Holy Ground: The Impacts of Place Belonging, Community, and Boundary Work

By

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Table of Contents

Abstract

In St. John's, Newfoundland, the Christian church has shaped cultural history since before the province joined Confederation in the 1940s. One church in the St. John's region that has navigated the shifting cultural climate throughout the province's history with organized religion is The Salvation Army St. John's Temple. With plenty of current members claiming multiple generations of attendance to the church, the complex array of social and historical influences on these members has profound impacts on their perceptions of belonging, community, and their creating an understanding of place within a religious community. Through 16 in-depth, semi-structured interviews, I create a framework to demonstrate how my participants create and maintain community, as well as the boundaries that delineate inside/outside membership. My analysis reveals a generational discrepancy in the attitudes relating to the use of boundary work to delineate membership of the church. My participants indicated a range of emotions towards the church's use of boundary work, primarily expressed through feelings of anger, resentment, and lost hope amongst the younger participants. Complex boundary work exists within the congregation itself, as well as outside of the congregation and the surrounding community memberships that participants maintain. My participants also reflect on the impacts of the current COVID-19 pandemic on religious life, involving both the restriction of in-person gatherings on their personal faith, as well as the structural concerns that have been highlighted during the unprecedented experience of the pandemic.

General Summary

I examined how my church community creates connection between different groups of people. I performed 16 interviews to look at how the church creates relationships between people, how my participant creates or created the relationships that connect them to the community, and their overall experience in the community. In these interviews, my participants provided visuals to help describe their relationship to the church community. From my interviews, I saw three major themes of discussion. First, I noticed that the community was built on relationships that brought some people together while also separating themselves from others. Secondly, I noticed that the community had numerous social boundaries that facilitated certain relationships and damaged others. Thirdly, I noticed that my participants had to perform certain social roles that influenced their position in the community, as well as the boundaries of the community.

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& To the Creator - you are endlessly known.

This thesis is dedicated to my nephew, Isaac Robert Riche.

I love you, little one; you are truly cherished.

Introduction

May 11th, 1997

I was born into the Christian religion. Within my denomination, a child is dedicated back to God after they are born, similar to a water baptism. This is the first symbolic act that connected me to The Salvation Army St. John's Temple. Before I knew who I was, I was already a member of this community; before I could walk, I was being directed; before I could speak, I was told what to say; before I could imagine, I was told what to think. This one decision has had profound effects on my life, even to this day. I cannot imagine who I am without Salvation Army St. John's Temple. My life has been tethered to that building in a way that I cannot escape nor remove in any capacity. It is this deeply personal connection that I have built this thesis on. The main goal of my thesis is to develop a clear picture of how my church community creates a sense belonging amongst congregants and what the necessary conditions are to maintain this sense of belonging. I approach this research goal through a series of reflective, theoretical, and methodological questions, approached in each respective section.

While I did not use a research hypothesis for my work, as I reject the positivist approaches to research, I was guided by a few overarching research questions that stemmed from my own personal experiences and observations within the community. The first major question that inspired my work is, what are the specific social forces impacting my church community? The social landscape of churches in my home province has changed drastically over the past few decades, primarily because of the atrocities committed in Mount Cashel (Higgins, 2012). Given the social and cultural impact of such a scandal, the church hasn't been the same since - nor should it have remained the same, after harboring the physical, sexual, and psychological abuse of children. Despite this, Christianity remains a dominant religion in the province, dwarfing other

potential religious affiliations (Statistics Canada, 2013). However, there is a consistent trend in churches closing in Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as across the country (Allen, 2019). With this knowledge, I wanted to search through my community to find the social forces that were maintaining our presence in the community, despite the current trend of losing religious spaces.

The second major question that guided my research revolved around generational differences in my church community. Why was there such a small representation of people in my age category, in my church community? As an anecdotal note, I remember my childhood and teenage years being profoundly impacted by my peers in my church, as these were some of the earliest instances of important friendships and relationships. As I aged through the community, more and more of my relationships and friendships were either strained and ultimately lost through the lack of interaction within the church community, or the relationship changed as the interaction with the community changed. This personal experience was a major catalyst for my research as I was perplexed by the changes in my personal life and my relationships. Finding a pattern as to why some relationships were able to flourish while others suffered became an overarching inspiration for my research. This could only be questioned by going through my community and engaging other members.

My deep connection to my community ultimately connected me to my research process as well. As I engaged other community members through interviews, I was shown the complex, beautiful, and cursed nature of the community. I was shown who I was through the ones whom I knew; I could see myself in every participant, and my participants showed through me. The question of how my community stays together despite the trend of dying churches and generational disparity ultimately revolves around looking at the relationships within the

community and how they are sustained. My work provides a perspective to answer these questions - the themes of community, boundaries and barriers, as well as performing church show that the sustained effort of these rituals remains the lifeblood of my community. The rituals of exclusivity spark against the individual efforts to create a community not confined by rituals of boundaries, but by rituals of participation and accessibility. My research shows the complexity of faith, in all its beauty and tragedy.

The Torn Veil: A General Description of My Research

The inspiration for my theoretical perspective comes from Gieryn's (1986) concept of boundary work: separating people or groups of people based on an imagined difference as a means to differentiate oneself from others. This simple definition of a radically pervasive quality of my church was the catalyst for my research direction. The act of demarcation is a key part of the current cultural expression of Christianity. This separation is a profound influence on my life, as I have been on both ends of this process from the church. This experience allowed me to have access to this type of data that otherwise would have remained untouched by outsiders. Maintaining a position within my community allowed me to uncover three major themes.

The first major theme of my thesis was community, which was not a surprise to me. However, the sheer proliferation of ideas on how community was made and maintained was phenomenal. My participants showed me that community was never a static entity that existed beyond the tangible world, only existing in the symbolic, but a constant process that required the intentional efforts of community members to bring people together, while also separating others. This key process, this duality of push and pull became more and more apparent the more I discussed community with my participants and how they have seen the power of discrimination

and solidarity existing together. Community could not be separated or distinguished from the relationships that were maintained between people - as well as those that were abandoned.

The second major theme of my thesis revolved around the boundaries that my community constructed for the sake of that title - community. Every single participant I engaged with spoke about the numerous and complex ways we create barriers, perceive barriers, and navigate barriers in our relationship to the structural community, as well as our own individual relationships. Boundaries and barriers fleshed out the theme of community by giving a process-oriented perspective of how my participants create and maintain community.

The connection between these themes lay in the power of social performance of both themes - community and boundaries - but also the performance of distinct social norms and traditions that shrouded the structural boundaries from critique and change. Within this third theme, I discussed how specific and unique social norms were causing a breakdown in one aspect of the community and the traditionally exclusive policy and position of the church, creating resistance through the challenge of the established policy boundaries..

From these three themes, I was shown that my community is a complex intersection of faith, discrimination, oppression, and hope. I witnessed my community use the same divinity from my personal beliefs to justify oppression, separation, and alienation, as well as inclusivity, reconciliation, and compassion. I witnessed the great joy of being in community come through the stories of belonging and purposeful inclusion, and I shared the grief of those who have been left by the wayside in the pursuit of a community ideal. My research provides insight in to a few key areas of social life, one primarily being the narrative of discrimination. While my research does not have a distinct focus on one particular example. From this work, I begin a lifelong

journey to look at how religious communities are impacting the lives of those around them, as well as those within them.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework: Radical Interactionism

I am taking a primarily interactionist approach to my research. While there are a variety of theoretical expressions of symbolic interactionism, I am using a more radical interactionist perspective (Athens, 2007; Athens, 2009; Athens, 2012). There are a few key differences between a radical interactionist perspective and a traditional symbolic interactionist perspective: First, instead of using Mead's concept of sociality for understanding the social act and the universal social interaction, radical interactionism uses the concept of domination (Athens, 2007). The difference between these two concepts lies in domination as creating the conditions of superior and subordinate roles in the social act with a conscious assumption among social actors (Athens, 2009). In the original formation of symbolic interactionism, there were roles of functional differentiation and functional superiority, which ordered social interaction (Athens, 2012). These roles were foundational for Mead's approach, but they did not provide an analysis of power in the social world, ultimately reducing any analysis of social conflict or institutional oppression. Thus, radical interactionism fills the void of accountability in the interactionist perspective by understanding that dominance holds a greater power in the social world than cooperation (Athens, 2012). The main conceptual difference between sociality and domination lies in sociality being based on individuals having social occupancy in two or more systems that subsequently alters one social system by association of another – like being a scientist and also being a religious person, or a pastor and a criminal (Athens, 2012). While Mead - and other early symbolic interactionists - does acknowledge dominance in the social act, he does not place it as

the main principle, fundamentally reducing the power that dominance plays in the social act. Dominance has four key attributes to consider in relation to sociality.

First, as previously mentioned, dominance as the main principle of the social world requires a superior and subordinate role. For my project, this is exemplified by the pastor and layman. These carry a default ascription of social performance that reinforce the position of social actors as either subordinate or superior to one another. In comparison, the symbolic interactionist perspective views social interaction as primarily cooperative, taking roles that are functionally ascribed. For the early symbolic interactionist, the perspective on the roles of clergy and layman has a cooperative lens. The radical interactionist adjusts this perspective to account for power (Athens, 2012). Notably, the superior tasks of sociality did not have any mention of an inherent power dynamic between the two roles. Radical interactionism challenges the traditional theoretical position by using a binary system of power. From here, the second aspect of dominance is established - differentiation.

For the radical interactionist, there is a need for differentiation amongst the roles of interpreting reality. This second aspect draws similarities to the original theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism. For the radical interactionist, differentiation is a process of understanding who wields the capacity to influence others and how they separate themselves from those who do not possess such power (Athens, 2009). For a contextual example, the different leadership roles in churches are separated for power and privilege. In my research, the different roles of Corps Officer, Corps Sergeant Major, and Band Master are examples, each of them having different responsibilities, privileges, and accessibility to the inner workings of the church. For the symbolic interactionist, differentiation is a process of understanding which roles are being played in the social act. With this dramaturgical language, it is clear that both

perspectives attend to performance in the social realm; the difference between these two approaches lies in the expression of power and conflict. To the radical interactionist, differentiation is about understanding the unique expressions of power, conflict, and domination, as well as the differences between them. Power does not always equate to conflict, and conflict does not always equate to domination, thus the understanding that there is a social process helps make sense of these separate, but similar processes. To the symbolic interactionist, differentiation is merely a process of establishing which roles are being played, and how they are being played, through the social actors (Athens, 2009). With differentiation, the radical interactionist can expand how superior and subordinate roles function in the social act.

As established, the superior role to the radical interactionist is one that holds power and the ability to elicit change in behaviour of others, exemplified by the superior role of institutions (Athens, 2007). While the superior exists on a smaller scale than the institution, the function remains the same: Influence the social act to the benefit of the powerful and reduce the position of the subordinate. The church has a long history of exploitation and abuse, thus the radical interactionist perspective is the better choice for my analysis. Other early symbolic interactionists, like Park, Blumer, and Mead**,** provide a perspective of dominance in early symbolic interactionist theory that radical interactionism draws upon (Athens, 2009). Athens describes dominance as having four main themes: biotic, economic, political, and cultural (Athens, 2009). Biotic dominance relates to control of biological aspects of social living, ranging from the physical control of bodies to the social norms and expectations of our physical bodies, like the political association of women's reproductive systems or bodily presentation through modification. Economic dominance ties into the bodily aspect of dominance, highlighted in the examples of job requirements and shift lengths as well as the presence of specific bodies in

economic positions. Furthermore, cultural and political dominance are two sides of the same coin; suppressing the culture of a subordinate people is subsequently suppressing their politics. Through these four themes of dominance, it becomes clear that the superior role in the social act influences these presented aspects of the subordinate role. The subordinate is confined by the superior, as these roles are consciously assumed in the radical interactionist perspective (Athens, 2009). These consciously assumed roles also create the conditions for four types of interaction that create meaning between the subordinate and the superior.

This confinement of roles is a process of domination by the superior. The superior role maintains its position primarily through the confinement of roles that become consciously assumed. As an example, the consciously assumed role of congregant has a set series of various characteristics: submissive, contemplative, and presentable, all of which are social performances that reflect on the superior. This takes shape in creating meaning by positioning the values, ideologies, symbols, and other vehicles of the subordinate as lesser (Athens, 2009). Instead of a cooperative perspective that was highlighted in other symbolic interactionist theory of symbols communicating with one another, the radical interactionist reinforces not a hierarchy of symbols, but a repression of symbols and meaning related to the subordinate. To the radical interactionist, dominance is the main principle of society, thus all processes of meaning are also within the process of domination. In addition to this conversation on dominance, there needs to be an understanding of the typology of interactions to the interactionist (Athens, 2009). For the interactionist, there are four recognized types of interaction: competition, control, accommodation, assimilation (Athens, 2009). It is important to acknowledge that each type of interaction is also one part of a cyclical process that evolves over time, ultimately repeating itself over time (Athens, 2009). The first stage, competition, is based on the struggle of establishing

status as an individual, as well as a community. Athens (2009) gives the example of finding work and how that functions beyond employment in our society, becoming a status signifier. This operates on both an individual and group level. Competition, in essence, is an interactional process that establishes status and privilege for individuals or groups to then be utilized in an unconscious display of power between others (Athens, 2009). Work is just one example of an unconscious status bearer, there are many others - gender, race, faith, all performative, interactive parts of social living. This first stage of interaction blends into the second as it becomes more conscious and personal (Athens, 2009).

For the second stage, conflict, there is an emphasis on a more intentional understanding of the social interaction and the status of the individual and accompanying group. It is within this conflict that the individual and the community achieve their greatest level of consciousness, as the shift from the unconscious search - and desire for status - moves towards the conscious, the individual enters into a power struggle that creates the conditions for dominance over others. This extends to the community level, as the rise and fall of the individual ultimately correspond to the community (Athens, 2009). Thus, the process of creating meaning and value incorporates the status of the individual and those in conflict with them to create the superior/subordinate binary. The conflict stage is akin to the differentiation trait of domination, as the ability to separate and define oneself against people or groups is a fundamental process of othering and generating power among groups (Athens, 2009). As above, the conflict of status is not confined to work. Conflict, as with competition, is merely one stage in the interactional order for radical interactionists, as the third stage deals with a change in superior/subordinate roles.

For the accommodation stage, there is a power shift. Other interactionists have described this as a creation of new super-ordinate roles in the social act, as previous relationships of power

have been renegotiated across conflict (Athens, 2009). This reordering stage allows for new communities and individuals to enter into a power relationship with others that once had superior or subordinate positions to them. The key piece to this stage is an understanding that the new relationships and positions of power do not erase or minimize the conflicts that have created the conditions for accommodation or new power organizations. Accommodation does not mean that power or domination has reached a stalemate in the process of creating meaning; it is merely one point in the interactional stage that leads to a reordering of values and meaning. Accommodation also does not create the conditions for a removal of previous power structures, but a conversational approach to challenging the dominant values and beliefs in favor of new interpretations and meanings (Athens, 2009). Accommodation is the back and forth between superior and subordinate that creates a diffusion of meaning in society, as the dominant do not have complete control over the subordinate, and the subordinate are not entirely reduced to the meanings of the superior role. For the last interactional stage, values and meaning are adapted across the subordinate and superior roles (Athens, 2009).

The final interactional stage, assimilation, is one that does not mesh well with the radical interactionist perspective, as this has a distinct symbolic interactionist lens. For symbolic interactionists, assimilation refers to the consolidation of values, norms, meanings, and beliefs across superior and subordinate roles (Athens, 2009). To the radical interactionist, however, assimilation is never completed, as domination is the cornerstone of the theoretical perspective. This change in role ultimately leads to a reciprocation of dominance between individuals and community that repeats across future interactions. This final stage is the main departure from symbolic interactionism in the radical interactionist perspective, as dominance is maintained across the community and individual as neither are fully realized in the utopic lens of the

symbolic interactionist. To the symbolic interactionist, assimilation is the process that brings a community into a fully-realized society; to the radical interactionist, assimilation is the transitional step in a new series of struggle over a performance of dominance between the superior and the subordinate. Taking these typologies of interactions, as well as characteristics of dominance, I flesh out the radical interactionist theory I apply to this research through its strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths & Limitations of Radical Interactionism

There are distinct benefits to using the radical interactionist perspective compared to the traditional symbolic approach. First and foremost, the radical interactionist perspective takes a direct approach to the analysis of power and domination in everyday life. This focus on systems of oppression, marginalization, and domination is fundamental to my analysis of a church community. Members of the congregation are in positions of cultural superiority, and as Western society is fundamentally built on Christianity, exclusivity, discrimination, and oppression of alternative lives, beliefs, meaning, and ways of being.

Secondly, radical interactionist theory blends the strengths of symbolic theory with a conflict-based approach. Highlighting that everyday living is infused with numerous instances of creating and maintaining personal and community identities and meanings through these identities is a major strength of symbolic theory, while conflict theory highlights the struggle between those who hold the power, and how their systems of meaning and ways of being are reinforced and propagated, and those who do not, and how their values and beliefs are repressed and illegitimized.

Finally, the radical interactionist perspective addresses the institutional influence on meaning in critical fashion (Athens, 2012). While symbolic interactionism does highlight the

influence of institutions on meaning-making, the radical interactionist takes the approach of questioning how the institutions are preserving meaning and beliefs in their favour, as well as how individuals are influenced by institutions in their process of creating meaning. The power of radical interactionism lies in its ability to transgress the boundaries of the institution while also being relevant to the creation of meaning for the individual, as well as keeping power and domination in clear focus through both situations. Having addressed the strengths of my theoretical perspective, I am also aware that it is not without flaws or limitations.

First of all, radical interactionism positions power as the centre of all social interactions. This can be dangerously misleading in that all interactions seem to have a necessity to create power or maintain it, or all interactions are understood through the lens of power. To begin with, this perspective may lead to the false idea that power is not built and maintained, but is a certain that must be navigated and not challenged. Power is a consequence of structures; it is not a mystical entity that lurks in the shadows waiting to be documented. Taking inventory of the structures that have created power imbalances offers an analysis that highlights the strengths of radical and symbolic interactionism.

Secondly, radical interactionism lacks a clearly defined lens to explain power relations. Radical interactionism may deal extensively in power relations, but it lacks a framework of its own to address specific structural issues – gender, race, work, all structural issues that have their own frameworks to address power through their own theory. Radical interactionism, however, must draw from other literature to bolster its theoretical influence on the analysis of structural conditions and how they create power. The creation of meaning is an excellent mechanism to analyze power, but radical interactionism needs a distinct structural lens to provide a broader, more complete analysis. While every theoretical perspective can be improved by the integration

of other ideas, radical interactionism needs that distinct lens to clarify its position beyond a rudimentary explanation of power relations.

Finally, radical interactionism does not provide room for an analysis of power from the perspective of the oppressed and downtrodden. Radical interactionism remains a theoretical interpretation that focuses on the dominant, further reducing the voice of the marginalized and discriminated. For radical interactionism to properly extend beyond the structural confines of the interactionist in a meaningful way, there needs to be an emphasis on the perspective of the powerless as they also inform power. To create a well-rounded analysis using the radical interactionist theoretical framework, there needs to be an acknowledgment of the structural influences that create power — not vice versa — and the benefits of drawing from other perspectives to explain power beyond the symbolic, as to prevent reductionist approaches to frequent expressions of power like gender, race, and class. Additionally, radical interactionists need to move past the tendency to position power within the perspective of those who benefit from the established systems, and look at those who are actively reduced under such conditions. My goal for this project is to draw on the strengths of my theoretical foundation while also accounting for the weaknesses I have highlighted as well.

Culture

Culture is one of the major themes of literature that I consulted for my research. The literature on community and identity paired well with the cultural literature I uncovered. While there is a truly vast amount of literature on the sociology of culture, let alone the broader social science literature on culture, I focused on literature that would provide insight into my given research interest and goals. Thus, I primarily focused on literature that discussed religion as a cultural event, religion as a cultural resource, and religion as a cultural project. While there is a

distinction between the sociology of religion and the sociology of culture, my goal was to hold cultural literature and religious literature in balance – consulting from both areas – so that I would draw on the strengths of both ideas, rather than devote my research to one particular focus. This is not to say that the sociology of religion lacks the nuance to address this project, but that my research is looking more at the culture of my religion than the religion itself as a sociological entity.

The Sociology of Culture & The Sociology of Religion

First, the sociology of culture positions cultural elements, like religion, as one process in a multitude of others that comprise an individual's culture. The literature from the sociology of religion focuses on the distinct aspects of religion that are sociologically relevant. For my work, I wanted to take a more holistic approach to the analysis of religion in the lives of my participants, focusing on how religion shapes every aspect of living, not just the symbolic (Orsi, 2010). Religion is not an all-encompassing cultural entity, therefore my literature should reflect that. Secondly, the literature from the sociology of culture draws on a larger body of work that speaks to meaning for the individual, and how it is produced. Where the sociology of religion draws on similar literature, the process of creating and maintaining meaning is encompassed by a conversation within the religious realm, once again positioning religion as a consuming part of life (Kleppner, 1970; Menendez, 1977). This has similarities to my first reason for consulting the sociology of culture; emphasizing that my participants had lives outside of their religion and that it informs their everyday lives was fundamental for my research. I did not want an analytical approach that positioned my research within the limitations of a religious perspective, but a boundless interpretation of how my participant's relationship with religion permeated their entire way of being. Finally, the sociology of religion focuses highly on the specific religious traditions

of the participants, which would further confine my analysis. For the literature on the sociology of religion, there is an emphasis on the religious structure that subtracts from other social forces. As I have stated before, I did not want my participant's religion to be the centre focus of my analysis, but one working part in the machine of making meaning. The sociology of culture takes religion as one key cultural element that influences individuals and combines it with other larger social processes. Thus, I draw on a few key pieces from the culture literature, starting with Williams (1996).

Intersections of Culture & Religion

Williams (1996) discusses many ways that religion has been used as a political force over decades. One of the main points of his article is that religion is an identity marker. What this means is that religion functions as a descriptor for an individual; it positions them in relation to others via having a similar status or through difference. This binary constraint reinforces an insider/outsider perspective to religion, and subsequently to the same political affiliations. Thus, Christianity has become synonymous with a distinct political perspective that then becomes an exclusionary, expected relationship. In this example, to identify with the Christian religion is to ascribe to a distinct political ideology as well. In the Western context, this has an undeniable oppressive characteristic. Building on this idea, Williams (1996) states that religions help form and base political attitudes. Churches are a key force in propagating a political ideology. As a signifier for a distinct political ideology, the religion acts as a pull factor for people with similar political leanings, thus creating an "opinion public" (Williams, p. 369, 1996). Additionally, the religious ideology of churches is often highly interconnected with distinct political ideologies, rather than having a diverse collection of political alignment (Smith, 2021; Putnam & Campbell, 2010). The church, the religious space, becomes a centre for political engagement. This is

reinforced by reflection theory from Griswold (1993) that Williams (1996) draws upon. Each cultural process reflects on itself, reinforcing the symbolic power of unique cultural elements that are connected. This theory supports how religion is central to the creation of symbolic worlds for its adherents. The political representation of the religion shapes the process of meaning as each denomination has unique approaches to the ascribed political ideology of Christianity in the West; differences amongst religious denominations change how adherents interact amongst one another, influencing the creation of meaning. This example shows how religion impacts the symbolic world beyond their own ideological assumptions, transcending into the political realm that carries such power. The symbolic world of meaning is fundamentally tied to the rituals that become vessels for participants to pour out their values and attachments. From these rituals comes a deep connection between those who are able to participate, as well as a fracture from those who cannot (Collins, 2004; Draper, 2014; Draper, 2019; Draper, 2021). While Williams (1996) provides an excellent starting point for understanding the interaction of religion and culture, a clearer understanding of culture is needed.

Ann Swidler (1986) provides us with an excellent analysis of culture. She provides a succinct definition of culture as a tool kit of habits, skills, and styles. Notably, Swidler (1986) does not provide concrete examples of habits, skills, and styles as discrete elements, but as a collection. Thus, I provide examples relevant to my own analysis. These three descriptors can be overlaid onto distinct features of religion to connect their relationships. I will break down these three qualities of culture in relation to religion: First, habits, skills, and styles all have an action-oriented description, reinforcing the constructed aspect of culture. Habits, however, are the repeated expressions of culture within constraints. In the Christian religion, this is expressed by a few key practices, such as prayer, observing the Sabbath, and taking communion. It is also

important to highlight the similarities between Swidler's (1986) discussion of culture and Goffman's (1959; 1963a) ideas on behaviour. While Swidler (1986) provides the mechanisms to classify cultural behaviour, Goffmanian ideas remain present.

These three habits listed above transcend into the realm of ritual, reinforcing their symbolic power (Collins, 2004). For each of these cultural practices, they have unique social conditions that separate them from others, positioning them as repeated acts. Habits are intentionally reproduced. Prayer, Sabbath, and communion are all cultural expressions that have their own unique time and space of practice, creating the conditions for repetition and building symbolic influence (Goffman, 1967). The action-oriented aspect of habits lies in participants actively engaging the habit in their own personal ways, sometimes challenging the traditional expressions in favour of alternative modes, even resisting them all together. Habits, therefore, cannot be understood without ritual.

Secondly, skills are tangible examples of cultural expression. One major example of a cultural skill is cultural literacy. It is important to keep the concept of literacy devoid of any classist or ethnocentrist bias, as literacy for one culture has distinct differences to another, but this does not denote superiority or inferiority amongst different cultural expressions. In the context of religion, the skill of religious literacy is vital for the sustainment of religious cultures. The ability to transmit values, meaning, and belief in a religious context is vital. Thus, this process becomes a performance of skill. Furthermore, this cultural literacy does not only relate to one possible culture. While cultural literacy does not provide a universal translation to all unique cultures, it does provide the framework for people to engage in other cultural expressions. It is important to note that cultural literacy is not ethnocentrism; cultural literacy reinforces the relationship between cultures, not the demarcation of cultures as superior or inferior. Cultural

skills are best represented by the numerous ways to hold cultural literacy. This takes shape in the Christian religion by knowing the traditions, rituals, and linguistic norms associated within denominations. Within the confines of the Christian religion, there can be instances of small religious groups fighting for positions of superiority over others. This does not mean that Christian as a whole becomes superior over other structural religious traditions, but that each religion has the possibility to breed cultural literacy that can be translated into language of superiority and inferiority.

The final characteristic of culture in Swidler (1986) is style. For the concept of cultural style, Swidler (1986) discusses the accompanying idea of unsettled and settled cultural lives. For Swidler (1986), habits, skills, and style are all influenced by unsettled and settled lives. Style, however, is discussed in relation to these different periods in cultural life. Swidler (1986) argues that style is reinforced during a settled cultural period. This idea of a settled culture allows for cultural traits, like the denominational differences between charismatic denominations and traditional expressions, to be refined overtime as it has a larger long-term impact on the action of cultural occupants. Comparatively, unsettled culture does not have the same conditions to allow for the propagation of style as it relies on structural conditions that do not exist in the same capacity as a settled culture (Swidler, 1986, p. 282). Thus, style requires a settled culture, or structural opportunities in an unsettled culture to maintain itself. Style comprises cultural elements that need to be passed on. A major piece in understanding Swidler's (1986) work is that culture has a distinct temporal quality, of an unsettled or settled perspective. As described, these two examples have their own characteristics that influence culture - embodied by habits, skills, and style. In comparison, settled time gives less control over direct cultural action, but it refines the established habits, skills, and styles of culture. Settled time creates consistency in the "ethos"

of the culture, the ultimate expression of style in culture (Swidler, 1986, p. 282). Swidler's (1986) formulation of culture provides a perspective that conceptualizes culture in open-ended examples of cultural practices - habits, skills, and styles - that can be worked into an analysis of various cultural fields, shown in her work where she discusses religion, class, and ways that culture can restrain and enable action. Taking this work as a cornerstone for understanding culture for my research provides the background for an analysis that sees culture as a key force in making sense of how people are enabled and constrained by their culture; culture ultimately shapes how people approach their lives in an action-oriented perspective (Swidler, 1986, p. 284). Taking Swidler's (1986) three mechanisms of culture, I expand them to show how the different habits, skills, and styles of cultures can come in contact with one another and create boundaries between people. Culture – and the associated rituals — is a major force in keeping people separated, as well as groups of people under specific definitions. This isn't to say that culture is not important to embrace or cherish, but that the culture of power and dominance will challenge others who do not, can not, or will not comply. From this, comes the conflict and strife that the church community continues to propagate: a culture war (Hunter, 1991; Baker, Perry, & Whitehead, 2020; Whitehead & Perry, 2020). Upon this rock, I build my analysis. Culture persists across space, place, and time, thus the next highly significant literature for my work is Gieryn' (2018) *Truth Spots*.

