

*THE CREATION OF COMMUNITY:  
AN EXPLORATION OF COMMUNAL IDENTITY CREATION IN MUSIC FESTIVAL  
COMMUNITIES AND CHURCH CONGREGATIONAL COMMUNITIES*

by

KYLIE LOUISE MCCORMICK

A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Theology and Religion  
School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion  
College of Arts and Law  
University of Birmingham  
November 2021

UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

**University of Birmingham Research Archive**

**e-theses repository**

This unpublished thesis/dissertation is copyright of the author and/or third parties. The intellectual property rights of the author or third parties in respect of this work are as defined by The Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 or as modified by any successor legislation.

Any use made of information contained in this thesis/dissertation must be in accordance with that legislation and must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the permission of the copyright holder.

## ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this dissertation is to explore the formation of communal identity in music festival communities and in church communities, ultimately discovering and discussing themes that are integral to the formation of communal identity. The themes of place, symbol, and ritual are examined in a representative grouping of church communities and music festival communities, yielding both descriptive and prescriptive understandings of the formation of communal identity.

I explore the formation of communal identity through theological and social scientific reflection, focusing on the work of scholars such as Mircea Eliade, Paul Tillich, and Clifford Geertz, who balance the lived experience of community with identity-shaping themes. Pairing theoretical frameworks anchored in the scholarship with extensive fieldwork, I show that the themes of place, symbol, and ritual are important communal identity themes. In comparing the music festival communities to the church communities, I note how church communities both succeed and struggle with some of the communal identity themes, leading to a prescriptive conclusion for the researched church communities. The ultimate hope of this dissertation is that the church communities adopt specific communal identity formation recommendations, engaging in positive, theologically attuned identity shaping, crafting centralized communal identities that draw from their successful music festival counterparts. The dissertation and its research not only reflect a new area for lived religion research but also explore the lived reality of two groupings that will allow for church communities to reflect on and enhance their formation of communal identity.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to express my sincere and deepest gratitude to my advisor Dr Andrew Davies for the support and guidance during my doctorate study and research. I am appreciative of your invaluable insight, patience, and humour throughout this process. I would also like to express my gratitude to my secondary advisor, Dr David Cheetham, for his guidance.

I would like to thank the University of Birmingham, and specifically the Postgraduate Office, for their support that allowed me to explore the fieldwork communities noted in this research.

I would like to thank Rachel Paprocki, who copyedited this dissertation for conventions of language, spelling, and grammar.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family, my friends, and my community for their unwavering support during this time.

## CONTENTS

CONTENTS.....	vi
TABLES AND FIGURES .....	ix
CHAPTER ONE .....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Forming the Research Problem and the Research Question .....	1
1.1.1 Forming the Research Problem and the Research Question: Church Communities .....	2
1.1.2 Forming the Research Problem and the Research Question: Music Festival Communities .....	5
1.2 The Research Problem and the Research Question .....	8
1.3 Research Focus .....	9
CHAPTER TWO .....	12
METHODOLOGY .....	12
2.1 Methodology Introduction .....	12
2.2 Defining Qualitative Research .....	12
2.3 Research Methodology in Theory .....	14
2.3.1 Participant Observation in Theory .....	14
2.3.2 Material Culture in Theory .....	24
2.4 The Methodology in Practice .....	26
2.5 Ethical Considerations .....	34
2.6 The Comparison Choice .....	41
CHAPTER THREE .....	46
PLACE.....	46
3.1 Introducing Place .....	46
3.2 Framing Place through Theological Reflection .....	46
3.2.1 Walter Brueggemann: The Covenantal Relationship and Place .....	48
3.2.2 Norman Habel: Place and Its Symbolic Purpose .....	51
3.2.3 Jeanne Halgren Kilde: Place and Its Power Purpose .....	53
3.2.4 Mircea Eliade: Place and Its Sacred Purpose.....	57
3.2.5 Conclusion .....	63
3.3 Framing Place through Social Science Reflection .....	64
3.3.1 Yi-Fu Tuan: Topophilism and the Connective Aspect of Place .....	64
3.3.2 Ellen Semple: Place and Its Explorative Purpose .....	69
3.3.3 John Horton and Peter Kraftl: Place and Its Consumerist Purpose .....	71
3.3.4 Jon Anderson: Place and Its Legitimizing Purpose .....	76

3.3.5 Don Mitchell: Place and Its Sacred Purpose .....	79
3.3.6 Conclusion .....	81
3.4 Observations in Music Festival Communities and Church Congregational Communities	82
3.4.1 Place and Occupation in Music Festivals .....	83
3.4.2 Place and Occupation in Church Communities .....	95
3.4.3 Place and Exploration in Music Festivals .....	102
3.4.4 Place and Exploration in Church Communities .....	112
3.4.5 Place and the Sacred in Music Festivals .....	115
3.4.6 Place and the Sacred in Church Communities .....	120
3.5 Conclusion .....	124
CHAPTER 4 .....	126
SYMBOLS.....	126
4.1 Introducing Symbols .....	126
4.2 Framing Symbols through Theological Reflection.....	126
4.2.1 Paul Tillich: The Reflective Purpose of Symbols.....	127
4.2.2 Margaret R. Miles: The Emotional Purpose of Symbols .....	132
4.2.3 Avery Dulles: The Relational Purpose of Symbols .....	139
4.2.4 Mircea Eliade: The Transcendent Purpose of Symbols .....	142
4.2.5 Conclusion .....	147
4.3 Framing Symbols through Social Science Reflection .....	148
4.3.1 Clifford Geertz: Creating Cultural Identity through Symbols .....	148
4.3.2 Alan Barnard: The Communicative Purpose of Symbols.....	151
4.3.3 Conclusion .....	155
4.4 Observations in Music Festival Communities and Church Congregational Communities	156
4.4.1 Symbols and Transcendent Shift in Music Festivals .....	156
4.4.2 Symbols and Transcendent Shift in Church Communities .....	164
4.4.3 Symbols and Emotional Shift in Music Festivals .....	171
4.4.4 Symbols and Emotional Shift in Church Communities .....	177
4.4.5 Symbols and Ideological Shift in Music Festivals.....	184
4.4.6 Symbols and Ideological Shift in Church Communities.....	191
4.5 Conclusion .....	195
CHAPTER 5 .....	198
RITUALS.....	198
5.1 Introducing Rituals.....	198

5.2 Framing Rituals through Theological Reflection .....	198
5.2.1 Paul Tillich: The Ontological and Moral Experience and Rituals .....	199
5.2.2 Mircea Eliade: Rituals and Their Historical Purpose .....	205
5.2.3 Theodor Herzl Gaster: Rituals and Their Future Purpose .....	208
5.2.4 Catherine Bell: Rituals and Their Communicative Purpose .....	212
5.2.5 Conclusion .....	219
5.3 Framing Rituals through Social Science Reflection .....	220
5.3.1 Arnold van Gennep, Victor Turner, Emile Durkheim: Rituals and the Liminal Process .....	221
5.3.2 Clifford Geertz: Rituals and Their Social Glue Purpose .....	227
5.3.3 Roy Rappaport: Rituals and Their Encoding Purpose .....	231
5.3.4 Conclusion .....	235
5.4 Observations in Music Festival Communities and Church Congregational Communities .....	236
5.4.1 Rituals and the Liminal in Music Festivals.....	236
5.4.2 Rituals and the Liminal in Church Communities .....	243
5.4.3 Rituals and Fortification of Doctrine in Music Festivals.....	249
5.4.4 Rituals and Fortification of Doctrine in Church Communities.....	253
5.5 Conclusion .....	257
CHAPTER SIX.....	260
CONCLUSION.....	260
6.1 Reflections on the Research.....	260
6.2 Church Community Recommendations .....	262
6.2.1 Recommendations for Place .....	263
6.2.2 Recommendations for Symbols .....	267
6.2.3 Recommendations for Ritual .....	270
6.3 The Contribution of this Project to Ecclesiology.....	273
6.4 Future Research .....	275
6.5 Conclusion .....	278
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	281

## TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Researched Church Communities.....	29
Table 2: Researched Music Festival Communities.....	32
Figure 1: The large field dotted with tents at Eco Festival. Photograph by Kylie McCormick, 2018.....	89
Figure 2: A standing art exhibit at Acoustic Festival. Photograph by Kylie McCormick, 2017..	91
Figure 3: An example of intentional explorative place creation found at Acoustic Festival. This explorative place was filled with opportunities and located next to the yoga tent. Photograph by Kylie McCormick, 2018. ....	104
Figure 4: An arch leading into a sitting area, branches manipulated to create an arc. Found at Eco Festival. Photograph by Kylie McCormick, 2018. ....	106
Figure 5: A stage placed in the middle of a forest. Found at Forest Festival. Photograph by Kylie McCormick, 2018. ....	107
Figure 6: Pigs at the Farm Festival. Photograph by Kylie McCormick, 2017.....	110
Figure 7: Another Farm Festival animal. Photograph by Kylie McCormick, 2018. ....	110
Figure 8: A branding image from Forest Festival. Twitter, 2018. ....	159
Figure 9: A branding image from Hillsong Church London. Hillsong Church London Facebook. 2018. <a href="https://www.facebook.com/pg/hillsongchurchlondon/photos/?tab=album&amp;album_id=10150581563586681&amp;ref=page_internal">https://www.facebook.com/pg/hillsongchurchlondon/photos/?tab=album&amp;album_id=10150581563586681&amp;ref=page_internal</a> . ....	167
Figure 10: A branding image from Hillsong Church London. Hillsong Church London Facebook. 2018. <a href="https://www.facebook.com/pg/hillsongchurchlondon/photos/?tab=album&amp;album_id=10150581563586681&amp;ref=page_internal">https://www.facebook.com/pg/hillsongchurchlondon/photos/?tab=album&amp;album_id=10150581563586681&amp;ref=page_internal</a> . ....	167
Figure 11: Eco Festival's large-scale tent village. Photo by Kylie McCormick, 2018. ....	172
Figure 12: Wild Life Festival. Photograph by Max Langran. Wild Life Facebook. 2017. <a href="https://www.facebook.com/disclosure.wild.life/photos/a.1939033499712558/1939040406378534/?type=3&amp;theater">https://www.facebook.com/disclosure.wild.life/photos/a.1939033499712558/1939040406378534/?type=3&amp;theater</a> .....	173
Figure 13: Wild Life Festival. Photograph by Sam Neil. Wild Life Facebook. 2017. <a href="https://www.facebook.com/disclosure.wild.life/photos/a.1939033499712558/1939612866321288/?type=3&amp;theater">https://www.facebook.com/disclosure.wild.life/photos/a.1939033499712558/1939612866321288/?type=3&amp;theater</a> .....	173



Figure 14: The interior of Sainte-Chapelle. Photograph from the Convention and Visitors Bureau website. <a href="https://en.parisinfo.com/paris-museum-monument/71380/Sainte-Chapelle">https://en.parisinfo.com/paris-museum-monument/71380/Sainte-Chapelle</a> . ....	178
Figure 15: A panel created by Makoto Fujimura, an example of the type of art that can be used in symbol creation. ....	181
Figure 16: Impericon poster. 2019. <a href="https://www.impericon.com/uk/impericon-never-say-die-13-11-2019-london-ticket.html">https://www.impericon.com/uk/impericon-never-say-die-13-11-2019-london-ticket.html</a> . ....	187
Figure 17: Impericon poster. 2018. <a href="https://metalanarchy.com/tag/alazka/">https://metalanarchy.com/tag/alazka/</a> . ....	188

## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

### **1.1 Forming the Research Problem and the Research Question**

The idea for this dissertation was sparked by my own experiences in two lived communities. One of these was a church community outside of Los Angeles, California, where I worked as a pastor. Like other church communities, this one struggled with retention and growth. The other community was a music festival community, South by South West (SXSW), located in Austin, Texas. Unlike the church community, SXSW was a thriving music festival attracting increasing numbers each year. SXSW as a brand offered a high-quality experience, but I was most struck by the way the weeklong SXSW left a lasting impact on those who gathered. The church community I worked for, and the SXSW community, functionally operated under the same goal—to craft a community that people wanted to return to—and yet SXSW seemed exceedingly successful.

The contrast between the two communities led me to wonder how communal identity is formed and why the specific church community I worked in seemed to miss out on what the music festival community offered. The question led me to research the subject and, after finding no published fieldwork on this specific connection, I wondered if a greater research opportunity was present. This introductory chapter will look at these two experiences in more depth, formulating an understanding of the research problem and research question that ultimately formed the base for this dissertation.

### **1.1.1 Forming the Research Problem and the Research Question: Church Communities**

During my time as a pastor in 2013, I heard colleagues, other pastors in the surrounding area, and even congregation members share a similar lament, the lament of what could be described as a fading church. While our microcosm of church communities was not representative of the global church, the church communities in the greater Los Angeles area were in this time and space facing an obvious demise. Many churches were failing, and the church communities were shrinking.

The experience of church decline was not necessarily demographically specific; rather, research in the United States and in the United Kingdom shows that a communal crisis is evident across many church communities. The Pew Research Centre has specifically looked at the religious landscape of both the United States and other countries, ultimately concluding that church congregational communities are dwindling in the United States and the United Kingdom. While not necessarily traditionally academic in nature, the 2014 Pew report does provide substantial information showing the realities of religious affiliation. Pew found that the US population that identifies as Christian has fallen 12 percent over the past decade, with Protestant-specific Christianity falling 8 percent in those ten years.<sup>1</sup> Like the greater Christian affiliation, religious attendance has also fallen: Pew notes that religious attendance has dropped 7 percent. The 2014 study is also the first time that monthly attendance (45 percent) was dominated by attendance of only a few times a year (54 percent).<sup>2</sup> Not only is Christianity losing percentages of US population affiliation, but the rate of attendance among adherents is also slipping, reflecting a general decline in community gathering in Christianity.

---

<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Centre, "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace," October 17, 2017, <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

In a global view there are other pockets where the church is declining numerically. An interactive map on Pew's website shows a sliding scale of religious affiliation in the United Kingdom. In the last decade, from 2010 to 2020, Christianity in the United Kingdom has decreased from 64.3 percent in 2010 to 59.1 percent in 2020. Pew has projected that by 2030 Christian affiliation will be around 54.3 percent, a continuation of the decreasing population affiliation.<sup>3</sup> The England and Wales census taken in 2001 and 2011 reflect the Pew report. The census reports a fall in the number of Christians over the ten years, Christianity decreasing from representing 72 to 59 percent<sup>4</sup> of the population, or four million<sup>5</sup> fewer Christians. Religion in total, however, is not in decline. The census reports that the number of people identifying as Muslim increased from 1.5 million in 2001 to 2.7 million in 2011.<sup>6</sup> Fourteen million people noted a non-religious affiliation, climbing by 6 million in the ten years.<sup>7</sup> While these data's accuracy is skewed by their age and by the potential inaccuracy of all census materials, they do, I argue, display this demise of Christian community.

Some researchers affiliated with the Pew reports try to find reason behind the exodus, suggesting that a 'do-it-yourself' approach toward religion intermixed with the political

---

<sup>3</sup> Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project, "United Kingdom | Religions in the UK," *globalreligiousfutures.org*, 2019, [http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/countries/united-kingdom#/?affiliations\\_religion\\_id=0&affiliations\\_year=2030&region\\_name=Allpercent20Countries&restrictions\\_year=2016](http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/countries/united-kingdom#/?affiliations_religion_id=0&affiliations_year=2030&region_name=Allpercent20Countries&restrictions_year=2016).

<sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics, "How Religion Has Changed in England and Wales," June 4, 2015, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/articles/howreligionhaschangedine nglandandwales/2015-06-04>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

problems of church has created the schism.<sup>8</sup> Philosopher Charles Taylor notes that a “belief in God is no longer axiom. There are alternatives,”<sup>9</sup> leading to not only the do-it-yourself attitude but also the multiplicity of options for religious affiliation. Others note that religiously unaffiliated “nones”<sup>10</sup> have replaced religious communities, another display of the migration away from traditional religious affiliation.

Theologians too have approached the subject, looking for reasons behind the demise. Reflecting the reports, Tom Beaudoin echoes that “religious belief and practice is shifting from traditional forms of religion to new religiosities that have been obscured by the dominant modern view of religion,”<sup>11</sup> an explanation of the rise of the “nones.” John Drane looks more to the church itself, noting the church has “fallen on hard times,”<sup>12</sup> a claim upheld by the statistics presented in the reports above. In various publications Drane has suggested that the church is in “decline,” “in a weak position,” culturally “side-lined,” and even “stagnant.”<sup>13</sup> Relating the church to a sort of museum, Drane repeatedly acknowledges how the church “cannot survive in

---

<sup>8</sup> Hillary Hoffer, “Nearly One-Third of Millennials Who Went to a Music Festival in the Past Year Say They Took on Debt to Afford It, Survey Finds,” *Business Insider*, September 1, 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/millennials-going-into-debt-music-festivals-coachella-lollapalooza-bonnaroo-2019-8>.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2007), 3, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bham/detail.action?docID=3300068>.

<sup>10</sup> The unaffiliated population rose 9 percent in the same time span that religious “nones” grew 4 percent. (Pew Research Centre, “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace,” October 17, 2017, <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.)

<sup>11</sup> Tom Beaudoin, *Secular Music and Sacred Theology* (Liturgical Press, 2013), 48, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bham/detail.action?docID=4546308>

<sup>12</sup> John Drane, *The McDonaldization of the Church: Consumer Culture and the Church's Future* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2001), 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 65; John Drane, *Faith in a Changing Culture: Creating Churches for the Next Century* (London: HarperCollins, 1994), 13, 25, 158.

its present state.”<sup>14</sup> I appreciate Drane’s reference to the museum-like nature of the Church and find the metaphor to be of interest. Like a museum, I might suggest, the Church has become not a participatory community but a spectator sport, a place where people come and see and consume. Some church communities seem fixed, holding on to relics and collecting dust like corners of museums.

The statistics and the potential reasons behind the decline certainly reverberate in my initial experience. Despite being in a dynamic, thriving city, the Los Angeles area church community I experienced was stale. The other pastors in the area seemed to experience something similar. Despite their best efforts, church communities lost more and more members, personifying the report statistics. But the tension felt with the decline of church community is not universal for all communities; in fact, communities outside of the church seem to thrive. One such community was the music festival community, which I experienced at SXSW.