Oracles & Parables: The Impact of Place on Culture

Gieryn's key discussion in *Truth Spots* is how places make people believe (2018). This spatial-orientation of analyzing meaning positions the built environment as a key factor in the interactionist process. He provides a succinct example of this place-based meaning-making from history with the Oracle of Delphi. He breaks down how this figure in history was proliferated

because of the spatial impacts to the symbol of the oracle (Gieryn, 2018). Delphi carried significance because of the oracle, and vice versa. This relationship between the place and the symbolic power shows how the place and its ascribed meaning cannot be separated, as they are one in the same. There cannot be a place devoid of meaning, and there cannot be meaning without a place to ground itself. Understanding this foundational point allows for a deeper analysis of symbolic places and how they influence culture

Another important point made by Gieryn (2018) that applies to my analysis is that engaging with places creates a sense of legitimacy, as well as a sense of order. In religious contexts, this is fundamentally important for the sustainment of distinct ideological traditions. Engaging with place also involves engaging in the symbolic practices and traditions of those that occupy the space. In relation to the Christian religion, engaging with church spaces brings with it a distinct processional tradition. Christian spaces are ordered by their own unique liturgical approaches, which simultaneously function as a way to create meaning. Encountering Christian spaces requires an encounter with liturgical traditions that are imbued with meaning through repetition and transmission. Furthermore, the ability to engage in a distinct spatial arrangement gives credibility. This has profound implications for religious spaces, in particular. Being able to engage with an established church space gives credibility to the traditional practices of the community within the church space. For those who cannot encounter established churches, their faith traditions are not legitimized in the same way as the Christian church, as these practices require a spatial environment for legitimacy (Draper, 2014/2019/2021). Place brings forth a sense of legitimacy to those that encounter it, as well as a sense of purpose that connects those within the space to a symbolic world that is then reinforced through the symbolic practice of legitimacy.

Another key point in Gieryn's (2018) work that applies to my analysis is that place narratives ground ideology and perspectives. This is a major component to how places influence belief and the creation of meaning. The stories, oral traditions, even symbolic language surrounding places connect to a larger ideological and intellectual tradition. One major contextual example of this is the rhetoric of holy ground and churches. The qualifying force of holiness on certain spaces elevates them above other symbolic areas, even those that may already be connected to the tradition. Additionally, the idea of holiness, as a built and sustained qualifier, carries across established places into new territories. This has dark implications, as this is certainly a rhetorical tool of oppression - creating a narrative that a place can be turned holy by the ideology and perspective of one distinct group minimizes others (Baker, Perry, & Whitehead, 2020; White & Perry, 2020). As well, the confrontation between two ideologies and their connection to a place is no more obviously a potential powder keg of violence than any other contextual example I could provide. The sparks of rhetorical clashes on the ideological relationships of place have caused more than enough damage throughout history. This is the clearest example of how place narratives ground ideology and perspectives (Gieryn, 2018). The last point from Gieryn (2018) I draw upon relates to the concept of credibility and how specific organizations of space create credibility.

This concept has connections to the first major point about how engaging places creates a sense of legitimacy and order (Gieryn, 2018). There is room to build on this however, as a distinct construction of space and place gives credibility. The distinction between credibility and legitimacy is important; credibility serves as an indicator of the group of people that occupy the space, whereas legitimacy is a contested quality among insiders. The issue of credibility in constructing a place relates to the ability of others to recognize the space and its relationship to a

specific identity. Exemplified, church buildings are recognized by their physical presence by insiders and outsiders, but the people who build the symbolic place - insiders - engage in the process of legitimacy. Further to this idea, each Christian denomination has their own distinct construction of space, with unique elements to their own approaches of symbolic places. The variation of cathedrals, the spatial ordering of sanctuaries, the presence of traditional iconography, all of these things and more dictate the credibility of church spaces. There is a distinct interaction and experience when these elements are incongruent among similar spaces; when church spaces lack the traditional elements they are associated with, like the cathedral, the iconography, the insiders to that space engage in ways of creating credibility to outsiders, and legitimacy to other peripheral insiders. Those who occupy non-traditional spaces, who also lack the traditional signifiers, engage in a process of propagating their symbolic meanings to others around them. Credibility and legitimacy are two sides of the same conceptual coin, one that is highly valued in my analysis. The last influential piece on culture I am drawing upon comes from Cross' (2015) work that discusses place attachments.

On Solid Rock: Connecting Place with Meaning

Cross' (2015) is an exceptional work that bridges the gap between the literature on the sociology of culture and the sociology of space and place. Cross (2015) provides numerous useful conceptual definitions that will underscore the application of her work, each of which relate to place. First, Cross defines place as a space imbued with meaning (2015). This succinct definition has two major conceptual arguments. Primarily, that there is a difference between a space and a place. Secondly, that place is a process, not a static entity. For Cross (2015) to present a concept of place that is separated yet connected to space creates a larger conceptual framework than simply placing space and place as two distinct properties. Cross (2015) allows

for a growing definition of space and place in her conceptual framework, instead of separating between the two. She does not bound her concept to distinct limitations of analysis, but presents an infinite possibility to apply her work on a theoretical level.

Additionally, Cross (2015) emphasizes that place is built, as it does not exist without the work of people. The infinite expanse of place requires the infinite possibility inherent to humanity. Thus, Cross' (2015) formulation of place requires people to engage in the act of creation; it is a utilization of the resource of space that is moulded over time and practice of those that encounter it. Place cannot exist without those that are willing and able to engage in the symbolic work of creation that, for Cross (2015), imbues the ordinary space with meaning. Having an understanding of this foundational concept for this work allows for a clearer explanation of two other concepts. From the concept of place, the ideas of place attachment and place identity have arisen (Cross, 2015). Place attachment is an interactional process, an affective bond; place identity is how members describe themselves as belonging to distinct places (Cross, 2015). Notably, these concepts cannot exist without one another; one cannot attach to a place without it also invoking an identity.

In her work, Cross (2015) identifies types of place attachments and processes of place attachments. She offers six distinct types: Genealogical, places that are connected to family or origin; narrative, places that are created through story; loss/destruction, places connections that are created through shared experiences of tragedy or mobility; economic, places that are created through the ability to own property; celebratory, places that are connected with distinct cultural events and experiences; and cosmological, places that are imbued with religious sanctity or a larger connection to a religious site (Cross, p. 4, 2015). These six attachment types all have their own distinct theoretical backgrounds and traditions, but a few of them have more influence on

my analysis. The attachment types that are influential for my work are genealogical, narrative, and cosmological. While all of these attachment types exist in my work - and all places - to some degree, these three are most salient.

Church spaces rely on genealogical types of place attachments. This is exemplified by familial association to a distinct Christian denomination, and subsequently a regional church of that denomination. The power of this type of place attachment is strong enough to persist across numerous generations, consistently being reproduced by families, even without any consistent engagement with that church space. Through genealogical place attachments, families know which church becomes a place for them, instead of a space devoid of meaning and value. This attachment persists even in situations of limited to non-existent engagement with the traditional place, as families know which denomination they belong to, as well as which distinct church.

Secondly, narrative types of place attachment are highly salient in religious places. For the Christian religion, storytelling plays a major part in the transmission of values and ideologies. Storytelling is a major component in the symbolic teachings of the religion, thus emphasizing the importance of storytelling in establishing a relationship to the church. Furthermore, narrative types of place attachment are also a key device in emphasizing who and what is present in church places. This key process creates distinct relationships between those that have been marginalized and those that have been privileged, ultimately creating a symbolic divide between the two groups. This type of place attachment reinforces the belonging of some at the cost of others.

Finally, cosmological types of place attachment influence church spaces as they are dependent on this kind of attachment to elevate the church beyond the mundane spaces of society. Cosmological types elevate the religious environment into the mystical realm, one that is

imbued with meaning, values, and beliefs. This is also another delineating force for community; religious communities and spaces make a significant claim on the mystical realm, thus reducing the legitimacy of others that make a claim on the symbolic power of mystical or divine ideas. The church spaces are an established place of cosmological orientation, which also become an oppressive force against alternative expressions of mystical foundations. The legitimized power of church spaces as a mystical place creates a power structure that has embedded Christianity as the only valid expression of divine and mystical experience in the West. Combined, the cosmological, the narrative, and the genealogical types of place attachment create a full picture of the church as a place filled with various types of attachment. This leads into an analysis of the processes of place attachment that Cross (2015) formulates from these six types.

Cross (2015) once again provides a clear explanation of her analysis and how she developed each distinct category of place attachment (p. 11). Like the various types of place attachment, Cross provides succinct descriptions for each process of attachment. The distinction between type and process is important to consider; types of place attachment develop over the distinct process that individuals undertake in the creation of place. Types of place cannot emerge without the process of place attachment. Understanding the base differences between types of attachment and processes of attachment is fundamental to my analysis. Cross (2015) highlights seven processes of place attachment: sensory, process dependent on personal preference through sensory stimuli and aesthetic value judgments placed upon the sensory experience; narrative, process dependent on storytelling of individuals, individuals within the place, and cultural elements of place, as well as who and what is not present in the stories; historical, process of accumulation of personal experiences and family histories, eventually creating association of events with places; spiritual, process of belonging, can create conflict between people throughout

the process; ideological, process tied to moral, ethical, legal commitment, requires the conditions to constantly reproduce commitments; commodifying, process of assessing desirable traits in spaces, often diminishes compared to others; and material dependence, process of reliance on resources, highly flexible as resources change in availability (Cross, 2015, p. 11).

For my analysis, I highlight all but two of the processes provided by Cross (2015). I will be focusing primarily on the following: Narrative, historical, spiritual, and ideological. These processes are closely linked with my work, more so than the process of sensory, commodifying, and material dependence. My analysis is focusing more on the symbolic resources of church spaces, not the tangible. Thus, I engage with the other listed processes. First, the narrative process of place attachment is almost parallel to the narrative type of place attachment (Cross, 2015). The key piece revolves around the cultural process of retelling certain stories. This decision establishes who maintains their attachment to the place, and who loses their attachment to the narrative process. Removing certain stories, even certain presence in stories, ultimately changes the landscape of meaning for those that engage the space. This is a process that is consistently evolving overtime, without one distinct direction, as narrative processes can change between generations by removing one group at one point, while returning them back to the narrative process at a later point. This is certainly present in church spaces, as many groups have been removed from the narrative of Christianity, primarily LGBTQ+ people and other marginalized groups - ironically. The narrative process of place attachment extends, in some capacity, into all of the other analyses.

Secondly, historical processes relate to my analysis of church spaces as the intersection of the personal, cultural, and familial create a connection across a plethora of experiences. Historical processes use the power of events as a key force in creating connections between the

structural elements of places to the individual level. Marriage, death, baptism, communion, all of these events serve as a historical process as they connect the individual to church places, running a line between the structural elements of places and the power of meaning for the individual. Historical processes have less involvement with outsiders than narrative processes as these highlight important experiences for those who have been established in the community. The narrative process has an overarching temporal quality, while the historical is connected and reproduced through the individual - ultimately shaping the narrative through the historical and vice versa. Those that have been present throughout historical points in their individual lives have been able to contribute to the narrative process.

Thirdly, spiritual place attachment is a clear piece of my analysis. The idea of belonging and how that becomes a sense for the individual is profoundly important to my work. Additionally, controlling and managing an individual's sense of belonging is a key process that church places engage in to create connections, as well as separate those that do not belong under the view of the elite. Negotiating the spiritual process of place attachment is also present in the historical and the narrative. Those who are not part of the storytelling, the creation of meaning and value process, those who are not part of cultural events or have had access to spaces in their individual lives, those people are not able to engage the spiritual process on a structural level as they have been denied other key steps in the process. The spiritual can be encountered as an individual, but without the presence of the historical and the narrative, the sense of belonging to church spaces suffers.

Finally, the ideological process of place attachment ties all of the previously discussed examples together. The ideological place attachment is fully realized in relation to the narrative, the historical, and the spiritual elements. The relationship between the ideological and these

other processes builds the numerous connections and divisions amongst a variety of peoples. This is exemplified by the generational diffusion of religious dogma. The commitment to the Christian faith is an ideological one that extends into the spiritual by creating the conditions of commitment in exchange for the potential of belonging. This belonging then extends into the historical and narrative as it is reproduced and renegotiated overtime. The ideological process is fundamentally a process of maintaining an imagined commitment to a place, that the place requires presence to exist. This commitment also serves to preserve power that has been reproduced throughout generations, reinforced by the other processes of place attachment. Taking these together, it shows that place is not a unitary entity, but that it is a collection of processes that ultimately depend on people and all their complexities to be fully realized. Cross (2015) supports this by formulating overarching examples of places and their processes of attachment. I use this work to establish a theoretical framework for my analysis of place and the culture of place. Cross (2015) provides a perspective to the ways in which place is always about who belongs, who does not, and how that is ultimately constructed and maintained.

For my literature review on culture, my goal was to review literature that viewed religion as a byproduct of culture, not a singular entity to be analyzed. My analysis would be looking at the culture of the religion in the community I was researching, thus I needed literature that incorporated elements of culture and religion. This led me to uncover some major themes, first of them being that culture and religion are intimately intertwined in the process of social creation (Kleppner, 1977; Menendez, 1970). The literature showed that the culture of religion creates distinctions between groups in society, each of them with their own unique skills, habits, and styles. These elements are often influenced by the establishment of power structures that support and hinder certain cultural groups with the larger society. The second major theme is that culture

profoundly impacts how groups use and influence places (Bainbridge, 1989; Shihadeh & Winters, 2010). The skills, styles, and habits are the main forces that influence place attachment in culture, which also vary on the cultural use of places. Where and how culture is being used influences religious aspects of daily life, and vice versa.

Community

The previous sections of this review highlight key pieces of literature that I will be drawing on in my analysis. These previously discussed works are foundational to my work as they provide me with a solid theoretical foundation. However, in discussing the idea of community and identity, I found myself straying away from distinct pieces of literature into a broader collection of work. I have an intimate knowledge of the community I planned to research as I have maintained a personal relationship and connection to members of that community. Thus, taking one distinct theoretical perspective did not seem to serve my research as much as consulting a larger selection of work to challenge my established experience, ultimately confronting my biases as well. The literature that I found on religious communities had a distinct perspective on the topics of exclusion, boundaries, and the separation of the sacred and the secular.

The work of Brace, Bailey, & Harvey (2006) focused on the connections between religion, place, and space. To them, religious practices are a central part to the very essence of society. For Brace et al. (2006), religion has its own internal political functions that are simultaneously confined to their attributed spaces and wilfully expressed to outsiders. Brace et al. (2006) described these politics as politics of identity, which have a distinct connection to the place of religious communities and their usage of the sacred and the secular. These ideas are supported by the work of Kong (1993) who discusses the spatial elements of religious

environments and how they negotiate the idea of sacred spaces as an ever-changing concept. It is from Kong (2001) that Brace et al. (2006) draw the idea of artificial separation between the sacred and the secular, as well as the poetic and the political. This is a key point for both, as they are reinforcing that the distinction between the secular and the sacred is a built process that is also reinforced by the political inclinations of their "poetics," the elements of interaction that shape meaning (Kong, 1990; Kong, 1999). The separation of the sacred and the secular is one example of religious communities producing a distinct narrative, that ultimately also produces a sense of community and identity amongst those who engage religious places.

The following quote clearly dictates the importance of religious spaces and their consequences - "all religions construct space and time through their own specific ontological commitments" (Brace, Harvey, & Bailey, p. 31, 2006). While not extensively long, the idea is profoundly important to my analysis. This recognition of constructed space being influenced by specific ways of being shows that place is not an empty vessel that is an endless opportunity to create meaning, but that it is created and controlled by power structures that then extend into the individual realm and then place requires a reworking of meaning and value. These scholars connect to the previous literature I've discussed by their echoing thoughts of ritualized behaviour impacting the very ground on which people stand, far beyond the material world into the spiritualized ideas of community – those that can pass the cup are welcome, but those who cannot are denied the possibility to impact the world in which they seek to belong. A noticeable theme in the literature on this topic stems from the experience of LGBTQ+ people in religious settings.

Sumerau et al. (2019) provide an in-depth look at the performance of LGBTQ+ people in church spaces. Unfortunately, Sumerau et al. (2019) do not provide an optimistic account of the

experiences this community has faced in Christian spaces. A clear finding they uncovered was that LGBTQ+ people are negatively viewed by religious people - this comes as no shock, but it does come with distinct consequences. One unique portion of their work focused on the experiences of transgender people in these spaces, and they found that people who identified as transgender were negatively viewed by the religious, but also negatively viewed by the non-religious (Sumerau, Cragun, & Mathers, 2016; Sumerau, Mathers, & Cragun, 2018). In terms of religious exclusion, Sumerau et al. (2019) found that the moral and institutional character of religion carried a distinct regulatory perspective with deep assumptions of proper conduct. This compounding exclusion ultimately forced this community to be less likely to be engaged in religion, but also have high levels of spirituality (Sumerau et al., 2019; Gurtler, 2018). This is an exceptionally interesting finding as this shows the community is actively negotiating the boundaries they experience by creating their own unique sacred spaces that are not creditable by the dominant forms of spiritual expression.

Sumerau et al. (2019) highlight that there is a necessity to do gender whilst doing religion. In this performance, there is a distinct spectrum of conformity like there is a spectrum of gender (Darwin, 2018). Essentially, this spectrum is established by the power-keepers to determine the boundaries of exclusion. Those who fall beyond a certain palatable threshold for those in power are met with exclusion and a loss of belonging. Thus, this exclusion is not only symbolic, but physical, as the bodies of LGBTQ+ are denied access to these spaces, compounding the boundaries and exclusion of LGBTQ+ people (Ferguson, 2020; Darwin, 2020). Encountering a rhetoric that not only denies the dignity of the individual, but also the capacity of compassion for these people, requires a structural refusal to acknowledge the worth of these people symbolically and physically. These are just a few examples of how LGBTQ+ people face

exclusion in religious places. Gurtler (2018) and Coley (2020) are two other scholars who have also looked at this discrimination.

Gurtler (2018) makes the claim in their work that being queer ultimately leads to rejection in religious spaces. Gurtler (2018) reinforces this idea as they have found that there is an inability to be queer and simultaneously religious, as there is a distinct boundary that queer folk experience in religious spaces. This is not indicative of the experience of all members of the LGBTQ+ community, but that there is a significant trend being observed by Gurtler (2018) and other scholars (Coley, 2020, Sumerau, 2019). A major issue for Gurtler (2018), however, is that problematic Christian ideology persists outside of the religion, further reinforcing the lack of space for LGBTQ+ people, echoing similar themes found in Sumerau et al. (2019). Gurtler (2018) eventually moves towards the idea that rejecting religion is a part of normative queerness. The rejection of faith becomes a normative practice for LGBTQ+ people, further reinforcing the exclusionary experience and expectation of queer folk in religious spaces. Gurtler's (2018) work connects well with the work of Coley (2020) as he discusses the experience of LGBTQ+ activism in religious environments.

Coley (2020) provides an open perspective of LGBTQ+ people encountering religious spaces, as he uncovered experiences of queerness as being incompatible or compatible with Christian communities (Coley, 2018a; Coley, 2018b). His work focused on LGBTQ+ activism and how that shaped the religious communities around them, which ultimately had a profound impact on the ability of LGBTQ+ people to experience a sense of belonging to a religious community. Coley (2020) had two conclusions to his study that expand the previous literature beyond the experience of exclusion. The first conclusion that Coley (2020) makes is that groups share individual strategies of belonging. This echoes similar insights shared by Beaman (2014)

where they discuss religious accommodation within the Canadian context,. In simple terms, this is another example of communities having boundaries that are built and maintained through a shared sense of belonging. When this shared sense of belonging is threatened by the proverbial Other, there is further emphasis on maintaining solidarity members between group members and preventing the "slippery slope" of losing identity (Beaman, p. 6, 2014).

The second major conclusion is that group rhetoric shapes conversations. This is significant, as other literature has not made a previous conclusion that rhetoric shapes belonging, let alone how rhetoric influences the relationships between communities, ultimately challenging different processes of belonging. In the context of Coley's (2020) work, this is shown through the relationship between LGBTQ+ activist groups and the religious communities they influence. Having a collective purpose in challenging the exclusionary traditions of religious communities shifts the power dynamics between the traditionally oppressed LGBTQ+ community and the religious elite that seeks to separate them from belonging in their spaces (Coley, 2017). This interactional conclusion shows that the experience of separation and exclusion can be challenged through a renegotiation of boundaries by a collective pursuit. The work of Coley (2017; 2018a; 2018b; 2020) shows that the overarching narrative of exclusion and discrimination can be challenged in certain circumstances. This challenge drastically alters the landscape of boundaries, which connects to another theme I encountered in the literature.

Neitz (2005) provides a perspective of religious spaces in rural contexts. While my analysis won't be looking at a rural church, it is important to consider how different spatial arrangements, like the rural and urban divide, influence the landscapes of boundaries. In her work, Neitz (2005) discusses the social implications of dying church communities in rural environments. The loss of these churches has profound impacts beyond the religious aspects of a

lost church, stretching into the very fabric of the ontological security of the community as a whole. Neitz (2005) breaks down the idea that the possibility of relocating requires a reconstruction of the established spatial standards. Losing the religious community means a loss of routine, norms, and belonging, fundamentally impacted every aspect of daily life. From here, she elaborates on how losing place is not just a physical loss, but a deeply symbolic loss as well. Neitz (2005) draws on the idea that creating a sacred space is also a process of creating a place for the self (Norris, 2001). Connecting the physical loss of church spaces to the symbolic world of sanctimony shows how these lines shift and blur, ultimately changing the structure of boundaries. Another scholar, Kenney (2016), looks at contemporary Freemasonry. While there are certain parallels to the Christian faith and the Freemasons, church communities and Freemasons have separate traditions and rituals. That being said, the use of ritual that occurs within Freemasonry and Christianity in the attempts to maintain connection cannot be ignored. The struggle remains for certain groups, like the Freemasons and Christian churches, how connection is maintained and how are the rituals contributing to the boundaries between people, as well as how they are keeping insiders connected. Kenney (2016) shows just one of many examples of groups struggling with their boundaries and the changing landscapes around them. When these structures change, there is the possibility that those who once held a position guarded by the boundaries are now experiencing a lost sense of belonging. It is this changing quality of boundaries that leads us to the work of Blok, Lindstrom, & Meilvang (2019), and Abbott (1995).

These two separate works draw on similar ideas of boundaries as ever changing and under constant production. For Blok et al. (2019), their work looks at the “ecologies of boundaries” as boundaries demarcate and distinguish their own realms (p. 590). They use church

spaces as an example of a proto-jurisdiction, taking a legalist approach to the foundation of boundaries. For Blok et al. (2019), they draw on the concept of boundary work to discuss how boundaries ultimately interact with each other the same way that social actors do (Gieryn, 1986). Their work shows that boundaries cannot exist without people to interact with them, but that they also cannot exist without the presence of other boundaries to define themselves against. This is similarly shown in the work of Bibby (2006) where he discusses the challenge of leaving one's "religious family" in relation to their traditional, denominational heritage, despite the changing attitudes of Canadians towards religion as a whole (Beaman, p. 35, 2006). Like denominations discussed in Bibby (2006), the process of distinguishing and demarcating is not just a social act on a micro-sociological level, but also a structural, macro-sociological process. In Blok at al. (2019), churches have their own boundaries that they push and maintain against other structural forces. This structural challenge creates an "ecology of boundaries," as they create the conditions for distinct social performances across different social actors (Blok et al., p. 592, 2019). While Blok et al. (2019) focuses on church spaces, there are other examples of proto-jurisdictions that influence individuals, such as universities, professions, and other chosen areas of social living. Within these entities, there are diverse expressions of boundaries, each of them intersecting with one another, creating a landscape of boundary interactions that are mediated through experience, tradition, and rituals (Kenney, 2016). From Blok et al. (2019) analysis of structural boundaries and their interactions, comes Abbott (1995) as they provided an analysis that influenced their conceptualization of boundaries.

Abbott (1995) makes a bold statement that boundaries come first, and people second. What this means is that a people needs boundaries to define themselves prior to becoming a unit. This is defined by Abbott as a "self-other" boundary (p. 860, 1995). Boundaries, then, become a

tool to create "sites of differences," a space that exists or does not exist in a given boundary (Abbott, p. 862, 1995). These two additional ideas flesh out how boundaries function in various structural situations. Abbott's (1995) conceptual framework of boundaries shaped Blok et al.'s (2019) work as they build on similar, key ideas. Most importantly, boundaries demarcate and distinguish those who occupy them as well as those who do not. Boundaries indicate a "thingness;" an entity that has the capacity to bear differences and similarities. This quality has infinite possibility, as all boundaries require the infinite possibility of people and their structures. Boundaries always begin with the process of demarcation, and then evolve over time in favor or in opposition to the separation of individuals and other groups. Boundaries have a non-mutually exclusive relationship with discrimination and inclusivity; the same community that separates and removes certain people also brings together and sustains others.

From this literature, the concept of community extends beyond the colloquial shortcomings. The literature shows that community is constantly changing through a diverse array of processes that challenge and reinforce certain traditional aspects and power structures. The literature also shows that community is built upon exclusion as much as it is built upon the opportunity of inclusion. These are the two main overarching themes of the literature I consulted on community. In my search through the literature on community, I also encountered literature that spoke on the impact of community on identity.

Identity

In my search for literature on community, I ultimately came across a variety of sources that also related to identity. The connection between these two ideas could not be ignored. However, if I was to draw on this literature, I needed to consult work that would provide a glimpse into similar analyses. With the plethora of literature on the concept of identity, I focused

my search on work that dealt with religious communities and identity, as well as researcher experiences with the concept of identity. From these works, I found great insight. While not extensive, these scholars broadened my understanding of what it means to draw an identity from community.

Charmaz (2020) was one of these influential scholars. She placed stigma in an interactive and emergent lens. Instead of placing stigma as a branded quality on an individual, this interactive and processional framework of stigma is constantly reproduced and sustained. This part of an individual's identity is not stagnant; it is dependent on those around them (Goffman, 1963b). Identity is not an individual, unitary, or singular process, but a built, sustained, and negotiated process. Charmaz (2020) shows that holding a stigmatized identity is reinforced by certain structural arrangements that ignore and marginalize certain bodies, experiences, and so on and so forth. Essentially, stigma is a structural result of constructing identities. This is highlighted in her passage, that states "[b]odies exist within social structures and are imbued with meaning through experiences… and interactions" (Charmaz, p. 21, 2020). From Charmaz's (2020) work, this shows that identity is built from a structural level as much as it is an individual process.