### **1.1.2 Forming the Research Problem and the Research Question: Music Festival Communities**

Located in Austin, Texas, SXSW is an established music festival that attracts thousands of fans and industry personnel. With vibrancy and energy, my week at SXSW offered a rich experience. The Fuller Seminary class that I was attending with not only participated in musical experiences, hearing from different bands in small and intimate rooms, but we also ingested the culture that filled the SXSW experience. We attended seminars and discussions about cultural topics, interviewed artists who were navigating the SXSW stages, and followed a few of our favourite bands as they played multiple nights around the city. SXSW crafted a vortex of community, transforming the week and transforming those who participated in the communal experience.

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 115; Drane, *The McDonaldization of the Church*, 182.

SXSW is just one example of the ever-growing music festival landscape. According to the Nielsen Music Reports, US-based music festivals are on the rise in terms of audience attendance, a direct juxtaposition of the Pew report for dwindling church communities. Like the Pew Research, the Nielsen reports are not traditionally academic in nature but rather a “comprehensive, in-depth study of consumer interaction with music in the United States.”<sup>15</sup> What the Nielsen reports found about the rise of music consumption and music festival attendance reflected my observations at SXSW.

The Nielsen reports note that live music consumption has increased, with 57 percent of respondents to a 2016 survey attending a live event, 8 percent of which was a music festival.<sup>16</sup> The 2017 Nielsen report found that the percentage of music consumers took a slight dip but that music festival attendees sharply rose. In 2017, 50 percent of respondents attended at least one live music experience, but 18 percent attended music festivals.<sup>17</sup> So, while the general population of live-music attendees dropped 2 percent, the music festival attendance increased 10 percent within a year. The trend of increased music festival attendance continued in 2018, with a reported 23 percent of respondents to the survey attending one.<sup>18</sup> As other communities fail to

---

<sup>15</sup> Nielsen Global Media, “2016 U.S. Music Year-End Report,” January 9, 2017, <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/report/2017/2016-music-us-year-end-report/>.

<sup>16</sup> Christopher Partridge reflects on the power of music, writing that it has the “power to move, to agitate, and to control listeners, to shape their identities, to structure their everyday lives, to define and to demarcate, and to challenge and to construct hegemonic discourses.” It is no surprise that music festivals would thus grow in popularity, the power of music moving many to participate. While Partridge notes that music in this purpose is central to the sacred and profane, we can understand that music as a powerful tool propels many to seek live music experiences. See Christopher Partridge, *The Lyre of Orpheus: Popular Music, the Sacred, and the Profane* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2013), <https://oxford-universitypressscholarship-com.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199751396.001.0001/acprof-9780199751396>; Nielsen Global Media, “2016 U.S. Music Year-End Report.”

<sup>17</sup> Nielsen Global Media, “2017 U.D. Music Year- End Report.”

<sup>18</sup> Nielsen Global Media, “U.S. Music Mid-Year Report 2018.”

attract and hold members, the music festival community in its general form is experiencing an increase and growth.

These numbers are not necessarily surprising, considering my illuminating initial music festival experience at SXSW. Not only did I observe the growing crowd over the week, but I also experienced a type of communal belonging that crafted an identity-shaping experience. My classmates noted something similar, many of them commenting on the incredible allure of the music festival experience. Those observations are of interest, as many of them worked in local church communities and should theoretically be experiencing the sort of liminal experience regularly. Yet it was the SXSW experience where they felt the most transformed and connected, the lived experience of one community surpassing the lived experience of another. Music festivals, SXSW included, seemed to craft an experiential community that was identity shaping. The church, on the other hand, seemed to fail on multiple levels of community creation and communal shaping.

These two experiences, qualified by the above statistics, sparked the initial idea for the research presented in this dissertation. I experienced two lived communities: The church community seemed to struggle to form a centralized communal identity, while the music festival communal identity thrived in its creation and dispersion. The experiences left me perplexed, and I turned to see if any theologian had researched this specific trend. Finding no research available, I took on the task of exploring the way in which communal identity was formed in the differing communities. We will now move on to discuss how this initial spark evolved into an actual research problem and question, giving structure to the initial idea.



## 1.2 The Research Problem and the Research Question

The contrast between the two kinds of communities illuminated a problem: The church communities in the initial context lacked the understanding and the ability to craft a community of interest to many. They lacked a communal identity. This problem is important and research-worthy because community is central to the contemporary Christian experience, and if churches are not creating community well, they are not fully expressing the greatness of a lived, experiential faith. Yet surely if the church can reflect on and potentially adopt thematic structures that create core communal identity in music festivals, the church can find new expressions of communal identity. The problem of the communal crises is not insurmountable; rather, the problem opens the door for deeper theological reflection and the potential for a revival in communal identity.

After finding a lack of research in both the areas of communal identity formation and in the comparison between music festival community and church community, I chose to embark on the research. My goal is to understand what themes craft communal identity, both theologically and social scientifically.<sup>19</sup> With this knowledge I also wish to compare the communal identity formation in music festivals and church communities.<sup>20</sup> My end goal is to offer up practical recommendations for church communities crafted from the research process and observation,

---

<sup>19</sup> Pete Ward argues that “to understand the church, we should view it as being simultaneously theological and social/cultural.” I agree with Ward, who prompts a reflection on the formation of communal identity in both theology and social science, giving us a better understanding of how the church is shaped as both a theological and a social entity. See Pete Ward, “Introduction,” in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Pete Ward (Eerdmans, 2012), 2.

<sup>20</sup> Gordon Lynch notes that a study that involves popular culture and theological analysis should always include some form of evaluation, drawing me to compare and evaluate the formation of communal identity in our community groupings. See Gordon Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture* (Blackwell, 2005), <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bham/detail.action?docID=228606>.

lending a practical theological conclusion to the research. The research present is focused on exploring and answering three questions.

- 1) How is communal identity created, both culturally and religiously?
- 2) What themes of communal identity formation differ between church and music festival communities?
- 3) And, what specific elements can be adopted by church communities to craft stronger centralized communal identities?

Exploring and answering these three questions will not only address the research problem but also lend important insight into the formation of contemporary church communal identity.<sup>21</sup> In doing so, there is potential to understand why falling numbers are statistically prevalent, and what contemporary church communities might adopt to better form communal identity.

### **1.3 Research Focus**

Before moving on to the methodological reflection, here I clarify the intention of the research, as the area of theology and culture that focuses on music festival research is sparse. When one hears about this research, they may be positioned to expect a discussion of the music itself, the way in which phenomenological experiences centred in music consumption shapes community. This assumption is not surprising, as much has been written regarding popular music and theology. Contemporary theologians such as Pete Ward, Jeremy Begbie, Gordon Lynch, Tom Beaudoin, and Barry Taylor have all written on differing theological approaches and understandings of

---

<sup>21</sup> Ward notes how research questions are “situated in theoretical conversations” and so act as contributions to and shapers of the theoretical approach and ultimate conclusions. The conversation sparked by these questions regards the nature of lived religion and the formation of community. See “Attention and Conversation,” in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, 38.

music in popular culture.<sup>22</sup> The theological evaluation of popular music is an understood way to approach theology and culture research. Yet the research presented in this dissertation does not include any reflection on the music itself. While the music is a part of both community experiences, I do not address music specifically because while, an interesting part of each community, it is not an area that I find directly adds to answering the research question.

One may also assume that the research will deal greatly with a reflection on the popular culture aspect of music festival communities. The theologians mentioned above, along with others such as Kelton Cobb, Christopher Partridge, Conrad Ostwalt, and Craig Detweiler, all address what popular culture is and what it means in a theological reflection.<sup>23</sup> Again, this research does not necessarily redefine what popular culture is in a theological reflection, so a general discussion of how music festivals parlay into the popular culture is not present in this dissertation. Rather, a very specific grouping of communities is my primary body of interest, so I discuss specific communities rather than generalised culture.

While this research is influenced by theology and culture theologians, and while the communities researched certainly align both with popular culture and with music, the research presented in this dissertation is interested in a different focus. I will not be commenting on music or the influence of sound nor will I be looking to define popular culture; rather, the research

---

<sup>22</sup> Pete Ward, *Selling Worship: How What We Sing Has Changed the Church* (Paternoster, 2005); Jeremy Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise: Towards a Theology of the Arts* (T&T Clark, 2000); Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*; Beaudoin, *Secular Music and Sacred Theology*; Barry Taylor, *Entertainment Theology: New-Edge Spirituality in a Digital Democracy* (Baker Academic, 2008). Lynch notes that theology and culture research began in the 1970s with an initial interest in the relationship between theology and film.

<sup>23</sup> Kelton Cobb, *The Blackwell Guide to Theology and Popular Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005); Partridge, *The Lyre of Orpheus: Popular Music, the Sacred, and the Profane*; Conrad Ostwalt, *Secular Steeples: Popular Culture and Religious Imagination* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2012). Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor, *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003).

presented are observations and comparisons of two groupings of communities, focused on a deep description of church communities and music festival communities, exploring through participant observation and material culture observation the formation of communal identity. Gordon Lynch would call research of this nature research focused on the way in which popular culture practices serve as a medium for theological reflection and comparisons, music festival communities serving as a medium for comparison for our church communities.<sup>24</sup> We now turn to the methodological structure and process, understanding how the research shapes the argument of this dissertation.

---

<sup>24</sup> Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, 21.

## CHAPTER TWO METHODOLOGY

### **2.1 Methodology Introduction**

Because of the innovative nature of this research, it is important to outline my methodology in detail. My research relies on qualitative research methodologies, drawing mainly upon participant observation and material culture observation. In this chapter I first explore the theoretical basis of qualitative research and the specific methods I will be using, before moving on to discuss how the theory is actualised in this research. I conclude the chapter by reflecting upon the strengths and limitations of my methodological structure. I begin by outlining the basic and core principles of qualitative research as evidenced in this project.

### **2.2 Defining Qualitative Research**

The research found in this dissertation is firstly qualitative. Qualitative research is, according to practical theologians John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, “slippery and difficult to contain within a single definition.”<sup>1</sup> Qualitative research houses different approaches and applications, its broadness marking it as an appealing option for many research processes. Despite the potential slipperiness of qualitative research some definitions do prove helpful, the definition of Denzin and Lincoln being one such example. They define qualitative research as

Multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings,

---

<sup>1</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (SCM, 2016), 24.

attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.<sup>2</sup>

What I find most helpful from this definition is the recognition of the multi-method focus of qualitative research, as well as the necessity of approaching research subjects within “their natural settings” or habitats. As the qualitative process in this research draws both from theory and observation in areas of both theology and social science, the multi-method focus is an important aspect for the base understanding of the qualitative nature of this research. Along with that, the research is steeped in fieldwork, meaning that the qualitative research for this dissertation is defined in part by the research within natural settings.

John McLeod adds to our understanding of qualitative research, noting that “qualitative research is a process of careful, rigorous enquiry into aspects of the social world. It produces formal statements or conceptual frameworks that provide new ways of understanding the world.”<sup>3</sup> McLeod notes that researching aspects of the social world is a cornerstone of qualitative work, adding that this work tends to be rigorous in nature, producing statements or conceptual frameworks that produce enhanced understandings. In other words, we draw lessons from our explorations, which can help us better and further understand the wider world in which we live. The necessity for qualitative research to produce new insights is an integral understanding for the qualitative process. McLeod’s definition reflects the process and aim of this research.

Qualitative research is understood for this project as an approach that observes and interprets specific observations and experiences within a culture or community with the purpose of understanding these communities, ultimately to produce conceptual frameworks that provide

---

<sup>2</sup> Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 54.

<sup>3</sup> John McLeod, *Qualitative Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy* (SAGE, 2001), 3.

new understanding. This understanding of qualitative research, though, is only the larger methodological umbrella for this dissertation, providing its overarching framework. We now move to the more specific methodology that underscores this research, focussing on participant observation and material culture reflection methodologies.

### **2.3 Research Methodology in Theory**

While labelling this research as qualitative offers some initial understanding of the type of methodology I adopt, this naming alone is not exact enough to fully understand the specific theoretical framework I will rely upon, which is best understood as a methodology focused on participant observation and material culture reflection.

#### **2.3.1 Participant Observation in Theory**

Qualitative research is in part structured on observation of phenomena, events, or communities meaning that many qualitative researchers employ some form of observational methodology. As this research draws from qualitative research processes the observational aspect and interpretive aspect serve as primary methodological structures. The research found in this dissertation specifically draws upon participant observation and reflection upon material culture as its major methodological tools.

Participant observation is a research method that focuses on detailed observation of and participation with the community experience, the world-building of communities.<sup>4</sup> Many

---

<sup>4</sup> Peter Berger notes that this observation of world building is important in these forms of research. Berger notes that “man’s world is imperfectly programmed by his own constitution. It is an open world. That is, it is a world that must be fashioned by man’s own activity.” The notion of world building, both for the individual as noted by Berger and for the community as noted in my research, suggests that culture is created and therefore through participant observation one can theoretically explore and dissect world construction. See Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Open Road Integrated Media, 1990), 1, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bham/detail.action?docID=1804802>.

practical theologians and social scientists engage in some form of participant observation, engaging in disciplined observation or the “intentional and systematic investigation and description of what takes place in a social setting.”<sup>5</sup> Participant observation can take on different characteristics for each researcher, though certain core elements do unify the distinct approaches.

Alpa Shah highlights the key components for participant observation, noting that participant observation includes research in “long duration”; the exploration and revelation of “social relations of a group of people”; a focus on “holism” or the “study of all aspects of social life (group, place, and material)”; and a balance of researcher “intimacy and estrangement.”<sup>6</sup> These four concepts outline the process and purpose of participant observation, offering the theoretical foundation for those using participant observation in their lived community experience or ecclesiological research methodology.

Shah describes participant observation first through a description of time; participant observation is first and foremost research formatted in a long duration.<sup>7</sup> This understanding is not surprising as it is shared by general qualitative research.<sup>8</sup> A good majority of both lived experience researchers and ecclesiological researchers conclude that the “essence of participant observation is prolonged participation of the researcher in daily life of the group.”<sup>9</sup> The long

---

<sup>5</sup> Christian B. Scharen, ed., *Explorations in Ecclesiology and Ethnography* (Eerdmans, 2012), 299.

<sup>6</sup> Alpa Shah, “Ethnography? Participant Observation, a Potentially Revolutionary Praxis,” *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7, no. 1 (2017) 51.

<sup>7</sup> Shah, “Ethnography?,” 51.

<sup>8</sup> Watts (“Ethical and Practical Challenges of Participant Observation in Sensitive Health Research,” *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* (2010): 301–12) notes that an extended period of study is normal in qualitative research. Watts notes that research over “extended periods” enables the researcher to “build in depth understanding of the research context.”

<sup>9</sup> Raymond Gold (“Roles in Sociological Field Observations,” *Social Forces* 36, no. 3 [1958]: 217–23) fortified the necessity of long duration for the integral relational connection that allow the researcher and participants to have the ease of relationship crucial for good research. Yet Gold writes that a prolonged duration



duration of participant observation, I find, allows the researcher to fully integrate and immerse into the community and therefore is integral for both the outsider and insider roles. This is important for lived experience methodologies: Without immersion, a researcher cannot fully understand and curate a thick description of the community in study. Participant observation thus starts with a duration of adequate length.

The second characteristic of participant observation Shah notes is that the method enables the revelation and exploration of social structures and social relations, or more simply put, the culture of the community. Some communal minded researchers seem to agree that this characteristic means the exploration of “habits and repeated behaviours” or “norms, values and behaviours,” the socially driven structure of the community.<sup>10</sup> The researcher, while still present within the community, takes a step away from participation for important observation. This exploration of social relation serves as a reflection on visibly observable community patterns.<sup>11</sup> The observation, naming, and exploration of the social structures highlights the outsider role that Shah weaves into her understanding; in this stage of participant observation the researcher

---

could be detrimental, too, observing that some informants can become too identified with their fieldwork community due to the prolonged nature of research. Maurice Punch, “Observation and the Police: The Research Experience,” in *Social Research: Philosophy, Politics and Practice*, ed. Martyn Hammersley (Sage, 1993). 185.

<sup>10</sup> Atkinson et al., eds., *Handbook of Ethnography*, 94; Punch, “Observation and the Police,” 185.

<sup>11</sup> Watts notes that the concept of patterns is an understandable construct for participant observation. Watts writes that participation observation developed from sociologist to “describe and understand patterns of life in different parts of society using nonobtrusive methods.” What Watts highlights is the original notion of patterns, and so in my reflection it seems that there is a universality in the understanding of finding patterns within the mythological structure of participant observation. See Watts, “Ethical and Practical Challenges,” 4.

Patterns are important for both the music festival community and for the church congregational community: The “study of congregations should focus on practices. Religious behaviour, identity formation, and so forth occur in diverse parts of the lives of the congregants, even if they receive quite concentrated attention within the congregation. Our focus should therefore be on the activity of those who gather through congregations, theological work that may well extend beyond the congregation itself” (Scharen, *Explorations in Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, 48. This notion is entrenched in pattern identification and analysis, showing that participant observation is in many ways focused on social relations or pattern creation, even for ecclesiological participant observation.

observes and details the societal structures acting as an observer but not necessarily quite yet as an active participant.<sup>12</sup>

I find this initial stage of participant observation, recognising the need for the researcher to acknowledge their outsider status, crucial for two reasons. First, the unearthing and exploration of social relations and patterns is of great importance because it gives observable structure for the deconstruction of the community. That is, the observation of habits, behaviours, norms, or values and the expression of these observations allows researchers (as outsiders) to begin to develop an initial impression of the structure of the societal framework to help them orient their participation appropriately. In making such observations, researchers give form and language to what is observed, observations that can highlight a subconscious structure not recognised by the community itself.

Along with that, I would note that the observation and analyses of patterns of social relation allows the researcher to mitigate personal research bias. Patterns that are observable produce repetitive and visible themes for the communities, these social relations becoming something others can observe. Working first as an external observer and not as a participant allows the researcher to critically detail the societal structure, naming that which gives organisation to the community. While the analysis of these social relations is an important part of participant observation and one that has the potential for more researcher bias, I argue the mere recognition of social relation patterns allows the researcher to identify and begin to catalogue community norms in a way that mitigates initial observation bias.

---

<sup>12</sup> Gold names this role the complete observer, who removes themselves from social interaction with the informants, acting without any notion of participation. See Raymond L Gold, "Roles in Sociological Field Observations," *Social Forces* 36, no. 3 (1958): 217–23.