Another work that built the concept of identity for my analysis came from Pauli (2012). Pauli looked at the process of creating illegitimacy, a distinct attribute enforced upon certain identities. In their work, they looked at the linguistic power of exclusion in church spaces. It is through structural forces that the title of illegitimacy is applied, reinforcing the structural qualities of creating identity. Pauli (2012) also shows that the church as a moral space negotiates social interactions, which then influence agency of those within. The church influences the conditions of interaction among peoples through its position as a moral space, as a powerful

social force. Altering the agency of certain people in social interactions has a profound effect on the creation of identity, especially when the challenge of agency is based on the creation of illegitimacy. Pauli (2012) shows that the elite in church spaces favour the fixed boundary of illegitimacy they are seeking to create. Engaging in a process that would position some in an elite position - and others in an inferior position - is a key part of creating illegitimacy in the identity of certain individuals. Pauli (2012) also shows that there is a class and gender intersection that marks the boundary of church elites. This intersection shows that the boundary of legitimacy is based upon other key identifying features of people, such as class and gender. This work further reinforces the structural elements of identity.

Given the structural influences on the creation of identity (Pauli, 2012; Charmaz, 2020), I now turn to the work from Javaid (2020) who reflects on the impact of compounding stigmas on an individual. In their autoethnography, Javaid (2020) discusses that their identity, which threatens an established social order, is alienated and stigmatized. Their identity becomes a "border of significance," as it creates a sense of othering and it is reinforced by lacking the symbolic and cultural capital to challenge the status quo (Javaid, p. 75, 2020). This is an excellent example of the individual struggle against the structural forces of identity. Javaid (2010) shows that bearing stigma becomes its own unique identity process, as is the performance of the individual identity as a whole; stigmas are not only an all-encompassing trait, but an ascribed status that is negotiated within certain contexts. However, stigma can also compound and further reduce the social position of an individual (Javaid, 2020). This shows that stigma is, once again, not a static position, but a position that is constantly being marginalized and oppressed, beyond the control of the individual. Javaid's (2020) concept "borders of significance" is an excellent example of the dynamic quality of identity and stigma, as it allows

for both identity and stigma to be produced and managed through an interactive framework (p. 75). The border is under constant management and is therefore constantly shifting in relation to the interactions of others.

Javaid (2020) provides an individual perspective on many of the same ideas that were discussed by Sumerau et al. (2016/2018; Sumerau & Cragun, 2018). The experiences of LGBTQ+ are one of, if not the most, highly stigmatized groups amongst Christians. Taking a glance at the literature shows that the interactions between religious groups and the marginalized often result in Christianity becoming a dominant oppressor across many different marginalized people. Within these contexts comes a difficult choice for many under these stigmatized identities – perform their role within the community and sacrifice pieces of their identity, or maintain their identity at the cost of their belonging to the community. This carries a distinct emotional toll found primarily in the active discrimination and marginalization of identities (Hochschild, 1979; Hochschild, 1983). Certain identity markers become incompatible in certain places, creating the borders to be negotiated. I connect Javaid's (2020) reflection on stigma to Casey (2018).

Casey (2018) has a similar reflective quality as Javaid (2020), as they both remark on the in/out divide within communities. This separation becomes its own stigma as well, once again on a structural level. However, Casey (2018) does provide a unique tool for looking at identity in their analysis. Casey (2018) fleshes out their work on identity by looking at the mechanisms that lead to the negotiation of stigma regarding their identities. For Casey (2018), stigmatized identity is a process that is delineated by characteristics. This becomes a mechanism that highlights and supports certain characteristics of an individual as a means to legitimize and privilege others, while disenfranchising others. Casey (2018) shows that having identity characteristics that

challenge other elevated traits need to be negotiated in order to challenge stigma. In essence, being too much of one identity means there is not enough identity in another aspect of their lives, leading to a hierarchy of identities in community. Casey (2018) highlights that there is a plethora of identifying features on and in an individual, but there is a challenge in negotiating between that which is privileged and that which is not. This is an individualistic process as it requires a reflection of certain characteristics in order to manage a potentially stigmatized position within the community. These articles show the relationship between the structural and the individual. The final piece I draw on comes from Priest & Edwards (2019) as they look at identity within a religious community and how it is managed by the congregation.

Priest & Edwards (2019) show that there is a challenge in creating a sense of collective identity across a racially diverse group of people. There is a significant challenge in connecting across the historical oppressions of others. In their analysis, Priest & Edwards (2019) show that those in power - in their case, the head pastor or clergy - can challenge or support hierarchies of identity within communities. This power-focused approach to identity-creation connects the micro and macro together, as the structural power of the institutional church is made real through the individual actions of a person in power. This is also reinforced through community rituals and performances of identity; these rituals create a sense of "us" and "them;" those who participate and those who do not (Priest & Edwards, 2019; Beaman, 2010). They also highlight that those in positions of power can alter these rituals for inclusivity, which then influences how identity is managed. The final piece of their work highlights that organizational identity becomes an individual identity characteristic, as those that engage in the community are shaped by those around them. From the organizational identity comes an individual identity, with a collective identity then becoming juxtaposed over both. From the interaction of an individual in a structural

environment comes a collective identity that reflects both the individual and the structural components (Priest & Edwards, 2019). This piece connects the structural influence that has been referenced in previous works and connects them to the highlight individualistic ideas of identity in the literature. From these works, it is clear that identity cannot be a solely individual or structural process, but that they are reflexive of one another. Identity becomes a landscape of boundaries that are navigated and negotiated through various social performances of legitimacy and opposition.

Methodology

Concepts & Contexts

My analysis was guided by two concepts: *tiny publics* (Fine, 2019) and *boundary work* (Gieryn, 1983). I sought to expand the previous work of these two theorists. While I am using qualitative methods, I am not applying a purely grounded theory approach, as I am drawing from two previously established concepts (Charmaz, 2014). However, my analysis is centred around building my themes inductively from my data, not vice versa.

I used these two concepts for the following reasons: First, tiny publics sets the stage for an analytical perspective centred around the meso-level, as my research interest is at the community level. Secondly, tiny publics provides perspective as to how meso-level analysis is vital for community study, as the community is a mediator between the macro and micro; conceptualizing society as a collection of numerous communities interacting with one another gives perspective on how my work can be expanded and narrowed to focus on distinct levels of analysis (Fine, 2014; Fine, 2019).

In addition to the theoretical foundation of tiny publics, boundary work sets the tone for my theoretical perspective on the micro level. Boundary work gives life to the social processes that separate and delineate social groups; a vital function of organized religion. While boundary work was established in an analysis of the medical field, it has room to expand into the analysis of organized religion (Gieryn, 1983). Finally, boundary work is a concept for both the individual and the institution; these boundaries intersect with one another. In my analysis, I am looking at boundaries at the individual, micro level, and the institutional, macro level, thus I require a concept that works along numerous lines. Combining these two concepts, I am able to analyze my research community with a solid theoretical foundation.

Gary Fine (2019) builds the concept of tiny publics from his work on meso-level analysis. In his work, he shows that all groups depend on meaning. This is similar to Anderson's concept of the imagined community, which has similarities to Fine's work. but focuses on the creation of meaning within nationalism (2006). Fine's focus on the meso-level gives it the edge for my analysis. Thus, the creation of meaning is an action that creates dialogue - either politically, culturally, or otherwise - between other distinct communities. He draws upon Goffman's interaction ritual (Goffman, 1982) to show how community dialogue creates meaning for communities. This concept alone provides a unique tool for understanding community relations, but there is a distinct limitation to using this concept in my analysis. Tiny publics is a concept that analyzes political action in communities. Politics, in this context, includes everything from the struggle against domination and subjugation to the mobilization of activism. My community has a distinct political perspective, to reduce my analysis to the political realm denies the presence of other processes of meaning. While everything may be political, it is useful for my analysis to extend beyond politics into the realm of culture and social capital. Thus, I bolster this concept with the hinge, an earlier concept from Fine that gives tiny publics more substance (Fine, 2014).

The hinge is the key concept for what connects the separation between micro and macro sociology in my analyses. Fine discusses six components of group cultures, or idiocultures, and how these extend into an analysis of society (2014). The themes are as follows: First, group culture acts as a commitment device; second, social capital and relations are tools for social opportunities; third, shared spaces are a tiny public sphere; fourth, social performances guide community action; fifth, collective past' shape collective futures; sixth, different forms of social control establish interactional consistency (Fine, p. 5, 2014). I will apply these, in addition to the

concept of tiny publics, to explore the following questions in my research: How does my church community build culture? How is social capital used in shared spaces? How does our collective past shape our future? How does social control impact social performance?

In my research, I am looking for the ways in which my participants build my church community. There are important questions to consider: Is my church culture built by the powerful members or families in the congregation? Is my church culture built by encounters with outside communities and other church communities that then transmit values across denominational affiliations? Is my church community based upon isolationist ideals, of preserving traditions and identity? As a denomination based upon militaristic orders and hierarchy, certain cultural elements exist across different church communities.

One major cultural element of my church community is that our officially ordained clergy bear military titles. These titles are often based upon years of service; earliest years of service in clergy are titled Lieutenants, between commissioning - first official appointment as clergy - to five years. After five years of service, there is a title change to Captain, which then changes to Major after fifteen years of service. Other titles bear symbolic significance - our head clergy is called the General. Among these various different titles are also diverse meanings associated with unique roles and responsibilities within the leadership position. There are also special titles for certain leadership positions that do not have pastoral responsibility, such as Area Commander, Divisional Commander, Territorial Commander and so on. These titles bring symbolic power into the church community they attend, as the experiential condition of each title demarcates different experiential passages, especially if these clergy have served other bureaucratic roles in the denomination that weren't specifically pastoral roles. The changing titles is an example of how my church community builds its culture in response to differing

clergy over specific time frames. Given the changing nature of our clergy, the church culture has been composed of reactionary evolutions as each clergy leaves the community in different positions, for better or worse. The unique characteristics of my denomination emphasize the necessity to create an analysis that incorporates my church community as an active social force in my participant's experience within the community; the culture is pervasive, my participants are not just interacting with a church building, but a built environment infused with meaning.

Another cultural element of my church community is that the clergy wear a stylized military uniform. Other church patrons can also wear this if they perform a certain social ritual of "soldiership," an equivalent to the process of baptism and confirmation in other Christian denominations. This social ritual endows each participant with a distinct social capital in the church community that previously granted access to distinct groups and positions of privilege. The uniform is an invested representation of my denomination, as it changes depending on the position and privilege of community members, regional denominational hierarchies, and bureaucratic power structures. This blurred line between official clergy and church patron both symbolically extends the power of the appointed clergy and reduces the agency of uniformed and non-uniformed church patrons. The generalizing nature of the uniform invests power to those who are willing to conform to the social performance of the community. This ability to conform grants social capital to distinct individuals, which is then transmitted over generations through familial affiliation to the church community. Understanding this process will illuminate how my participants utilize their social capital to exercise power in the church community, or the struggle my participants experience when they lack the same social capital as those in uniform. The bureaucratic, structural constraints of my denomination frequently attempt to confine the process of meaning making to their own ideologies on the separation between the sacred and the profane.

This restriction, however, creates the conditions for a plurality of divergent meaning making from the expected and regimented meanings reinforced throughout the bureaucratic landscape. Over time, however, these meanings evolve throughout the many generations that exist in the church today.

My church community has roots in St. John's that can be traced back over 120 years, starting in 1885 (St. John's Temple, 2021). The international denomination of the Salvation Army started in 1865 by William Booth, a British Methodist minister, making Newfoundland one of its earliest expansions (Duignan, 2021). The Salvation Army, as a denomination, follows similar evangelical traditions as other Methodist churches, with a distinct focus on social outreach, with the original intention of feeding and housing the poor (Duignan, 2021; Davies, 2021). The Salvation Army retains most of the Methodist traditions to this day, operating on an international scale in more than one hundred countries (Duignan, 2021). The Salvation Army operates under a militaristic tradition, as stated earlier, supported by The Articles of War — or Soldier's Covenant — a significant and symbolic document that highlights the core tenants of behavior as a Salvationist, heavily influenced by the original Methodist denomination of the founding family, the Booths (Duignan, 2021). The Articles of War are informed by The Eleven Articles of Faith, which clarify the belief structure of the denomination as a whole (Peterborough Salvation Army, 2021).

Throughout our history, our church community has had three different locations in the city of St. John's, first starting in the downtown core on New Gower Street, subsequently moving in the 1940s to Springdale Street, and eventually moving to the current location of the church in the 1980s on Torbay Road. My family alone can trace five generations of church membership. The church has had profound impacts on the transmission of values and identity

formation across generations. This evangelical history of my church influences how my church community creates connection to the larger groups, or the lack thereof due to the change in location in the past forty years into a more residential area.

The final exploratory question I will be looking at in relation to the concepts of the tiny public and the hinge focuses on how social control influences social performance. As it is stated above, my denomination operates under a militaristic, evangelical perspective of church. This foundational part of my church sets a precedent for social control in my community. As an evangelical, militaristic denomination, there are clear social expectations for community members in some form, which are also dependent on the community members themselves and the different commitment devices they have employed like the uniform or volunteer initiatives (Fine, 2014). This clearly illustrates a level of social control exercised by the community in social performances. My research will focus on the mechanics of social control and how it is reproduced across the various generations. I am curious as to whether or not I will encounter generational differences amongst my participants as to how they respond to questions on community and social control. As I conduct my research, I am conscious of these questions and how they influence my data collection. Using the concepts of the hinge and tiny publics allows me to flesh out my analysis to show how my church community builds culture, wields social capital, and how it influences the generation of meaning across generations. Combining these questions with an analysis of boundary work creates the conditions for a flourishing analysis of my community.

Complimenting the hinge and tiny publics with boundary work solidifies my analysis in the mechanical nature of the social world. Boundaries give definition to the amorphous phenomenon of community. Boundaries reflect how power has been used to maintain the

position of certain individuals or groups, as well as which individuals or groups have been removed or guarded against in the community. It is vitally important to my research that I understand how boundary work can be performed in my community, in what ways it can be performed, how it can be performed, and how it differs from the original definition of the concept.

My research must take into account the ways my church culture is impacting the boundaries that are being created, negotiated, and reproduced. These include various elements of the Christian religion as a whole, like our distinct ideology, our sacramental traditions, as well as our scriptures. For our church community as a distinct unit, certain cultural elements absolutely function as a boundary; the uniform is a primary example. Aside from this previously mentioned construct, our evangelical traditions can certainly act as a boundary for some people. The devastating relationship between evangelical Christianity and colonialism cannot be ignored or reduced. These two foundational examples of boundaries certainly set a tone for how I am searching for the presence of boundaries and boundary work in my church culture. These two examples provide a preliminary glimpse into the realm of boundaries and culture, but they are in no means an exhaustive list. These potential boundaries merely indicate where my research starts.

Finally, and most importantly, my research is highly focused on how boundaries are influencing my participants experience in the community as a whole. Extending beyond these preliminary examples is vital for my research, but it also requires more reflective qualities to consider. First, in my analysis of boundaries in my community, I need to mould my analysis based upon my participant's discussion, not the previously established conceptual definition. This allows my analysis to take on a grounded, inductive approach, creating a more generative

expression of boundaries, rather than a deductive analysis that positions my participant' experience against a conceptual framework. Secondly, my analysis must have room for my participants to define boundaries in their own terms. This means that my analysis is not as dependent on the established conceptual framework, but on the iterative, generative process of my interviews. Holding space for the unexpected character of boundaries will give life to the concept of boundary work more than making a jigsaw puzzle of discrete instances where my participants matched the established conceptual definition. Finally, in my analysis of boundaries in my church community, I must hold space for my participant's place in the community and how that is intricately tied to their understanding of boundaries. My analysis of boundaries cannot exist without an analysis of my participant' sense of place in my community. Boundaries and barriers are entirely capable of existing within the symbolic world, but a sense of place needs to have boundaries and barriers in the physical realm. These are three key ideas I must consider when encountering boundaries or barriers in my analysis, in any context.

In this section, I have introduced the conceptual framework I am drawing from. With the concepts of tiny publics, the hinge, and boundary work, I will be creating an analysis of my church community that accounts for cultural influence and social performance. I use the concept of tiny publics and the hinge to position my analysis at a meso-level, allowing for a conversation between the individual and the community, much like the larger metaphor of society as a collection of connecting communities (Fine, 2014; Fine, 2019). I am establishing a connection between the individual, agentic elements and the structural, constraining elements of my church community through meso-level analysis. The concepts of tiny publics and the hinge show the necessity of all groups depending on each other in the process of meaning and belonging together; these processes are in continual dialogue with one another (Fine, 2014; Fine, 2019).

This process connects to the accompanying conceptual framework of boundary work that seeks to solve the "problem of demarcation" (Gieryn, 1983, p. 781). Boundary work provides a needed aid to my conceptual framework, as the hinge and tiny publics as a concept provide a theoretical perspective. Boundary work provides an action-oriented quality as to how meaning and relationships are established in my analysis. I am using boundary work to critique my church culture and social performances in my church community - vital pieces to analyze in the process of creating meaning, highlighted in the work of Fine (2014; 2019). Finally, I have established three guiding principles for my analysis: First, I will expand the concept of boundary work to look at religious boundaries. I am looking for my participants to engage with the language of boundaries and barriers, rather than my participants engaging with an established definition. Secondly, my participants will have the ability to define boundaries and barriers on their own terms, without a definitive expectation. This will create data that is generative and iterative, rather than generalizable. Taking this approach will breathe life into the conceptual framework more so than a comparison of discrete events where my participants matched the established conceptual boundary. Finally, my analysis will hold space for my participants to engage in a conversation of place and belonging, as my community cannot exist without boundaries and barriers that are centred on place and belonging. This is the conceptual foundation of my analysis, which leads into a conversation on the methodological foundations of my research.

The Photo Voice: Refining Silver

For my analysis, I performed 16 semi-structured interviews. My interview guide consisted of eight guiding questions, which I then probed through follow up questions (Appendix I). The interview guide used guiding themes related to individual experience in the church, participant perception on the value of church, as well as preliminary questions regarding their

sense of belonging (Appendix I). My participants were primarily recruited through direct approach, due to a lack of responsiveness from community members contacted by email. Furthermore, I had no potential participants decline. During my interviews, I employed the photo voice technique (Wang & Burris, 1994), a form of visual methodology, which required my participants to bring chosen visual representations of a guiding question (i.e. what is your relationship to the church) prior to the interview (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004; van den Hoonard, 2019). I applied this methodology in 13 of my 16 interviews; three participants did not provide visuals. In my research, my use of photo voice differed from the original expression of the methodology. First, I did not provide my participants with a camera to take photos of their community. Secondly, my participants were not required to provide photographic visuals. Third, I asked my participants to refrain from photographs that included individuals that did not consent to the research process - this was the only limitation I placed on my participants in terms of the visuals they could choose. Finally, my participants did not need to provide me with copies of their chosen visuals, as I positioned my photovoice methodology as a vehicle for conversation, emphasizing my participant's process of meaning making over the actual visual itself (Budig et al., 2018).

These three differences were founded upon attempts to reduce some of the criticisms that visual sociology encounters (Karlsson, 2007 in De Lange & Stuart, 2007). In my research, I chose to not provide my participants with cameras for a few reasons: First, and primarily, I lacked the funding to provide all my participants with a camera. Secondly, I found that the technological aspects of my participants engaging with photography could not adequately engage the scope of visual representation. Photography is certainly an excellent medium for visual analysis, but allowing my participants to engage with visuals on their own terms allowed for a

deeper analysis of how my participants created meaning within the community with less emphasis on the visual components themselves (Prinsloo, 2007 in De Lange & Stuart, 2007). Finally, given the nature of my community being religious, I found that restricting them to photos that they would take would limit them from drawing on the wealth of visual content that has religious or spiritual significance in their lives (Williams & Whitehouse, 2015).

The second adaptation to the photo voice methodology I employed is that my participants were not confined to some form of photography. My participants were able to draw on any form of visual medium, such as art or traditional religious iconography; I also expected my participants to draw on culturally specific "memes" that elaborated on certain norms or traditions that have been popularized in Christian culture. I made this change for the following reasons: First, photography may not be a comfortable visual medium for my participants to engage in, as it may create an atmosphere of aesthetic criticism that moves away from an analysis of meaning making for my participants (Karlsson, 2007; Harper, 2002). Secondly, moving away from the constraints of photography expands my participant' experience with visual aspects of their community. This shift away from photography allows my participant to engage with various other visual elements, bringing a physical aspect of visuals into the methodology. Furthermore, the constraint of photography does not provide a kinesthetic appreciation in community making, limiting the representation of social powers to strictly visible phenomenon (Pauwels, 2012; Prinsloo, 2007). I expected my participants to provide examples of personal expressions of their faith, like their bibles, or sentimental trinkets. These objects, while not a strictly visual item, carry a distinct visual presence to my research; instead of my participants bringing photography, they could bring physical items that bear visible uniqueness, as well as personal histories and

social experiences that have shaped their experience with the community (Wang & Burris, 1994; Wang & Burris, 1997).

The final divergence I made from the original methodology was that I did not require my participants to provide me with copies of their chosen visuals. I emphasized that the visuals are a vehicle for conversation, not analysis. I made this change for a few key reasons: First, the nature of virtual research was already a technological struggle for some of my participants, which I did not wish to increase. Furthermore, one major criticism I found in the literature related to the lack of reliability and validity in visual research generalizing the experience of a community (Karlsson, 2007; Galvaan, 2007; Evans-Agnew & Rosenberg, 2016; Williams & Whitestone, 2014; Harper, 2002). Thus, for my research I emphasized that my participant's discussion and conversation with me, as a researcher, was the important part of the interview, not the chosen visuals. This removed my participant from any expectation of judgment on their visuals and placed them alongside the research process, "breaking frames" of researcher and participant (Harper, 2002). This allowed my participant to engage my methodology as a seemingly "co-researcher" in the interview as they displayed their visuals and how they hold meaning for them, which was the key piece of my analysis (Harper, 2002; Galvaan, 2007). This emphasis on the meaning of the visual allowed my participant to present their community - and subsequently my community - in new ways to both themselves and me as a researcher (Pauwels, 2012). These changes I made to the original methodology of the photo voice were my own attempt as a researcher to address some of the issues presented in the literature (Karlsson, 2007; Galvaan, 2007; Evans-Agnew & Rosenberg, 2016; Williams & Whitestone, 2014; Harper, 2002). Photo voice provides an opportunity for my participants to engage with my research and methodology on a more egalitarian basis, challenging some of the established norms between researcher and

participant (Harper, 2002). Photo voice, as a methodology, carries numerous strengths in emphasizing the importance of the participant.

There are two key strengths to the photovoice methodology that I highlight in my research. First and foremost, photo voice brings to life the process of creating meaning (Harper, 2002; Evans-Agnew & Rosenberg, 2016; Williams & Whitestone, 2014). Secondly, visual analysis has a highly adaptive potential as a methodology, but it has three main themes: Enabling a reflection of community strengths and concerns of the community, promoting a critical dialogue within the community, and influencing potential policy (Wang & Burris, 1994; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang & Burris, 2003).

Photo voice was originally developed for health research, but it has a promising future in the study of religion (Wang & Burris, 1994; Williams & Whitestone, 2014). In its original function, photo voice provided participants with an opportunity to highlight important features of their everyday lives through visual portrayal. This active participation allowed for a greater revealing of meaning in the lives of the participants. Thus, this was a major strength for my research, as it allowed my participants to express their community in new and alternative ways. Being an insider to the community allowed me to have access to the norms and traditions, but having my participants express the community in new and unfamiliar ways allowed me to analyze with a new perspective. The perspective from my participants made the community that I am familiar with strange and distant from what I had known, ultimately strengthening my analysis.

The second key strength of the photovoice methodology is based on its ability to facilitate knowledge production (Wang & Burris, 1997). The three main objectives of the photovoice are highlighted throughout its use in health research: Enable the recording and reflecting of

community strengths and concerns from its members, promote a critical dialogue between community members, and create conversation between community members and its policymakers (Wang & Burris, 1994; Wang & Burris, 1997). These three main objectives are fundamentally important to me as a researcher, as well as a community member. Photo voice methodology provides a framework for my research to extend beyond the world of academia, into the realm of my community and future communities of research. Photo voice is an avenue by which my participants can express the strengths of the community through their positive experiences, or their concerns about the weaknesses of their community, even their concerns about preserving the strengths. This methodology takes this conversation between myself and my participant and extends it into the community itself, thus creating the conditions for community members to engage in a critical dialogue of what is meaningful to them and how that is also a community process. Finally, these two possibilities can ultimately lead to policy change in the community by addressing potential systemic issues or creating new opportunities for future community direction. Photo voice draws from the theoretical perspectives of critical consciousness and feminism to create a methodology that values the perspective of the participant as a means of affecting change in communities (Wang & Burris, 1994; Wang & Burris, 1997). Overall, these strengths emphasize the inclusivity of the participant in the research process, leading to a richer analysis of the meaning and values of community members.

Knowing Where I Sit: My Position In My Research

As a qualitative researcher, I need to be aware of my own position in my research. I have three distinct features to my position. First off, I need to be aware of my insider status for my research and how that impacts my data collection. As an insider, I have had access to the internal functioning of my community prior to my position as a researcher, thus blurring the lines of community member and researcher. Secondly, I need to consider my relationship to my participants outside of my research. Across my participants, I have held numerous roles in their lives; I have grieved with them, celebrated with them, even nurtured and been nurtured by my participants. Finally, I need to be keenly aware of my own biases.

Taking inventory of my position in the community, I must be aware of my insider status. This has distinct differences from an outsider status as a researcher (Bikos, 2018). First, my participants have an in-depth knowledge of who I am as a person. They know my family, my relationships, my friendships, these important, defining features of how I am as a person, outside of my position as a researcher. Thus, I have a compromising position - I must balance my position and integrity as a researcher against my position in the community. There are certainly benefits to my position, as I already carry an in-depth knowledge of most, if not all, norms and behaviours in my church community. My insider status also carries a distinctly powerful influence on me, as it is also intricately linked to my own personal beliefs and faith.

As a researcher, when I speak about my church community, it is not a mere level of analysis; it is not some amorphous other by which I compare literature, theory, and analytical reasoning against, it is my home. My church community has given me relationships that have spanned across generations, as many of my closest friends are beginning their families. My church community has been a blessing through times of mourning for my immediate family, as I

have witnessed true compassion for neighbours. Thus, when I speak about my church community, it is not an empty vessel, it is filled with my own personal relationships that shape who I am as an individual. Furthermore, my church community was the earliest ideological influence on me.

My own personal beliefs and ideologies have been shaped by my community, both in the ways they expected and others that were unintended. My personal belief shapes my research, as I believe in allyship to the marginalized, to the oppressed, as one of my key tenents of my faith; I cannot separate my research from my personal desire to hold the powerful accountable, to speak truth to the power of my church. As well, my personal faith shapes my interactions with my participants, as my participants may differ on certain perspectives to myself; navigating these situations where my participants may be holding oppressive beliefs is a definite challenge. The important intersection of my faith and my position as a researcher lies in treating my participants with equity and compassion, despite any personal conflicts or challenges to my own perspectives. My insider status brings both blessings and curses in my work. It provides me with an opportunity to extend my participants beyond a numerical marking and pseudonym in my research to a more humanized, known entity. As a researcher, when I speak of my participants, I am not speaking of just my interview with them, but of the times that I have broken bread with them, shared a heavy burden with them, celebrated their life milestones with them, or been nurtured by them. For some researchers, they are able to leave their research sites and their data at an arm's length, but I am unable to do so (van den Scott, 2018). My field site is also my home. I do not have the same choice as other researchers to leave the field and return to where they belong, because my research is also intertwined with how I belong to my community.

For many of my participants, I have shared in their grief. For some, this grief has become my own. This beautifully cursed fact of community living transcends my research. In my research, I may have to grieve my participants harmful experiences that they carry in their own relationship to my community; I may have to grieve my participants current position in the community. As a community member, I may not know the complexity of other lives in my community. This could bring me to question my own position in the community, or it may bring my own actions in my community into question. The complexities of my own emotional boundaries may also impact my research (Kleinknecht, 2018; Müller, 2018). Navigating my position as researcher and community member is primarily a navigation of my participant' emotions, as well as mine. Creating a relationship between my participant and myself that honors their experience - and thus their data - is a vital piece of understanding my positionality. As a researcher, I must be open to the possibility that my participants may not be willing to discuss certain questions, topics, or experiences. It will be just as important for my research to acknowledge the empty spaces as much as the in-depth conversations. While I may not be taking a purely grounded approach as I've stated earlier, applying the standards set out in Charmaz (2014) provides me with a framework that allows me to bolster my analysis with a systematic approach. Engaging my data throughout the collection phase addresses the majority of concerns regarding dishonesty, in addition to participant selection based on the generation of theory, not representation.

Secondly, my position as a researcher must have room to also celebrate my participants. This is the opposite side of the same coin in grieving with my participants. As I have room for my participants to grieve, to express their harms, to express their pain and frustration, I must also have room for my participants to cherish my community, to praise my community, to express joy

and love for my community. Additionally, this space in my research compliments the previous section as it creates an opportunity to celebrate my participant' experiences, instead of grieve them. Negotiating the space where my participants can both mourn and grieve is a major priority for my research; I cannot prioritize the importance of one experience over the other. Balancing the opportunities of grief and celebration for my participants requires me to probe and follow-up with experiences of joy as well as grief and sorrow. While it may not have the same emotional weight as grief, celebrating my participant and their stories is still emotional work that I am undertaking as a researcher.

Just as I pay respect to my participant's rejection, I am also paying respect to the breadth of emotion my participants may feel in my research. I provide these two examples as mere bookends to the possible emotional spectrum that I will encounter in my research. Celebrating and grieving with my participants is just one example of holding space for my participant's emotions, as my work may create the conditions for anger as well as peace, or the conditions of pride as well as shame. The process of creating trust and rapport with my participants started long before I recorded my interviews for my research. For my position, trust and rapport have been built over the years through living in community. The blurred lines between researcher and community member are accentuated through my relationship to my participants, highlighted by the emotional space that my research holds for them. This is exemplified in the duality between my relationship to my participant's grief as well as their joy. As a researcher, I must create an environment where my participants can express their emotions adequately by providing them the space to grieve and rejoice, as well as any other emotional process they may require. However, as a fellow community member, I am drawn into this process with my participant, ultimately blurring the line of researcher while also enriching my data.

Through these qualities of my relationships in my position, my research will be impacted by the different aspects of community living. Having experienced grief with my participants leads me toward an understanding of the struggle that is living in community and the harms that can cause. Creating a research opportunity that respects my participant's boundaries - and how that in itself is data - is a fundamental part of my data collection. On the other side, I have experienced joy and pride for my community through my relationships to my participants. This experience transcends into my research by illuminating how my data may not show exactly what I expect my community to look like. Providing a space for my participant to feel a breadth of emotion will enrich my data beyond an analysis of my community's flaws and damages. The goal remains the same, throughout all of my work: To provide a research environment that is equitable to all my participants. The final piece of my researcher position that needs to be addressed is my own biases in my research, as an insider.

The Black Sheep's Wool: Addressing My Biases

As a researcher, I know the importance of recognizing biases. This recognition is further reinforced by my insider status. Prior to my analysis, I highlight two potential biases for my research: First, my research may be biased towards a pursuit of social justice, which may compromise the data as to misrepresent the harm of my community. Secondly, my research may be biased in a pursuit of hope. My research may be influenced by my own personal position to the extent that I may struggle with presenting an interpretation of my community that honours the experience of my participants, as well as my community as a whole. Prior to my analysis, I have also developed an analytical framework that will address these biases. First, I must maintain a perspective of social justice not as retributive, but as restorative. Secondly, I must maintain a perspective of seeking knowledge that is answered through the process of collecting my data.

My first bias lies in relation to my position as an insider, having witnessed the pain a religious community can cause. My struggle has been respecting the process of data collection while allowing these injustices to emerge naturally over the course of my research. I cannot enter my research with the intention of revealing the injustices my church has caused without allowing these instances to emerge naturally through the interview process. While I may know of instances where my church community has acted unjustly and how that impacted my life, I cannot place that observation onto my participant's experience. It is important for my work to maintain a lens of social justice as to extend my work beyond the ivory tower of academia (Ratkovic & Sethi, 2018), but this cannot be done by compromising the process of qualitative research that requires me to engage with my participants and what their experiences are. My main defense against this bias is positioning social justice as restorative, not retributive. As a researcher, it will not be my position to assign blame or judge the accused through my participant; instead, my research will remain a space where my participants can speak openly about their struggles to a member of the community that also plays a role as researcher. I will be positioning myself against my bias by approaching my search for justice in a restorative, processional perspective.

My second bias is the opposite perspective of seeking out social justice for my community; I have a bias towards presenting my community in a hopeful, optimistic perspective. This once again relates to my position in my church, as I do not wish for my community to emerge as a violent, vindictive, and hateful group. As a human, that is my fear; as a researcher, my fear is that I compromise my research by collecting data that reduces my community to a perspective of blind optimism and naivete. As I stated above, I know the harm my community can cause, and as a member of the community and researcher, my bias lies in hoping that my

data doesn't reflect more harm than good. This bias is a reflection of myself as a member of the community first, and researcher second, whereas I previously discussed bias in the inverse. Searching for a retributive social justice is my bias as a researcher first, community member second. For my research, I will be navigating this bias by allowing my participants to build the community on their terms, similar to the previous discussion. Instead of building the data collection by my own perspective and what I hope my community is, I will build the data collection around my participant's experiences. Maintaining perspective of myself as both a researcher and community member is my goal in reducing bias in my work, as these two biases occur when I lose balance between my two roles.

In my position as researcher, I need to be keenly aware of who I am as a person in relation to my research. As such, I have reflected on three major aspects of my positionality: First, in this research, I am an insider to the community I will be analyzing. Thus, my approach cannot be a purely inductive, grounded approach, as I have participated in the same events and rituals as my participants, having created my own meaning and value in relation to their experiences as well. My insider status is ultimately a blessing and a curse as it prevents me from entering the community with a fresh analytical perspective, but it also allows me to transgress social barriers far more easily than an outsider. Secondly, as an insider to my analytical community, I have developed relationships with most of my participants prior to my research, some relationships having a very close connection to who I am as a person and others that have shaped my growth indirectly. When I am speaking about my participants, I cannot separate myself from my thoughts, memories, and experiences I have shared with them prior to my research. When they speak of their grief, some of them also speak of my grief as well; when they speak of their joy, some of them also speak of my joy. This interconnectedness between myself

and a researcher of the community allows me to enrich my data with an experience that mirrors my participants. Finally, my insider position also carries distinct biases that needed to be addressed prior to my data collection. As a member of the community, two major biases are navigated in my research: my search for social justice and my search for hope. These two biases are interconnected with my perspective as a researcher and member of the community. Searching for social justice is a bias that arises when I lose perspective of myself as a member of the community in relation to my research; knowing the harms that my community has caused could influence my data collection to highlight these experiences without honoring the breadth of experience my participants hold. Secondly, my search for hope arises when I lose perspective of myself as a researcher. Instead of knowing the harms of my community, I also know the great joy my community brings. To navigate this bias, it requires balance, as does the former. In my research, honoring myself as both researcher and community member will lead me to respecting the experience of my participant in a more holistic way than separating my roles from the community and from my research. My goal is to ultimately trust the process of qualitative research in illuminating how my own experience influences my work (van den Hoonard, 2019).

The Great Unknown: Research During The Covid-19 Pandemic

I conducted all of my research during the Covid-19 Pandemic. In fact, I only spent one entire semester on campus for my master's degree. I remember telling a nervous colleague in my cohort of graduate students that I doubted the pandemic would reach my small island home. Once it arrived in my home, it took little time to experience the fear and uncertainty of a global pandemic in full force. This monumental shift has had drastic effects on how I conducted my research. The pandemic has made two major changes to my research: First, my research methodology shifted from a primarily in-person research method to an entirely virtual, distanced

method. This had profound effects on my participant's ability to engage with my research. Secondly, the pandemic had major impacts on the accessibility of my research, both good and bad.

Obviously, the pandemic has forced society to adjust to new norms, none more so evident to me than the norms of research. There are key differences between physical and virtual research. First and foremost, this fundamentally changed how my participants began interacting with my research, through the consent process. While I had originally intended to take written consent, with the option of verbal consent, I quickly shifted my consent procedure to account for the varying levels of technological literacy that my participants held. Seeing as I would primarily be researching a community with an older average age, the shift in my anticipated consent procedure was a minor, yet produced a noticeable change in my research. The intended procedure of providing physical copies of my consent and research description to my participant would provide them an opportunity to actively engage with the consent form while I was present with them to answer any questions, while the virtual procedure required an earlier notice for my participant to read the forms prior to the interview, removing that in-person opportunity to ask questions. My virtual research still made space for my participant to ask questions relating to the consent form prior to the interview started, but that small difference certainly had an impact. While I did not actively exclude certain community members from participating in my research, there was certainly a barrier I needed to navigate in the early stages of my research that impacted community members in the recruitment process, as that was also conducted virtually through a community email. This base requirement of virtual research already separated certain members of my community who didn't have access to email, or the technological literacy to get in touch

with me via email, let alone conduct a virtual interview or review the virtual document prior to the interview.

Secondly, the virtual aspect of my research shifted how my participants fundamentally engaged with my methodology. Using the photo voice in my interviews required my participants to find chosen visual representations of their experiences, and with the shift towards virtual research, this posed challenges for both my participants and for myself. For my participants, virtual research confined their ability to engage with the methodology. In physical, in-person research, my participants had an opportunity to provide me with distinct visual examples of their experiences that may have been lost in virtual research. As an example, some of my participants engaged with the methodology in unique ways by providing visual descriptions of their experiences (i.e. describing visual metaphors, like an arrangement of chairs facing inwards), not necessarily the same as a visual medium such as artwork or photography. This unique response from my participant could have emerged more frequently if I had the opportunity to meet with my participants in-person. The in-person, physical research opportunities provide an opportunity as a researcher to engage on a deeper level with my participant, and I may have been able to experience their material on a more immediate, personal level than the virtual environment allowed.

From the researcher's perspective, the virtual medium had an impact on my analysis, as many of my participants did not feel comfortable providing me with copies of their visuals. While I cannot know for certain whether this would have changed in the physical realm, my participants having hesitancy in providing me with a sample of their chosen visuals was still a result of the virtual medium. Additionally, the virtual environment was certainly a barrier in connecting with my participants on a deeper, empathetic level. For some participants, they

struggled with expressing their emotions over a distanced medium. As a researcher, I felt as though I wasn't able to support my participants adequately over the virtual interview if they were emotional, as I felt removed from their experience. This barrier was one I had to navigate; allowing my participants to take the appropriate time they needed to, and probing their experiences to examine the "how" of their emotions instead of why. These two strategies served me well in crossing the virtual barrier. Aside from the emotional separation of virtual research, the physical separation between myself and my participants was also difficult. The inability to step into a familiar place where it was only myself, my participant, and my research was lost in virtual research, as I conducted most of my interviews from my home, and my participants joined in whatever spaces they had access too. On a personal level, this took a toll as my home lost its separation from my work; for my participants, it was a struggle to navigate their own ability to access my research, as it required much more on their end than normal in-person research. Virtual research carried with it an unknown, unexpected territory that I had to navigate as a researcher which brought many challenges, but thankfully, it also brought many treasures as well.

Where the consent process shifted from a written recording with the option of a verbal declaration of consent, this also opened up the possibility for the consent process to become conversational prior to the interview. As a researcher, I could provide them with the form prior to the meeting and allow them to read beforehand and bring their questions to me so that I could answer them immediately, and then discuss other aspects of the consent process. While I echoed throughout the interview that they could revoke consent at any time, it was also an opportunity to speak conversationally about the consent process that involved data, methodology, confidentiality, and anonymity, instead of reading through the form and having a question period

afterwards. This shift provided me with the conditions to reinforce the constant quality of consent in my research, which can be missed in written forms of consent.

Secondly, the virtual aspect did yield some interesting results, from the perspective of the researcher and how my participants engaged with my methodology. As a researcher, the virtual medium allowed me to memo my interviews in a much more efficient manner than in person. In addition to that, virtual research gave me more power to establish the conditions of my interview to favour a more private, accessible environment for my participants. From the perspective of a researcher, I also saw my participants engage my methodology in unique and adaptive ways, as there was some divergence between participants in how they engaged with my methodology. In virtual research, some of my participants chose not to provide visual mediums like photography or artwork, but physical objects they could show me, objects they may not have taken from their home or work. While I did remark on how this could have been explored more by an in-person methodology, virtual research still facilitated my participants' ability to choose physical objects that they could keep to themselves but also show through the visual medium of distanced interviews. Combining these aspects with the limitations of virtual research from my perspective as a researcher, it shows how the pandemic ultimately disrupted traditional norms and standards for research while also allowing for new opportunities and avenues for future research to emerge. The limitations of the pandemic reveal that within every restraint there is an infinite possibility to adapt. Additionally, the pandemic reveals how accessible virtual research can be.

Through the research process, certain benefits and concerns of accessibility were made apparent: First, virtual research allowed my research to fit time restraints much more easily than in-person research. This benefitted both my participants and myself as a researcher, as it allowed my interviewees to create their own space for the research, as it was not infringed by a third-

party location and the associated time constraints. The ability to navigate my participant' time was made easier through the virtual environment, but the lack of connection in the physical realm was a disadvantage as discussed earlier. Secondly, virtual research allowed my participants to maintain whatever distance they preferred between themselves and my research. This meant that my participants could participate in their homes, in their offices, in whatever space they desired and engaged with my research appropriately. There was no expectation that my participants engaged my research in a distinct location; as long as they felt comfortable and secure in their location. I performed interviews with my participants in numerous different locations while I maintained my own location consistently. These were two apparent advantages to virtual research, but there were also two major drawbacks to virtual research.

First and foremost, virtual research has a classist restraint. There are major conditions that my participants need to meet before they can participate in virtual research; the ability to access the internet, the ability to afford a computer and or some means to access the virtual program, as well as the ability to create the required time, space, and privacy to engage in research, all of these are major structural challenges that arise in virtual research. These conditions were immediately excluding members of my community from participating in my research. Secondly, and relatedly, virtual research has a major literacy and ableist restraint. As a researcher, I was confined to virtual mediums that did not offer adequate support for potential participants that had hearing impairments, even visual impairments. In addition to this, my participants needed a level of technological literacy that had generational impacts. Many members of my community had not used virtual communications extensively prior to the pandemic, and the ability to navigate this medium was a definite technological barrier. Furthermore, my recruitment process was confined to a mass email through the community,

which still did not cover all members as many did not have their own individual contact information. This technological barrier absolutely impacted which community members were able to participate in my research. As it is shown, there are distinct drawbacks to virtual research that should absolutely be recognized, but the benefits of virtual research are present and they should also be acknowledged. A combination of virtual and in-person meetings would create a flourishing data collection process.

Despite the limitations of virtual research, I was still able to conduct a research project similar to what I originally had in mind when I began my degree. This would not have been possible without participants who braved the unknown waters of virtual research alongside me. My participants ranged in ages from early-twenties to mid-sixties, with various years of membership to my church. Some of my participants have been members for only a few years while others have been attending the church for decades. I also had a variety of professions represented in my work, ranging from unemployed students to retirees. I also had the opportunity to interview pastors that did not actively lead the congregation, but had an insider perspective on the internal functioning of the denomination on a bureaucratic level. I did not ask my participants to provide me with identifiable characteristics, given the relatively small number of people in the church community, like gender, sex, or marital status. Finally, my participants had interviews ranging from thirty minutes to ninety minutes, not including the precursor conversation involving the consent procedures, explanation of my project, and research policies. I am forever grateful to my participants in this project – Deborah, Simon, Martha, Matthew, Mary, Jerusalem, Elizabeth, Galilee, Babylon, Herod, Esther, Lazarus, Delilah, Saul, Theresa, and Sarah - as they have provided me with a foundation to begin a lifelong pursuit of knowledge in academia.

Analysis

Community: They Shall Come From The East, and Not Be Welcome

I remember when my church started broadcasting the weekly Sunday services on the community Facebook page. At that point, I still believed that I would be back in my church building in only a few months. As the weeks faded into months, I could not distinguish where the outreach ended and the barrier began. While it provided hundreds of my church family with an opportunity to maintain some sense of normalcy and routine, there were other members of our congregation who were slowly left by the wayside. Our community is defined by the relationships and actions to maintain, or separate individuals from, belonging. My participants remarked upon this phenomenon in many different examples. For some, community was consistent and a powerful force for good and positive interactions throughout their life. For others, it was the main source of doubt and grief in their life. The contrast highlights the incredible power of relationships in creating a sense of belonging within communities. My church community consistently maintains barriers between people, and the passage between such barriers is a distinct process that serves as a series of compounding social performances that solidify a sense of belonging.

One of my participants, Deborah, describes their understanding of community through the following quote:

> [A]ll the different coloured hands just representing all the different types of people… [D]ifferent races and cultures even, all coming together with one faith. [T]here is a sense of community and diversity… [A] fact that is all in one tree shows that we are all part of one community and one body and we are all connected despite maybe our differences.

This language was a frequent occurrence across my interviews - staking claims that the church community represents different races and cultures, all entering the boundaries of Christianity.

While my participants each had their own thoughts and opinions on such language, the acknowledgement of such rhetoric points to a community of boundaries, despite the generalizing implications. All different races and cultures, coming together under Christianity, are ultimately reduced under the overarching ideology of Christianity. To be clear, this does not mean that there is not a plurality of experiences in Christianity amongst BIPOC communities - what this means is that Christianity uses languages of 'all' as a signifier for followers, leaving those outside of Christianity without a place. Those who are under the umbrella of Christianity in their communities cannot claim all belong. Another interview with my participant, Herod, shows this. My participant perpetuated the same ideas of "all people," but taking it one step further and stating that not every person can have their needs met, but all are welcome:

> All children of God coming together, different age groups, different backgrounds, different experiences, uhm, coming together to share this common belief, uhm, and vision, and dedication to ministering and worshipping God - like that's amazing… Now, is everything we do in the church, every uhm ministry opportunity, is that going to be for everyone? Right, every age group or whatever? No.

To speak about "all" coming together, across identifying lines, begs the question - what about those who cannot come together? What about those who have not been welcome in the church? My participant answers this. Is everything we do in the church going to be for everyone? No, it isn't. The church community has a constructed membership of exclusivity and performance of such exclusivity. Those who attend, able to enter their spaces, able to conform to the social performance, those are the people who will have their needs validated. Those who cannot enter the space, individuals who can exist in spaces that conflict with Christian ideologies, those people will encounter a radically different experience of that place. I cannot say with certainty that LGBTQ people, or other marginalized communities, will not have their needs met in this church; I can only say that my participants have shown a willingness to accept that there will be

people in the congregation, in the community who won't have their needs met - and it would be safe to assume who would be the first to not have their needs met or validated in a Christian space. My participant also discusses how the church community could be doing more to reach people outside of the established boundaries, but remarks about the difficulties the church faces in such endeavours:

> I think any church could do more. [Y]ou need people to do it. ['C]ause as soon as the church is looking for more, you often find the same group of people that step up and get it done, and it's very hard. It drains people, right? … [Y]es, any church could do more, but you just need the, the people to do it. You need the right people at the right time to get it done… I think though, one of our struggles might be a lot of our church family is not from the neighbourhood. So do we even really understand our church neighbourhood? And I bet you I don't.

These passages show some key aspects of my participant defining community by processes of maintaining and separating individuals from a sense of belonging: First, it positions the community in a place where it could be doing more, but deflects responsibility onto the individual members of community, disregarding the institutional character of exclusion. Secondly, the community maintains its dependence on specific individuals who already exist within the boundaries of the established social performances to solidify their sense of belonging while keeping outsiders at bay by reinforcing barriers of participation. Thirdly, the church community continuously draws a boundary between the physical community where it exists and the symbolic community of the church by removing itself from the daily struggles and benefits of existing with others in the physical community. Believing that "any church could do more" but qualifying that with "you need people to do it," acknowledges that the institutional character of the church keeps people from entering into their spaces. Positioning the fault for a lack of services to the marginalized, or even simply those around you, on the individual member lacks a critical perspective on the nature of institutional power and the ability to draw party lines.

Further to that point, placing the onus on the individual not only shifts accountability away from those in power, but places the individual in a position that allows them to solidify their own sense of belonging through the navigating of institutional barriers. Within each of these institutionalized barriers, there are those who benefit from the separation and there are those who suffer from the same separation - the individual performance masks the boundary from its discriminatory character in favour of providing some form of community that people can potentially encounter and experience a sense of belonging. Finally, creating a symbolic community that is detached from the physical environment which it occupies shows an incredible amount of privilege. Having the ability to distinguish between the symbolic community and the occupied community shows an immense power to define the boundaries that keeps others at an arm's length for the sake of identity and solidarity. These barriers appear in many different forms, some more subtle than others, like the deflection of responsibility, volunteer requirements, or more overt qualities. Some of the overt qualities would be individual identity expressions, divorce, or substance use.

Community for my participants also involved creating rituals and meaning through an association of place. Participants like Deborah recognized the importance of relationships to feeling belonging in a community. This was primarily facilitated by the relationships associated with different places, like two generational churches in the lives of Deborah and their partner:

> [W]e settled on the church that I had grown up in because we had a network of friends there and that was really important, we were missing that when we went to [their] home church, there wasn't the same network, we didn't feel the same community… [T]he social part of it is so important to know that you, you do have other people that share in your same views and have some common interests… [T]he community is what we kind of followed… [J]ust finding the right fit for us was important because if we weren't going each week, we weren't really an active part of that community… [W]e need to go to a place that we would be comfortable as a family to go each week and to feel part of a community.

This quote highlights the importance of group membership in the creation of belonging in a community. Creating relationships within the community allows for a deeper understanding of both their own place in community, as well as the boundaries that they can transcend. Encountering a bounded place that cannot be transcended by your own personal experiences further increases the divide between the individual and the community; encountering a bounded place that can be transcended by your own personal experiences allows the boundaries to become porous and navigable, allowing for a complex intersection of social and emotional performance that continuously solidifies their position within the community and the accompanying sense of belonging. Another participant, Babylon, provided a visual example of what a bounded place can look like and how it influences relationships - a circle of chairs facing inwards. This imagery provided by my participant represents one aspect of the church community and how it uses rituals to maintain its sense of community, while also creating the boundaries by which community members navigate.

> I think it solidifies what we understand the Temple to be. I think that's, you know, it's a staunch, high church, Salvation Army church if you will… [W]ithin sort of the nucleus of the corps, there's chairs that I think that are focused inwards, but even if you look at sort of the whole outreach initiative, evangelism, whatever you want to call it, I still think that, you know, our chairs are facing inwards and we don't have much of an outward focus.

This visualization of chairs facing inwards is indicative of community existing beyond the example given, while also being confined within. It shows the power structures that are at play in the creation of church spaces and communities, how they create and maintain boundaries that must be surpassed and continuously navigated to maintain that sense of belonging within the community. The inward facing narrative is representative of binding an individual's place to the power structures that determine what is acceptable and permissible within group membership to the church. While my participant shows an interest in expanding the bounds of community

beyond such internalized perspectives, it is a difficult task to perform on the institutional level. The church congregation is restrained by people seeking to maintain a sense of community through separation and cohesion simultaneously. My participants show that the blessings of community come at a cost - whether they be paid by the individual, or by the othered communities around them.

Most of my participants spoke at length about their frustrations with the church - nearly all of them engaged in some kind of deflecting narrative not long after expressing their concerns or negative feelings regarding the church. This took form in several different ways. One of my participants, Matthew, spoke at length about their confusion existing within such a community. Matthew had personally seen the impacts of discrimination in the church after one of their friend's openly identified as transgender. Additionally, Matthew discussed another friend that left their home after years of abusive behaviour from their parents. Both of these relationships had deep ties to the church. Matthew discussed at length the hateful experiences these individuals encountered, both within their own family and the church at large. Despite this, a constant theme throughout the interview process was the phrase "to err is to human… it just shouldn't happen in the church." Even the blatant discrimination of their friends, their loved ones, was assuaged by a deflecting rhetoric that covered a multitude of sins. Claiming the erroneous nature of humanity and believing in an idealized community as a means to avoid accountability to those that have been marginalized preserves the community as a whole, keeping the established boundaries of gender and individual expression intact, while also preserving my participants' own sense of belonging, no matter how precarious it has become following such events. Matthew was not the only participant who expressed deflection rhetoric, it was also

expressed by my participant, Esther, who spoke as an individual within the institutional community that takes a "realist" approach:

> There were some poor decisions by some of the leaders in the church, I don't know that it was handled very well, much like, you know, things in the Catholic church, kind of trying to hide it and sweep it away as much as possible. I feel like there was a little bit of that… [I]t was found by uhm, an employee of the church that the officer had been viewing some very inappropriate websites, mainly child and gay pornography, and then through that, there came to light some other allegations and things like that… I did find out and I did know about it… I don't know how it got dealt with - other than the fact they eventually got moved, but I don't think they got [legal consequences] … I think they retired is what happened.
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> I'm very much like a realist (laugh) … I think that's something that happens to everybody as they get a bit older and they start to see things through, you know, more adult lense. Uhm, but I, I think kind of just saw people making mistakes, rather than the church making mistakes, because the church is made of people.

While there is definitely an individual at fault within this situation, it is also apparent that the institutional character of the community allowed the individual to remain within the bounds of community in some capacity, without consequence. Furthermore, my participant also displays a great luxury of remaining a realist - a different flavour of complicity and centrism. It is a great privilege to remain a realist in situations of abuse by recognizing that the actions were committed by an individual and not the whole church, thus the established boundaries need not change. However, the mechanism of institutional community appears to favour the abuser, as the consequence they faced was retirement - the extent of such a consequence was unclear within the interview, but it did not involve any legal ramifications. We see my participant express a deflection from accountability by placing themselves within the comfortable boundaries of the community, allowing themselves to accept the identity of a realist, of someone separated from this situation because of their position within the community. Claiming "realism" as

a piece of their identity deflects from their responsibility to hold their communities accountable to their exclusion and harmful practices.

Another one of my participants, Simon, consistently deflected accountability from the institutional character of community throughout their entire interview. One such example positioned institutions away from critique by placing the blame at the individual level:

> [T]he lawyer will sometimes break the law, the doctor will sometimes not look after his own health, right? The teacher may sometimes not be that mentor that he should be, or she should be, in the classroom. Parents will molest their own children, but I don't think we can write off all of these institutions, because some have failed.

Such outrageous claims characterize the sheer power of deflection that some of my participants wielded in the preservation of community, going so far as to trivialize, by comparison, the abuse of children to other minor characteristics of deviant behaviour. Additionally, my participant disregards the institutional character of such abuse that is rampant across denominational and organizational structures, positioning the abuse not as a structural issue that has remained unchecked and unaddressed, but as a failing of individuals within certain situations. This mentality preserves the power of a church community from addressing the violations of power in favour of preserving community. It is a pinnacle example of deflecting the systemic problems within Christianity onto the individual to preserve the boundaries of power. Additionally, my participant also shifts focus away from the abusers in the deflecting rhetoric directly to the abused. Such language places the boundary away from accountability so that the other community, the victims of such abuse, have to navigate their own positions in relation to the boundaries set forth from those in power. By shifting the conversation away from acknowledging such harm, the institutional community preserves itself and its own boundaries by posing such questions as those stated in the following quote:

> [W]hen will it be enough? When will it be enough? When the pope is castrated, I don't know? When will it be enough? When it will be enough for First Nations to say, okay you've, you know, paid part of your debt, when will it be enough for those who were hurt - I don't know if it ever will feel like enough, because the violence has been so great! The abuse has been so horrific! So, I can take responsibility but still... I say to the church, there's only so much I can give away, in monetary retribution… [E]very time you ask me I'll tell you we're sorry. And, and you know, I'll give this up, but is it ever going to be enough? [O]r will there always be a comma at the end of the sentence? I think there will always be a comma at the end of the sentence, so - when will I ever get a receipt saying paid in full? I don't know.