Insight into the societal structures and cultural makeup of a community is key knowledge which can emerge from participant observation and gives way to the third characteristics, the holistic need in participant observation. Describing and emphasising the “holistic” element, Shah notes that all aspects of life, including place and material culture, must be observed. Again, the researcher observes as an outsider the intricacies of the community, crafting a thick description of the community and at times uncovering what the community itself may not be fully aware of. We will discuss the holistic notion of participant observation in greater detail below, including its focus on material culture; for now, we can understand that social relations are only a piece of the holistic process.

Shah discusses another factor integral in participant observation, the balance of the researcher’s intimacy and estrangement. Shah does not use the often-noted terms of insider and outsider, but her intentions show an observation of the importance of crafting boundaries, giving a nod to the insider and outsider realities of participant observation. Shah maintains the importance of mindful outsider boundaries, so that the researcher maintains a clear outsider perspective while being sensitive to the community experience.

Watts seems to echo this perspective, expressing the view that part of participant observation is a “non-obtrusive” stance.<sup>13</sup> While the researcher seeks intimate experience and knowledge, they also must maintain some set of boundaries, and therefore estrangement. The language of boundaries denotes, in my reading, a stronger emphasis on the role of outsider in participant observation. The balance of intimacy and estrangement is certainly a difficult one to master, and yet as an “observer one tries to stand back and analyse in a way possible foreign to

---

<sup>13</sup> Watts, “Ethical and Practical Challenges,” 301–12.

the subject, asking questions deemed eccentric or irrelevant for practical purpose.”<sup>14</sup> Firmly establishing participant observation in a partial-outsider perspective, the call for balance shows the roles the participant-observer researcher must access under this methodology.

Shah presents a helpful four-pronged process for participant observation. Her explanation that participant observation is a time-rich process yielding deep description of social processes and thick or whole communal understanding directly parallels with the goals of this dissertation. Along with that, Shah hints at the outsider role that researchers take on when engaging with participant observation. This outsider role necessitates that a researcher examines the community without fully participating in it; while insider knowledge may exist, the researcher is charged with crafting research boundaries. The role of outsider is integral to cultivate the thick description for it allows researchers to, from a distance, observe and analyse the community. Yet a purely outsider perspective does not fully encapsulate the researcher’s role in participant observation, since the researcher takes on both the role of outside observer as well as the inside role of participant.

Participant observation utilizes the researcher in the role of both outsider and insider.<sup>15</sup> While an aspect of the insider role may be cultivated in prior community knowledge, the researcher also crafts an insider observation role by participating in the observed community. The researcher engages with the observed community through integration, effectively doing

---

<sup>14</sup> Atkinson et al., eds., *Handbook of Ethnography*, 32.

<sup>15</sup> Christina Chavez calls the role of insider the role of “co-participant” in which both the researcher and the participants observed interact and define the relational role. I appreciate the openness Chavez uses to define the insider role, giving a better understanding to the fluid notion of the insider position. See Christina Chavez, “Conceptualizing from the Inside: Advantages, Complications, and Demands on Insider Positionality,” *The Qualitative Report* 13, no. 9 (2008): 474–94.

research within the organization, developing insider knowledge through active participation.<sup>16</sup> Corporate ethnographer Vidar Hepsø relates the insider to one who works within a company, a company badge-wearing member of a team.<sup>17</sup> The insider does not need to negotiate access into the community but is accepted as a community member. The insider is a part of the community, a practitioner and participant. For ecclesiological research and music festival research, this means that the researcher shares in the rituals, language, and communal functions of the community being researched and may gain additional insight into their significance because of their status within the community. While this insider role can be ethically challenging, as will be discussed later in this chapter, it invites potentially important insights, bringing value as a methodological role.

Certain structural elements can be used to define the insider role that yield insights into the way in which the insider interacts within the participant observation methodology. Andreas Giazitzoglu and Geoff Payne write about the levels and forms of the insider role. Giazitzoglu and Payne note that in some way the insider often interacts in a most basic level, producing a shared membership or intimate familiarity so that the researcher has some sort of innate connection to the community.<sup>18</sup> Chavez finds connection with this idea with the description of the researcher as a partial insider—the researcher who engages participants by reflecting some similarity without total mirroring.<sup>19</sup> This characteristic of participant or insider establishes rapport that allows for

---

<sup>16</sup> Signe Bruskin, “Insider or Outsider? Exploring the Fluidity of the Roles through Social Identity Theory,” *Journal of Organizational Ethnography* 8, no. 2 (2019): 159–70.

<sup>17</sup> Vidar Hepsø, “Doing Corporate Ethnography as an Insider,” in *Advancing Ethnography in Corporate Environments: Challenges and Emerging Opportunities*, ed. Brigitte Jordan (Left Coast, 2013), 154.

<sup>18</sup> Andreas Giazitzoglu and Geoff Payne, “A 3-Level Model of Insider Ethnography,” *The Qualitative Report* 23, no. 5 (2018): 1149–59; Steve Herbert, “For Ethnography,” *Progress in Human Geography* 24, no. 4 (2000): 550–68.

<sup>19</sup> Chavez, “Conceptualizing from the Inside,” 474–94.

easy integration, and yet this level of insider still requires some work to be fully integrated into the community experience.

The second level as proposed by Giazitzoglu and Payne finds the insider taking on equalizing social capital, resembling the community through shared behavior or language.<sup>20</sup> This secondary level reveals intimacy between researcher and community, as through social participation the researcher actively participates in the expressed culture and therefore participates in the creation and formation of communal identity.<sup>21</sup>

Giazitzoglu and Payne's final level is reached when the researcher fully acts as participant, the researcher having learned how to "be an active, competent, and creative player of the game."<sup>22</sup> As a full participant, the researcher "actively and creatively" participates in the centralized behavior and structure of the community, becoming what Chavez calls a "total insider."<sup>23</sup> At this level the researcher shares a large portion of identity-shaping factors with the community observed, participating in full integration. I would argue that a total participant, one that moves the researcher from observer to participator, could potentially disrupt the balance of the outsider/insider perspective necessary for participant observation, and yet some communities may necessitate more of an insider researcher role.

The insider role is an important dual element of participant observation. The insider role can open previously closed communities, or at least yield enough role legitimacy so that the

---

<sup>20</sup> Giazitzoglu and Payne, "A 3-Level Model of Insider Ethnography," 1153.

<sup>21</sup> Hepsø notes that in corporate ethnography this level is understood when the researcher not only uses the linguistic patterns of the community but also internalizes its strategies and internal structure ("Doing Corporate Ethnography as an Insider," in *Advancing Ethnography in Corporate Environments*, ed. Jordan, 155).

<sup>22</sup> Giazitzoglu and Payne, "A 3-Level Model of Insider Ethnography," 1153.

<sup>23</sup> Chavez, "Conceptualizing from the Inside," 474–94.

researcher can partake in integral community activities. Not only does the insider role allow for access, but it can also allow for a deeper reflection of the community observed. Chavez notes that insiders can “understand the cognitive, emotional and/or psychological precepts of participants as well as possess a more profound knowledge of the historical and practical happenings of the field.”<sup>24</sup> I would argue that an insider position also allows for the researcher to closely explore a community, producing a thick description necessary for eventually proposing new theoretical insights yielded by the research. Especially for research that examines how community is shaped, the insider researcher position allows the possibility of better description, understanding, and participation in important communal identity themes.

Of course, potential issues also may arise with an insider role. Hammersley and Atkinson note the potential obstacle to insider researcher, what they term “over-rapport.”<sup>25</sup> In over-rapport the researcher comes intimately integrated into the community, ultimately identifying with the group in a way that produces “partial perspective.”<sup>26</sup> While potential issues emerge with an insider role, the ultimate ability to produce rigorous research within a known community makes the insider role vital for participant observation.

The distinct role of insider and outsider in participant observation is important to understand as it impacts how participant observation is understood and expressed, and yet up to this point I have been discussing the dual roles as structurally different. This approach tends to misrepresent the fluidity between the insider and outsider roles of researchers. Many scholars

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 474–94.

<sup>25</sup> Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, 3rd ed. (Routledge, 2007). 100.

<sup>26</sup> Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, 111.

would argue that the role of insider and outsider is often blurred.<sup>27</sup> For example, Woodward notes the research process can never be totally inside or completely outside; rather, the researcher and the process of participant observation integrates insider and outsider.<sup>28</sup> Drawing from social identity theory, Signe Bruskin notes that the adoption of insider or outsider characteristics is fluid, and dependent on the context, so a researcher can determine when an insider or outsider boundary is best suited.<sup>29</sup> Meaningful participation and meaningful observation, or a situational choice between outsider or insider, is thus a more realistic structure for the researcher.<sup>30</sup>

With an ecclesiological research and music festival research methodology in mind, the process of participant observation reveals a tool of observation and analysis that constructs community understanding. Shah concludes her description of participant observation by noting that “through living with and being a part of other people’s lives...participation observation makes us question our fundamental assumptions of pre-existing theories of the world. Participation observation enables us to understand relationships between history, ideology and action,” drawing a fitting conclusion to understanding not only the process of participant observation but also the powerful purpose of using participation observation as a main

---

<sup>27</sup> Brun-Cottan notes that in some cases a researcher may occupy both roles within a single project, taking on both insider and outsider, connecting with the other scholars who integrate roles in research. See Francoise Brun-Cottan, “Doing Corporate Ethnography as an Outsider,” in *Advancing Ethnography in Corporate Environments*, ed. Jordan, 165.

<sup>28</sup> Kath Woodward, “Hanging out and Hanging About: Insider/Outsider Research in the Sport of Boxing,” *Ethnography* 9, no. 4 (2008): 536–61.

<sup>29</sup> Bruskin, “Insider or Outsider? Exploring the Fluidity of the Roles through Social Identity Theory,” 159–70.

<sup>30</sup> Brun-Cottan notes that at times it is not the researcher who chooses the insider or outsider role, but the greater community makes the distinction for the researcher. She writes, “Labelling an ethnographer an insider or an outsider may well depend on the ethnographer’s relationship to the person who is doing the labelling” (ibid., 166). In this way the community is responsible for the insider or outsider distinction.



methodological tool.<sup>31</sup> Participant observation, through the process of immersion and analysis as well as the roles of insider and outsider, allows researchers to seriously consider and question the structures of the community, opening new or overlooked ideas as the community creates and lives into its culture. Participant observation as a methodological tool allows researchers to take seriously the lived reality of the community, drawing conclusive understanding from insider experience and the outsider observation of the people, places, and culture of the community. We will discuss how participant observation actualizes in the research later in this chapter, but for now the theory of participation observation as a methodological tool allows us to concretely understand the process and purpose in methodological use.

### **2.3.2 Material Culture in Theory**

Participant observation is only one of two central methodological tools used for this dissertation; it is paralleled by the engagement with material culture research. Material culture reflection is an important methodological tool, surveying and interpreting the built landscape and the visibly constructed communal elements to better understand the formation of communal identity. We will briefly look at material culture observation in theory, finding a foundational understanding of the process of material culture reflection as a methodological tool.

As with participant observation, material culture research is focused on observation and interpretation, understanding both the process of artefact creation as well as the purpose for its creation. Focusing on observing and interpreting the built material artefact, a researcher can craft an understanding of cultural structures and makeups, adding to their analysis and understanding

---

<sup>31</sup> Shah, “Ethnography?,” 3.

of a community. Through detailed and reflective observation and analysis, material culture can present new insights when ideologies become actualised in objects.

Material culture has great value for many theological researchers. Morgan notes that the “idea of religion itself is largely unintelligible outside its incarnation in material expression,”<sup>32</sup> the material artefacts representing the lived faith for the religious community. The significance of material culture is not limited to the physical expression of lived religion; it has doctrinal relevance. McDonnell notes that “Christians have explored the meaning of the divine, the nature of death, the power of healing, and the experience of the body by interacting with a created world.”<sup>33</sup> Yet some theological research passes over the material culture as a form of research, the “perceived irrelevance” of material culture stemming from this notion that “religion is spiritual, experienced, and expressed through interior faith.”<sup>34</sup> This dissertation dismisses any theological irrelevancy of material culture and rather aligns with the understanding that, for materially constructed religion, observing and reflecting on material culture is vital to understand the formation of communal identity. Christian communities, among what I would suggest are material culture creators and manipulators, use material culture artefacts to reflect and refract core community beliefs. Religious objects “function within a complicated network of beliefs, values, myths and social structure.”<sup>35</sup> So, through the observation and analyses of material culture, researchers can understand the core of the community as it becomes represented in material form.

---

<sup>32</sup> David Morgan, *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 7.

<sup>33</sup> Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (Yale University Press, 1995). 1.

<sup>34</sup> Morgan, *Religion and Material Culture*, 25.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

Material culture research is a methodological tool used to observe and interpret community through artefacts. The analysis of how the artefact adds to the communal identity will lend important understanding into not only the way community is crafted but also how communities use the crafted for the formation of their communal identity. The process of creation, the purpose of creation, and the thing being created all lend invaluable insights into each community. As the “material world is not passive,”<sup>36</sup> a focus on observation of material culture adds greatly to my community research, inviting the methodological research of material culture artefacts to integrate into the research process.

## **2.4 The Methodology in Practice**

The above reflection on the theoretical structure of the methodology allows us to understand the process and purpose behind the methodology chosen. Approaching this research, I undertook a participant observation and material culture exploration methodology, exploring the formation of communal identity using participant observation and material culture research. We now move on to understand how those theories were actualised in the research, which focused on exploring and answering three questions.

- 1) How is communal identity created both culturally and religiously?
- 2) What themes of communal identity formation seem to be different for the church communities and for the music festival communities?
- 3) And, what specific elements can be adopted by church communities to craft stronger centralized communal identities?

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 2.

Paralleling other lived experience researchers and practical theologians, I understood that to answer these questions I would both need the theoretical academic foundation as well as field research on the practical lived cultures of both communities. I chose to draw from both theological as well as social science literature, seeking to learn how theological understandings and cultural understandings of communal identity influenced the groupings of communities. I would argue a measure of desk-based research was essential, as it would establish theories that could be explored in greater depth in the fieldwork.

I began my desk-based research with works by theology and culture scholars such as Gordon Lynch, Kelton Cobb, and Barry Taylor.<sup>37</sup> These theologians underscore how theology and culture can be explored together, and yet I found their writings to lack specifics for the formation of communal identity. I found those specifics in the writings of theologians like Paul Tillich and Mircea Eliade, who feature throughout the following theological literature review and reflections. I found that though Tillich and Eliade wrote from a more philosophical and phenomenological perspective that their ideas of Christian culture identity were immensely valuable in helping me identify the themes of communal identity formation. With Tillich and Eliade, and the other theologians included in each chapter, I began to craft the thematic pillars to identity creation, shaping the focus of the research through the desk-based research.

As noted, the theological theoretical foundation was parallel by the social scientific desk-based research. As I had some understanding of the nature of my research, I began to research ethnographic, anthropological, and sociological theoreticians, understanding that their methodology of discovery and their strong focus on community study would parallel my research. I also researched areas such as organizational management, corporate theory, mass

---

<sup>37</sup> Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*; The Blackwell Guide to Theology and Popular Culture; Barry Taylor, *Entertainment Theology*.

event marketing, and media-specific studies and yet found that the social science focused theories offered a better expansion into the formation of communal identity and therefore proved more influential on my foundational theory reflection.

Without a full review of all the work researched and read during the desk-based research process, I have highlighted the process undertaken to ground the research in the theoretical. The desk-based research was integral to the foundational underpinnings of this dissertation. A grasp of literature not only connects the research of this dissertation to other thought leaders, but it also lends some extension to established ideas displaying the academic potential of the research. However, I wanted to parallel the desk-based research with empirical analysis of the communities, believing that I would gain the best understanding of how communal identity was formed in empirical fieldwork.

Paralleling the desk-based research was the empirical analysis of both the church and the music festival communities. Drawing from the ecclesiological research and music festival research methodology, I researched church communities that had some familiarity with my previous context, allowing for some insider knowledge. This insider base led me to observe and analyse church communities in the English Midland area with non-denominational affiliations. I understood that an appropriate length of time was needed at each community (a consensus for research focused on participant observation and material culture analysis), and so chose church communities that I could access reasonably easily.

With the narrowing factors of denominational affiliation and location, I found four church communities with the same affiliation, of differing sizes but with similar demographics. I added a fifth church to the research process; though affiliated with a specific denomination, the fifth church community's demographic and theological understandings made the community like

the other church communities. I made fewer observational visits to two of the church communities; these church communities were not a part of the original research grouping of church communities (one was not open during the initial planning and the other had a denominational affiliation), but after spending time in each church community I found that they successfully used the themes of communal identity in ways that the other church communities did not. For the two communities added after the initial research grouping, I reached out to church leadership and was granted access to use the observational reflections in this research.

	<b>Denomination</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Demographic</b>	<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Visits</b>
Lake Church	Non-denominational with Pentecostal roots	Suburban: Rented school.	75-125	Two services, first service primarily family ages, second service predominately students. Even male and female.	Male, Caucasian	Approximately 25 over 8 months
Canal Church	Non-denominational	City Centre: Refurbished warehouse.	250-300	Mixed demographic. Mixture of ages with largest demographic coming from 25-50.	Male and female leadership. Majority Caucasian.	Approximately 20 over 6 months
River Church	Non-denominational, presbyterian roots	Suburban: Rented school	130-170	Predominately white with intermixing of some Indian and African.	Male leadership, Caucasian leadership.	Approximately 8 over 4 months
Stream Church	Non-denominational	Suburban	75-140	Mixed demographic. Mixed ages with the largest demographic from 30-50.	Male leadership	Approximately 3 over two months
Ocean Church	Denominational, neo-charismatic	City Centre: Office building.	150-250	Mixed demographic. Mixture of ages with largest demographic being 25-40.	Male and female leadership.	Approximately 2 times over one month.

*Table 1: Researched Church Communities*

Establishing connections with each church's leadership through either email communication or face-to-face conversation allowed me to explain the purpose of my research. Communicating with church leadership, I spent a length of time in each church community that approximated the hours I had spent at music festivals, spending a total of twelve to fifty hours in the community. I visited two of the church communities over shorter periods of time, because Stream Church and Ocean Church were not accessible until much later during my research process. During each observation period I watched and listened, observing over time the material construct of each community, understanding how the physical landscape and material culture shaped the formation of each community. I also observed the liturgical rhythms around the themes of place, ritual, and symbol.