While my participant may make a passing acknowledgement that the church has been a purveyor of horrendous abuse throughout its history, it is largely overshadowed by the comments that minimized such abuse. My participant seems to be equating their own ability to apologize at an equivalence to the reparations of the amorphous victim. What this shows is that there is a boundary of submission to the demands of those who have been victimized by the church - the church is only willing to transcend a certain space of forgiveness that allows them to still maintain their position of power and privilege. To admit that full responsibility for the damages they have caused, the church would have to tear down one of their established boundaries that would then be crossed by those that have been excluded, compromising the established construction of church spaces. Church as a community maintains itself through the exclusion of others, as it must have another group of people by which they must define themselves; to create the Christian community, there must also be a non-Christian community. In addition to defining the Christian community through the opposition of those outside of their boundaries, the church also creates the outsider as a boundless place, one devoid of boundaries. This is shown in the passage "will there always be a comma at the end of the sentence," positioning opposition as a constant, without end. The mechanism at work here places

those who are outside of the boundaries of Christianity as an all-encompassing entity that is constantly at odds with their place in community. This ideology elevates community members of Christianity against those seeking to navigate the barriers as a means of reconciliation, retribution, or other restorative practice by placing themselves as a finite entity, with a limited means to provide such functions. In contrast, the boundaries the church maintains to avoid accountability for such historical abuses, like child molestation and predatory sexual behaviour, create a seemingly infinite expanse of boundaries through the propagation of deflecting rhetoric. The boundaries are characterized by the question of whether there will ever be enough to pay back for the abuse, as well as the question of whether the church has paid at all.

Deflection also appeared in many interviews through idealized beliefs that my participants held regarding their personal faith. Exclusion was positioned outside of the institutional character of the church. This also occurred in my interview with Simon, highlighted in the following passage:

> The gospel has a solution for all of that. Do you realize that if the gospel of Jesus Christ was accepted fully by the entire world, that we wouldn't know what to do with our money? [I]f the gospel took root in the human heart, I'm convinced that there would be plenty of, there's plenty of food in the world, there's plenty of money in the world, if our hearts suddenly - Jesus Christ has the only solution, for the world. He is the only solution for the world, and if we, if the gospel took root in the world today, it would solve every single social problem that there is.

We see a very important mechanism at work here. The erasure of alternative communities or communities outside of the boundaries of Christianity would be beneficial for all people, or so my participant believes. The critical aspect here is that my participant is placing their own beliefs as a superior to other ways of being. This supremacy is certainly tied to many institutional issues that persist today - racism, colonialism, homophobia,

sexism; each of these discriminatory systems are entangled with this erasure ideology of the church. To claim that there would be no social strife if all people accepted the gospel erases the good of outside communities and positions Christianity as the moral superior, alone at the top of the moral hierarchy. Positioning Christianity as the keeper of moral and ethical ways of being places the outside community as the opposition of such living, further reinforcing the boundaries between Christianity and other communities, as well as the power of belonging in community members. Propagating a narrative that elevates a certain community as morally and ethically superior is a pinnacle example of communities defining relationships based on maintaining a group of people by separating others. This was not the only example of such deflection, especially in my interview with Simon:

> [T]here has never been the perfect congregation, if you read about all the congregations in the bible, a good congregation is not always just because they're perfect and they don't have moral lapses or - because they have a bunch of sinners in them who were always recovering from their sinfulness, and that's the problem with the church, when you look at the church you say, look the church did this, or the church did that, I'm not surprised, but the problem is, that's, that's a shallow view of what the church is, the church is a bunch of sinners saying we need to repent, we need to repent and yes, the only time the church is got to be held accountable is when its testifying of something that it isn't… So, unfortunately, the people have expected too much of the church, and that's a common problem with, with the world… I say I understand about the places where the church [was] horrible, I get that, but when you say the church has done that, I say first of all, what percentage of the church has done that, but secondly, when you look at a church, don't call me to a higher standard than the scriptures call me too! Don't do that to me! Don't say well the church is not gonna have any of this within its circles, because we're all sinners… I separate the church from its institutional character, I do. The church is not an institution, it's a family, it's a, it's the international federation of the blood-washed, spirit-filled people of the world

There is plenty to unpack in this passage: First, we see my participant defining the boundary by which it is acceptable to condemn a church community, placing the power of accountability within the community and removing it from those on the outside. My participant sets the

boundary of accountability in one place, denying all other forms of accountability. Secondly, my participant sets up a boundary using whataboutism - what percentage, what churches, what preachers, distinguishing the abusers instead of the abuse. Thirdly, my participant solidifies the boundary through their own idealized perspective of how they are creating and maintaining the community, both through language of sacred moral codes, as well as codifying the institution in an emotional context.

The first critical note for this passage is that my participant establishes the boundaries for religious condemnation within their own personal boundary. My participant sets the stage for the appropriate conditions that a church should be persecuted, which suppresses any resistance from outside of the community by invalidating and denying alternative conditions by which the community should be held accountable for, such as the abuse of power, negligence, or other harms. Instead, my participant sets a vague, but reinforceable boundary that the church should be persecuted when it is preaching to be something it is not - creating an atmosphere for competing narratives of power, oftentimes reducing the narrative of the abused to preserve the position of the abuser. Secondly, my participant also deflects blame away from the community by placing it on a scaled value of fault, demanding that the outsider determine which parts of the community can be blamed. This rhetoric shifts the focus away from a sense of accountability towards the outcasting of the abuser, preserving the institutional power and the sense of belonging amongst community members. Minimizing the abusive wielding of power to the single individual removes the institution and the community members who were complicit in the abuse; there needed to be an institution to provide power for the individual to be cast out. Finally, my participant wields sacred texts as a means to preserve the boundaries in their favour. My participant uses language that places the affront on the challenger of boundaries, on the

expectations of the outsider, as a means to reduce their personal responsibility in the event of harm. My participant uses the fallible nature of humans, much like my other participant Matthew, as a means to preserve the power structures of the church, to assuage their own personal conflicts with the power of their constructed boundaries. My participant expresses a great privilege in being able to compartmentalize an institutional community in the language of family - not as an institution of abuse, not as a location of pain, not as a community of harm. Furthermore, my participant erases the quality of abuse in the language of ideals. Such language preserves the integrity of the community at the cost of minimizing the toll on the abused. These examples show how community is made through separation, but it is not entirely descriptive of the whole process. Community is created not only through acts of separation, but of congregating and maintaining that congregation.

Given that the church I encountered in my research is notably more associated with humanitarian work, like thrift stores and family services, it definitely creates a unique distinction between the symbolic community of the church I was a member of and the larger, international organization that provides humanitarian aid. Thus, there is also a boundary of institutional affiliation. The larger humanitarian sector of the Salvation Army has their own set of boundaries that differ from each church community. My participant, Deborah, speaks about their experience with the humanitarian aspect of the denomination with high praise:

> I do see though that regardless of people's choices in the community they're there to support them… I do see that regardless of choices the Salvation Army is there to help people no matter what, what their own personal convictions are or not… there's a place for everybody.

It is important to notice the distinct difference between my participant' discussion of the church community and the larger institutional community. While the church community serves as a representative of the larger institution, both entities have their own unique

boundaries that are negotiated. Surprisingly, my participant shows that the larger institutional body has less rigid boundaries than the smaller church community. This shows how the boundaries of the church community are far more refined and rigid than the larger institutional body. This is a stark contrast to the previous examples of how my participants separate themselves from other people and ways of being. This passage shows the ability to create barriers and boundaries at different levels, with different ideological and social conditions. Furthermore, my participant Simon spoke about the benefits of creating a community based upon a religion and how different communities can interact:

> I don't think that should stop us from paying for the pavement in front of both of our houses, I don't think that should stop us from building a swimming pool together, I don't think that should stop us from feeding the poor together, I don't think that should stop us from attending each other's funerals, I don't think that should stop us from electing each other to office… I don't think society has to grind to a halt, simply because we believe differently… [R]eligion while it's often been the enemy of Christianity, religion has called the people together for a common purpose and [they] have been able to work together… I see the Muslim communities doing some really nice things, I see the Jewish communities doing some really nice things. The church has done some great things.

My participant believes in the ability to create communities that are different, but maintain some level of respect and decorum. This shows that the boundaries from each community have an apparent equal opportunity to navigate. Additionally, my participant remarks on the institutional character of religion in the processes of creating oneness with others - the same institutional character that was also used to separate in earlier examples. The process of creating community is complimented by the interactions of other larger social processes, often at a higher institutional level, but community consists largely of the interactions of individuals, especially the interactions that seek to maintain connection and solidarity - this is none so more apparent than in the following passage from my participant, Jerusalem:

> [T]here's always gonna be people there to support you and lift you up, and that's what I love most about our church. Like, obviously there's sometimes drama, things happen, but at the end of the day, when something happens, like they're there to support you.

Here we see the seemingly inverse expression of community from an earlier passage from my participant Matthew. This passage shows the importance of positionality with my participants, as one participant positions the boundary as a means to maintain that separation, as a means to assuage any conflict with those barriers, whereas another participant sees the boundary as a means to support members of the community. Comparing both of these passages shows how boundaries are created and navigated by members of the community in unique ways, both taking on performances that separate them from outsiders, as well as solidifying themselves as insiders.

My participants also expressed community in terms of an overarching, generational impact on their lives. The generational implications show that these boundaries are historically reproduced, leading to a deep understanding of community and sense of belonging. This sense of belonging also allows some of my participants to understand the community outside of one distinct location, creating a community that remains bounded but can also be without a distinct place. My participant Galilee shows this process in the following passage:

> [W]hen I think about the church, the church is the people. So, the church is the ecclesia, the church is uh, the gathering of the members of the body of Christ, and so without people there is no church. That's my basic, fundamental understanding of what the church is.
>
> -
>
> [M]y heritage is wrapped up completely in the church and, like there's never been a time in my life when I have not been part of a church congregation… I can't separate myself from the church fully… I can't think of church without people, and I think - when I think about my relationship with the church, some of my best church conversations and best conversation about God have not happened in a physical church building, but at a table with friends, or chewing the fat with people that just got questions and you just want to answer them… You know, if you got three or four sitting together around a table, and you're drinking coffee or eating wings, or doing whatever, and you're talking about God and spirituality and all those pieces, that's church! Like, that's church for me!

Galilee shows how churches can function outside of a distinct location, separating themselves from the boundaries of church space in favor of a more malleable expression of community. This takes community members outside of the established places to experience the community in broader terms, simultaneously expanding community boundaries and reducing them to the individual level. My participant shows how church can take many forms, the important aspect of community being the intentional congregating, of keeping community members together within and without barriers. This malleable expression of community allows members to navigate the established boundaries that are outside of the church community while also maintaining some form of connection. My participant is showing the process of decoupling place and community in favour of a boundless community, one that emphasizes congregating and not necessarily attachment to a specific place. For Galilee, their heritage is also woven so intricately with the church community that they understand who they are as an individual by association to this community and its generational impacts, indicating how powerful a sense of belonging can be for a person. This sense of belonging allows my participant to experience community beyond the established church location, reinforced by their inability to separate themselves from the generational impacts of such a pervasive sense of belonging. A similar idea was expressed by my participant, Saul. He reinforces the same ideas as Galilee, highlighting the importance of congregating intentionally and meaningfully:

> I've been connected with church pretty much my whole life, uhm I actually have been my whole life (laugh) since birth, my parents were clergy with the Salvation Army… I love the fellowship of church! I believe that God has created church not as a building - I believe that church is very much felt in the congregating of people, whether that is food, whether that's Taco Tuesday, whether that is our bible studies, whether that is screwing around with the b'ys - like even that! Even if we don't talk about God, I believe that there is, there is God in the presence, that Jesus is there, influencing our hearts and our minds… I believe that everything that we have done or will do, as a people, as congregating together, is a form of church!

My participant is certainly in a unique position as a child of former clergy within the denomination, clearly elevating their own sense of belonging within that community. Furthermore, my participant is supporting a church community that emphasizes congregating more than separation. They see the value in community existing beyond the measures of exclusion and separation; community can flourish under the conditions of actively congregating and maintaining connection with people, not just through the separation of others.

My participant Lazarus expressed a similar appreciation for the intergenerational church community and how that has impacted their relationships:

> [W]hen I moved here, it allowed me to create relationships here. So, that was a big thing for me moving to a new place. That tie to the Salvation Army church allowed me to create relationships here…. [O]ne of the things that I think I appreciate the most, specifically about the Salvation Army is, it's so intergenerational and I've always appreciated that… I mean like when I was old enough, I became a junior soldier, and then when I was old enough I became a senior soldier, and being part of those groups, like the band and songsters, and interacting with so many people that I would never know otherwise… I don't really know where I would have met a lot of the people that I know today, outside of church, and there are people that have given me jobs because I know them through the church… I wouldn't know so many people, if it wasn't for [my church].

Community membership within the denomination served my participant very well throughout their life. They indicated that they were able to transgress the numerous milestone groups, solidifying their position within the denomination and the wider church community. Their ability to connect across generations positioned them to succeed in the community and create a steady sense of belonging, steady enough to transition to a different church community with some level of confidence. Having the ability to maintain a sense of belonging in the community afforded my participant privilege, going so far as to state that they attained employment through their community membership. The intergenerational benefits have clear consequences for my participant, marking a difference in the merely symbolic importance for other participants who

have been referenced earlier. In this example we see that the generational diversity of community members serves as a dominating power in creating that sense of belonging, transferred through the numerous milestones that the church upholds. The ability to cross these thresholds, the same thresholds that prevent many from creating a lasting sense of belonging within the community, marks a distinct privilege for my participant and highlights the duality of boundaries in my community analysis. The same boundaries that seek to reinforce division between the community at large also preserve a sense of belonging amongst other community members; every sense of belonging has been paid at equivalence to every sense of exclusion.

In this section, I have shown the complex relationships my participants have to community and a sense of belonging. My participants highlight the importance of distinguishing community members from outsiders through numerous different social performances: The first example being discussed was the distinct language of community used by my participants. My participants used language that indicated a process of barriers. This took shape in the language of vague inclusivity - an inclusivity that had previous conditions attached to the possibility of full inclusion; “All Children of God" does not actually indicate all people, but all people that identify as a Christian. Secondly, my participants frequently employed a deflecting rhetoric to maintain separation between community members and outsiders, as well as justify their own positions and sense of belonging within the community. The deflecting rhetoric ranged from claiming the flawed nature of humanity as a reason for a flawed institution to justifying systemic abuse. The deflecting rhetoric was a vital component for community-making as it assuaged the position of my participants within the community and positioned the flaw or violation outside of the realm of accountability, maintaining both the sense of belonging my participants felt within the community and the boundaries that seek to preserve the internal functioning of the community as

a whole. Finally, my participants demonstrated that with each act of separation and boundary work, there is also an act of solidarity and connectivity. This was shown through my participants shedding the boundaries that have been associated with the distinct church location and the accompanying norms in favor of a larger conceptualization of what church can be. From these three examples, there is a clear relationship to the previously discussed concept of tiny publics (Fine, 2019). The church community becomes its own political and cultural environment, separate from larger communities that insiders also engage. This section of my analysis reinforces how tiny publics - like church communities – impact the lives of other, larger communities.

My participants spoke about the numerous ways to do church that do not require a distinct, centralized location and how it created community without the associated boundaries of church. In addition to the ways my participants negotiated with ways of doing community, they also remarked on the positive impacts that the community and their sense of belonging has had on them. My participants spoke about the same boundaries that would keep others at bay, the same barriers that others could not cross, as powerful forces in their lives for the better. The barriers of full commitment to the community through milestone rituals, the barriers of admission into smaller groups within the community, served as a tool to support community members throughout their experience in community. Thus, community is defined by the relationships between members that seek to maintain themselves and separate others from a sense of belonging. This is also intimately connected to my theoretical foundation, as the duality of community brings the possibility of inclusion and exclusion based upon the established rhetoric to create meaning and value amongst insiders (Fine, 2019; Cross, 2015). Within my analysis of my church community, I witnessed the profound effects of a strong sense of

belonging on my participants. I saw my participants proclaim a deep sense of purpose because of their relationship to the church and their community; I also saw my participants express a pervasive regret at the exclusion of their loved ones, or themselves, in church communities. My analysis shows that the same barriers and boundaries that uplift so many, also crush and demoralize others. My participant, Martha, summarizes this perfectly - “church should be for everyone - but it’s not.”

The Experience of Boundaries: O Exclusionary Church, Deep Ocean of Demarcation

For most of my life, I have been told that being a "soldier" in the Salvation Army provides you with certain rights and privileges. This process of indoctrination awarded people with the opportunity to participate in specific groups, primarily music groups and certain church leadership positions. Being a "soldier" is just one boundary that I uncovered in my analysis. Boundaries take many forms in my analysis, all of them tied to three distinct themes: First, boundaries are used to create a sense of place for my participants. Boundaries established what church means to my participants, as well as how my participants know how to do church. Secondly, boundaries reinforced the separation of conflicting identities, ideologies, and social performances. The boundaries served as a foundation for the exclusion of alternative identities and expressions amongst community members. Finally, boundaries delineated between insiders and outsiders of certain groups that existed within the community. In all of these examples, boundaries were compounding upon one another, leading to a series of distinct social performances to maintain a position within community boundaries.

For many of my participants, their sense of belonging was often tied to a sense of place. They understood their place in the community by understanding what the church building meant to them. Some participants expressed that the church building carries a specific expectation when it comes to social performances. My participant, Martha, highlights this in the following passage: "You attract different people, I think, based on what your building looks like, a lot of the time." There is a personal expectation tied to the physical construction of the church building for my participants. They show how the church can immediately set a standard for social interactions based upon a physical typology of church buildings. This is highlighted in their experiences with other church buildings and congregations:

> I've grown up in a church setting, I'm quite comfortable going to a church service, but I would never set foot in the Basilica on a Sunday morning because I am intimidated by what that church physically looks like, I have no idea who goes there - absolutely none… I am intimidated but what that physically looks like on the outside, and on the inside, because I've been there for a concert… [T]hat alone I think would say, no I can't go there, because it's so unfamiliar to me, whereas every Salvation Army church kinda looks the same. So for me, it's not a big deal to walk into any Salvation Army church - because you know you're gonna see red carpet, you're probably gonna see red cushions on the pews, there might be a stained glass window, but it's like contemporary stained glass… There's gonna be a platform, there's gonna be like a songster side and a band side and that's comfortable for me, I feel normal going into a setting like that… I do think that the physical impression of a place, it says a lot - and whether we recognize that or not, it tells a lot about what the style of worship is going to be, it says a lot about, sometimes, the people that are gonna be in there. I think you get a feeling when you walk in a place. I really do. Like, I think you can sense if a place is welcoming or not, and the physical layout and structure does say a lot about that.

Here, there are a few points to highlight: First, my participant shows that despite their familiarity with a church community, there is still a boundary between different religious groups, even denominations. Secondly, my participant expands upon the previous claim to include the structural components of the church in what to expect when encountering a church, describing many commonalities amongst Salvation Army churches. Thirdly, my participant positions themselves with a lense of familiarity to describe their experience with church communities and how that impacts their ability to navigate boundaries.

My participant expresses an inability to enter a prominent church in the St. John's community, the Basilica. The Basilica is one of the oldest churches in the province and is the centre of Catholicism on the island. Given the church's history, there is an immense amount of social baggage tied to that place, creating a barrier between many people and the internal church community. However, it is also important to note my participants' familiarity with the inner workings of Christian culture and yet, they still have difficulty entering and encountering the community associated with that place, going so far as to state they feel "intimidated" by that

place. Furthermore, my participant highlights the structural components of their church as a means to navigate the social landscape of the accompanying community. These structural elements mark distinct physical features that serve as signifiers for community dynamics. My participant expresses a deterministic perspective for the church building. Community is facilitated by the physical characteristics of the church building. The elevated platform signifies a heightened importance of those in that space, each designated seating space has associated individual memberships, and the same symbolic markers are physical representations of similar ideologies across different physical spaces. Finally, the familiarity of these spaces act as navigable boundaries in and of themselves. My participant makes reference to the similar construction of Salvation Army church spaces as a means to understand the potential social climate and landscape of the church space. The church space shows what is present within the community, as well as what is not present. The boundaries of each church community are often physically represented by the church building. The comfort my participant experiences is intimately tied to their own ability to navigate the established boundaries and norms associated with the Salvation Army denomination, highlighted in her struggle to encounter community in another religious denomination. Martha was not the only participant who spoke on the impacts of church buildings.

Another participant, Jerusalem, spoke about the narrative of church buildings and their level of accessibility:

> [O]bviously we got the elevator put in, which is a big step. You don't have to go outside the church and through the front and stuff… [B]ut there's a lot of other kind of disabilities, [and] maybe we haven't had to address them before, but we definitely have, and we definitely haven't.

Jerusalem points out an important piece of the church landscape that others didn't mention. The church recently installed an elevator that would allow those with mobility issues to access both

floors while staying inside. Previously, the only option was to leave the upper floor via a fifty-foot ramp that then circled around the church property to the lower entrance - not exactly the most accessible option for many. This addition is a new way of experiencing the church building, creating an easier physical space to navigate. However, my participant highlights an important piece of this analysis: the church building has definitely encountered disability before, and the church building hasn't been accommodating. There was a distinct barrier between community members in the church - those who were able bodied and those who weren't. Those who were able-bodied had full access to the church building, without conditions. Those who had mobility struggles only had access to the full building under the condition that they could leave the building, move down an exterior ramp, and then enter the building through another door - they couldn't stay in the building during inclement weather, they may not have had the ability to walk that distance, they may not have the appropriate assistance to enter the building again. All of these conditions create a vastly different experience of the physical space. Accessibility is one of the clearest examples of how physical spaces create boundaries between people. The ability to navigate all physical spaces is a privilege that reaps powerful rewards.

My participant, Galilee, spoke about the power of church spaces extensively in their interview. When discussing the church building, Galilee highlights an important piece for understanding how space works for communities:

> I don't think it has anything necessarily to do with the bricks and the mortar, right? Like I don't think it's the actual design of the building, or the location of the building, or anything like that. It's about what happens within those walls, so you know, I can drive up a street in St. John's and find another old church building that's no longer functioning, and doesn't have the same type of resonation with me as that one in the picture. It's because I have no personal connection to these other buildings… [I]t's more about what happened there - so for me, that was sacred space as a child, even though I didn't necessarily know what sacred space meant as a child… It's not so much about the actual physical location or the structure of the materials, it's what happens in those spaces that has significance.

This passage is an excellent example of how church spaces are not just physical objects that participants interact with, but deeply symbolic vessels of value and meaning for both insiders and outsiders of the community (Cross, 2015). Galilee disregards the physical, the "brick and the mortar," in favour of the symbolic power that is built over time through experiences. My participant shows that the church is always being built, continuously creating a sacred space through rituals and relationships.

Galilee provided further insight into the symbolic power of church spaces by discussing their relationship to an empty church building:

> So the church building, for me, has really become a point of solitude where I connect with the Lord… I found a whole new appreciation for an empty church sanctuary… [B]efore Covid it wasn't unlikely to find me sitting in the sanctuary of the Basilica downtown… [F]or me it was the space - it wasn't so much who the space belonged to who owned it, it was the space… I walked into St. John's Citadel to do a recording for NTV and when I got there all the Christmas lights were on but nobody was in the sanctuary, and like I just went in for that five-ten minutes alone - it was just sacred space, right? Like it was just holy ground for me in those moments… I like an empty church sanctuary; I resonate with that because we go there to sometimes separate ourselves from the world for a little bit and focus on God.

This passage is important because it builds on previous analysis that shows the importance of people and interaction in creating meaning in the community spaces. Previously, it was shown that experiencing community is a process of experiencing people; this passage shows that experiencing community spaces can also occur with or without people. Community is contingent on interacting with people, but community spaces can be entirely encountered as an individual. In this passage, my participant shows that their relationship with church buildings is a sacred one, one that has been constructed through a reflexive process of community and individual interactions. Galilee has highlighted the importance of community, as well as the importance of an opportunity to experience spaces as an individual. Combining an understanding of individual

processes and community processes shows the dynamic nature of creating space and a sense of belonging. Galilee follows up on this idea with the following passage, exemplifying the duality of community and individual processes in creating meaningful places:

> If you walk into a crowded restaurant, and you're bombarded with the sights and sounds of that space, but there's music on the radio and you really want to listen to the music, it's hard to listen to it above the noise, and the clutter from the kitchen, and the chatter from your people - but if you walk into that empty restaurant and all the staff have gone home, and all the patrons were outside, and that music came, you can hear it pretty clearly. For me, it's kinda how I envision the church, the empty space - God is always present, I don't always get to listen to him specifically when it's crowded, full of people. So, when it's empty and it's just me there, I can really sense the presence of God, and have conversation.

This passage highlights how my participant makes meaning through an encounter with space. Galilee highlights both aspects of spaces - the people that create the place and the individual that creates meaning - to highlight their understanding of church (Cross, 2015). For my participant, experiencing a sense of place has a reflexive characteristic as they highlight the differences between the church building at specific points. Distinguishing between the experience with other people in the space and when the individual is alone shows two separate processes for both encounters, highlighting the procedural aspect of space and place. These previous passages show how church is intimately tied to my participants' experience with specific church spaces and how those interactions influence the process of creating a sense of place. In addition to the experience of specific church spaces, my participants also discuss how church is not entirely a location, but the creation of meaningful places.

Previous discussion on how my participants create community and a sense of belonging outside of church boundaries intersects with how my participants understand church spaces - passages that highlight the multiple ways my participants do community outside and inside of the church – physically and spiritually. My participant Simon sets the foundation for how I analyze

my participants creation of meaning: “I am the church, I am; where’s the church? Right here. And over there. And over there.” This one quote summarizes a pattern that has been displayed in the ways my participants create community, both within the confines of church spaces and beyond, as well as how my participants understand space and place in relation to the church community. For my participants, they understand the church building and community as a reflexive entity; the community exists because of the church building and the church building exists because of the community. My participants expressed varying opinions on this process, some expressing opinions that the church building was vital for the community to function effectively, while others expressed an opinion that the church building cannot and should not be representative of the community. For my participant Martha, they understood that the church community is beyond the need for a distinct physical location:

> Some of the most meaningful things that I’ve attended that have been churchy have absolutely not been in a church setting, uhm, because I think it’s also about creating a sense of home and comfort for people, and for a lot of people that isn’t a church building. A church building is the opposite of that for a lot of people, so, I think if we can instead of saying St. John’s Temple is 101 Torbay Road, we can say that you know, St. John’s Temple is here and there and everywhere! I mean, that’s a lot nicer and is accessible to more people and could potentially reach out to more people… I think if we ripped out 101 Torbay Road, you’d lose eighty percent of the congregation. I think people attend that church because of tradition and tradition’ sake. And they love the building, honestly.

My participant shows that being a member of a church community does not mean being tied to a specific location. This flexible approach of creating meaning allows my participant to expand their understanding of church spaces beyond one distinct location, towards a grander, more iterative expression of church. My participant builds upon the previous passage that claims the church as an entity that exists on the micro level, to claiming the church as an entity that depends on interaction between relationships. For my participant, the church can exist - and does exist - beyond the confines of a singular location, like a church building. My participant experiences

church in multiple locations, in multiple ways, all of them being tied to the idea that church can be decoupled from its physical location. Contrasting Martha' perspective, I had Herod claiming that a centralized church is vitally important:

> Obviously that's our home base, that's where you're running your programs, that's where you have your Sunday services, which is important, for people to worship together, to congregate. Uh, a corps family or a church family is very important, which is reiterated in the bible over and over and again… 'Cause if you don't have that home, if you don't have that home base, and you just have people everywhere, then that's not necessarily a congregation. Right? So both coexist, and I don't think you can have one without the other, and one should support the other; small groups supporting the large congregation church family, the church family supporting small groups. That's a two-way street, you can't have one without the other! [S]o if you don't have everyone fully supporting the corps, how could you have the corps fully supporting initiatives out in the community? So you need a lot of support for the church in order for it all to work, right… [B]ut yes the church can sometimes, can withdraw into an address and just provide the needs for the people there constantly, right? That's not healthy either, I don't think.

Once again, my participant uses the bible as a means to support their individual claim. Aside from that, they highlight a centralized church as a focal point for their own sense of place. The reflexive relationship between the centralized church and its peripheral units shows a sense of place that extends beyond the singular church location, but remains tethered. Furthermore, my participant contrasts the previous passage from Martha by refuting the idea that you could have a congregation without a physical, centralized location. My participant is emphasizing the need for reciprocity between the physical location and its attendants - this also shows a reciprocity between the physical and the symbolic. For Herod, the centralized church is a necessity for a group of people to claim membership to a symbolic community. Both of these passages show opposite ends of the spectrum my participants created in understanding how space and place functions in my religious community. These passages have highlighted how my participants understand boundaries as a means of creating a sense of place. In addition to my participants' discussion on space and place, I also found that boundaries were a fundamental part of keeping

conflicting identities, ideologies, or social performances at a distance from the inner workings of the community.

One of my participants, Deborah, provided a perspective that showed a larger experience with different denominations and what their experience was like facing a division between community members:

> [My] church really split into two, uh, like twelve-ish years ago… [T]here was definitely some division in terms of, you know, theological opinions within the church… I guess the divide was that, you know we can interpret, that, that in terms of this is what was really meant, or in our common society this is how we should interpret it… [One side] developed out of, what was called an essentials movement, and so they really were focusing on the essentials of scripture that formed the foundation of our faith, and I think the biggest thing for me is that, [my church], I just found it very wishy-washy, it like, you can believe this or you can believe that, and if you don't that's okay, whereas if I'm gonna belong to a body, like I wanna have a common, a common faith and belief system, as opposed to something that's more wishy-washy, that you know some people can blame this, and other people can blame that.

There are three important pieces to highlight in this passage: First, we see that church communities do divide in certain situations based upon ideological differences. Secondly, my participant discusses their own perspective on foundations within a community and the need for common ground and steady beliefs. This desire highlights the importance of a consistent ideology within a church community so that members have a common thread across different positions in the community. The "wishy-washy" position, the possibility of a malleable group identity, presents as a challenge for my participant as they indicate a desire for a boundary to determine where other community members are in relation to their own position. Additionally, this desire for a boundary shows how my participant wishes to keep disparate ideologies away from the foundational elements of their community. My participant's desire for a common belief system shows how they are doing community by establishing boundaries. Deborah continues to highlight this process in the following passage:

> I feel like there's a huge division in the church on some critical issues… [O]ne I think for me is you know, life issues… [I]t's hard to say you're pro-life these days, uh because it's not really the political correct thing to say and I'm not, it's not all about abortion, it's about protecting the sanctity of life in my opinion… I also get from a political standpoint that you know, if you don't provide safe access to certain services, like abortions then people are going to do them anyway… [T]aking away those services aren't the solution to the problem, it's really changing people's mindsets about the importance of life, I mean, it's just - it kills me to think about how many babies are lost each year… I think [one denomination] is a little bit more wishy-washy on things like life issues, uhm, versus say [another] who would be a bit more strong on those issues uhm, of course there's always the debate on the same-sex unions and - I, I just think there's a huge divide there… I totally support same-sex unions in a civil case, but I also support the ability for a church to define that, that may be is not within their faith, and that's okay and that doesn't mean that you're pushing that on other people, or that you're holding other people to those values, but if you belong to that faith system - [i]t is what you believe and that's okay too, but I also think within society we need to be accepting of all people and all their choices… I just think that people have a right to have a faith that maybe they would choose not to do that or, and that's okay, I, I hate the fact that, you know, politics could influence faith in anyway, like - yes, we all need to work together and live in a community and respect everyone's differences, but that doesn't mean that every individual person has to follow the same belief system… [A]s a society yes, we need to be accepting but in uhm, in our faith we should be able to make, make choices that are in line with what we believe

There is plenty to break down in this segment. It is important to mention that there is a generalized moral imperative in the boundaries my participant is establishing. Language such as "critical issues" or "life issues" highlights the moral panic my participant feels around the boundaries they wish to maintain. They also position the issues to have multiple dimensions, indicating the boundary as a navigable social terrain. Furthermore, my participant provides a perspective on how different communities create boundaries, referencing one denominational expression versus another in their experience. My participant makes their preference known with their desire for an opportunity to define what is and what is not acceptable within their faith community. They also indicate a reflexivity in their boundaries; separating the larger secular community and the inner workings of the religious community allows for two ideologies to exist within my participants' way of being. They are able to delineate between larger community

functions and more intimate group dynamics, like the church community. This is a prime example of how boundaries compound upon one another. The boundary is porous insofar as my participants' ability to separate what is acceptable for different communities and how they are able to function separately but together. Defining what is acceptable within the broader society and the smaller community do not have to be the same, thus creating the compounding boundaries.

The ability for a community to define what is acceptable for membership is a common occurrence across my interviews. My participants highlight the compounding boundaries they experienced when relationships were affected by the community, be they personal relationships or ideological relationships. My participant, Mary, expresses this experience in the following passage:

> [W]hen my parents got divorced, nobody knew what was happening, nobody knew the situation, nobody bothered to ask the situation, but right away they were so quick to exclude my mom. People that claimed to be the closest of friends, you know, to my mom and right away just because she got a divorce, which in their minds doesn't follow what is right, uhm they were so quick to exclude her and say she wasn't welcome there… [I]t actually turned her away from the church for years, because of how people in the church treated her. But you would think, they would be the ones to say you should keep coming, you know? Even the pastors didn't allow her to continue volunteering, so when you talk about people leaving the church and you wonder why, like… People act like as if they have no idea why somebody would leave, but they're the main problem, they're the ones saying she can't participate, they stop asking her to do things, they start talking about her to exclude her, you know? I have a lot of hurt with the church as well.

Mary's experience with exclusion is not based on her own life, but on the life of another significant relationship to her. Mary' experience has influenced their understanding of boundaries by their relationship to those that have been excluded and how that was negotiated. This relationship shows how boundaries compound on one another, especially when a person's position is challenged by such conflict. Mary has clearly been affected by how her mother was

treated by community members. This creates another layer of boundary work that Mary has to engage with to maintain a position within the community. Aside from that, my participant continues to show how communities deal with conflicting identities to that of the established norms. Within the specific religious community of my analysis, this passage shows that divorcees are not seen as a valid member of the community, emphasized by the loss of status and ability to participate. This is just one characteristic that would cause the boundaries to compound upon one another. The exclusion of a particular individual after a moral violation shows that there are real consequences to the imagined boundaries of communities.

This separation of identifiable features, like being a divorcee, shows how the community uses boundaries as moral objects to keep distinct people at an arm's length, instead of full integration - even those that previously had full access to the space. My participant Mathew supports this framework in the following passage:

> [I]t *(exclusion)* sets up this barrier of hate and judgment that's very difficult to pass… [I]t's very difficult to go to that place every week when there is that much hate generated… [I]t didn't physically stop me from going, but it definitely mentally stopped me from going… [I]t caused unneeded barriers… [I]t shouldn't happen in the church… I mean, it's the house of the Lord and it should just be that. There should be no personal bias brought in when you enter the church… But when it comes down to person, like personal views, those should never be brought into the church, especially not in any leadership position… It's all about love, and the moment it is about turning your back on someone, and shooing them out the door, and looking at them funny, it's no longer a church - it's just a building where people go. [Y]ou don't think Jesus, if he was here, would walk into the church and flip tables if he saw people building walls of hate? Like, it blows my mind to think that people would think that is okay, or is godly in any way.

Matthew builds on the previous passage from Mary to show how they also experienced exclusion in their time with the community. The phrase "walls of hate" show the emotional toll the exclusion has had on my participant, but the important analytical piece here is that they reference them as being built. The exclusionary practices of the religious community are not intrinsic

elements of the church community, but rather they are built and sustained. These boundaries are strong enough to influence long standing relationships, creating a deep sense of conflict between community members and dramatically influencing how my participants make meaning out of their position in the community. When my participants experience exclusionary practices from the community that they belong to, it creates a boundary between themselves and their sense of belonging. This boundary then compounds upon the established norms and expectations that the community has around membership, participation, and access to privileges. This negotiation between boundaries is the conceptual framework of compounding boundaries - these boundaries are not solid social entities, but they are rather porous and contingent around the position of my participants.

While all of my participants have membership to the community, not all of my participants experience the same boundaries and challenges as others. To maintain their position within the community, my participants must traverse past the established boundaries constantly or risk losing their access, position, even respect from the community. This takes shape in the following passage from Matthew as he discusses one of the photos he chose from the interview:

> [I]f I was to show doubt, if I was to show my differing opinion on, you know, Christianity or religion or how the church should act, I think, like Peter, I would slip beneath the waves. But unlike Jesus, the people in the church wouldn't grab my hand… [I] think they can still be very toxic in how they approach change, or questioning, or doubt. I don't know if the supports that should be in a church are there for stuff like that.
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> -
>
> I think it's when somebody who has grown up in the church says hey, well wait a minute, I'm not super sure on that, I think it's almost like a tyranny kind of vibe. Like you're questioning us? Like we raised you to not question us? Get the hell out (laughs). [W]ho's to say that they wouldn't turn their back on me if I, if I slipped into the water? I mean, we've seen it with so many people in our church growing up… I think it is way too easy for people to slip and fall, and everyone just to turn their heads and be like listen we're only going to be sticking with the people that are good Christians, quote-unquote good Christians. I think it's of our church to prefer those who are uh, not struggling, it's easier for us to say oh, well I wanna

> hang out with the good Christians, I don't wanna hang out with those that have personal struggles with religion or anything.

For context, my participant chose a photo of an individual plunging into an overwhelming body of water. He positions himself as the individual falling into the depths without the ability to escape or survive. This powerful imagery represents their experience of doubt in the church - doubting ideology, doubting their own position within the community, doubting their own ability to continue the performance for the community. This doubt my participant holds is an excellent example of the imagined boundary that is doubt and questioning within religious contexts, and the real consequences that sinders encounter, like feeling the possibility of abandonment, or drawing a line between my participant and their ability to encounter the community on a deeper, more meaningful level. My participant highlights that it is of the church, of the community, to maintain a separation between people that differ from the expectations within the community.

Building from my participants' expression of how the church is creating a community that makes them feel at odds with their own position, they show the mechanisms that those in power wield to create a sense of othering. This is shown in the following passage from Mary:

> [P]eople aren't looking at the focus of Christianity, which is supposed to be loving your neighbor. But people seem to think of that meaning, like loving your other neighbor who is this, this, and this, but not this, this, and this… [I]f you do this *(support LGBTQIA2S+ community)*, then you're that outcast when you shouldn't be! You know what I mean? That should not make you an outcast! That should make you fit right in with everybody else!

First off, my participant draws their own boundary by discussing what they believe the focus of Christianity to be. Furthermore, they show that the church creates boundaries out of seemingly inclusive language, something that was discussed previously in this analysis. My participant is remarking upon their experience of exclusivity and the church's history of othering communities when they discuss how "loving thy neighbour" became a conditional statement, instead of an

overarching ideology that permeated every aspect of community living. Loving thy neighbour became a litmus test for community cohesion, as it is described by my participant as someone who fits certain parameters and rejects others. This passage is another example of how my church community creates compounding boundaries - for those who match the appropriate demographics for integration in the community, they are able to transgress the seemingly invisible boundaries that the church maintains; these boundaries are given life when individuals attempt to cross over having violated the established identity that community members can hold. This theme also occurred in my interview with Martha, highlighted in the following passage:

> [I]t *(visual chosen for analysis)* doesn't say love thy neighbour, even blank, blank, blank, blank. It just says love thy neighbor, that neighbour, that neighbour, that neighbour. So it's taking the approach that instead of loving someone despite something, we are loving people because - and so, that's kind of the phrase that I go back to often, because I find it's very difficult when I hear somebody preach or somebody speak and we're talking about loving people despite, loving people despite their sins, loving people despite their decisions, loving people despite their actions… [W]hen we say those things, we're putting ourselves up on a pedestal. We're saying, well I love you even though - I love you, even though you're not on the same level as me, and I hate that. [E]very time I hear that I just hate it, and I think in order to fully love someone, we have to love them because of - we can't love them in spite [of]... the things that are represented on this shirt are sometimes some of the most defining features of people, so if we pretend that we don't see these things, or we turn a blind eye and we say oh well I'll love you, except if you're a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. You can be it, but just don't tell me, I'll love you anyway. If we say that, I don't think we're fulfilling what Jesus wanted us to do. I really don't.

Martha is distinguishing themselves from the actions of their community by positioning themselves as acting in opposition to the community narrative. Separating yourself from the institutional structures is a note of privilege, as though it would be possible for all people to adequately separate themselves from their political bodies - a task that many cannot undertake, and a boundary that cannot be crossed. Aside from that, my participant echoes the same ideas presented by Mary, challenging the narrative of conditional acceptance and access to community.

Instead, my participant acknowledges that the foundation for many barriers in the community are based around the preservation of marginalized communities for the benefit of those in positions of social power. These previous passages show one aspect of how my church community creates boundaries that keep diverging identities separate from the interior functions of the community. My participants - Mary, Martha, and Matthew - highlight the experience of people within the community witnessing acts of separation and exclusion, causing them to question their positions and privileges. In addition to their passages, I had other participants remark about the experience of exclusion, firsthand.

During my interview with Elizabeth, they were quite emotional discussing how they were treated by the church on an institutional level. Their pain and frustration with the church stems from their experience leaving church leadership:

> [W]hen I as a church leader, as a wife, as a mother, as a church person, was at my absolute lowest, the church simply kept pushing instead of what I feel a church should do, is embrace and welcome and pull up, instead of push down… [A]s you know with the Salvation Army and officership, you are provided a house, a vehicle, different things, uh those things were taken and we were left to figure life out… *(crying)* I don't actually think it was necessary. I felt very pushed away. I felt very, very much so that, if you can't do all of these things, then you do none of them, and if you can't suck it up and can't toe the party line, then you need to be done… [M]y church membership was not affected. My employment, and income, and housing, and health benefits, and vehicle, all the adult things were affected.

In this passage, one thing is clear - the imagined boundaries of community have real consequences, even for those in leadership positions. These boundaries that the community maintains allow room for people who can perform their associated roles without constraints, whereas others are met with an impassable challenge. The position of each of my participants highlights the complex nature of how the community is constructing their boundaries. In this instance, Elizabeth cannot perform her role in the community and as such, they are faced with extreme consequences. This imagined boundary that the community constructs for its leadership

has devastating consequences on the life of my participant. My participant describes the boundary as the party line, indicating that it is constructed and maintained by the institution, but also by the community that conforms to the institutional structures. Elizabeth was not the only participant that faced brutal consequences as a result of their position within the religious community being challenged. My participant Galilee struggled greatly with their ability to lead in another religious community prior to attending my church. They faced discrimination from others within the institution that actively invalidated their work:

> I had some pretty drastic things said to me, simply because I was the corps officer [of a church] Like that was the harsh side of the church, right? That was where the negative side of the church really came out - simply because we were different. It had nothing to do with what we were doing, or what was being done well, or not done well, it was because we were different. We wanted to do things that didn't look like the cookie-cutter mold of the Salvation Army… I think people were more willing to enter our church doors on a Sunday morning because we didn't have a church building. So, because that, that creates preconceived notions in people, like we all admit that, we understand that. Inviting someone to Paradise Community Center had a lot of appeal to it, instead of inviting people to St. John's Temple… [W]e were not treated the same way as every other Salvation Army ministry unit in our division. So, that showed up in different ways, like you know, if there were, if there were ministry opportunities in the city of St. John's say, we were very, very rarely included in those efforts. So there was almost like an ignoring of our ministry, we're like the black sheep kind of thing… [F]rom a Salvationist perspective, so not the institution but like actual members of other Salvation Army churches, that's where we saw a lot of vitriol. You know, I think the reason was that there were people in our church that had come from the other Salvation Army denominations right? So some people might say - well, it's just the disgruntled members of one church went to another Salvation Army church, and I would say, yeah, and that was okay with me… I think the most, the single most hurtful comment that I received while I was at Pathway was from a uniformed Salvationist, from another Salvation Army church, who looked at me, straight in the face, and said your church is raping mine… [W]e heard people say well you're not a real ministry unit anyway, you're not really Salvation Army.

This passage is another example of how church communities are building boundaries among one another, especially for individuals in leadership. These boundaries are being built to preserve a traditional model of church spaces, one that is heavy laden with boundaries and barriers

accompanied by the norms that should not be challenged. For my participant to create a church community that is a challenge to the established way of doing church, it places them in a precarious position; to be a different expression of church space under an overarching institutional umbrella is to challenge the norms and expectations of being in the church community. This violation is met with criticism, invalidating rhetoric, and in the example provided, brutally symbolic accusations - "your church is raping mine." This passage is a powerful example of how church members draw boundaries for themselves within institutional contexts, as well as the power of those boundaries on people in other alternative expressions of the same community structure. For Galilee, they experienced the harsh realities of community living when other community members seek to undermine and devalue an alternative expression of the same community they belong to, one that challenges their boundaries as individuals and members of the same overarching institution. This challenge of boundaries is an example of how the church community will respond to a breakdown in the separation of disparate identities and ideologies from the internal functioning of the community.

For Babylon, this challenge of boundaries, this separation of identities brings them great conflict:

> [I]t brings me great concern as to how, even our own people, how we're caring for them as they're navigating this in their, their way of life and who they are, uhm and the room that we have for them to be involved. Like that brings me a lot of concern… [O]ur greatest commandment is to love our neighbor, right? Just as Christ loved us… [T]hat's the greatest commandment, and my fear is that we're not doing that… I just want people to know that they're loved and my fear is that, uh, they haven't heard that, or they haven't experienced that… [T]he straight and narrow has become the rigid line that we ought to follow because we've always done it this way… [T]hese are our people, right? And, we've got, we got to create a place for them.

During my interview with Babylon, we spoke at length about their struggle being in a leadership position and not being able to support community members that also belonged to the LGBTQ+

community to their fullest extent. Babylon remarked on how their position was a hindrance in connecting with other individuals that were in the LGBTQ+ community. For them, their position within the church community was a barrier to connecting across communities, something that is well documented in many areas, but furthermore, Babylon struggled to connect with church community members that were also members of the LGBTQ+ community, compounding the boundary between leadership and patron, as well as the boundary of identity within the community. This sentiment was highlighted in the following passage:

> We don't celebrate diversity, we kind of, socially, we have this positional statement where we sort of say, yeah we'll serve you but when it comes to ecclesiastical kind of approach to who we are, ethos, then do we really support the LGBTQ community, someone who may be different from you or I?

Babylon shows the institutional restrictions that create boundaries between the religious community and the LGBTQ+ community. Speaking about a community in a "positional statement" is not a true act of welcoming people, or celebrating them to use Babylon's language. The need for a positional statement is merely a signifier of the boundary that religious communities hold toward alternative identities. My interview with Babylon was not the only instance where my participant was frustrated with the institutional confinement of identity and separation of alternatives.

My interview with Delilah was one of my most emotional moments as a researcher. They described their experience of losing a church community because of institutional concerns about members of the congregation and their identities. Delilah experienced firsthand how religious communities will go to great lengths to deny certain identities a sense of belonging within the community:

> I can't understand why, why we persecute people for their sexual orientation? Like it's a shame, that I feel on behalf of my religious community… [T]o think that a church would prevent them from openly worshipping in a building, in a temple, it's

> just so hurtful… I just know that God or Jesus would never, ever, ever persecute or turn someone away from the church… [N]o matter who they were. So, to see our religious leaders doing that is just… I can't understand - [Y]es, I grew up in the Salvation Army, but please don't associate me with the Salvation Army people that say no, you can't get married in our church because you're marrying someone of the same sex. Like, don't associate me with those people! [W]hen I went from the temple and started going to [another church], where LGBTQ was so accepted, and so outwardly accepted… I felt like I belonged in that community, not 'cause I identify as LGBTQ, but simply because I identify with being compassionate, being part of a community that doesn't have discrimination, uhm being part of a community that just sees people as people, and just loving them as who they are, and that's it - I identified with that. I belonged there - and then when that church was gone, uhm, I went to try out [another church] for a bit, but also had feelings about being conflicted about being in a similar style of church, but knowing that I was still in a Pentecost church that was under the Pentecost association that did persecute an entire community. So I struggled with belonging to [that church] because I knew … [T]hat organization is still harming people and hurting people, and they hurt people! So then, I didn't feel, at the end of the day, it didn't feel like I belonged there.

Delilah shows their own boundary work by denying any commonality between other community members that violate their personal beliefs, a similar tactic used by the institution itself. Furthermore, Delilah speaks strongly on their struggle to fully integrate after experiencing the loss of a community that provided them with a space of full belonging, not just for themselves but for others that have been marginalized. Witnessing an institution persecute a community because of a divergent approach to a similar ideology shows the desperate need for religious communities to separate identities that conflict with the established norms of each congregation, even the broader context of congregations under the same institutional banner. This similarity causes my participant to express a sentiment of guilty by association, as when they encounter a different space, they still face the same symbolic boundaries that exist because of the constructed nature of exclusion and discrimination. Delilah shows how these boundaries fundamentally focus on separating divergent identities from a sense of belonging within the community. These boundaries delineate between the status of insider and outsider, which both provide distinct

privileges and challenges according to each position, which is the final function I observed in my analysis of boundaries.

The previous sections focused on the ways my participants understood the places where they built community, and how they also built the separation between insiders and outsiders. In this final section, I will expand on the ways my participants discussed being an insider or outsider, and how they can both exist within the same community. For some of my participants, they struggled to connect with their religion because of their confined church communities. My participant, Saul, spoke about this extensively in their interview. They have had diverse experiences with Christianity, stretching across numerous denominations. Saul remarks about one experience where they encountered a different denominational community during their education and it had a profound impact on them:

> I was very uncomfortable with the more like stricter, I guess uhm, uh denominations if you will, it was kind of uh a put off, or a very much of a - I wouldn't say oppression, oppression of what my beliefs were, but it was definitely feeling uhm, like I was an outsider, and that what I, if I made a mistake that - not say I would be kicked out of school or whatever - but it was just like that weird feeling of, like… if I can't do this, I'm not accepted… [Y]ou can't say anything, you can't do anything, it's only them *(lead pastors)*… [Y]ou can't really like, I don't know, put your own self into worship, again that might be for some people… [I]f you're an outsider it's hard to get in, let's just say. Like, it's hard to be accepted.

In this passage, Saul is discussing their experience participating in the sacramental rite of communion. Transitioning from a denominational experience that does not participate in the traditional sacraments to another denomination of sacrament is a large barrier to transgress, and my participant evidently struggled with that, noted in another passage where they said there were "five different walls to get through" in connecting with the ritual. For Saul, the sacramental rite of communion was burdened by a process that they were unfamiliar with. This unfamiliarity is a definite boundary that can be transgressed easily with the appropriate knowledge and skills, but

the access to the knowledge is burdened by performances that prove legitimacy. Interestingly, Saul also compares their experiences of sacrament between denominations, contrasting my participants ability to navigate social landscapes:

> I've had two experiences with eucharist *(communion)*. I've had it as a [small church] base, and I've had it as [a large church] base, and they were night and day with the same way of doing it… [I]t's the same actual sacrament of what they're doing, but how different they were. It was literally like night and day when it came to how I felt connected to God, how I felt connected to the actual sacrament of what it's doing. [I]t *(the small church)* was so welcoming, it was so, it was so like we are here to uh, come together as the church, come together as the people, to celebrate God through this, and it was like we are celebrating - but with the [large church] side of it or through my school, it was like yes, we are gathered together to celebrate God, but we can't even touch God. So, there was that like, it felt like God was this close during Local [indicates small distance], and then God was feeling this close during the Anglican eucharist [indicates large distance].

Saul was one of my only participants who used physical demonstration in their interview and it was an excellent tool to analyze their experience. To have my participant delineate between two separate experiences with two distinct denominational approaches to the same ritual shows the divergent social landscapes that both communities construct. My participant experienced a level of insider status with one community, and a level of outsider status with another community, despite the similar conditions that permeate both communities - both having similar ideological foundations in the Christian religion and both practicing the traditional sacraments. Thus, the communities have two distinct landscapes that facilitate the possibility of experiencing insider status or outsider status, dependent upon my participants ability to confine themselves to the expectations and social norms of the community. In the passage presented above, the litmus test for my participants ability to navigate the social landscape is indicated by their signified distance to a deity; being near or far from a deity is a symbolic representation of their ability to navigate the social landscape in the process of creating meaning and belonging in a space. Participating in

sacramental rituals was one example my participants used to indicate their insider or outsider status. Deborah also discussed their experience with sacrament in another church community:

> [Y]eah I do see how churches do set up boundaries, I mean particularly like, half my family are Roman Catholic and so when we go to weddings or funerals at Catholic churches, technically we're not welcome to come to the communion table 'cause they don't see Anglicans as being true Catholics, so (laugh) we're not welcome to receive communion there, uhm, so yeah there's definitely boundaries set up with some of these rituals and traditions, but my biggest problem is that I think the people who partake in them don't really truly understand what they are partaking in, and I think that's the biggest challenge.

This passage clearly supports a separation between Anglicans and Catholics, thus the mechanisms of distinction are my focus. Firstly, Deborah uses the phrase "true catholic," indicating that there is an established expectation for Christians, one that cannot be met by Protestants in the eyes of Catholics. The very nature of Protestant Christianity is enough of a distinction between Catholicism to deny them access to rituals performed by Catholics, despite the similarity between rituals. Secondly, my participant expresses their own response to boundaries by drawing their own; differentiating between those who "understand" the significance of the ritual, and those who don't, shows the built quality of these ritualized boundaries. My participant positions themselves as understanding the significance of the ritual, but restricted due to their identity as an Anglican in a Catholic space, thus creating a conflict. This is one example my participant provided that could be expanded to cover a multitude of other examples of exclusion - keeping community members that drink alcohol or use recreational drugs away from positions of authority within the church, preventing LGBTQ+ community members from holding volunteered positions, removing divorcees from volunteer positions, all of which my participants discussed in different interviews. From the communion table to daily volunteering schedules, the church uses its rituals and boundaries to create insider and outsider

status. This contrasting status is also highlighted in my interview with Jerusalem, as they speak about their experience witnessing the impacts of insider/outsider status:

> [T]he church has helped me to see others and how they each belong… [C]hurch made me believe that everyone is deserving of love and respect, and everyone should belong, no matter what. No matter if I disagree with someone or if they're different. But also, being in the church, I've noticed that there's sometimes a disconnect between what's preached and what people believe and what's actually happened… I've seen people feel unwelcome and whether they've made mistakes or they're different or even just over a misunderstanding, they're suddenly unwelcome and they're shamed, and stuff. So it's a bit of a contradiction because being in the church taught me that everyone should be welcome, and everyone should belong, and then not seeing it happen, where I've learned it, kind of makes me believe it even more strongly, I guess.