While observing I did not take any obvious written notes. I did add a few notes using my smartphone but mostly wrote reflection notes after the service. I chose to do this because I felt that visible notes on paper would be a distraction to the community and therefore too obtrusive. During the observation period I chose to engage with the service, taking on the insider role to match the rhythm of the community. Yet I often stood in the back of the room and would verbalise my role as both participant and researcher when conversing with community members. Engaging in non-obtrusive observation as a partial insider allowed me to craft a thick description of the church communities, allowing me to understand their communal culture.

After the observational time, I wrote down notes, yielding a variety of research observations. These observations would later be grouped together to align with the three categories that subsequently became central to the emerging communal identity themes. I then moved back to desk-based research, engaging in a process of analysis of the observational research. During the analysis I aimed to critically reflect on and engage with the lived reality of

each church experience, both reflecting upon what I had seen and seeking to interpret it in the context of the literature I had been engaging with, leading to what is found in each chapter of this dissertation. I also compared and contrasted the church community fieldwork with the music festival fieldwork produced during my first and second summer of research. The comparison was key to improving understanding and developing critical reflection, so I made sure to reflect on the actual church community as well as on the music festival community.

Along with church community research I also engaged in music festival research, exploring the cultural expression of communal identity creation. I understood here too that drawing from both desk-based research and fieldwork would be paramount to understand the theoretical formation of communal identity as well as the lived reality of music festival communal identity creation. Music festival research itself is a newer area of research, and so my desk-based research drew heavily from social scientific reflection, a helpful approach because it allowed me to draw from an understanding of other communal identity creation, lending themes that are integral for communal identity formation that are not only music festival specific.

Along with the desk-based research, I focused my fieldwork on observing music festival communities. I was interested in two groupings of music festivals—Midland based music festivals, and music festivals that offered a unique marker for their communal identity. I was interested in Midland-specific music festivals because their location paralleled the church communities; I was interested to see if the location and shared demographics would yield any important insights for the formation of communal identity. I also looked at music festivals that offered a unique marker of size or genre or festival marketing, to see if the themes of communal identity were focused on more sharply, lending to stronger communal identity. With these groupings and criteria in mind I began to explore music festival options, gathering the music



festivals found in this dissertation. The music festival scene is vast, so the specificity of this list offers a representative exploration.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Length of Festival</b>
Acoustic Festival	Multi Genre but acoustic focused	1,500	Rural	Two weekends, Friday–Monday
Eco Festival	Folk, Indie	20,000	Rural	One weekend, Friday–Sunday
Forest Festival	Rock, Metal,	15,000	Rural	One weekend, Friday–Monday
Flag Festival	Multi Genre	50,000	Urban	One day, Saturday
Electronic Festival	Dance, EDM, Pop	13,500	Midlands, Urban	One weekend, Friday–Sunday
Pop Festival	Multi Genre	200,000	Rural	Two weekends, Online experience only
Retro Festival	Multi Genre	5,500	Midlands, Urban	One weekend, Friday–Sunday

*Table 2: Researched Music Festival Communities*

I approached the task of gaining access to the music festival communities in a similar fashion to what I had done in the church communities, in that I worked with music festival management for access to community observation. This is not necessarily the universal process for all music festival researchers; many note that the public nature of music festivals allows them to observe without express permission. Music festival researchers at a 2018 conference at the University of Birmingham vocalised this, many discussing how they approach research by simply attending the music festival. However, I wanted to make sure that music festival management would allow me to research their communities, so I worked through the music festival management team and or the music festival press team to gain access. As I had worked previously as a music journalist, I understood how to communicate with each music festival so that they understood the purpose of the research and the observational methodology I would be adopting.

Working with the music festivals' press teams and management, I was granted access to each music festival community for observation. Since I worked through the press teams, I was given press credentials for some of the music festivals, and therefore not only access to the music

festival but also permission to take photographs. I often covered the music festivals as a journalist and often worked on ten-to-twenty-member press teams, so my photography was not obtrusive, as it was a part of the normal music festival routine. The photographs I took for this research highlighted the material culture and built landscape; I did not include any images of participants without their direct permission. Furthermore, any photograph or image used in this dissertation was approved by the music festival press team and or the music festival management. The images aligning with the music festival branding, noted in later chapters, was also accepted by the music festival management for use in this dissertation. Unlike the church community research, in which I took notes after each experience, I took copious notes in a notebook during the music festival experience. From my experience as a journalist, I knew that taking notes was not abnormal in this context and did not impede any normal rhythm, allowing for this non-obtrusive method of recording.

I engaged both as an insider and as an outsider to explore the themes of communal identity in each music festival. As an insider I participated in different shows and music festival activities, engaging with artist and music festival participants in the lived experience. Yet as an outsider I expressed my researcher role when conversing with others and did not engage with all music festival activities offered if those things had the potential to raise ethical concerns. I argue the methodology allowed me to observe the community and fully understand the thematic presence, giving way to a thick description of the music festivals.

I engaged in critical reflection after each music festival, comparing my music festival experience with desk-based findings and theories. I also compared the music festival experience with the experience of the church community fieldwork, exploring how the formation of communal identity was represented in both community cultures. This dual reflection allowed me

to understand the ways in which the themes of place, symbol, and ritual formed communal identity, and how the groupings of church communities and music festival communities compared as they crafted communal identity.

The participant observation and material culture reflection methodologies, paralleled by desk-based research, allowed me to curate a thick understanding of each community I experienced. Engaging in the fieldwork made obvious the lived reality of the formation of communal identity, adding to the desk-based themes that emerged from theorists. Paired with critical reflection and analysis, I found the methodology produced interesting research that opens a new area of reflection for our theological understanding of community as well as a new approach to music festival research.

## **2.5 Ethical Considerations**

This methodological discussion would be incomplete without also addressing some of the ethical consideration that anchored the research process. Before I began any fieldwork, I went through a lengthy and thorough ethical review process with the University of Birmingham. Working closely with the University as well as with my advisors and other university professors, the ethical review committee and I outlined ethical considerations for the fieldwork research. To conduct research in the best way possible I found myself reflecting on areas for ethical consideration—balance between observation and relational connection, consideration of full informed consent from the communities, and the necessity for researcher reflexivity due to previous knowledge and insider perspective.

The first area worth elaborating on for the ethical consideration is the balance I had to find between the observational outsider role and the insider participation role, often addressed in ecclesiological research and music festival research. In fieldwork actively engaged with

communities through participant observation, I wanted to ensure that the communities understood my role as researcher but did not want to be obtrusive in a way that changed the behaviour of the community. Thus, a balance between observer and participant had to be crafted.

Raymond Gold explores this balance, addressing three potential roles for researchers engaging in participant observation. While Gold writes mostly from a sociological perspective, the ideas brought about parallel my ethical considerations for research. Gold notes three potential structures for participant research that include complete participant, participant as observer, and complete observer.<sup>38</sup> Two most align with my research, the participant as observer and the complete observer role. Gold notes that in a participant as observer role the researcher gains knowledge by curating relational connections over a long period of time, with both the researcher and the community understanding the role of the researcher.<sup>39</sup> The complete observer removes themselves from the social interaction of the community, observing without participating.<sup>40</sup>

Much of my fieldwork required the position of a participant as observer, but some also held to the role of complete observer. As a participant as observer, I wanted to approach the community of research with great care and considerations, so I engaged in conversation with the church communities and music festival communities.<sup>41</sup> Each community leader, whether church leader or music festival management and press team, was included in communication.

---

<sup>38</sup> Gold, "Roles in Sociological Field Observations," 217–23.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 217–23.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> The continuous dialogue between my role of researcher and the communities mitigated some of the covertness of participant observation. Ruth Strudwick notes that the researcher through covert participant observation can conceal their identification as researcher and while this may minimise the researcher impact on the community, I wanted to make sure that the leadership of each community was aware of the research process. See

For church community research, ethical considerations centred on the correct balance of observation and participation; engaging in the normal rhythms of the community, I participated in Sunday services, observing informally through the participant as observer role.<sup>42</sup> To limit potential obtrusiveness, the informal observations meant that I took limited notes on my phone, detailing notes after the experience, away from the community. I did not take any photographs, like I did at music festivals. When engaging with church communities through participation I positioned my seating near the back of meeting spaces so as not to disrupt any normal community rhythms and did not participate if a church asked for member participation or speaking during services. In this way I engaged and participated but did not fully or completely embed myself within the congregation. My participant stance allowed me to interact and observe without influencing the rhythms and actions of the community, thus yielding a more authentic experience of the community.<sup>43</sup>

As I participated, I focused on observations of material culture, looking for patterns of the community through their physical and built landscape. When doing this, I found I shifted into a role that was more complete observer than participant observer, as I visually observed things that communities often do not pay too much attention to. In observation of rituals, I participated within the community service and rituals, but again did so in a way that allowed me to act as participant observer and so did not lead the rituals or engage in the community obtrusively.

---

Ruth Strudwick, "Tensions in Ethnographic Observation: Overt or Covert?," *Journal of Organizational Ethnography* 8, no. 2 (2019): 185–95.

<sup>42</sup> Gold, "Roles in Sociological Field Observations," 217–23.

<sup>43</sup> Strudwick comments that one of the benefits of participant observation is the minimal external influence that comes about when researchers adopt conscious research roles. Warning against the Halo Effect, which changes participants' actions during obtrusive research, Strudwick highlights an important balance in researcher roles that promote positive research ethics for community study ("Tensions in Ethnographic Observation," 185–95).

When engaging with community members, during natural times of welcoming, I brought up in a comfortable and causal manner the duality of my role as both participant and researcher. If any leader or member desired to participate in discussion or interviews to aid in the research, we engaged in a process of informed consent through email dialogue, but these instances were rare. While available for community integration and social interaction, I did choose to not participate in any church community small group function during the research period, or extra activities outside of service. Smaller gatherings tend to be more intimate in nature, and I argue they have the potential to upset the researcher role balance.

The ethical considerations around the church research allowed me to balance the participant observation and insider and outsider roles. I had informed community leadership throughout the research process, and I detailed some of the observations that would be used in the research after leaving the observation period. Along with that, any conversation that took place with community members included a natural verbalisation of my duality of roles as both participant and observer. As I entered the communities and participated, I made sure that my actions did not appear obtrusive. I focused my observations around the material and physical, being cautious when engaging in rituals. The focus on observing patterns and material culture limited my observation of specific individuals, as I aimed instead at capturing the communal expression and experience. My knowledge of the community from my previous insider experience paired with my ethical considerations for participation allowed me to approach the church community fieldwork with great caution but also with a familiarity that allowed me to research and observe without disrupting the natural rhythms and flows of each community.

I also desired to strike a similar balance for the research in music festivals, drawing upon similar ethical considerations but shifting slightly to fit the more public nature of the music

festival communities. As already discussed, I approached the music festival management and press team in a similar fashion to the church communities, explaining my duality of roles as both music festival researcher and music festival journalist. This may have been technically unnecessary, but it was important to me as it mitigated some of the covert potential for research and met the ethical requirements detailed during the ethical review. Similar to my fieldwork in church communities, I observed from a distance the built landscape and material culture of each festival to gain a thick description of the community's construction of their visual and built culture for the formation of communal identity.

Along with this I also engaged as a participant, observing through the insider experience. As music festivals tend to be large, public gatherings where journalists are common sightings, I was able to participate in music festivals in a way that was a little more obvious than my approach in the church communities. I could take fieldnotes while participating, something other journalists do, without disturbing what would naturally be observed in a music festival experience. I was also able to take photographs at some music festivals to document the built landscape (without including festival attendees). As photographers are common at most live music experiences and at music festivals, this addition was not obtrusive to the music festival community.

While participating in the music festival experience, I took on a similar participant role as was noted in the church communities: By that I mean I often stood either in the back of the gathering or on the side of the stage where other music journalists tend to gather, allowing me to participate but not intrude on the music festival experience. For music festivals that required camping I often camped on the outskirts of the camp or in designated journalist and artists camping areas, making sure I did not impede on other attendees' space. Thus, while considering

the ethical nature of music festival research, I feel I found a non-obtrusive but still participatory balance, engaging with the music festival community in a way that was not abnormal but also did not compromise the role of either observer or participant.

I also discussed the duality of my role when conversing with any individual at each music festival. The press team and other journalists understood that I was present at the music festival as a researcher, and I informed any artists I chatted with of my role as researcher. In any informal conversation I had with festival attendees, I also made clear my role of researcher, and so mitigated the potential for covert casual conversation. Like my research in church communities, I found I balanced the role of observer and participant, of insider and outsider, as best as I possibly could in the music festival communities.

A final area of similarity was the ethical necessity for my own reflexive analysis of both communities. Shah notes the necessity for reflexive analysis as a part of participant observation.<sup>44</sup> The researcher can reflect on and analyse the experience to understand the makeup of the community, drawing new insights from the reflection. Noting the ethical imperative to engage in reflexive behaviour, I actively engaged in a reflexive practice after each community experience. This practice included looking over any notes taken during or shortly after each experience, categorizing those notes both into the different communal identity themes as well as understanding how these experiential notes reflected the crafting of each unique community. Along with this I also reflected on the experience in its entirety, crafting a thick description of the community through the observations. Reflecting on any potential insider bias while also detailing the experience of each observation and participation allowed me to build a process to accurately construct my description and understanding of each community. The process of

---

<sup>44</sup> Shah, "Ethnography?," 51.



reflexive analysis thus proved important in the research process, and I considered it throughout my research and writing stages for each community.

While I engaged in reflexive practices in the fieldwork process, my observations of the church communities required extra reflexivity because of my deep insider knowledge as a church worker and church researcher. The research question that sparked the idea for this dissertation came about because of what I personally experienced as a lack of community in the church context, so I approached the research topic with a pre-conceived notion of the church communities failing. Previous work and research I had conducted also fostered deep frustration with previous church communities. To engage in good, beneficial research I had to deconstruct these biases from my insider experience, and I had to consciously engage with extra reflexive practices to accurately observe and analyse the church communities. I did this in two ways. First, I approached the observation in material culture, making the built landscape a primary area of observation. Second, I made sure to approach and examine research by reflecting on the notes and observational experiences, holding in thought my insider perspective while reflecting on the experience. In holding these two methods together, I found I was able to be conscious and reflective over my insider role, acknowledging my potential bias. Ultimately my insider experience was beneficial, as it allowed me to enter the community with ease, but the insider experience did require extra reflexive work to represent the full structure of each church community.

The music festival communities also required a different ethical consideration, that of researcher safety. This ethical question was first raised by the research committee at the University of Birmingham, regarding how to guarantee researcher safety in the travel to and from the festivals, as well as the safety of engaging in a music festival as a solo researcher. Many

researchers who travel for research engage in some potential for safety concerns. I mitigated the safety risk by setting up travel contacts to touch base with before travel and once arriving at the music festival. Along with this, I informed the University of my travel to and from each music festival, giving me two points of contact for travel safety. Once at the music festival I worked with the press and management team, so while researching as an individual I had contacts at each music festival to engage with. With these teams I mitigated many of the potential safety risks of individual research. I took the ethical consideration for research safety seriously by organising a plan and engaging in constant contact to mitigate some of the safety risks.

The ethical considerations noted in this section are not an exhaustive list of the ethical process, but they highlight the major ethical steps in the fieldwork noted in this research. As an ecclesiological research and music festival research study, the research provided important ethical considerations that required attention and reflection, and yet I argue the steps taken in the ethical process produced research that both the communities approved of as well as research that produced new insights for the formation of communal identity.

## 2.6 The Comparison Choice

A final component of this study that deserves a brief explanation is its comparative nature. While this issue is perhaps not a staunchly methodological concern in the narrowest set, it is important that I highlight a key ideological assumption which underpins this dissertation. This assumption is that communities can and should be compared—and not just communities, but those that originate and live within different ‘worlds.’<sup>45</sup> Theologians have longed compared the sacred

---

<sup>45</sup> Ann Taves argues that scholars “need to work comparatively, but that we cannot limit our comparisons to ‘religious things’ as if ‘religious things’ or ‘religious experiences’ comprised a fixed and stable set. Rather, much as scientists compare experimental and control groups, we need to compare things that people consider religious with similar things that they do not.” The argument illuminates the desire of this dissertation, to compare seemingly non-

from the secular, drawing concrete lines so that the two do not intersect. Some of the theologians used throughout this dissertation write in this way, staunchly designating between sacred and secular. Yet the totality of this research does not create a chasm between the two but rather argues that the sacred can, and even should, examine and draw from the secular. In theory, music festival communities craft and curate communal identity in ways that church communities can adapt and adopt, the secular manifesting important structures for the sacred. Here, I thus briefly explore and explain why this dissertation compares the sacred and the secular.

The tension between the division of the sacred and the secular is often felt both in the lived experience of church congregations and in my research for this dissertation. Unable to fully split the sacred from the secular, this dissertation takes on the interdisciplinary comparison to explore and understand the formation of communal identity. This interdisciplinary sacred and secular amalgamation is, again, not new; some theorists note that the “commitment to interdisciplinary approaches characterizes practical theologies.”<sup>46</sup> Other scholars argue the division is more harmful than helpful, suggesting the “dichotomy has been established between sacred and profane, spirit and matter, piety and commerce...[and] constrains our ability to understand how religions work in the real world.”<sup>47</sup> While I would not go that far, believing instead that the division between sacred and secular, and their shared uniformity, offer important insights in theological research, I do find that a methodological approach that invites direct comparison of the two does offer important insights for lived religious experience.

---

religious with religious, crafting a thick description of the formation of communal identity through comparison. See Ann Taves, *Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building-Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things* (Princeton University Press, 2009): xiii.

<sup>46</sup> Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen, eds., *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (Continuum, 2011), 151.

<sup>47</sup> McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America*, 4.

Comparison and comprehension between the sacred and secular is important as it offers us the best and most complete understanding of how communal identity is crafted. I would argue that there is minimal distinction between the identity curation of church communities and music festival communities; rather, individuals present in these communities live into both worlds and draw from experiences in both when crafting an identity. In this way the communities exist among and are shaped by pluralistic influences, allowing us to explore not the expressed dichotomy but rather the shared communal identity-creating themes. In this understanding, research that examines both sacred and secular is vital, as the pluralism in identity formation themes is universal and therefore noted across secular and sacred.

Other scholars operate under a similar understanding, noting that the plurality of culture allows us to actively examine the sacred and secular together rather than as wholly separate. The church finds itself in a “twofold relationship ... that two sources of energy flow into the church, one coming from the world, the other coming from God. The twofold relationship to the world and to God should not be conceived as defining a stable state, passive and inert. The duality points to a dynamic interaction of nature and grace.”<sup>48</sup> The plurality of current culture and the observation of the twofold relationships present in many church communities form the need to explore complementary relationships among communities. As identity is formulated in the midst of plurality, it is good methodological practice to explore through direct comparison.

The importance of interdisciplinary research for practical theological studies paired with the notion of the pluralistic society in which the church community exists has led other scholars to research church and culture in an intertwined manner. They have propelled this dissertation to take a similar stance for the comparison of church community with music festival community.

---

<sup>48</sup> Roger Haight and James Nieman, “On the Dynamic Relation between Ecclesiology and Congregational Studies,” *Theological Studies* 70 (2009), 582.

While the music festival communities and the church communities differ in terms of cultural standing, duration of experience, and proposed purpose, they both share in the crafting of rich and purposeful communities. It is because of that that I desired to study the two together, comparing and analysing communal identity in the community groupings.

It is obvious that the two communities differ, with purposes as different as religious practice and entertainment. They take up different places, and their duration of experience is different, with the church community meeting regularly if not weekly and the music festival meeting annually. Yet their differences are mitigated somewhat by their similarities; both communities share a desire of unifying individuals, employ liminal experiences to enhance the lived experience, and shape and grow their identity through pattern adoption. The similarities extend to the demographic and geographical location as well. I chose to research churches in a specific location and paralleled this by also researching music festivals in the same location. In theory, this allows the two community groupings to share in demographic and city cultural identities. With a shared ethos and a shared demographic, I find these communities share a foundational similarity that allowed me to confidently research in a comparison and contrast methodology, drawing from the community similarities as well as the practical theological notion of interdisciplinary research to explore the formation of communal identity.

Swinton notes that the “primary task of practical theologians is to ensure and enable faithful practices,” and one of the ways that practical theologians engage in this call of research is to understand the “significant similar and continuity between the practices of the church and the practices of the world” while also holding on to “radical dissimilarity and discontinuity.”<sup>49</sup> Those observations and calls for research are upheld by this dissertation. The research question

---

<sup>49</sup> Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 30, 29.

and the methodological structure uphold the core understanding that similar themes craft the communal identity for both music festival communities and for church congregational communities, the plurality leading to an analytical understanding of the significant similarities. When appropriate, the research also discusses and engages with the dissimilarities as well. Yet to truly explore critically the formation of communal identity and understand why some church communities lack in the formation of communal identity, I argue we must approach the research with an understanding of the importance of the similarities between the sacred and secular. These important similarities allow us to not only understand the major themes that craft and curate communal identity, but also allow us to critically reflect on how and why some church communities struggle to fully craft a communal identity.

Theological research, like so many other fields that use qualitative methods, is not singular in its methodological approach. While some scholars research based on a commitment to the staunch contrast between sacred and secular, other theologians and particularly practical theologians understand the nuanced similarities between the two and therefore engage in a research methodology that explores both the significant religious experience in, as well as the cultural underpinnings that form, communal identities. This research, while appreciating and at times drawing from scholars who operate in clearer cut, sacred-or-secular research, operates with the understanding that the plurality of some church communities allows them to craft an identity influenced both by the culture they are placed in, as well as their eschatologically curated reality. From the inception of its research question to its methodological observation and analysis, this dissertation is anchored by the understanding that sacred and secular communities can be researched comparatively, ultimately yielding prescriptive insights that will allow church communities to build clearer and deeper communal identities.

## CHAPTER THREE PLACE

### **3.1 Introducing Place**

Theologian Barry Taylor argues that media “creates communities with no sense of place.”<sup>1</sup>

While the technology age has spurred a connection to the non-physical, the idea that media has replaced a connective bond is arguably incorrect, placing too much restriction on the lived reality of place. The place we inhabit has purpose. From the microecosystem of our homes to the greater interactions we have in our daily experiences, the physical material of place shapes the culture that we encounter and identify with. The theme of place also has theological purpose, leading several theologians to dissect what place is and how place defines a community in Christianity both historically and in current ecclesiological communities. This chapter will explore the physical reality of place and how the theme of place as material culture is active in the formation of communal identity. We first explore both a theological and social science reflection on the theme of place, concluding with an exploration of how place shapes our fieldwork communities as they participate in the formation of communal identity.

### **3.2 Framing Place through Theological Reflection**

Engagement with the theme of place and its continuing impact on community experience is a narrative found repeatedly throughout the Bible, and certainly is a point of conversations as contemporary churches wrestle with and define their community in and through materialized

---

<sup>1</sup> Taylor, *Entertainment Theology*, 78.

place.<sup>2</sup> A biblical use of place can take on different meanings, as noted by Karen Wenell, whose research focuses on place as it relates not purely to material experience but to the concept of the kingdom of God. Wenell discusses the dichotomy of place, particularly regarding the kingdom of God in the Gospel of Mark.<sup>3</sup> Wenell understands that some theologians approach the discussion of place with non-spatial focus, as opposed to the notion of physical place concept used in this dissertation. The theological theme of place invites complimentary research ideas, encouraging dynamic theological reflection.

In my following reflection on theologians, we explore place in its physical, spatial form, allowing the material reality of place to define it. This chapter begins with an exploration of how the theme of place is discussed in biblical narratives, moving on to discuss how differing purposes of place are understood by some theologians. These theologians reveal that place is influential for the formation of communal identity in the link between place and the covenantal relationship, the link between place and symbolic purpose, the link between place and power, and finally the link between place and sacred understandings.

---

<sup>2</sup> Taves argues that twentieth-century thinkers “located the essence of religion in a unique form of experience that they associated with distinctly religious concepts such as the sacred, the numinous, or divine power” (*Religious Experience Reconsidered*, 3). This important understanding centres religious experience, and the things that define the experience, as the foundation for understanding community. Through patterns of experiences, we will understand how place adds to the formation of communal identity, aligning with others who also place experience as an important part of religious community.

<sup>3</sup> Karen Wenell, “A Markan ‘Context’ Kingdom? Examining Biblical and Social Models in Spatial Interpretation,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 44, no. 3 (2014): 123–32.



### 3.2.1 Walter Brueggemann: The Covenantal Relationship and Place

Walter Brueggemann opens our theological foundation, drawing from biblical texts to demonstrate the importance of place.<sup>4</sup> Brueggemann argues that the theme of place is central to the biblical narrative because of the way in which place displays the covenantal relationship between God and people.<sup>5</sup> Brueggemann finds that place ultimately comes to define not only the covenantal relationship but a notion of legitimacy for a community, forming the communal identity in and through the physical place.<sup>6</sup>

In *The Land: Place as a Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* Brueggemann begins by addressing the centrality of place as a biblical theme.<sup>7</sup> Brueggemann understands that “land is a central if not the central theme of biblical faith.”<sup>8</sup> Drawing from Genesis 1–11, Brueggemann finds that “God is committed to this land and that his promise for his people is

---

<sup>4</sup> Walter Brueggemann notes this in the first chapter of his book *The Land: Place as a Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). In this chapter Brueggemann discusses land as the lens through which biblical faith is understood.

<sup>5</sup> Brueggemann discusses this in chapter 2 of *The Land*, noting how through the story of Abraham we can understand how land became a piece that displays the covenantal relationship between God and God’s people.

<sup>6</sup> Brueggemann discusses this throughout *The Land*, but I found it to be obvious in chapters 3 and 4. In these chapters Brueggemann discusses the continuation of land and presence as well as the myriad of purposes and reflections for the land.

<sup>7</sup> John Inge (*A Christian Theology of Place* [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003], 37) upholds Brueggemann’s notion of the centrality of place in Genesis. Inge writes that biblical narrative and storyline can be understood as a narrative of “finding a place” so that the underpinning of community throughout the biblical text is linked to place. Inge notes how throughout the Bible there is an interaction between place, people, and God, arguing that throughout the Bible we find God interacting with place so that place becomes a signifier of the blessing.

<sup>8</sup> Practical theologian Paul Ballard (“The Bible in Theological Reflection: Indications from the History of Scripture,” *Practical Theology* 4 [2011]: 35-47) adds an interesting extra layer to this claim. Ballard pulls from a practical theological mindset noting the validity of biblical scripture as a historical document. For Ballard, the Bible is as much a religious text as it is a text that details how generations lived and developed. Including this with Brueggemann’s thought of the centrality of land in the biblical text, I hypothesize that land is not only central for its theological purpose but also as a way for biblical authors to establish in an anthropological sense a tribal occupation of specific land. This enhances our theological understanding as it displays both the religious and anthropological purpose and importance of land in the Bible, as Brueggemann argues (*The Land*, 35).

always his land.”<sup>9</sup> Brueggemann’s observation of the strong connection between God, people, and place suggests that communities build their shared culture and identity through a collective connection rooted in physical location.

Brueggemann finds that God relates to place uniquely, describing the connection as relationally attuned, an exclusive intimacy and connection between God and people based on place.<sup>10</sup> Place as an opportunity for relational intimacy means that place means more than a physical location, more than the material; for Brueggemann it signifies covenant relational ties. Brueggemann understands that place is covenantal, noting the “land is one of a triad of assurances, the others being God’s blessing and a future people, that comprise the patriarchal covenant.”<sup>11</sup> Brueggemann’s compelling address of the land formulates that place is important because place in its physical form characterises a relational affirmation between God and people, forming the communal identity through place. In Brueggemann we find that place is not merely a

---

<sup>9</sup> Andy Crouch finds a creative, artistic understanding for Genesis, noting “God has located the garden in a place where the natural explorations of its human cultivators will bring them into contact with substances that will invite the creation of beauty.” Place serves as an important theme for Crouch because of the way it aligns with the artistic dimension of creation. See Andy Crouch, “The Gospel: How Is Art a Gift, a Calling, and an Obedience,” in *For the Beauty of the Church: Casting a Vision for the Arts*, ed. W. David O. Taylor (Baker, 2010), 33; Brueggemann, *The Land*, 15, 80.

<sup>10</sup> Walter Brueggemann, “The God of Joshua...Give or Take the Land,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 66, no. 2 (2012): 164–75; Brueggemann, *The Land*, 80.

<sup>11</sup> Keith Gruneberg and Knud Jeppesen expand Brueggemann’s argument to understand that the covenant is a specific blessing. Gruneberg and Jeppesen understand that the verses in Genesis are in fact a part of the covenantal blessing. Jeppesen writes that the “implication of this is that Abraham will become a great nation and his name will be great, and furthermore that he will be a blessing for other people. In blessings there is a power to fruitfulness, growth and obtaining one’s goals. The promise to Abraham aims at the greatness of Israel, which is the first to be mentioned.” The blessing that Brueggemann identifies as a blessing of legitimization is rather seen by Jeppesen as a blessing of fruitful growth and greatness, a reflection on how place will hold a powerful and prosperous community. See Keith N. Gruneberg, *Abraham, Blessing and the Nations: A Philological and Exegetical Study of Genesis 12:3 in Its Narrative Context*, BZAW 332 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003); Knud Jeppesen, “Promising and Blessing: Gen 12, 1–3,” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 27, no. 1 (2013): 32–42; Betsy Halpern-Amaru, *Rewriting the Bible: Land and Covenant in Post-Biblical Jewish Literature* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1994), 9.

reflection of a relationship; it is a material manifestation of covenant that promises blessing and future, thus giving physical place theological importance for the formation of communal identity.

Brueggemann extends the purpose of place to discuss how its conventional relational aspect yields legitimacy; W.D. Davies echoes Brueggemann's extension, writing that the "emergence of the promise of the land is to be understood as the legitimization of settlement of the patriarchs."<sup>12</sup> Brueggemann concludes that the covenant of place is a covenant of legitimacy. I argue that the early covenant with Abraham (Gen 15) reveals God delineating a promise to a nomadic people, a plot of land where their deity would also dwell. The "nomadic clan" was promised "the two greatest needs of nomads, land and progeny," a powerful promise to a wandering group.<sup>13</sup> The specification of place for this wandering people group would give them a sense of ownership, legitimising their existence and community through place. This legitimacy would certainly add to the communal creation of their identity, attaching them to the place that they had been given, so that place and identity became in some ways synonymous. I appreciate Brueggemann's explanation of place because it extends past a purely spatial understanding and instead displays the purposeful link between the physical place and the lived experience of the people. This link has lasting impact, legitimising a community through place, allowing communities to form their communal identity through the theme of place.

Walter Brueggemann contributes much to my foundational understanding of place and its theological purpose. Brueggemann offers a twofold understanding of place. First, place is central as a physical location that intertwines God with God's people. Second, that place connects God and God's people has a purpose as a tool of legitimization. The duality of place no doubt forms

---

<sup>12</sup> W. D. Davies, *The Territorial Dimensions of Judaism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1911).

<sup>13</sup> Davies, *The Territorial Dimensions of Judaism*, 8.

the identity of the community allowing the theme of place to actively engage in the formation of communal identity.

### 3.2.2 Norman Habel: Place and Its Symbolic Purpose

Brueggemann allows us to understand foundationally how place is constructed in biblical narratives, explaining its thematic centrality, providing notions of relational connection and legitimacy. We now move from a narrative focus on place to a thematic focus, looking into the symbolic purpose of place through the work of Old Testament scholar Norman Habel.

For Habel, writing in *The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies*, place is understood as the “primordial allocation from on high.”<sup>14</sup> The allocation of place is central for Habel, who writes “YHWH allotted *nahalat*. YHWH plants the land” as YHWH plants the people.<sup>15</sup> This clearly resembles Brueggemann’s notion that place is a physical location where God dwells with God’s people, a material place that is allocated to a community. Most interesting is not Habel’s congruity with Brueggemann, but rather Habel’s extension of the metaphor in the description of place. The idea of place as metaphorical, more than purely physical, deepens theological reflection on the theme of place and its ability to form communal identity.

Pulling from Exod 15:17 and Deut 32:9, Habel highlights how God is described as a planter, a gardener. Habel’s dissection of the Hebrew, “YHWH plants the land,” shows how God works intricately with the land, planting purposefully and methodically.<sup>16</sup> A metaphorical

---

<sup>14</sup> Norman C. Habel, *The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 77.

<sup>15</sup> Habel, *The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies*, 77–79.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

connection to place and God's action in place opens the potential for symbolically oriented place creation, meaning that place moves beyond the purely physical for community.

The symbolic idea of place is significant for theological reflection on the formation of communal identity. I theorise that the adoption of symbolic notions of place could allow communities to draw emotional and ideological connections to their physical place. They are planted in the specific place by God and therefore must form roots there to grow as metaphorical seeds. Both the metaphorical act and the metaphorical undertone of place are significant; communities build their identity on both the concreteness of place as well as the symbolic actions that can be curated there. I argue that in exploring a physical place through a symbolic narrative, communities can form and adopt their own narratives of that place, crafting a communal narrative through symbolic notions. In this way I find that place and the symbolic ideology around it directly forms communal identity.

Habel's writing on place potentially has great influence for contemporary church communities, especially since other scholars also find his ideas influential. In her review of Habel's work, Suzanne Boorer announces its ground-breaking ability to formulate the symbolic purpose of land, especially a land mired in great conflict.<sup>17</sup> I argue this symbolic nature aids in our understanding of how the theme of place shapes communal identity by displaying how place creates an ideological framework.<sup>18</sup> Finding biblical roots of the symbolic nature of place that

---

<sup>17</sup> Suzanne Boorer, "Book Review: The Land Is Mine," *Pacifica: Australasian Theological Studies* 10 (1997): 93–95.

<sup>18</sup> An area that Habel does not address in any depth is the type of literature of Exodus and Deuteronomy. There seems to be some debate as to whether Exodus can be seen as a mythology, history, or geographical text. This point is brought out in James K. Hoffmeier's book *Ancient Israel in Sinai: The Evidence for Authenticity in the Wilderness Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Hoffmeier points toward the use of mythical language as prompted by Bernard Batto, Gosta Ahlstrom, and Donald Redford to display how the exodus narrative can fall under the category of a mythical text rather than historical. I would argue this construct, of the exodus story as mythical, aligns with and enhances Habel's understanding of symbolic place. In my viewpoint, the exodus narrative in a mythological construction creates a narrative of people, just as the symbolic nature of land creates a

helps shape community ideology, Habel's notion of the symbolic purpose of place allows us to see how place actively forms communal identity: A community adopts metaphorical narratives of and from the physical, forming the communal identity through their symbolic interaction with place.

Norman Habel, in conclusion, extends our understanding of how the theme of place can be viewed theologically and how this understanding of place is integral in the formation of communal identity. Most important is Habel's overarching understanding that the theme of place is understood through its symbolic possibilities. While place maintains its material physicality, it can also take on metaphorical and symbolic potential, adding purpose. Habel is integral for my research, allowing us to understand how communities create and use physical place in the formation of communal identity.

### 3.2.3 Jeanne Halgren Kilde: Place and Its Power Purpose

In the previous sections, we explored place through a contemporary theological lens to display how God dwells with God's people, both literally and symbolically, yielding a sense of presence, purpose, and legitimacy to the community. What our discussion with the theologians has lacked thus far is a description of how this understanding of place yields a notion of power. I argue that place is powerful, agreeing with modern theologians who share this understanding, writing on how God, place, and power intertwine. Noted for her work in religion and place, Jeanne Halgren

---

narrative of place and people. In many ways the understanding of exodus as a mythical addition enhances Habel's assertion about the symbolic nature of place that he finds prevalent in both Exodus and Deuteronomy. While Habel does not address the genre of these texts, the information reflected in Hoffmeier's construct has the potential of enhancing the symbolic nature of place.

Kilde's *Sacred Power Sacred Space* emphasizes this connection between place and power in the modern church, adding important points of reflection for our understanding of place.

Kilde argues that place is a seat for power.<sup>19</sup> She notes that the notion of power is something understood by both scholars of place and those experiencing place in their lived experience, a universally acknowledged connection between place and power: "Scholars and lay people alike have widely acknowledged the power of a particular place— a building, a room, a landscape, a city, whether experienced physically or through imagination."<sup>20</sup> I appreciate Kilde's description of the universality of power when tied to place, as she highlights the idea that the material culture is influential because of this inherent power, something to reflect upon in considering the theological formation of communal identity.

The notion of place in both material culture and the imaginative hints to the power linked not only to the physical place but also through the symbolic place. This idea has obvious connection with the work of Norman Habel, who argues for a similar metaphorical interpretation of place. Interestingly, Kim Knott reflects a similar argument to Habel and Kilde, writing that "spaces are both material and metaphorical, physical and imagined."<sup>21</sup> All three scholars find that place, both its material culture and imaginative aspects, is important to communities. Kilde effectively emphasises the importance of real and imagined place, inviting deeper theological reflection.