From this passage, Jerusalem shows their ability to recognize the presence of insider and outsider status in their community, but they also show the way individuals with insider status can influence change and challenge boundaries within the community. Engaging with the symbolic work of belonging and expanding the boundaries of insider status allows for a greater opportunity for community members to develop that sense of belonging as an insider and combat the barriers that seek to preserve the position of outsider as a means of uplifting the insider. Furthermore, my participant shows that they are able to exist in community with those that they "disagree with," whether that may be on political or personal opinions. This is different from the expected community process of keeping contrasting opinions, identities, and ideologies away from the internal functions of the community at large. For Jerusalem, existing in community is about creating a sense of belonging for all people, not just people who can confine themselves within church boundaries. Expanding from this passage, I had a participant express the struggle of losing their insider status, and how that fundamentally shaped their understanding of their place in the community.

Previous passages from Elizabeth have shown the institutional struggle of fighting against boundaries and barriers, norms and expectations. Elizabeth also shows how church communities function across different space and time, constantly maintaining the place of community members in relation to their experiences and evolving identities. The following passage shows how losing the insider status haunts an individual in church communities:

> [S]ince being on the outside - I have never actually felt like I'm on the inside since… [Y]ou could say it's a feeling of, like the black sheep of the family, like having an x on your back, like you were once this, then for unknown reasons and reasons that people don't care about, I am now this, so like that middle ground is, it's like what - it's like the unspoken. Did it actually happen? What does that look like? Are you sure there was nothing bad? That type of a situation… [O]r it's just completely ignored, like the last twenty years of my life never happened and now who is this person that is just kind of there, on the outskirts of the church? Which is tricky to say, because people looking at me probably don't realize that I feel that way, because I may look the part, but I sure don't feel the part.

After losing their place in a religious community, Elizabeth feels that they can no longer enter into a church community completely. The loss of status accompanies them across communities, positioning them outside the realm of belonging. They show how belonging in a community is facilitated by the status that is ascribed to them, and when that status is lost, it can seemingly never be returned. After their transgression, Elizabeth describes their place in community as the black sheep, as if they have an "x" on their back, not as a valued member, nor as someone that belongs in a church. They are able to play the part of someone that appears to belong in the community, but they do not feel as though they belong. Elizabeth' experience is the pinnacle example of how church communities utilize insider and outsider status to reinforce a sense of belonging which facilitates whether or not certain individuals experience a sense of belonging in the community. The previous passages have shown how my participants grapple with different status' amongst community members and how that also influences their understanding of the

boundaries within church communities. The very presence of insider and outsider status denotes a presence of boundaries, but also the necessity to perform these boundaries.

In this section of my analysis, I have shown how boundaries are a fundamental part of my church community. The boundaries of my church community function in three distinct ways: First, they provide my participants with a sense of place in their community. The boundaries of church communities build my participants' understanding of what their church community means to them through the symbolic processes of creating meaning associated with places. My participants show that church is not just a singular location, but a built community and collection of individuals with an intentional pursuit to create connections along similar ideological lines. Secondly, the boundaries of church communities seek to preserve the integrity of the internal functioning of power structures by separating and distancing alternative identities, ideologies, and personal expressions. My analysis shows that my church community actively removes community members from positions within the community that hold power and privilege after a violation of norms, ethics, or guiding principles that the community upholds. Finally, my church community uses insider and outsider status as a mechanism to attribute power and privilege to community members.

This section of my analysis is the greatest example of building the concept of boundary work (Gieryn, 1983). As previously mentioned, boundary work originated in the study of social borders in the medical field. However, this concept is applied to the social borders of my religious community. The boundaries that my church community creates requires constant management, highlighted by the three subthemes I mentioned above. The three characteristics of boundaries in my community function exactly the same as the boundary work that Gieryn (1983) defined in his work, as the chosen qualities for the purpose of creating boundaries and

separation. Additionally, this section also ties in the concept of truth spots, as my participants also discussed their relationships to the church buildings and how that impacts their sense of belonging and meaning (Gieryn, 2018) From my discussion with my participants, they have shown how access to a community building or established space is seemingly vital to create meaning for some, while others do not need a physical location to facilitate their creation of meaning and value. This dichotomy shows that place does not carry an inherent value system, but that it can be built or reduced by those that occupy and sustain place (Gieryn, 2018). Community members who remain on the fringes do not receive the same privileges or support as do those that are in the internal power struggle of the community. This impacts my participant' sense of belonging to the church community as a singular unit, but also across other similar religious communities. The process of creating an insider status is intricately tied with creating a sense of belonging in community. Taking this section of my analysis, I will expand on the performative nature of boundaries and how they are experienced through conflicting social performances, as well as repetitive social performances.

Performing Boundaries: Come, Now Is The Time To Perform

I have always been acutely aware of the strange traditions my denomination holds. These traditions created the foundation for how I understood my religion and my place in it. Throughout my religious life, I have seen my peers, mentors, and other community members interact with these traditions in unique ways. I have seen my closest friends thrive under the structure of my religion and others buckle under the pressure of expectation. These traditions and expectations are the manifestations of community boundaries. The social performances that accompany these traditions are the guidelines by which community members negotiate their position as well as others that conform to, or violate, the expected behaviours. Performing the boundaries of the church has three functions: First, every boundary must be performed to reinforce my participants' position in the community. Secondly, there are common rituals that are performed in the church community to denote privilege. Finally, the performance of these barriers can subvert or support the structures by which the boundaries persist.

In my analysis, I have found that there is a need to perform boundaries to uncover their presence. In some instances of my participants encountering a boundary, they also discussed the ways they performed in response. In other instances, my participants described how their behaviour was a way they created boundaries. For my participant, Theresa, they understood their place in the community by specific behaviours and social performances that community members perform, highlighted in the following passage "I think as Christians, as members of the church, we're all called to deny ourselves sometimes, to put others above our own needs… I think it is something we are called to, as Christians; put others above ourselves." This is a clear example of asceticism, but also an example of performing boundaries. Making a generalized claim of expected behaviour establishes a boundary for my participant, which is then expanded

to cover other community members. For Theresa, it is important to them as a member of the community to perform appropriately, exemplified in their belief of denying themselves for the betterment of the community. When community members transgress their expectations of appropriate behaviour, the boundary is violated, creating the need to perform boundary work, either assuaging why the expectation was violated or challenging the established norms. Like all social performances, it is a series of events that continuously create the social environment of boundaries and expectations.

Theresa provides another distinct example when discussing their interactions with other clergy and how they also reinforce boundaries from a position of social power - “I know there are clergy in various denominations who will, you know, who still won’t marry people who have been divorced once, for what - doesn’t even matter the reason, right?” This reinforces previous discussions on the boundaries of moral violations in religious communities, like divorce. It also shows a performative aspect of these boundaries. The clergy denying a service to distinct persons because of an apparent inherent quality of them establishes a boundary that is sustained by performance. The passage shows my participant highlighting “some,” but not all, marking the ability to navigate around the performed barriers of certain clergy; denying marriage to a divorcee is not a generalized experience of boundaries within the church, but it is certainly a possibility that needs to be navigated through social performances. Furthermore, Theresa also discusses how this need to perform boundaries has impacts on different generations. In Theresa’ experience, they are concerned about how these boundaries and expectations are not easily passible, creating a separation between different generations that have influenced these boundaries. In my interview with them, they said “I don’t know if there’s enough of those leaders around to sustain the amount of people who want to have the conversations, and don’t

want to have conversations where the leader says this is how it is, and this is what we believe, and this is why, the end." This concern is rooted in the transmission of values that replicates the conditions to maintain boundaries, as well as the ability of younger generations to create their own sense of belonging within the established community and its boundaries. Theresa is showing a disconnect between the process of previous generations who have created a sense of belonging within the community and the current generation. The inability, and inaccessibility, of gatekeepers to provide a path for the current generation shows the demands of performance when encountering barriers and boundaries. At another point, Theresa describes the conversations of gatekeepers as "messy conversations," a common phrase in Christian culture that often references social issues and current events; this language is, in and of itself, a boundary as it stigmatizes the conversations that challenge established boundaries and barriers. These "messy" conversations are merely a process of creating a sense of belonging that isn't founded upon the exclusion or discrimination of others in exchange for a place amongst the community. Theresa's interview showed that there is a concern about how boundaries are being performed to create a sense of belonging, at the cost of ignoring the concerns of community members, leading to a lack of dialogue on social issues which preserves the established, traditional power structures that separate conflicting ideologies and personal identities that challenge power. A final segment from my interview with Theresa illuminated how my participants make sense of the boundaries in church spaces, and how that then informs their behaviour. In the following passage, Theresa shared how they experience a church space:

> I think I always notice uhm, the atmosphere in the sanctuary before church starts, and by that I mean the mingling of people, the talking of the congregation members. For me, if I walk into a sanctuary and people are just sitting there, quietly, in their pews, and not talking to each other, that… [T]hat's concerning for me (laugh). When I walk into a church and people are talking and mingling, I just get that sense right, of okay - this is a place where people know each other, are concerned about

> each other, they just want to chat… I always look at that. I always notice how often people, uhm, explain things in the service, particularly in terms of whatever is happening for children' ministries. I always notice if, you know, there are ushers who are talking to people who have brought children about how to get to the nursery, where the washrooms are. [T]ypically in a Salvation Army setting, children would be excused from the main worship at a certain point, I always notice if there are instructions given around that to people who are hopefully visiting, or who you know, children that are there for the first time, or whatever, I always notice that… I always notice how hard a worship leader has to work to get emotion or feeling or feedback from the people while they're leading - and that's probably a mix because I know what it feels like to stand up in front of a congregation and get like, blank stares and nothing, and I know how hard it is to pull people, right? You're like, come on people! Give me something! Like, smile, clap your hands once, like do something to let me know you're with me; so it's probably a mix of knowing what it feels like to stand up there and feel like no one's with you.

Theresa' experience of taking inventory in church spaces shows that they are consciously aware of the boundaries in community and how they must be navigated, or avoided. Noticing acts of welcoming behaviour and positive social interactions shows a church community that may not be as bounded as others, referenced by Theresa' apprehension. Furthermore, the more logistical elements that Theresa notices, like accessibility and functional understanding of spaces, also represent boundaries that need to be navigated; not every boundary is symbolic. Having access to the knowledge of spaces is a privilege in some communities, and the ability to gain that knowledge is certainly a boundary that may need to be performed. In every instance of a boundary that my participant experiences, there is an accompanied social performance that dictates the quality of the boundary; creating conversation in church spaces, expanding accessibility to services in church spaces, these are actions that create a community of navigable barriers. Ignoring the presence of implicit knowledge, restricting access to spaces, these are actions of a community that constrains its members. These actions are not mutually exclusive, they can coexist within the same community. Each boundary is a performance that is maintained

by my participants seeking to create their place in the community. Another interview that spoke about performing boundaries was with Sarah, my last participant.

In my interview with Sarah, they were quite emotional discussing how the established boundaries of the church community caused them great discomfort through the accompanying social performance that was expected of them. Sarah describes their experience in the following passage:

> [G]rowing up in the church, I find there is a lot of emphasis on finding your person and getting married and having kids, which is great and someday I do want that, but I kind of chose a different path… I'm super happy with what I have done in terms of my career, and I just fear that people will look at me and either think less of me or value me less.

In this passage, my participant shows that they experienced a boundary that had a heavy emphasis on a specific social performance. This boundary is strong enough to cause my participant to doubt on whether or not they are valued by their community, simply because they diverged from the expected social performance of the community. The divergence away from the expected social performance, the social norm, led to my participant feeling as though they were valued less by the community, ultimately challenging their previously established sense of belonging to the community. When community members do not perform in accordance with the established boundaries, they are met with a sense of conflict rather than a sense of belonging. The divergence away from expected behaviour is a challenge to the power of the boundaries that inevitably results in a conflict that harms my participant, whether that be on an interpersonal level - as rare as that may be in my data - or on an internal level with a loss of belonging. This passage was not the only discussion I had with Sarah on performing boundaries in the church.

Sarah was rather vocal about their struggle with performing the boundaries of my church community. In another passage, they discussed how they negotiate their place in the community while diverging from the expected norms and behaviors:

> [T]here's choices, there's ways I've chosen to live my life that not everyone in the church will agree with, but I personally think I'm in a better spot, not necessarily because of those things, but because I'm more just open in general to experiences and that's been really beneficial in my life, but I don't know, I just fear that gets clouded by the fact that like I'm not about to get married, and I'm not about to have a kid… I don't know, and I guess it's hard to fit in with a group of people when that's all that their life is. [I]'m really proud of what I've done, and sometimes I feel like that gets overlooked because I am not married. [I] think it's weird to me that I'm in a really good place, but yet I don't feel like I can go there… I don't know, and it's almost like this weird conflict, 'cause it's like if I'm feeling really good and really open and I have a really good mindset on things, why can't I go there?

My participant shows that there is a struggle that comes with diverging away from expected behaviours, but there are also benefits for their life. Sarah shows that moving away from expected behavior allows them to become more "open," which is an example of boundary language. However, this navigation away from the expectation also moves them away from the community. Separating oneself from boundaries and barriers is unfortunately also a separation from the possibility of belonging in the community. Furthermore, my participant states that they are "proud" of themselves and yet they struggle to interact with the community because of how they have negotiated the boundaries. For each instance of my participant stating a positive, it is always followed by a negative impact of the church community. When my participant discusses how they are pleased with their life, they follow that with a struggle to maintain a place in the community. For Sarah, and many of my other participants, every boundary they encountered needed to be performed. Each performance was an act of solidifying a position in the community. Every instance of separation, discrimination, or delineation between insider and outsider was also an instance of a social performance between community members. The

imagined boundaries of my church community have real consequences on how my participants interact and create a sense of belonging to the community, some losing it all together. In this process of performing these boundaries, there were rituals that reinforced power and privilege of certain people and groups. This was the most common example of performative barriers throughout my analysis.

During my research, my church community recently changed a long-standing policy that now allows women to wear pants with the traditional attire of my denomination. The former traditional attire for women was a black tunic, white blouse, and skirt, while men wore the same black tunic with a white shirt and black pants. Additionally, after the policy change, all church members could join volunteer positions that once required a uniform if they wore similar attire, like a white shirt and black pants. This small change in official policy in my church community was a major shift away from previous boundaries that separated certain church members who were not fully indoctrinated into the denomination, like baptism or confirmation. This timely change in policy had a profound impact on my research, as many interviews discussed the implications of changing such a policy and how that influenced the process of creating a sense of belonging in the community.

In my interview with Martha, I discussed how the policy change had impacted their experience. They struggled with the power of rituals in maintaining boundaries. Martha recounts their experience with these boundaries in the following passage:

> [T]here's certain people who have that expectation and they think that you have to meet this before you get the privilege of being in the band or being in the songsters or standing on the platform. And I mean, you see that, even in like the treatment of the worship team. The worship team doesn't have to be in uniform, they don't have to be senior soldiers. But, for a long time, there was pushback against having a worship team, and some older people would get up and walk out when [the worship leader] would start singing because they were so opposed. So, I really think that that culture of privilege combined with the expectation of, of just participating in

> these rituals, in these traditions is so entrenched in the way that we think about tradition in the Salvation Army… [A]nd sometimes we're so blinded by that that we don't see the reality that, we don't really care what's happening in the world around us… [W]e really don't care about the people who are even around us in the church building necessarily, because we're just so hyper focused on the tradition, on the privilege, and on the expectation I think.

This passage directly references the special groups in the community (i.e. the band, a musical ensemble of brass instruments, and the songsters, a choral group) that previously operated under exclusive membership that was contingent upon being a "senior soldier," which is the equivalent of a fully baptized member of other Christian denominations. After the change in performative boundaries, these groups no longer held an ideologically exclusive membership clause. This shift away from traditional power structures allowed my church community to become more inclusive, but it also caused concern for other community members. Martha' experience describes how the church community is hyperfocused on the tradition, the privilege that comes with focusing on tradition, and the pushback that occurred at another point in church history that allowed non-uniformed members to join the worship team, another musical ensemble. Martha provided another example of how the community organizes itself based upon boundaries and the appropriate performances of each position in the community:

> I was sent a letter to post about Covid *(on social media)*, like explaining protocols and whatever, and the letter was addressed dear soldiers, adherents, and friends. So, I took it upon myself to delete that and I posted the letter as dear church family. (laugh) [B]ecause personally I don't think we should rank our family members, but you know, that's just me. [Y]eah, it's very interesting that we continue to accept a hierarchy, and it's what we've been trained to do, and its what people, I think, deep down want, they want to know that there's rankings.

This small act of changing language that does not have a direct hierarchy is a definite example of performing boundaries that would seek to separate distinct identities in the community from one another; removing the language that qualifies individuals is, in this instance, an act of solidarity and place-making. Martha uses their position of privilege in this situation to negotiate the

boundaries that would seek to delineate community members. Furthermore, Martha shows that the community is reproducing the conditions for separation and distinction by using language that orders, and subsequently elevates certain community members. In this instance, posting on social media - while not a frequent topic in my research - is certainly a social performance, and challenging the desired expectation of the church community to order community members by a signifier of their status is certainly a performative boundary. The final quote from Martha that summarizes their experience with performative boundaries is a powerful portrayal of the emotional weight these barriers bring:

> I hate the uniform… I don't plan on ever wearing it again actually, now that you don't have to play in the band. [I] don't think that will make an appearance back on my body, because I don't like the message that it gives. The message of othering, the message of I am on a pedestal, the message that I could afford this outfit, the message that well I am a soldier, so I don't want to wear that because of the message it brings… [W]e pretend that the tradition is the most important thing and we convince ourselves in believing that and we have this convoluted idea that the community outside of our church knows what it means, but they don't!

In this passage, I cannot ignore the presence of bodies in performing boundaries. Martha' inclusion of using their body as a means to challenge the traditional boundaries of church communities is unique to this process, as it is giving an imagined concept a physical manifestation. To actively choose a performance that subverts an expectation is to breathe life into the process of creating a sense of place and belonging; bringing boundaries to the forefront of physical experiences in community allows members to actively engage in boundary work that reinforces their place, as well as the place of those around them. For Martha, they are no longer willing to participate in traditions that would distinguish them from others. The privilege of wearing a uniform is certainly a boundary that is performed by specific community members to create a sense of belonging through ritualized behaviour. My participant, Mary, also provided similar input on the ritualized character of the uniform as a performative boundary.

Mary provided eerily similar discussion on the impacts of the uniform in their process of creating a sense of belonging. For Mary, the uniform was a symbol of struggle that represented systematic discrimination and separation of peoples. In Mary' experience, they know the uniform as a boundary marker, one that has been used to represent the harm my participant has encountered in community living. The following passage shows how the uniform is a boundary:

> [T]hat *(the uniform)* creates a barrier in the church. Easy divide, right away. You don't have to say anything and there's already a division in the church… [D]o I want to be wearing the same thing that these people wear who represent horrible things? [T]here's definitely barriers for sure, one hundred percent, especially between my own opinions of how I disagree with things that a lot of the church members agree with, so it puts up a barrier really easily already.
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> -
>
> I'm in this conflict with the uniform where, you know, right away it puts up that divide. Like you walk in to the church and you see, okay up on a platform are all these people representing this one thing and then down in the congregation, in the pews, are all these people, for the most part, representing this thing, and so if you were somebody who was coming in and have never, has never been in there, and has never experienced this before, looking for a church, right away you're gonna feel like okay, where do I belong? Do I even belong here? There's already this separation… [W]hen I think about wearing the uniform, I think about how there's such a wide variety of people that wear it and a lot of these people don't agree with a lot of the things that I agree with, and I was saying like do I wanna share this same clothes as somebody who I know would turn away some of my closest friends? Like, would I want those people that are so important to me to look at me and be like okay well you're sharing that same uniform, you're representing that same idea as somebody else who so quickly turned me away.

In this passage, Mary is showing the power that the uniform holds. Once again, my participant is showing a conflict in physically participating with the traditional power structures that create boundaries between people by way of their bodies. The symbolic boundaries that are woven into the fabric of the uniform are powerful social forces that actively remove people from their sense of belonging in community. Mary provides a reflective perspective on what it means to be participating in the boundary work of the uniform, as it is a force of cognitive dissonance, highlighted in the phrase "do I want to be wearing the same thing that these people wear who

represent horrible things?" Furthermore, Mary reinforces the use of uniforms as a mechanism to divide community members by their status, as those that have chosen to wear the uniform and those that have not, which bring their own distinct privileges and challenges. Finally, Mary shows that the very presence of the uniform is enough to create a question of belonging in community. The uniform becomes a physical manifestation of imagined community boundaries that are used to elevate individuals that can subscribe to the dominant, expected identities and performances of community members. In these passages, it is clear that the uniform is one of the common rituals that community members engage in to denote privilege, power, and a sense of belonging in the community - at the cost of engaging in the process of othering.

In this section of my analysis, I have shown that every boundary is a social performance that either reinforces a sense of belonging, or separates individuals from their place in the community. When my participants encounter boundaries, they perform in relation to the established expectations of the community. This takes shape in certain characteristics of church spaces, like the closing of eyes and bowing of heads during prayer, up to and including the performance of renouncing homosexuality or other contradictory identities, behaviour, and ideologies to the Christian faith. In the circumstances that my participant does not transgress the established boundaries in the process of creating belonging, they then negotiate their position within the community in relation to the boundary. This takes shape in my participants challenging the expected beliefs of community members and creating a space for alternative ideologies for those within the community, or simply separating themselves from the community ideologies and expectations. This finding is supported by the literature that I consulted on identity and navigating oneself through different environments and positions that would compromise or challenge personal identity (Charmaz, 2020; Javaid, 2020; Casey, 2018). The

performance of boundaries is mainly a performance of identity. Secondly, this section has analyzed a recent shift in my community as a result of a policy change that deeply influenced how the church community organizes itself and its community members. During my analysis, my church changed a policy that had a deep connection to the social performance of community members by altering the traditional wear of certain community members. The uniform of my church community changed, as well as the policy that functioned as an exclusionary foundation in certain community groups. My participants remarked on this change as an opportunity to challenge the established boundaries and exclusionary principles of my church community. The policy change and the internal political and cultural shift are also supported by Fine's (2014) work on the meso-level of analysis. In my analysis, I show how policy impacts the individual lives of community members, a major theme for Fine's (2014) concept of the hinge. The uniform was described as a performative ritual that denoted privilege amongst certain community members, at the cost of othering those that did not participate in the ritual. This section is also intricately tied with the two previous sections in my analysis, as the process of understanding community and boundaries, both on a physical level of analysis and symbolic level of analysis, is woven into the social fabric of performance. This final section is a testament to the imagined boundaries of community having real consequences on my participants and other community members.

Discussion & Conclusion

Seeing The Big Picture: Looking At The Questions My Research Answers

Three common themes emerged throughout my interviews and analysis. First, I discussed the nuances of community in every single interview I performed. Some of my participants understood community as a result of participating in a shared church space. Holding a sense of ownership to the church building was a process of building a sense of community and belonging for some of my participants. Other participants focused less on the physical building and church spaces, and more so on the ways of doing church. The unifying social mechanism that my participants employed was a process of creating relationships between community members who sought to maintain their position, as well as separate others from a sense of belonging in the community.

In my analysis, I saw my participants engage in creating relationships that solidified their position, as well as others that suited their own personal boundaries for the community. This took shape in my participant's appreciation for intergenerational relationships, relationships that were based upon the transmission of values and traditions across generational differences, as well as my participants emphasizing the importance of common truth, belief, or faith in the Christian religion.

In addition to my participants creating relationships that solidified their position within the community, my participants also engaged in acts of separating others from their sense of belonging in the community. If my participants didn't directly discuss the ways they separated others from belonging in the community, they discussed instances where they witnessed someone whom they have a relationship with experiencing this separation and act of othering. Examples of this behaviour include everything from questioning how non-Christians could feel

welcome in a predominantly Christian environment to recounting experiences of families turning their backs on LGBTQ+ children. My participants discussed how the church community functions by separating contradictory identities, ideologies, and beliefs from its internal function as a means to preserve the traditional power structures. The separation of certain individuals from their sense of belonging is an act of othering people that challenge the expected behaviours, ideologies, and social performances of community members. This process of othering is boundary work that would keep specific individuals marginalized in favour of the cohesion of traditional community members.

In both of these examples, I saw my participants engage in boundary work that served two functions: preserving the traditional power structures of the community to maintain a sense of belonging in the community, and reinforcing the space between outsiders and insiders to prevent a compromise in how the community is created and maintained. Community became a process of connecting and separating; this was expanded in my analysis of boundaries, both physical and symbolic.

The second dominant theme in my analysis was boundaries and how they functioned in the community. In this theme, there were three common threads: First, boundaries helped establish a sense of place. My participants understood their place in the community because of the boundaries, and how they were constantly being reproduced. In addition to that, my participants expressed their ability to do church outside of the established church spaces and how that was different from doing church in traditional environments. A common example of this was in relation to my participants stating that church is not just a building, but a group of people and relationships amongst those people, harkening back to my previous section. My participants spoke extensively about the ways they performed church outside of the normal spaces that are

associated with Christanity, like the church building; church was done on the golf course for some participants, for others it was performed in their workplace, or in their social allyship to marginalized groups and peoples. This boundless expression of church complimented other participants when they discussed how church is rooted in a distinct location, and other performances outside of this place were merely extensions of that locale. The two sides of the same coin were how my participants were able to do church both within the confines of traditional spaces as well as beyond them in everyday living. This shows that the boundaries of church communities help my participant understand their place in the community, while also shaping how they interact beyond the confines of their traditional spaces.

Secondly, my analysis shows that each boundary seeks to preserve the integrity of traditional power structures by separating and removing alternative identities, ideologies, and social performances from positions of privilege and power. My participants showed this in numerous discussions on the ways church communities, including their current and former communities, discriminate against other groups of people. Furthermore, if my participants didn't provide a personal example of discrimination or exclusion in their own life, they provided an example of someone whom they have a relationship with. My participants provided a range of experiences that showed a true breadth of boundaries in church, stretching from one participant not participating in the Eucharist ritual because of their denominational differences to another participant remarking how someone close to them was removed from their volunteer positions and committee memberships because of a divorce. In every example, my participants showed how the church community actively guarded against violations of established boundaries of conduct, both on a preventative level and reactionary level. These examples built upon the next

common thread from my participants, which clarifies how the church community performs boundary work.

Finally, the third common thread from my participants was that boundaries are the mechanisms through which community members understand their position as an insider or an outsider to the community. In the instances where my participants spoke about violations of boundaries in the church community, they also spoke about their own position within the community. Some of my participants discussed their own behaviour and how it wouldn't be acceptable for other community members to perform in that way, but because of their position they were capable of navigating the boundary as an insider or outsider. Other participants spoke about their position as a means to challenge the expectations of community members and the room for advocacy in specific positions of community organization. The use of an insider and outsider status denotes a power relationship between community members as well, as those on the periphery of the community do not hold the same influence as those in the core functioning of the community. It was also evident in my analysis that these statuses could change based on a variety of factors, be it personal choices or organizational demands. For some of my participants, they spoke about experiences where they witnessed a change in status, ranging in severity from uncovering illegal activities and abuse allegations by head clergy to joining a new volunteer initiative. No matter the severity of change in status, it brings new challenges and opportunities as to how boundaries are navigated.

Throughout these common threads, my participants show the many ways that boundaries function in my church community. Boundaries facilitates my participant's experience of space and place, as they create the conditions by which they understand how church spaces hold meaning and value through ceremony and ritual. This process is then superimposed on similar

situations that my participants create to expand past the singular location of church. My participants show that church exists within the traditional boundaries that have been established across generations, but also in the spaces where community members actively participate in similar rituals and ceremonies that hold meaning.

Secondly, boundaries are the tools of power used in separating community members after a violation of community expectations and norms. This separation is a vital strategy to maintain a cohesive community identity. My participants discussed distinctions between identities, ideologies, and specific behaviours from the community. This had a variety of consequences for my participants; some felt conflicted and heartbroken at the separation of others from the church community, others felt that it was necessary to maintain separation between the community and outside influences. No matter how my participants discussed boundary violations, it was clear that they understood them as a force for separation.

The final common thread of boundaries was their ability to instill insider and outsider status, which carried its own unique privileges and challenges. When my participants discussed their sense of place in the community, they spoke about an insider/outsider status; it became evident that understanding the boundaries of my church community meant understanding how they create insiders and outsiders. In my analysis, it is entirely apparent that my community is built upon boundaries, and how they are constantly being reproduced and negotiated between powers, which ties in with the final dominant theme of my analysis.

The final dominant theme of my analysis focused on how my participants were performing the boundaries of my church community. This theme is intricately tied to the unique quality of my church community and denomination, as it has militaristic qualities to its overall functioning and hierarchy. The militaristic nature of my denomination brings a distinct tone to

the social performance of community members, with a large focus from my participants on the uniform, a traditional dress code for full members of the church. This is a unique quality of my research as there is a compounding boundary upon the visual social performance of dress in my church community that is not present in other Christian denominations. While there may be the generalized experience of "Sunday Best" clothing, my church community adds another layer by providing an opportunity for church members to dress similarly to official clergy. The uniform was a hotly contested topic in my research, notably due to a recent change in denominational policy that shifted traditional power structures towards a more inclusive church environment.

I found two common threads in my participant's discussion of performative boundaries: First, every boundary needed to be performed to reinforce the position of community members, and when this could not be done, my participants struggled to maintain a sense of belonging to the community. Secondly, performative boundaries were also occasionally ritualized, which denoted a sense of power and privilege to those that could perform, highlighted in my participant's discussion on the uniform.

When I was discussing boundaries with my participants, they frequently spoke about the ways in which they performed according to what the boundaries were in their lives and position within the community. This took form when my participants discussed the same boundaries, but had differing responses and performances; one participant spoke about their inability to join a volunteer initiative prior to a policy change as unimportant, whereas another was frustrated at the need to prevent community members from joining the same volunteer program. This is just one example of my participants having different social performances in relation to their position within the community. On the other hand, I had participants speak about their inability to perform certain expectations that were intertwined with the community boundaries. Instead of

experiencing boundaries as a navigable experience, or as an object of scrutiny, boundaries became impassable barriers that could not be navigated or scrutinized, only avoided. These experiences marked a struggle for my participants, as this inability to navigate hindered the process of making meaning in church spaces, ultimately pushing some of my participants away. This inability to navigate was tied to the social expectations of my church community, as these boundaries permeated across the behaviour of church spaces into the daily living of my participants. When my participants did not allow for the boundaries of church spaces to influence their lives, they experienced a conflict in creating meaning. This then led into my analysis on the uniform and certain performative rituals in church spaces.

The timely policy change on uniforms that was occurring during my analysis had deep impacts across my research process. The shift away from a more rigid, exclusionary policy to a slightly less exclusive policy changed the landscape of boundaries for my church community. This change provided an incredible opportunity to analyze how boundaries are made real, extending past the symbolic into our realm of senses. The shift away from requiring volunteers to wear and conform to the uniform and its accompanying social covenant as a prerequisite to participation in certain distinguished groups, to a less authoritarian expression of group mentality that did not involve overarching social commitments fundamentally changed the power structures in my church community for the foreseeable future. This change disrupted the organizational ritual of wearing the uniform in certain positions of favour in the community, challenging the established norms of privilege and power, ultimately disrupting the conditions of boundaries between those groups and the larger community. The uniform was, and still is a symbol of power and privilege in the community, notably because it is the same traditional wear of the head clergy in the church community, thus providing the conditions of other uniformed

community members to serve as an extension of official power and regulatory authority, granting privilege and prestige to those who have conformed to the ideological commands of full membership. The boundary that was once supported by the uniform was brought low by community members challenging the conditions that kept others at a distance, away from participating fully in the community. This challenge was a process of creating a sense of belonging that could extend beyond the traditional boundaries of my church community, ultimately stemming from performances that were expected from the same boundaries. Finally, performative boundaries are not only tied up in these examples, but they permeate across all situations my participants discussed. Whether that was understanding the church building as a symbolic place to creating a sense of church on the golf course, my participants actively performed church when they were challenging boundaries, as well as conforming to them.

My analysis has shown me that my church community is fundamentally tied to the process of creating and maintaining boundaries as much as it is tied to challenging and changing them. My analysis has revealed real consequences to the imagined boundaries of community, that has ultimately led to the harm of some community patrons, as well as the betterment of others. Additionally, my analysis shows the delicate strength of community as it is always in a state of change, as well as consistency; there could not be progress and change in my church community if there were not people that sought a better experience for themselves and others. In short, my church functions under a principle of exclusionary inclusivity that seeks to separate those that would challenge the established power structures and traditions from their sense of belonging in the church community, while drawing close those that would support and maintain the conditions of exclusion for the sake of their own inclusivity. This takes shape in the ways my participants discuss community, how the community creates and maintains its boundaries, and

how they reinforce distinct social performances that become intertwined in the boundary work of making meaning and belonging to the community at large. In my research, I witnessed my participants, both my peers and my elders, discuss frustration with the state of my community, as well as hope and joy for my church community. I believe that is the greatest indication of the exclusionary inclusivity in my research.

Refined Silver: How My Participants Engaged With My Methodology

Alongside the surprises I encountered with my participants and how they view their community, I was also surprised by how my participants engaged with my methodology. In every interview, my participant provided a new perspective as to how the visual permeates their everyday lives and how that takes different shapes and forms for each person. One of the more common occurrences in my interview process was my participants' expressing the ethical limitations of my methodology. This limitation led to interesting adaptations from my participants, which profoundly influenced my analysis. Finally, my methodology ultimately surprised me with its adaptability, which will shape my future as a researcher.

The ethical restrictions of my methodology had a profound impact on my research. The main restriction for my methodology revolved around keeping outsiders of the research away from potential harm by keeping visuals with non-consenting participants outside of my analysis. Essentially, this took form in a request for my participants to not choose any visuals that had other people in them, any people that did not already consent to the visual being used in my research. This had major implications for the types of visuals my participants could draw on. Most of my interviews involved my participants remarking how they initially had an idea of what visuals they originally wanted to draw on in the early recruitment stages, but once they were informed on the ethical limitations, these ideas shifted. While this is still interesting data,

these ethical limitations created a restriction on the ways my participants expressed meaning in the interview by having to reevaluate how to tell their narrative. With these ethical restrictions, the potential of what the interviews could have been if my participants were unrestricted in how they expressed their values and meanings is forever lost. One of the more profound examples of how this impacted an interview was with one of my participants who asked to make a declarative statement at the beginning of the recording. This participantbegan their interview by stating that they could not provide a full representation of their relationship to the church community, because for them, the church community fundamentally consists of relationships to people and experiences with people. The ethical limitation of my participant not being able to use visuals that had important relationships and experiences with people in them fundamentally influenced the data I was able to collect in that interview, as well as data from others who had the same struggle. While my methodology did provide moments of unique data collection and analysis, I cannot deny the struggle I had with this ethical limitation.

The ethical restraints of my methodology were present in all stages of my research, but this did not prevent me from experiencing some truly unique moments with my participants. I observed a few profound approaches to my methodology: First, I had far more participants use physical objects for their visual representations than I expected. Secondly, I had a participant provide visual descriptions (i.e. a described visual scenario) for his chosen visual representations of their relationship to the church, which fundamentally shifted how I analyzed my data. Finally, I was surprised by the lack of religious iconography that was used by my participants in my interviews.

For my participants who used physical objects in their interviews, I wasn't surprised to see that their bibles were included. But, I was surprised how many of them had chosen at least

one physical object to display their relationship to the church. These physical objects presented in my interviews blurred the lines between the sensory realms of meaning for my participant, as their bibles that once held a kinetic power now extended into the visual world, providing them with the opportunity to express deeper meaning. This transition between the physical and the visual certainly benefited my data, as well my methodology as it deepened the scope of visuals that my participants provided that ultimately shaped my analysis; understanding why my participants used a physical object for a visual representation started with asking how they have created a relationship to this object. This unique pattern of my data expanded how I saw my methodology and how my participants created meaning.

The single most unique experience I had in my research was when a participant provided visual descriptions of situations, people, and places connected to the community as the representations of their relationship with the community. This fundamentally altered how I saw my participant's visuals across all my interviews, how I analyzed them, as well as their meaning. This interview had a variety of unique visual expressions, as they were not only one type of visual description - my participant provided a visual description of an influential person in their lives that was tied to the community, a visual description of certain social scenarios that echoed common themes in their experience with community, and a visual description of traditional experiences that have shaped their understanding of the community. This alternative expression of my methodology eradicated the boundaries I had established in my mind as to how my participants could engage my methodology. This participant circumvented the ethical limitation by describing an important relationship to them as a visual object, and in addition to that, they created a nuanced description of a distinct pattern that had emerged in my data, but it did not fit exactly into the chosen visuals of previous participants. This distinct expression of my

methodology shifted my analysis to incorporate how my participants chose these visuals and what else connected them to the visual that wasn't innately described within the visual example. This participant provided me with an opportunity to reflect upon my methodology as I was engaging it within every following interview, as well as in reviewing every interview I had previously completed prior to this participant.

As I reflect upon my methodology and how my participants engaged with it, I am still surprised by the lack of religious iconography that was used by my participants. Yes, I had participants who used their physical bibles as a visual representation, but this is not so much religious iconography as it is a physical object; religious iconography would be common visual depictions of scriptural events or individuals, like the Virgin Mary or the iconic white-washed Jesus. This lack of iconography had an interesting effect on my analysis, as this influenced the literature that I would draw on. Furthermore, the lack of religious iconography had a distinct political influence on my analysis as well. The presence of alternative expressions of religious visuals from my participants does not equate to a causality of traditional religious iconography bearing no significance to my participants. It does show, however, that the traditional, culturally propagated religious visuals did not encapsulate my participants' relationship to the church enough to be included in their interview. In terms of religious iconography, it moved my analysis away from breaking down the traditional visuals in terms of how they influenced norms and perspectives in the community. Aside from that, the lack of religious iconography was a surprise to me as a researcher, and a potential example of future methodological study.

Overall, my methodology has surprised me with how it has adapted and evolved across the change of in-person to virtual research. Across my research, I have seen two important features of my methodology: the ethical limitations, as well as the unique approaches my

participants utilized in their interview. First, my methodology was absolutely hindered by ethical limitations. These limitations positioned my research to a certain potential that I needed to navigate; limiting what visuals my participants could draw upon influenced my data and my analysis. These limitations fundamentally changed what my data could have been. This did, however, create the conditions for my participants to engage with new and creative expressions of my research. My methodology was certainly impacted by the patterns of my participants, but it was also impacted by the unique approaches of my participants that forced me to reconsider pieces of my analysis that were being built across my interviews. Having a participant make a declarative statement that acknowledged the ethical limitations of my research of removing people from the visual aspects of their relationship to the church shaped how important people are to the functioning of my community; having a participant circumvent these ethical limitations by bringing a verbal description of their chosen visuals instead of a physical documentation created a new appreciation for what was present in my participants' visuals as well as what was missing. These two examples of my participants influencing my perspective in unique and surprising ways complimented the patterns and themes that were emerging in my data. Ultimately, I could not imagine utilizing a different methodology for my research - it has provided me with moments of genuine emotion and reflection that is entirely unique to witnessing how people see their world and their process of creating meaning.

Passing The Cup: My Relationship to My Research & How It Has Influenced Me

I still remember the first day of my interviews. It was November 13th, 2020; it was a beautiful fall day. I sat anxiously, reviewing my documents, preparing for any questions from my participant. In this moment, I knew that I was beginning a journey into my community that was completely foreign to me. This project has had profound impacts on me - not only as a researcher, but as a human being. In reflecting on my work, I asked myself three questions: How has this research affected me? How has my research influenced my position in my community? What were the social factors that pushed me to this research?

I knew that this research would be challenging; entering into a community that I have been a part of since birth as a new role, in a new perspective, was daunting. I was surprised by how emotionally taxing it quickly became. I had consulted literature that had shown me the struggle of insider research (Kleinknecht, van den Scott, & Sanders, 2018; van den Hoonard, 2019). I had read countless articles on the struggle of church membership in various denominations, I had spoken with friends and mentors about how I felt in my church community, and yet I still felt burdened by my research. Behaviours I had engaged in that normally assuaged my anxiety, my frustrations, my cynicism, no longer worked. My research had taken its toll and I was left with the charge of pursuing it to completion.

The toll lay in the process of analyzing the harm of my peers, how they spoke of their own harm and the ways they had harmed, or harm others. The analysis of the social mechanisms of harm in your community is a devastating, but fascinating pursuit. Furthermore, witnessing members of my community express a belief in discrimination was extremely demoralizing, especially with the presence of such rampant deflective rhetoric. While an important part of my analysis, as a community member it was incredibly difficult to see the harmful stereotypes of

Christian communities being expressed by my community - homophobia, pro-life politics, moral superiority, all of the negative cultural ascriptions made to Christianity were present in my community. When I experienced these disappointing aspects of my community, I questioned my own position in the community. My participants perpetuated homophobic ideas, I wondered how I participate in these beliefs by staying in the community. In reflection, this was also something I considered when my participants fought against these harmful beliefs that are common across Christianity; how am I participating in these beliefs by staying in the community? This was a major struggle for me. For each participant who had a socially-problematic perspective, I had another who expressed a socially conscious perspective - this conflict between my membership and the discriminatory or inclusive perspectives of my participants was the most emotionally taxing aspect of my research. In addition to this emotional aspect of my research, I had to also consider how my research would affect my position with my community.

The question of how my research may affect my position within the community is one that has kept me up at night. Will my community deny my work based upon my position? Will my community fracture further under the weight of my research? Every single story of exclusion I share in my work, I know the person who carries that struggle. Every single story of disappointment and frustration I heard in my research, I knew two more from others outside of my work. Every story of heartbreak and loss in my analysis, I know the faces of the family that no longer feels they belong in my community. Will my work show to them that there is a place for them? Will my work show that there are those that would challenge the systems that keep others away from belonging to my community? Ultimately, I cannot know how my research will affect my position in my community. What I do know is that my position in the community has influenced how I chose my research project and why I pursued my topic. In my community, I

have transitioned across almost all of the common milestones but I have taken a black sheep position since my university education.

As a member of the community, I have gone from being a child under the care and tutelage of leaders, to being a leader for another generation, and now existing in a liminal space of community membership. I have been able to experience a variety of Christian denominations in my own personal faith, and I have seen how each of them create barriers and boundaries among people. I have maintained membership to my research community for most of my life, but I have not always felt a sense of belonging in that space. I have been a member of two other church groups, one of which was lost due to systemic oppression by another denomination. Having experienced the loss of a community, one where I held a deep and powerful sense of belonging, profoundly impacted why I pursued this research in my first religious community. When I lost this church, I lost a large part of my faith; I had lost what little hope I have for my religion, what little hope I had for people to build community not based on exclusion, or discrimination. I had joined this community out of a sense of disillusionment with my first church community, as I began to see more examples of exclusion and separation of people from a sense of belonging. To see that community fall under the weight of institutional discrimination was devastating to me on a deeply personal level. Grieving this community is something I do every time I step into a Christian space. This experience profoundly shaped why I pursued this research. I wanted to see how my church community has built itself and sustained itself over generations while another church community was cut down. This research was not for retribution, but a response to my experience of losing community. My ability to maintain connection to multiple religious communities was a privilege, one that not many in my other community shared. I took this privilege — and curse — back into my community to look at how

my church has built relationships and what these relationships are sustained upon. Taking my experience of losing a religious community as a major force as to why I pursued this research, I have also considered other social factors that have pushed me to this research that are not on a personal, micro-level.

The two main social forces that pushed me to this research was the Covid-19 Pandemic, and the generational impacts of my church community. To begin, I cannot discount the sheer impact the Covid-19 has had on me, on a personal level, outside of my research. I have lost members of my community whom I could not grieve in person during the pandemic, I have suffered personal hardships with uncertain circumstances in my own life, and I lost my grandmother during the pandemic. I have been resilient throughout the uncertainty and unprecedented times; this has not been without a cost, however. My research had to fundamentally change because of the pandemic, and I grieve this change as well as celebrate it. I celebrate what my research has become and how it has pushed me to greater depths as a person and as a researcher, but I grieve what could have been; losing personal access to my community for months, lacking access to a space that carries so much meaning to me, separating myself from incredibly important relationships, all of these things were a result of the pandemic, and all of these things influenced my research. Experiencing the struggle of separated relationships in the pandemic highlighted the power that relationships have in creating a sense of belonging for myself, ultimately blurring into my research. In addition to my personal experience with the pandemic, I have to acknowledge the generational perspectives of my community.

This acknowledgment is twofold: One, my community has generational differences and divides that are quite extreme. Thus, as a member of the community and also a researcher, I was pushed towards this project because of my consideration for what kind of community I wish to

leave behind for the future generations. I do not know how my research will impact the future of my community, but I could not deny the potential impact of my research in changing the policies of my community. Participating in research that has a distinct lens of social justice and accountability has always been a high priority for me, primarily because of my perspective on the future of my community, as well as other, future communities that will be touched by my work. I want my research to move my community, and every community that would listen, towards a more compassionate relationship between members, a more equitable environment for all people, a more loving expression of connection and relation. I want my community to be true to the words that they preach - whosoever will, may come.

Secondly, on a more analytical note, I have always noticed the decline in church members across generations. There is a distinct difference between my parents' generation and the generation between myself and them. This was certainly an analytical starting point, as I saw a social difference between generations in my community and I wanted to probe my community to find out how this happened, and how to potentially inform the future of my community. In a sense, this research has both a reactionary and preventative perspective; I do not wish for my community to have a mass exodus like the generation between myself and my parents, but I also do not wish for the harmful discrimination to persist any longer in my community or any other church community. Ultimately, I want my community to take down its barriers and boundaries. That is what pushed me to my research, and it had a combination of perspectives: To question what happened in my community prior to my experience that has ultimately shaped my relationship to the community, and how I can influence the future of my community through research and reflection.

Ultimately, as I reflect upon my research and how it has affected me, I am met with a cornucopia of emotions. I am wracked with imagined guilt over how my community membership may be compromised by the exclusive and discriminatory behaviours of those that would claim my faith as their own. I am astonished by the sheer love and compassion that my participants expressed in their interviews. I am shocked and appalled by the systemic oppression my community creates and maintains. I am uplifted by the hope and faith my participants hold for a better future, a better community. Throughout all of these emotions, I am reminded of a key tenant: Trust the process (van den Hoonard, 2019). All of these experiences have been a struggle, but they have also provided me with hidden blessings I only realized after I finished my work. Reflecting on my position within my community and how it influenced my work was also an opportunity to reflect on the relationships that have shaped my sense of belonging to my community. Analyzing my community and its structural flaws allowed me to identify potential room for improvement. These two basic examples permeated across all of my reflections in some capacity, as with each blessing in my research, it came with its own challenges. Trusting the process of my research, my methodology, my analysis, all parts of my work led me to a richer experience. My research has made me lose sleep, shed tears, and contemplate my position in academia now and in the future - but it has also filled me with an incredible sense of purpose, one that I have not had in my life before beginning my work. I am grateful for every hour I spent awake wondering if I was honoring my participant and their data, I am grateful for every tear shed, and I am grateful for every person who has influenced my work to this point - that is what matters to me.

Forty Years in The Dessert: The Future of My Research & The Limitations of My Work

While I cannot know how my research will impact my community, I do know what future directions to pursue in my research. From my research, I highlight three potential areas of future research based on my participants' discussion of certain topics unrelated to the current project. One avenue of potential research my participants unknowingly highlighted was the phenomenon of Christian influencers on social media and their connection to Mega-Churches. Secondly, my participants highlighted the recent rise of alt-right conservatism and the relationship between the far-right and evangelical Christianity. Finally, my participants spoke highly of another church community in St. John's that is connected to my University Chapel which could lead to an ethnographic project.

While it wasn't discussed extensively, I did have an interesting conversation with one of my participants about the performative aspects of another denomination they experienced in their religious life. My participant highlighted the trend of people they know changing aspects of their appearance to fit a mold that has been popularized by Christian culture on social media. These aspects seemingly become transitional markers for community members that my participant knew prior to their denominational shift. The future potential of this research would seek out what social forces are propagating this phenomenon of Christian influencers and what mechanisms are at work. This research would primarily focus on Christians who actively engage with Christian content on social media, either through influencers or Mega-Churches, such as Hillsong in Australia, one of the most widely-known churches in the world.

The second avenue for future research would focus on the recent rise of Alt-Right Conservatism and its connection to Evangelical Christianity in North America. One of my participants spoke extensively about their experience with an Evangelical Church, prior to their

experience with my church community. They experienced the Evangelical Church in question through a joint mission trip - a colonial-evangelical project for churches to impact marginalized regions - from their previous church community. This experience was discussed rather extensively through my interview with them, leading to a further conversation on conservative Christianity and its colonial roots. In this conversation, my participant shared how the mission trip was rooted in colonial ideologies; evangelizing to a marginalized community, renouncing traditional living for the Christian faith, reinforcing westernized traditional gender roles, all of which occurred during the mission trip. Beyond discussing the mission trip, my participant also discussed how conservative Christianity is dominating the representation of Christianity in North America, especially after the election of Donald Trump in 2016, the Covid-19 Pandemic, and the subsequent Capitol Riots in 2021. These recent events provide an incredible opportunity to research how Christianity has changed over the last five years, and how conservative Christianity has given rise to the Alt-Right movement. I would primarily focus on analyzing news stories involving churches or church groups, comparing the coverage between sources, and how these communities are represented in media. Additionally, I would look at how the American Evangelical Church has influenced churches in Canada, primarily through the analysis of media relating to churches and church groups.

The final avenue of research that my participants illuminated was focused on an ethnographic study of a church community located on my campus, run by the Pentecostal chaplain, called Mosaic. Some participants referenced this church community in passing when they were comparing their experiences among church communities. A few of my participants were members of both churches. For this project, I would not have a defined research goal, as I would be watching the data unfold around me in the interactions of the community and how

patrons built relationships, connections, and meaning with the church community. My priority for my research will always focus around how religious communities are building, or not building, connections among people and other communities, and how this social process is performed. That being said, my future as an academic begins with this work, and it is not without limitations.

One major limitation of my work is that my analysis cannot provide a truly holistic perspective on the construction of boundaries. While my analysis highlights how boundaries are created within my community, I cannot provide insight into the boundaries of other groups that come into contact with my community. My research, unfortunately, cannot illuminate how these barriers impact outside communities beyond what my participants have already described to me. I cannot know how those outside of my community experience their outsider status. For future analyses, my goal is to look at both the internal construction of boundaries within a religious community, as well as how those on the periphery experience and navigate the religious community, if at all.

Another limitation of my work is that I do not engage with those that have been historically victimized by the church, primarily the LGBT+ community. There was extensive discussion in my research on the ways that the church has victimized the LGBT+ community, but none of my participants openly identified as a member of the LGBT+ community. While there was tremendous allyship within my research — as well as disdain — my participants could not provide a lived experience of the marginalization and discrimination faced by the LGBT+ community. Without this lived experience, I cannot provide an in-depth analytical perspective on the boundaries of my church community from the position of the outsider, only from the position of insiders.

The last major limitation of my work is the scope of my analysis. While I provide an in-depth analysis on the inner-workings of my church community, I cannot speak on the boundaries of other church communities underneath the same denominational tradition, nor can I speak on church communities with different faith traditions and structural hierarchies. Without these pieces to the puzzle of constructing boundaries, I cannot fully map the landscape of discrimination and hostility of the many communities that exist within one another. Even within my own analysis, I cannot map out the surrounding groups that interact with my participants, such as other memberships that may or may not be compromising to my participants position within the church community. My analysis is certainly informed by my participants membership to other groups, but I cannot map out those boundaries – that is beyond the scope of my research, currently.

Promised Land: Final Thoughts On My Research

In the fall of 2020, I began researching how my church community creates a sense of belonging amongst church members. In my analysis, I uncovered the numerous strategies that my participants employed in creating a sense of belonging to the community, as well as the numerous barriers they encountered while creating their sense of belonging to the church community. I found that my participants understood the community through relationships that they cherish and foster, as well as relationships that separate. Certain relationships flourished beneath the presence of boundaries as it tied people together through a common belief, while others struggled to maintain connection across the separation. Across all of these relationships, boundaries were constantly being performed through a process of renegotiation as the boundaries of my church community were solidified through the relational power of church members and how it was exercised against others. As both a member of the church community and a researcher, I was able to witness my research from an insider perspective, having access to the jargon and social norms that my participants were referencing, as they were the same norms and terminology that I experienced for my entire life. It was a blessing and a curse to see my peers, mentors, and elders participate in my research; I uncovered the ways my church community distances itself from those seeking a sense of belonging and connection to a community, one that is tied to an ideology of neighbourly love and care. I also witnessed my participants' express hope for the future as our church community changes to include a greater population of people from a variety of backgrounds. My research has shown me that my church community does not welcome everyone, and that they have actively removed people from belonging in my community. But, my research has also shown me that my community is filled with possibility and hope that our collective past does not dictate our future, and that we do not have to build a

community based upon the exclusion of others to feel as though we belong to something greater than ourselves. My research shows that there is great resiliency in fighting for the belonging of all people in divine spaces. My hope is that this research would push my community, and every other community, towards relationships not based upon boundaries and exclusions, but on compassion and celebration.

My thesis makes direct contributions to the concepts of boundary work (Gieryn, 1983) and the hinge (Fine, 2014). I expand boundary work from its original position focusing on the way that people construct social barriers to include how these barriers must repeatedly be performed and that they compound upon one another. My research highlights that the construction of social boundaries is not a one-dimensional process, but a constant process that seeks to eliminate the imagined threats to belonging. My work also supports the idea that crossing the threshold of acceptance and belonging does not equate to a permanent position within the community. There is a major element of performing within the appropriate limits, reinforcing the idea of boundaries having compounding qualities that need to be consistently reinforced through behavior. While Gieryn (1983) showed how boundary work shows the separation between groups of people, my work contributes to the overall process of the separation. In addition to my contribution to Gieryn's (1983) concept, my work also extends the work of Fine (2014).

As Fine (2014) reinforces the importance of the meso-level analysis in understanding both the macro and the micro levels of society, my work echoes the same sentiment. My work contributes to the growing emphasis on groups and how they impact the individual as well as the larger society. Group level study shows how a collection of people create meanings which then influence how they approach society as a whole. My work shows the same results, as my church

community demonstrates how they take the same boundaries they create within the church community and apply them to the greater community at large — or how they challenge the same types of discriminations and exclusions found in their church and beyond. In addition to the conceptual frameworks I am contributing to, I am also filling a gap in visual methodologies as well. My use of the photo voice shifts its position from health research to research focused on religion, community, and meaning. I am directly contributing to the literature on visual methodologies as it is not a mainstream technique. My work does not contribute to just one area of study, but to several specific fields that have a wealth of knowledge already. As I stated above, I hope that my research not only contributes to the academic world, but to the many worlds that exist within my own communities, for the better.

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Appendix I – Interview Guide

1. Did you have an opportunity to collect some pictures to show me?
    a. What does this picture mean to you?
2. How does the church influence how you see yourself and others?
3. What are some positive ways the church has influenced who you are today?
    a. Are there any ways it has had a negative influence on you?
4. What are some things you value about the church?
5. How do you think people value church today?
6. How do you think the church values people?
    a. Do you feel valued by your church?
    b. Has there been a time you haven't felt valued?
        i. What happened?
        ii. How did you feel?
7. Do you feel like you belong in your church?
    a. How so?
8. Anything else you would like to discuss about church and its impacts?