---

<sup>19</sup> Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *Sacred Power Sacred Space: An Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957). 4.

<sup>20</sup> Kilde, *Sacred Power Sacred Space*, 183.

<sup>21</sup> Kim Knott, *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis* (Durham: Acumen, 2013).

For Kilde, power in physical and metaphorical place comes from the understanding that the divine dwells participatorily in place, extending the above definition to specify that a place can be used to “enhance or generate religious experience and reflection.”<sup>22</sup> In reflection on Kilde’s work, William McAlpine writes that “power or empowerment resides in participation” and so it is the participation with the divine or the religious experience that yields a sense of power.<sup>23</sup> In some ways I find connection between this understanding and Brueggemann’s reflection on Old Testament narratives. Brueggemann argued that physical place was in part purposeful because it structured a physical experience with the divine, a collective experience physically embodied in and through place. I find this insight is further enhanced by Kilde’s reflection on the contemporary importance of experienced place, and so we can find the roots of the power of place experienced both theologically and in biblical narratives. While Kilde’s work has been criticised because of its inclination to make generalized statements without considering specific historical movements,<sup>24</sup> I agree with Kilde’s assertion that power comes from an experience of place and through collective experience of a place anchored with the divine.

Kilde notes that a purpose for power-infused, collectively experienced place is the connection to a state of authority or legitimacy. This concept of legitimacy is also found in Brueggemann’s writings, Kilde bringing a reflective but slightly different angle to the concept of the ultimate purpose of experienced place. Kilde writes that “religious space is powerful. Within it the awesome power of the divine is often understood to dwell. Proximity to this power is

---

<sup>22</sup> Kilde, *Sacred Power Sacred Space*, 184.

<sup>23</sup> William McAlpine, “Kilde, Jeanne Halgren. 2008. *Sacred Power, Sacred Space: An Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship*,” *Practical Theology* 2 (2015): 293.

<sup>24</sup> Richard W. Pfaff, “Sacred Power, Sacred Space: An Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship. By Jeanne Halgren Kilde,” *Church History* 79 (2010): 693-694.



deemed to yield authority and spiritual empowerment.”<sup>25</sup> Kilde expertly details the twofold reflection of power as delineated through place; place is first a centre of power because it physically encapsulates an experience with the religious, and place is secondly powerful because through the experience and proximity to religious experience the individual, and I would contend the community, builds a sense of authority. I argue that this duality of power in place creates an important connection to the formation of communal identity: Communities acknowledge how God’s dwelling in place is powerful, thus sanctifying their place, and as communities interact with God in this place their community identity is formed in the physical interaction in a way that promotes authority or legitimacy. Power in place is thus not only important for its symbolic truth but also in the way that it connects to the formation of communal identity.

Kim Knott adds to the discussion of the link between place and power, highlighting the theological connections. Knott, like Kilde, argues that “the spaces that religion occupies and participates in are spaces of power” and while Knott adds that the “challenge will be to discover the relationship between religion and power in any given space,” her understanding highlights a uniformity in the theological reflection of place, both finding that place is powerful.<sup>26</sup>

For Knott, place becomes powerful when it is deemed so by the community, a slight distinction from Kilde who argues that the experiential nature of place as a divine dwelling crafts power. Knott argues that groups “manipulate” place to construct the power they desire, crafting place power through domination or resistance to physical place.<sup>27</sup> She differs slightly here with Kilde, who organises place power through experience; Knott notes that power comes through

---

<sup>25</sup> Kilde, *Sacred Power Sacred Space*, 4.

<sup>26</sup> Knott, *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis*, 28.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

experience constructed in and through the community, so place is powerful because of the manipulation and manifestation of a communal desire. Place is powerful, either by the “social constitution of space that opens it up to the purist and exercise of power” or by the “capacity of space to be shot through ideology that makes it powerful,” an intrinsic link between place and power. Knott’s argument highlights some uniform theological understanding that place is powerful, and while I find Kilde’s active experiential manifestation of power in place more engaging, it is worth noting that for some place is powerful because of the way in which community crafts it.

For Kilde, place is a centre of collective experiential power that yields legitimacy, influential in shaping the identity of community. The notion of the power of place is important for this research because it illuminates another facet for the theme of place for the formation of communal identity. As communities gather in a specific, physical location, one that is sanctified as their deity dwells, the place is infused with a power. As the community dwells and constructs a community around place, this sense of power shapes how the community creates structure and identity. Jeanne Halgren Kilde is thus integral for our understanding of the theological formation of communal identity by revealing how the theme of place yields legitimizing power.

### 3.2.4 Mircea Eliade: Place and Its Sacred Purpose

One aspect of the study of place that may seem obvious in a theological reflection is the connection between place and the notion of sacred. The theological construction of sacred place alone deserves an entire dissertation, and yet I draw primarily from one theologian to understand place as sacred, giving us a foundational understanding of the way in which sacred place can be understood. While not an exhaustive exploration of the sacred, this theological reflection will allow us to better understand how sacred place manifests in a way that is relative for our

fieldwork communities in the later sections of this chapter. Theologian and phenomenologist Mircea Eliade continues our theological reflection of place by detailing its sacred purpose. Through Eliade's work *The Sacred and Profane: The Nature of Religion* we will begin to understand the notion of sacred place and its importance for the formation of communal identity.

Eliade begins his introductory chapter of *The Sacred and Profane: The Nature of Religion* by presenting a clear definition of what sacred place is and how to evaluate it.<sup>28</sup> Eliade organises his work around the sacred by highlighting two key thoughts: Place that is sacred is experienced as separate and different, and place that is sacred represents a cosmological notion of centre.<sup>29</sup> We begin the discussion of sacrality by first discussing Eliade's viewpoint of sacred place being a manifestation of other.

Eliade explores the manifested nature of the sacred, finding that the "sacred always manifests itself," and the sacred manifests "as a reality of a wholly different order from 'natural' realities."<sup>30</sup> The sacred, for Eliade, "shows itself to us."<sup>31</sup> Eliade articulates this manifestation of the sacred through 'hierophany,' which describes the act of the manifestation of the sacred. For Eliade the sacred represents something different, a manifestation of the opposite. Every sacred place for Eliade "implies a hierophany, an interruption of the sacred that results in detaching a

---

<sup>28</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, 1959), 10.

<sup>29</sup> Taves adds to this reflection, discussing how "specialness implies the *belief* that some things are priceless or incomparable, the *ascription* of singular value to things, and the *attribution* of causality to the violation of the taboos associated with those things" (*Religious Experience Reconsidered*, 35). While the language of specialness and sacred differ, I argue we could link Eliade's discussion of sacred as separate and Taves's notion of specialness to discuss how the sacred forms from a belief and ascription of the separate or sacred. Christopher Partridge aligns with Eliade's understanding of the sacred, noting that "the sacred, whether embedded within religious discourse or not, concerns those ideas which are understood to be set apart from the rest of social life and which exert a profound moral claim over people's lives" (*The Lyre of Orpheus*, 5). Using the language of opposite, Partridge upholds this idea of sacred representing a different or opposite.

<sup>30</sup> Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane*, 10.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different.”<sup>32</sup> Sacred place represents an experience within a place that is other, a place of a different nature that comes from an interruption, manifesting a sacred experience within the physical. I find that Eliade’s explanation of sacred place as a physical location of marked interruption to be important, lending structure and a working definition to sacred place.

While Eliade’s definition of sacred brings about some theologically rich points of reflection, it is important to note that at times scholars have found his explanation of the sacred limiting.<sup>33</sup> Veikko Anttonen finds that Eliade’s description of the sacred place is perhaps not reflective of what researchers of comparative religion would argue. With a purpose of “relating religious notions to the social world at large” so that “religion is approached as an important arena for displaying general mechanism of human cognition,” Anttonen argues for a broader explanation of sacred place.<sup>34</sup>

For Anttonen, the “idea of the sacred is founded on our bodily being and mental representation of interior and exterior spatial coordinates. The word and the concept does not need to have a fixed point (a fixed agent to refer to) which defines its content.”<sup>35</sup> Anttonen expands some of the restrictions Eliade includes, noting that the sacred can be seen not as a fixed manifestation of other but rather a sort of boundary that delineates the transformative from the

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>33</sup> Eric Arnould and Linda Price (“Beyond the Sacred-Profane Dichotomy in Consumer Research,” *Advances in Consumer Research* 31 1, no. 52–56 [2004]: 52), mirror the dispute of Eliade’s separation between sacred and profane. Arnould and Price argue that in the postmodern consumer culture the sacred and profane no longer comprise the dichotomy suggested by Eliade.

<sup>34</sup> Veikko Anttonen, “Space, Body, and the Notion of Boundary: A Category-Theoretical Approach to Religion,” *Temenos* 41, no. 2 (September 1, 2005), 186.

<sup>35</sup> Anttonen, “Space, Body, and the Notion of Boundary,” 197.

ordinary. This understanding mitigates some of the religious and non-religious distinction that Eliade proposes, Anttonen aligning more with my understanding of the sacramental ability of a multitude of places. Anttonen argues that the

cultural logic by which the attributions of “sacrality” are constituted—whether as a reference to a distinct metaphysical entity or as an ontological level of existence or as an attribute of value—is governed then by principles of categorisation. It is the notion of a category boundary that establishes the ‘sacred’ and the difference that it makes.<sup>36</sup>

The sacred is thus a category, a boundary, that can be used and adopted by any community in any place. The category marks the transformative and the important, a distinction between other, making the notion of sacred transitive but still contextualised in a marked interruption of a physical place that is experienced by a specific community. Anttonen notes that sacrality can be a form of categorization, not fixed by a purely religious experience as Eliade denotes. I find this addition helpful as we reflect on sacred place for multiple community identity creations; Anttonen engages in important conversation with Eliade’s foundational description of sacred place by moving the sacred out of the purely religious and into the universal.

I appreciate Eliade’s understanding of the sacred, and while his understanding of the lived experience is focused on the individual, we can extend the place he describes into the communal so that the description becomes more community rather than individually focused. This communal approach is better understood as Eliade moves to explain the purpose of a sacred place. For Eliade, the manifestation of sacred in place is purposeful for the way in which the sacred place centres the community, meaning place acts as a location for rooting. Eliade notes that the

experience of sacred space makes possible the “founding of the world”: where the sacred manifests itself in space, the real unveils itself, the world comes into existence. But the interruption of the sacred does not only project a fixed point into the formless fluidity of profane space, a centre into chaos; it also effects a break in plane, that is, it opens

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 198.

communication between cosmic places (between earth and heaven) and makes possible ontological passage from one mode of being to another.<sup>37</sup>

Place is not merely a manifestation of sacred other; rather, Eliade argues that sacred reflects the cosmological narrative and myth of the community, place acting as a representational and physical centre for the community, adding to and organising the myth that the formation of communal identity is focused on.<sup>38</sup> This approach to place delineates order from the chaos, the sacred crafting a place for community that wraps together communal myth, communal stability, and communal connection. Eliade argues that the potential to experience and live into the order and cosmology facilitates connection with the divine world so that, through inhabiting sacred place, the community also inhabits a theologically significant centre.

Eliade's description of the sacred, while a theory that brings an interesting insight, is not without its potential issues. Jonathan Z. Smith critiques Eliade's notion of the centre, arguing that his interpretation of the myth and ritual tradition of the Tjilpa aborigines that led to the notion of the centre is not without its faults. Smith notes, for example:

Eliade's interpretation of the Tjilpa myth focuses on the pole as the "sacred axis" that makes territory "habitable" by maintaining contact with the sky, for him, the "transhuman" realm of the sacred, of the transcendence. In Eliade's understanding, the pole functions as a type of "sacred centre" the point of contact between heaven and earth, a locus of sacrality that "founds" the world for man.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane*, 63.

<sup>38</sup> I find parallels between Eliade's description and Conrad Ostwalt's understanding that sacred place carries a 'utopian' element (Ostwalt, *Secular Steeples*, 79). Both theologians hold this understanding of sacred place representing an almost unreachable other. Stewart Hoover and Knut Lundby (*Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture* [SAGE, 1997]), mirror Eliade's notion of the sacred place acting as a place of centring. They note religion is "not limited to what happens in a 'sacred' realm, traditionally conceived, but it is that part of culture that persuasively presents a plausible myth of ordering existence" (159). While they do not address place specifically, rather discussing religion in its general form, their language mirrors this idea of the intermixing of belief, the ordering of existence, and the potential for a myriad of sacred options.

<sup>39</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 2.

Yet the text Eliade uses, Smith argues, “in no way warrants such an interpretation.”<sup>40</sup> Smith argues that Eliade approached communities and myths with a Christian influence, producing a “Christianised reinterpretation”<sup>41</sup> of the original myths. The critiques are important to note, as they certainly highlight a potential problem with Eliade’s conclusion, and yet Smith adds that if theory is extrapolated from the misrepresented myth, then Eliade did propose some important insights. Smith adds that “poles take many forms, under a diversity of names,” later noting “I do not doubt that such understandings of place can be found within the history of religions, and that there are traditions in which poles (or world-trees, or mountains) sometimes play such connecting roles; but they are not present in the Tjilpa myth.”<sup>42</sup> Here is the tension in Eliade’s work; Eliade’s work as strictly anthropological presents critique, and yet if we convert Eliade’s apparent anthropological missteps to a cosmological theory, the hypothetical understanding of a sacred pole could be quite helpful, finding significance in his writing. Moving to this understanding, I argue that the theory of a sacred centre directs the role of sacred place in communal identity formation. In Eliade we can then begin to understand the theological construction of a sacred place, place manifesting as sacred and a centre of importance for community.

Mircea Eliade allows us to understand how sacred place is crafted and the power that comes to communities that adopt sacred place. His argument is central to our understanding of how modern theologians both understand place and allot purpose to place, and while Eliade draws from the phenomenological understanding of an individual experience, his theories can

---

<sup>40</sup> Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*, 4.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

easily be adopted in an ecclesiological research and music festival research focus on collective communal experience, giving us observable understandings for the theme of place and the way in which place adds to the collective communal identity shaping experience. Through Eliade we understand that sacred place is crafted through the manifestation of the extraordinary, granting a community an extended sense of power and purpose, thus shaping the communal identity. As we continue to reflect on the formation of communal identity in a theological understanding, Eliade aids in our understanding of what sacred is and how this sacred understanding extends into to the theme of place, forming the communal identity through that theme.

### 3.2.5 Conclusion

Place as a theme for communal identity is evident in our theological reflections, and while place in the physical has been researched across multiple theological disciplines the scholars highlighted in this review display the differing purpose of place for the formation of communal identity. Walter Brueggemann opened this theological reflection by observing how throughout the biblical narrative one can find a relational connection between God, people, and place.

Brueggemann notes that this relational connection allows for communities to dwell with God in a way that legitimizes the community, forming communal identity. Norman Habel notes how the symbolic purpose of place instils communities with a sense of symbolic ownership and craftsmanship, key for communities as they construct not only place but also communal identity within the theme of place. Jeanne Halgren Kilde discusses how place can attribute a sense of power and legitimacy through the experiential and divinely endowed place. Mircea Eliade concludes our chapter, discussing the theme of place and its sacred purpose, finding a distinction between the experience of hierophantic place and profane place. In all our theologians, we can understand the biblical source of place and a theological purpose for place as it relates to the



formation of communal identity, lending to our understanding of how communal identity is shaped by the theme of place in an ecclesiological observation. We now turn to examine the understanding of place in a social science reflection.

### 3.3 Framing Place through Social Science Reflection

Rooted in modern theological reflection, I argue we can understand the purpose affiliated with the theme of place and its ability to add to the formation of communal identity. Yet as this fieldwork and research combines church communities with music festival communities, I find it helpful to also explore what social science adds to our reflection on the theme of place. Social science clarifies and deepens how modern communities, both the theological and the cultural, form their communal identity. Through a series of social science theorists, we now seek to understand how place shapes connective and explorative identity markers, how place adds to the consumption and legitimization of communities, and how social scientists approach the sacred notion of place, better understanding how the theme of place is active in the formation of communal identity.

#### 3.3.1 Yi-Fu Tuan: Topophilism and the Connective Aspect of Place

There is arguably a connection between people and place, between communities and the landscape they inhabit. We can understand this connection through the work of Yi-Fu Tuan, who lays for us the foundational social science understanding for the connection between communities and place.<sup>43</sup> Through Tuan's *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception*,

---

<sup>43</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

*Attitudes, and Values* we find the intrinsic link between people and place, understanding how the relational connection shapes the formation of communal identity.

Human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan finds a connection between people and place, like our theologians above.<sup>44</sup> Tuan explores this connection, popularizing poet W.H. Auden's neologism "topophilia" to understand the uniqueness of relationship between place and people.<sup>45</sup> Tuan writes, "topophilia is the affective bond between people and place, or setting," later calling this connection a sense of rootedness to place.<sup>46</sup> This is a key connection for us, the understanding that community and the physical location are bonded. Tuan is not the only social scientist to find truth in this connection between people and place. Pulling from Tuan's term, environmental scientists Elmqvist Thomas Berry, K. Ingemar Johnson, and Johan Elmberg add that "identity and social processes...are attached to specific physical places and culturally valued species often shape the strength of attachment to community."<sup>47</sup> Relaying Tuan's ideology of topophilism, these scholars clearly find a connection between the physical place and the identity of the community.

---

<sup>44</sup> Social geographer Hilary Winchester (*Landscapes: Ways of Imagining the World* [Routledge, 2014], 4), takes this idea one step further, arguing that identity and group affiliation occurs through landscape. A connection exists between a community and the place they inhabit, stringing together the physical and the community.

<sup>45</sup> In 1947 poet W. H. Auden coined the term 'topophilia,' meaning an emotional bond with place. Yi-Fu Tuan popularized the term years later. Scott Donald Sampson, "The Topophilia Hypothesis: Ecopsychology Meets Evolutionary Psychology," in *Ecopsychology: Science, Totems, and the Technological Species*, ed. Peter H Khan and Patricia H. Habsach (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2012).

<sup>46</sup> Madan Sarup (*Identity, Culture, and the Postmodern World*, ed. Tasneem Raja [University of Georgia Press, 1996]) adds to this, noting "identity is formed in relation to place and time," indicating the importance of both the physical location and the season or time of fabrication. The thought adds to Tuan's understanding of the connection between place and identity. Tuan, *Topophilia*, 4.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Beery, K. Jonsson, and Johan Elmberg, "From Environmental Connectedness to Sustainable Futures: Topophilia and Human Affiliation with Nature," *Sustainability* 7 (2015): 8837–54.

Tuan goes on to explain how topophilia actualises and shapes a communal identity. Coupling “sentiment with place,” a community experiences and perceives a place in a special way, crafting a deep connection between the people and the place.<sup>48</sup> The perception of place is central to the experience, Tuan writing that perception as an activity allows the place experiencer to formulate a worldview, thus place acts as a character in the structuring of the experience and in the construction of the worldview or identity.<sup>49</sup> What I find interesting in Tuan’s work is what I would call the mitigation of emotional experience. Tuan writes that “topophilia is not the strongest of human emotions. When it is compelling, we can be sure that the place or environment has become the carrier of emotionally charged events or perceived as a symbol.”<sup>50</sup> The limitation Tuan puts on the emotional experience limits the potential power for place. I would argue that the experience and emotion is perhaps one of the strongest human emotions, that the topophilia Tuan highlights has the potential for great purpose and power, especially when shaping the communal identity. When a community experiences a place, whether through patterns of habitation or a singular event, place becomes the literal and metaphorical foundation of communal existence and thus the communal identity. This understanding, paired with the experiential connection and emotional immediacy of place experience, forms what I find to be an incredibly strong connection. Tuan is correct that topophilia acknowledges the connection between people and place, and yet I would argue that this sentiment is a connection and emotion that often holds great power.

---

<sup>48</sup> Tuan, *Topophilia*, 113.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

Deepak Chhabra and Eunye Grace Kim contribute to this understanding from a study in which they applied topophilia to the study of migratory patterns of people referred to as snowbirds, individuals who migrate seasonally. What the study found was that “seasonal migrants seek ‘everydayness’ and ‘sociability’ in moored settings.”<sup>51</sup> The lives of seasonal migrants is “focused around the mundane and involves embodied, habitual ordinary objects, place and practices.”<sup>52</sup> Chhabra and Kim discovered that, contrary to their hypothesis, seasonal migrants do not act like travellers on holiday but are rather rooted in the community by filling days with mundane activities.<sup>53</sup> They forsake wild adventures or taking in every cultural activity, as one might do on holiday. Rather, the lifestyle travellers want to feel rooted to the place, connected in some way to the community, this desire reflected in their everyday actions.<sup>54</sup> I would argue those seasonal migrants work to establish their connection to place by integrating their everyday actions into the greater community. This assimilation reflects the need to feel rooted in place, a sense of establishing oneself and coordinating life within the greater community. A connection to place and an emotion of safety drives the rooting actions of those in the study, enhancing the understanding of the connection and emotional rootedness for a community in place.

The ideology of topophilia is of great importance for the scholarly understanding of a community’s relation to the greater landscape.<sup>55</sup> In fact, topophilia has become influential in

---

<sup>51</sup> Deepak Chhabra and Eunye Grace Kim, “Topophilia and Economic Value of Lifestyle Travelers,” *Leisure Loisir* 42 (2016): 115–123.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Tuan, *Topophilia*, 4.

multiple fields, finding connection in psychology and psychoanalysis. In a 2004 study, environmental health scholar Oladele A. Ogunseitan used topophilia to understand quality of life.<sup>56</sup> Ogunseitan discovered that there was a direct connection between restorative environments and increased notions of quality of life, a clear connection between people's perceived happiness and the environment or place inhabited.<sup>57</sup> Using Tuan's understanding of topophilia, scholars are discovering there is in fact a connection between humanity's construction of happiness and the surrounding world that is inhabited.<sup>58</sup> I take these studies to understand that there is an inexplicable bond between people and place, a foundational argument which I find compelling. In a human-geographical lens there is an intrinsic symbiotic connection between people and place, a connection that helps form a sense of identity for communities.

Yi-Fu Tuan argues that "to live, man must see some value in his world."<sup>59</sup> By organising the world around the theme of place, and the topophilia sentiment that comes from place, Tuan argues for an important connection between people and place, a connection that forms communal identity. Taking Tuan's idea of topophilia I would argue we can understand that place holds a "wider system of meaning and power" that "develops a story as a result of human experience."<sup>60</sup> The spatial dimensions in Tuan's ideology of topophilism becomes the foundational layer from which the community builds its central identity. Concluding, then, we can understand through

---

<sup>56</sup> Oladele A. Ogunseitan, "Topophilia and the Quality of Life," *Environmental Health Perspectives* 113 (2005): 143–149.

<sup>57</sup> Environmental psychology also upholds the idea of the benefits of natural environment aligning with the connection between restorative land and happiness. Terry Hartig et al., "Tracking Restoration in Natural and Urban Field Settings," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 23 (2003): 109–23.

<sup>58</sup> Richard M. Ryan et al., "Vitalizing Effects of Being Outdoors and in Nature," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 30 (2010): 159–68.

<sup>59</sup> Tuan, *Topophilia*, 98.

<sup>60</sup> Knott, *The Location of Religion*, 99; Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 124.

the notion of topophilia, and supported myriad scholars who adopt it, that a community finds connection and thus rootedness in physical place. In such rooting, a community foundationally establishes itself in place, shaping its existence and experience and communal identity through the theme of place.

### 3.3.2 Ellen Semple: Place and Its Explorative Purpose

Ellen Semple continues our understanding of the theme of place in social science by attributing another purpose to place. Like Habel, who above attributed a symbolic narration to place, Semple seems to connect the idea of symbolic creation and exploration of identity to place.<sup>61</sup> Ellen Semple argues that place is central for the formation of communal identity because place creates a sense of exploration that allows communities to expand upon their created sense of identity, curating a culture and overall identity through explorative symbolic place.

Asserting that “man is a product of earth’s surface,” and reflecting the work of geographic environmentalist Friedrich Ratzel, Semple makes a bold claim: Community is a product of place.<sup>62</sup> The compelling idea that communities are a product of their environment as much as a product of their culture suggests a direct connection between place and identity. While this idea is social science in prescription, and thus a different school of thought from Brueggemann’s theological argument, I find a connection between the two scholars. Both seem to directly link the identity of the community with their place, displaying the important idea that the physical landscape and place is active in the formation of identity.

---

<sup>61</sup> Habel, *The Land Is Mine*, 77; Ellen Semple, *Influences of Geographic Environment on The Basis of Ratzel’s System of Anthropo-Geography* (London: Henry Holt and Company, 1911), 32-50.

<sup>62</sup> Semple, *Influences of Geographic Environment*, 1; Friedrich Ratzel, *Anthropo-Geographie, Oder Grundzüge Der Anwendung Der Erdkunde Auf Die Geschichte / Tl. 1, Grundzüge Der Anwendung Der Erdkunde Auf Die Geschichte* (Stuttgart: Engelhorn, 1921).

Semple's work with indigenous peoples led to her observation that communities' doctrines of hell directly reflect the place they inhabit, expanding the connection between people and place to a mythical narrative of place and its ability to shape a community.<sup>63</sup> She found that Eskimo communities depict hell as somewhere cold, whereas Christian and Muslim religions, set in desert landscapes, depict hell to be warm, desert-like places.<sup>64</sup> The place communities inhabit prompt exploration and reflection, creating communal narratives and later ideological structures from place. In this way Semple's observation directly reflect the way in which the exploration and lived experience within place adds to the formation of communal identity.

Semple is not the only scholar to show how place forges communal identity. In a study of ghost towns, sociologists found that imagination plays a large role in actualizing the importance of otherwise-empty towns without community.<sup>65</sup> The lore of ghost towns combined with the actual historical narrative of the place allows a community to invent a place's purpose anew. The communities near ghost towns create a narrative based on place (like the ideology of hell in Semple's work), one that comes from their explorative curiosity. These narratives are "experienced in a tangible, spatial form" creating an "experience that becomes all more powerful" when placed in the location and narrative of the past.<sup>66</sup> The exploration spurred by the place allowed for the "emotional, experiential and affective traces [to] tie humans into the particular environment," making place a key aspect in the conceptualization and establishment of

---

<sup>63</sup> Semple, *Influences of Geographic Environment*, 42.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Paul Adams, Steven Hoelscher, and Karen Till, *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2001), 29.

<sup>66</sup> Adams, Hoelscher, and Till, *Textures of Place*, 36.

communal identity.<sup>67</sup> I would argue they align to what scholars discuss as the tension place can bring, “between what is, in a simplistic sense, ‘real’ and what is ‘fantasy.’”<sup>68</sup> Explorative potential and possibility intermingle and at times blur the lines between the real and the fantasy within a physical, actualised place. It is in the active exploration and the connection of the symbolic narrative to the physical place that crafts this intertwining of physical place with communal ideology, the theme of place thus forming communal identity as a community engages in and explores both the real and the fantasy of their place.

Semple impacts this dissertation because she opens our understanding of a differing way that place has purpose. By creating and curating exploration, place grounds communities’ invention of ideology, so that through the symbolic and explorative possibilities, community formulates key communal identity structure through the theme of place. Semple adds to and expands some of the theorists above, highlighting the way in which the theme of place actively contributes to the formation of communal identity.

### 3.3.3 John Horton and Peter Kraftl: Place and Its Consumerist Purpose

Consumer mentality of a place also aides in the formation of communal identity. Cultural geographers John Horton and Peter Kraftl add an interesting point of reflection as we continue to discuss the theme of place, adding that a consumption narrative to place shapes not only the experience but also the purpose of place. Through Horton and Kraftl, we explore the way in which place is consumed, and the ultimate occupational influence of place consumption on the formation of communal identity.

---

<sup>67</sup> Anderson, *Understanding Cultural Geography* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 39.

<sup>68</sup> Adams, Hoelscher, and Till, *Textures of Place*, 24.



For Horton and Kraftl the material culture of place is not merely passive, but rather represents the space that is both consumed and producing consumption: “Spaces aren’t just where consumption happens, rather it is often the case that spaces are the ‘things’ being consumed.”<sup>69</sup> Place is shaped by the creative actors of place while also promoting greater forms of cultural consumption, Horton and Kraftl arguing for what I would call the duality of place consumption.<sup>70</sup> I find that this duality of consumption crafts that connection to place that Horton and Kraftl highlight; as a community establishes itself in place and crafts the place to fit needs, the community consumes the literal place. They also begin to craft place to fit their consumer methods, consuming place while also creating place for consumption. In both forms of consumption, identity is threaded into place and created by place, so that place promotes and reflects the continuous cycle of cultural consumption, or what I argue is the cycle of communal identity creation and edification. For Horton and Kraftl this interaction on place is “central to identities” so that place and the consumer behaviour of place shapes the identity of the community.<sup>71</sup> Identity shaping comes not merely through consumption of place but also through the notion of ownership that stems from it. Horton and Kraftl allude to this, briefly noting that through consumption of place communities craft a sense of occupation.<sup>72</sup>

I argue that these links among place, consumption, and power come from understandings of ownership. Ownership tied with consumption is not a revolutionary thought; it is one that we

---

<sup>69</sup> John Horton and Peter Kraftl, *Cultural Geographies: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 65. The argument that places are consumed is a central theme to sociologist John Urry’s book *Consuming Places* (London: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>70</sup> Horton and Peter Kraftl, *Cultural Geographies*, 67.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 65.

are very normalized to. When we purchase something, whether as small as a drink or as large as a home, the trade of currency for goods crafts a sense of purchaser power. This is why people take such great care to personalize bought goods.<sup>73</sup> We add backgrounds to our computers to make them personal, we name cars, we add art to walls of offices and homes, and we pick out certain colours for journals, all acts of personalization and ownership transferred by the purchase. Horton and Kraftl allow us to then understand that place is a physical material culture of consumption for a community. This consumption leads to ownership, ownership leading to personalization that shapes and creates place in a way that also constructs the communal identity structure.

Other social scientists explore similarities between consumption, occupation, and place, adding to Horton and Kraftl. In the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* Derek Rucker, Adam Galinsky, and David Dubois describe consumer behaviour and the power of ownership that comes through consumption. The authors write that power of purchasing is a “social construct” unleashed when consuming, so purchasing an object generates a sense of power.<sup>74</sup> The consumption of specific goods is itself an object of status, increasing one’s sense of power.<sup>75</sup> While this study focuses on individual agency and consumer culture, the connection between consumption and power yields important understanding of how ownership yields power. I assert

---

<sup>73</sup> Shahram Heshamt asserts that consumers develop an attachment to objects emotionally straining ownership. Heshmat’s understanding of the emotional connection created through ownership creates this desire to modify an object so that it physically displays the identity of the owner, reducing emotional strain (Shahram Heshmat, “How the Ownership of Something Increases Our Valuations,” *Psychology Today*, June 30, 2015, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/science-choice/201506/how-the-ownership-something-increases-our-valuations>).

<sup>74</sup> Derek D. Rucker, Adam D. Galinsky, and David Dubois, “Power and Consumer Behaviour: How Power Shapes Who and What Consumers Value,” *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 22 (2011): 55-77.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 360.

that, like individuals, communities find purpose and power through the occupation and ownership of place. The ownership of place then is not just a superfluous extension of place but rather a tool of community power. This socially accepted power makes ownership an extension of the communal identity.

The occupation of a place conveys rootedness (as Tuan observes) and power for the community. This understanding is particularly fruitful for reflecting on temporary community occupation of spaces, such as the Occupy movement of the early twenty-first century. The movement was a temporary success, but as the groups occupied public places such as parks or the stairs of St. Pauls' Cathedral, their lack of ownership ultimately led to the slow demise of usage of the place.<sup>76</sup> Perhaps public places offer no true ownership for a private community. I hypothesise that ownership is important, but for ownership to be powerful it must be actualised by the community and accepted by the greater culture, a symbiotic display and acceptance of occupied place.

In "Why the Occupy Movement Failed," Alasdair Roberts suggests that the Occupy movement was unsuccessful because of its misuse of the places it occupied.<sup>77</sup> Roberts summarizes that a range of problems plagued the Occupy movement and their choice of place, specifying that the groups use of the place alienated possible attendees: "An unrelenting circle of drummers alienated sympathetic neighbours and drove many of the park's own residents"<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> Mario Cacciottolo, "Occupy London: What Did the St Paul's Protest Achieve?," *BBC News*, February 38, 2012, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-17188327>.

<sup>77</sup> George McKay argues that "one way cultures of resistance define themselves against cultures of majority is through the construction of zones, their own spaces" (*Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance since the Sixties* [Verso, 1996], 7). The Occupy movement did construct specific zones, but I would argue it was the misuse of and not the construction of the zones that ultimately led to the failure of the Occupy movement.

<sup>78</sup> Alasdair Roberts, "Why the Occupy Movement Failed," *Public Administration Review* 72, no. 5 (2012): 754–63.

crazy. Reports of “violence and drug dealing became more frequent. The General Assembly struggled to manage these problems, and other aspects of camp life, efficiently.”<sup>79</sup> Roberts thus opens the idea that the movement failed not necessarily because of its fluidity but rather because of its misuse of place. While the countercultural group was tolerated, their disruption of everyday life and the growing potential for violence threatened the surrounding society. Its disruption of the majority led to pushback, illustrating my idea that occupation is both established by a community and accepted by a larger culture. Only in the actualisation of both acceptance and establishment does a community consume in a way that promotes occupational power.

I argue that a consumer-constructed occupation as understood from Horton and Kraftl is important because it allows us to explore how communities form relationships with place, blossoming to allow a community to organize a powerful central identity structure. Ownership of place is helpful when organizing our thoughts on the formation of communal identity, for ownership allows communities to feel connected to a specific place, this connection ultimately birthing a sense of power that becomes central to the formation of communal identity.

Horton and Kraftl continue our social science reflection on place by revealing how the construct of occupation reshapes a community understanding and connection to place. Mirroring Jeanne Halgren Kilde’s understanding of place yielding a sense of power, Horton and Kraftl detail how in our consumer culture the occupation of place shapes the notion of permanence and power, and in this way, the theme of place becomes central to the formation and maintenance of a communal identity. John Horton and Peter Kraftl thus allows us to understand how place is integral in forming the communal identity by allowing communities to occupy and thus create a notion of power within place.

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 760.

### 3.3.4 Jon Anderson: Place and Its Legitimizing Purpose

Communities often do not merely occupy place; they also shape the place so that it reflects and mimics their ideologically tinged aesthetics. With occupation comes building and expansion, reshaping the place to reflect the community and its evolution. In *Understanding Cultural Geography: Places and Traces* cultural geographer Jon Anderson writes on how occupation and consumerism of place melds with reconstruction.<sup>80</sup> Detailing how communities materially build and reshape the place they inhabit, Jon Anderson reveals how social scientists understand the purpose and power behind the communal shaping of place revealing how the theme of place is integral for the formation of communal identity.

Anderson discusses how the theme of place directly forms communal identity; place is “crucial for understanding who we are and where we fit in to the culture and geography of our lives.”<sup>81</sup> A sense of place, he writes, is “fundamentally important in defining our connection to geographic areas, and why they become significant to our own sense of who we are.”<sup>82</sup> Anderson makes these claims after observing how communities root and then reconstruct place.<sup>83</sup> Anderson notes that communities root themselves in a specific place, and once they have a foundational connection there, they craft and create in and through place, or what Anderson calls trace making.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> Jon Anderson, *Understanding Cultural Geography* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>81</sup> Anderson, *Understanding Cultural Geography*, 51.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

As Horton and Kraftl note, place is central for the formation of communal identity through the consumer process of occupation, which yields power. Anderson agrees, detailing how communities not only occupy but also transform a place to reflect their core identity by crafting “traces” of physical material, literally adding to a place by building material artefacts.<sup>85</sup> Communities do not merely create once. Instead, they engage with “ongoing composition of traces,” meaning that patterns of trace creation outline community creation.<sup>86</sup> It is not merely the occupation of place that is important, but it is also the building and leaving of traces that allow a community to explore identity in and through material culture.

In this re-crafting of place community finds power and legitimization, two factors that are prevalent amongst our theologians as well.<sup>87</sup> Anderson discusses numerous forms of power that come from trace making. Of particular note is the idea of dominating power, through which communities control place.<sup>88</sup> Power is thus a direct application of the construction and ownership of place. Anderson is proved right by the many ways humanity monopolizes and shifts natural places to fit its needs.<sup>89</sup> In a review of Anderson’s work, geographer Aretina Hamilton writes that this remark on the reconstruction of place is birthed from Anderson’s focus on how trace

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>87</sup> Kilde, *Sacred Power Sacred Space*, 4; Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 37.

<sup>88</sup> Anderson, *Understanding Cultural Geography*, 76.

<sup>89</sup> Arran Gare (*Postmodernism and the Environmental Crises* [New York: Routledge, 1995]) argues that there is undoubtedly an environmental crisis. Through a postmodern lens Gare suggests that this crisis can only be remedied with international political cooperation and sacrifice. The importance of this work lies in the foundational understanding of a current environmental crisis influenced by the human manipulation of natural place.

creates an awareness of place.<sup>90</sup> Natural places and landscapes are reconstructed as humanity leaves traces on the land, reshaping the natural using the created.

Place thus becomes an active avenue through which communities shape their material culture, conveying power to the community. Anderson interestingly notes that places are “not ‘nouns’—they are not fixed and solid things, rather they are ‘verbs’, they are doing things, and they are always active.”<sup>91</sup> This reflection allows us to understand how communities continuously and actively craft traces for their communal identity. Place acts as a mirror of communal identity as well as a physical element shaped by the fluctuation of communal needs. Place should be treated as an important, observable theme as we explore how communal identity is shaped because place acts as an unconscious representative of the present communal identity, the community expressed in and through material culture.

Anderson is helpful in our understanding because he points to how communities do not just inhabit a place but rather inhabit and reshape place. While Anderson’s work may lead some readers to an ecological end, calling for the awareness and mitigation of dominant power display in natural place, I find that Anderson reveals an important prompt for our social science reflection on the formation of communal identity. His concepts bring a deeper understanding of how the theme of place influences the formation of communal identity. Once a place is occupied, communities begin to transform the landscape to fit them, establishing power and legitimacy by reorganizing the natural for their ideology and communal needs. Consumption, power, and place intertwine to shape and reflect the communal identity. Concluding Anderson’s section, we can begin to understand how place yields again a sense of power through consumption and

---

<sup>90</sup> Aretina R. Hamilton, “A Review of ‘Understanding Cultural Geography: Places and Traces,’” *The Professional Geographer* 62, no. 4 (2010): 551-553.

<sup>91</sup> Anderson, *Understanding Cultural Geography*, 73.

construction that leads to legitimization. For our communities, this ability to create in place allows them to physically represent their ideology and identity through trace making; thus, the theme of place becomes ever more central to the formation and evolution of communal identity.

### 3.3.5 Don Mitchell: Place and Its Sacred Purpose

The final purpose of place (that is, insofar as place is a central theme in this dissertation) is one that some may not necessarily link to a social science reflection, and yet the world of the sacred is arguably not only found within the theological. Sacred place understanding and notions of the sacred can be examined in numerous fields, leading us to consider how the theme of place is sacred according to a social science understanding. Obviously, our theologians would have ideas about the link between place and sacrality, with Eliade beginning the theological reflection of sacred, but Don Mitchell adds to our understanding from the perspective of social science. Mitchell explores the notion of sacred and its tie to place through a social science lens, finding that the notion of sacred is adapted to the theme of place for the formation of communal identity.

In *Cultural Geography*, Mitchell argues that both place and the name attached to place are a social product, conceived, and contrived within a community.<sup>92</sup> The notion of place as a social product is also reflected in the work of Henri Lefebvre, who understands place as an

---

<sup>92</sup> Karen Wenell critiques what she calls the “social” production of place. While her critique is valuable in its display of how the kingdom of God is not necessarily a socially produced place, I find her critique lacking in terms of a social scientific approach to place. I argue that social production of place is a valuable notion when looking at the creation of sacred place, as the sacred place for this research is physically crafted, unlike the Kingdom of God. Wenell’s point does illuminate how not all place is appropriately socially created, giving us a better understanding of the potential or lack of potential for a socially constructed place. See Karen Wenell, “A Markan ‘Context’ Kingdom? Examining Biblical and Social Models in Spatial Interpretation,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 44, no. 3 (2014): 125.

Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, 48, notes that communities project meaning into the universe around them, aligning with Mitchell’s argument. In many ways both theologians and social scientists understand and argue that sacredness is attributed to a place by the community. Kim Knott in part reflects this understanding, noting that space is not necessarily intrinsically religious, but rather religious meaning may be attributed to place (*The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis*, 39).



intertwining of the physical and the symbolic, a location that individuals and communities add to for the creation of place.<sup>93</sup> Mitchell adds to his understanding, writing that “landscape is a social product that becomes naturalized through the very struggles engaged over its form and meaning.”<sup>94</sup> While this notion certainly does not apply to every place or every sacred place, as noted in the way some theologians construct the idea of sacred place, I find purpose in Mitchell’s definition of sacred place.<sup>95</sup> There can be a socially constructed aspect to sacred place, and while it may not apply to every sacred place, Mitchell’s notion allows us to better understand how communities in their formation of identity can add to or emphasize a place to invite a place to be understood as sacred.

Mitchell’s notion of place as a social construct teaches that communities build their own notions and purposes for the place they inhabit, based on their ideologies. Similar to how a community builds physically on their place, they can also create the non-physical, allotting specified notions of the sacred to place. Mitchell allows us to understand that, as social products, places can take on specified materializations for ideology; so, if a community desires a sacred place, they are able to materialize sacrality as they manipulate the place they inhabit. Sacrality does not have to be theologically birthed through the dwelling of a deity; rather, it can be socially constructed. People prescribe sacredness to place, so the communities use their ideology and the occupation of the physical to move the concept of place into the realm of the sacred.

---

<sup>93</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 39.

<sup>94</sup> Don Mitchell, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 163. Philip Sheldrake adds to this, reflecting the way that “concept of place refers not simply to geographical location but to a dialectical relationship between environment and human nature” (*Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory, and Identity* [Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001], 1). He also holds a dialectic description of place and while he does not directly address the notion of dialectic sacredness, I find the congruence with a dialectical understanding of place to be important.

<sup>95</sup> Wenell, “A Markan ‘Context’ Kingdom?,” 125.

Mitchell argues that the theme of place is a social construct, and the sacred also is in part a social additive. Sacred place therefore is contrived, created by the community it serves to emphasise the way in which the theme of place directly forms communal identity. Don Mitchell is important for this dissertation in his emphasis on the purpose of place being a sacred purpose. In recognizing the social prescriptive potential of sacred place, we can better understand how sacred place is curated with intention, crafting, and shaping the formation of communal identity.

### 3.3.6 Conclusion

Our social scientists offer a wide and varied reflection on how the theme of place adds to the formation of communal identity. Yi-Fu Tuan discusses the connection between people and place, highlighting the unique relationship that comes in toponymia connections.<sup>96</sup> Ellen Semple explores one of the purposes of place by outlining the explorative function of place.<sup>97</sup> Cultural geographers John Horton and Peter Kraftl, along with Jon Anderson, explore the consumerist nature of place, influential for how this consumer behaviour in some ways seems to legitimize the community.<sup>98</sup> Don Mitchell concludes our social science reflection by exploring how place can hold sacred purpose, even when that place is not necessarily consecrated by a religion.<sup>99</sup> Ultimately, our social scientists offer great insight into the way in which the theme of place directly impacts the formation of communal identity. They highlight key factors for the theme of place that are reflected in the community observations I present from my fieldwork, developing

---

<sup>96</sup> Tuan, *Topophilia*, 4.

<sup>97</sup> Semple, *Influences of Geographic Environment*, 42.

<sup>98</sup> Horton and Kraftl, *Cultural Geographies*; Anderson, *Understanding Cultural Geography*, 20.

<sup>99</sup> Mitchell, *Cultural Geography*, 163.

theoretical approaches to the theme of place and its influence on the formation of communal identity.

### **3.4 Observations in Music Festival Communities and Church Congregational Communities**

Our theorists articulate that the theme of place is important because of its intrinsic link to people and community. Theologians Brueggemann, Eliade, and Habel all find this connection between people and place, enhanced by the addition of God. Our social scientists, Tuan, Semple, Horton and Kraftl, all add similar insights in their cultural geographic and anthropological research. So, place is influential as a theme because it connects a community to a location, rooting a community in the physical place it inhabits. Our scholars share similar understandings of place as both physical and symbolic, crafting something metaphorical or allegorical even in the midst of its realness. Habel and Kilde articulate the theological significance of symbolic place, which Semple's fieldwork highlights further explorative symbolism in the theme of place. Place both in the physical and in the symbolic or metaphorical share some purposes for the theorist—the purpose of power and the purpose of authority or legitimization. Kilde and Tuan detail the innate power that comes as communities collectively engage in a place, a thought added to by cultural geographers Horton, Kraftl, and Anderson, who find that consumption and trace-leaving are acts of power. For many, a place's purpose is also constructed around the by-product of legitimacy or authority, with theologians Brueggemann, Kilde, and Eliade mirroring social scientists Tuan, Anderson, and Mitchell. Finally, these theorists often agree in their discussion of the sacred, with Eliade and Mitchell both explaining the way in which place articulates a sacred understanding for a number of communities.

Through our theorists' reflections we can understand that place is an essential theme for the formation of communal identity among contemporary communities. Taking these ideas from

the theoretical to the empirical, my ecclesiological research and music festival research will show how the theme of place shapes the fieldwork communities of both music festival and church congregational communities. We now shift to our fieldwork observations, looking at how through occupation, exploration, and sacredness the theme of place actively forms communal identity.

#### 3.4.1 Place and Occupation in Music Festivals

The occupation of a specific place is an integral part of how place actively forms communal identity. As noted above, theologian Walter Brueggemann alludes to the importance of occupation in his discussion of place in Old Testament literature. Cultural geographers, specifically Horton, Kraftl, and Anderson, directly discuss how occupation and consumption crafts communal connections to a place. While our theorists argue for the importance of place occupation, I found in my observation of music festivals that the process of occupation is integral for the formation of communal identity. The new insight for this rhythm of occupation is not only useful because it presents an addition to the theory of place occupation, but also because I found that the rhythm of occupation established the theme of place as an integral theme for the formation of communal identity in our music festivals. Through my observation among the fieldwork communities, I saw that music festivals engage in a process of occupation that moves from historical place attachment, to trace creation, to consumption in place—these processes leading to the formation of communal identity through the theme of place.

The process of occupation begins with a rhythm I observed at each music festival, a rhythm of annual return to a specific place that holds historical significance for each music festival community. Initially, I found it interesting that the music festival communities made a concerted effort to return to the place of experience year after year. This rhythm became evident

not only for the music festival communities I observed for this dissertation, but also for the music festival communities I visited even after my research ended.

Upon reflection of this clear observational pattern, I found the desire and need to return both surprising and intuitive. From an outsider perspective, I would have expected the transient communities to move from location to location each year, finding a place based on availability or as a response to the growing or diminishing anticipated size of the music festival. As an insider, however, I observed and heard from music festival musicians and attendees the importance of the place they inhabited; while the communities were transient and not necessarily tied to a location throughout the year, the place they inhabited during the music festival was still of focus.

The strong connection between music festival community and place was evident both in my participant observations and casual conversations, moving me to understand that music festival attendees and broader community participants prioritise historical rootedness because of the connection the community feels to the specific place. I would connect this historical attachment and return to place to the toponophilia connection crafted during each music festival experience.<sup>100</sup> The transient nature of music festival communities roots their communal experience and, in many ways, their communal identity, in place, the bond between people and place driving the community to return each summer. My observations and conversations made it evident that the theme of place, and the occupation of particular places, is paramount as our music festival communities form their communal identity.

---

<sup>100</sup> Adams, Hoelscher, and Till agree with the idea of historical attachment within place, adding that when “social memories are experienced in tangible, spatial forms, their experiences become all more powerful” (*Textures of Place*, 36). I would link the power to the way in which social memories, or historical attachment, increases toponophilia between people and place.

The occupation of place is significant for the music festivals I observed, something especially interesting when compared with a case study of one music festival whose inability to return to one place led to its demise. The large V Festival (later RiZe), attracting 150,000 attendees at its height, ultimately failed, and later closed in part because it continuously changed location. Music journalists commented that part of the failure was because of the lack of establishing a rhythm of occupation for the music festival.<sup>101</sup> While I note that other factors like a lack of consistent, recognizable sponsorship certainly added to the demise of the festival, I do find it interesting that place was in part a reason why journalists themselves said V Festival failed. I would have assumed that the large community paired with a stellar yearly line-up would have kept V Festival in regular rotation, and yet the music festival failed in part because of its lack of rooting in place. This case study leads me to assert that an occupational rhythm that begins with historical place attachment displays how the theme of place is central for the formation of communal identity. Music festival communities return to place because place roots them, the historical attachment and annual return shaping the core identity of the music festival community.

Every music festival community I observed used historical attachment for their identity formation, but they all expressed their historical attachment in different ways. During my participant observation, I noted that some music festivals used this historical attachment in place to directly shape the name and identity of their music festival: Acoustic Festival and Forest Festival both had descriptive place words in the name of the music festival itself. In these

---

<sup>101</sup> “V Festival to Get a New Name after Sponsor Virgin Pulls Out,” *BBC*, October 30, 2017, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/41803081/v-festival-to-get-a-new-name-after-sponsor-virgin-pulls-out>; Piers Meyler and James Rodger, “V Festival’s Replacement RiZe Cancelled for 2019,” *Birmingham Live*, January 27, 2019, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/whats-on/music-nightlife-news/v-festivals-replacement-rize-cancelled-15738479>. See also “Bring Back V Festival,” *Change.org*, n.d., <https://www.change.org/p/richard-branson-bring-back-v-festival-chelmsford>.

examples, the historical attachment evidently proved important to the music festival's communal identity because the place itself informed music festival nomenclature.

Some music festivals I observed used their historical place attachment in marketing materials, as in the case of Eco Festival. This usage of place aligns with the way in which the symbol of place adds to the narrative of the community, the use of images in marketing showing how the place shapes the communal story: Communal story becomes solidified in this aspect of material culture. While not as overt as using a place descriptor in the name of a music festival, the prominence of place in marketing material still arguably displays this innate connection with and desire to display a historical attachment to place.

Other music festivals I observed seemed to express the occupied place in a less overt way. These music festivals highlighted the connection between occupied place and the music festival identity but did not necessarily include this occupational place in their material culture. The occupational rhythm was still integral, as I noted during casual conversations with music festival attendees, who all discussed a connection to place. Yet the music festivals, Retro Festival in particular, did not materialise this connection in the same way as other music festivals. Visually displaying and connecting the occupational rhythm to the place enhanced the collective toponophilia, yet I would argue that the most successful connection was found when the occupational rhythm of the historical attachment was included in material culture.

Upon reflection of what I observed at each music festival, I argue that rhythms of historical occupation ultimately allow the theme of place to craft communal connection to place, which observably forms communal identity. My observations invited clear connections to Tuan's toponophilia in that each community was deeply connected to the place they occupied. The physical location of occupation is where the communities are centred, the foundational core for

the community, and so it would be naturally important for the community members to return year after year because they would be re-engaging the historical heart of their community. This is also why I heard music festival artists and attendees discuss the primacy of place for their communal identity; the place was at the centre of their experience and therefore at the centre of their communal identity. The historical attachment and occupation of place is thus not haphazard for the music festival communities but rather integral for identity formation. Through the annual return to a specific place, the music festival communities engage with historical attachment and occupation, shaping the identity of the music festival in and through the theme of place.

The historical attachment of place gives way to another step in the occupational process, the crafting of place. Each music festival community, in line with our cultural geographers' theories, engaged in activities of trace making and community consumption to fortify the occupation of place, shaping the communal identity by actively engaging in the material culture in place. Jon Anderson argued that one way in which communities establish a notion of occupation is through reconstruction or trace making within place. Communities inhabit a place, shaping it through material culture manipulation. Anderson argued that the ultimate purpose of trace leaving is to both display communal ideology in and through the material artefacts, and to reconstruct the natural in a way that promotes communal power and authority. I observed that through occupation and trace creation all of our music festival communities instilled a notion of place occupation and ownership, trace making adding to the rhythm of place occupation in a way that invited the place to form the communal identity.

Through my observations, I found that every music festival community created or left traces, whether large-scale or small-scale, recrafting place to fit the community identity and ideology. Many of the music festivals left noticeable traces that altered the place in great ways;



located in an urban location Retro Festival dominated the place by not only changing superficial aesthetics by adding festive art to most walls, but also changed the built landscape by adding tents to fill large urban spaces and hanging flags in between each walkaway to create a new visual experience. The completely changed place reflected the party ethos of Retro Festival, reconstructing place through the addition of fanciful materials.

In smaller rooms, Retro Festival used lighting techniques and retro furniture and costuming to craft a playful atmosphere. This visually stimulating material culture allowed the community to physically touch and interact with artefacts that pointed to the ideology of the music festival itself. This trace making altered the space and invited communal participation so that community members had both visual aesthetic engagement and tactile trace-making engagement. Other urban located festivals also recreated place, leaving trace changes that completely altered the place landscape. Electronic Festival used large, inflatable wall hangings to alter the urban landscape, changing the colour and texture of the built landscape. Along with this Electronic Festival also enhanced smaller rooms, turning to a more natural form of material culture. By placing dramatic floral arrangements on ceilings and in rooms, Electronic Festival reconstructed the urban landscape, including an organic ethos. The smell in these rooms also altered place, again intermixing tactile and sense engagement for the community members who entered the specific rooms.

Other music festivals, especially those situated in rural or more nature-oriented areas, also used material culture to leave traces on the place. Forest Festival, set outdoors in large open fields as well as smaller forested areas, employed large tents as well as large art installations, creating traces that intermixed metal objects with the nature around it. As a rock festival, the event's material culture reflected the hard-hitting sound, but did so while nestled in the natural

landscape that defined the music festival's branding and marketing identity. Eco Festival also used large art installations and mechanically focused installations to highlight different sustainable ventures, using material culture in the natural setting to visibly display community ideas.



*Figure 1: The large field dotted with tents at Eco Festival. Photograph by Kylie McCormick, 2018.*

I find it interesting that many of the music festivals observed created traces on large and exaggerated scales, altering visual sense engagement with the place setting for the community. It is easy to assume how the creation of traces on place was exhausting work, the scale and set up taking long periods of time to shape the urban and rural music festival locations, something that is not noted in other music communities like concerts, and yet it was evident that the trace curation in place was of acknowledged importance.

I suggest that music festival communities chose to construct place through large-scale traces because of the importance of trace creation and implementation for creating a sense of occupation. Through large-scale trace construction, the community displayed dominance over

place, rooting the community in a place designed specifically for the ideology and identity of community, therefore emulating or embodying that ideology and identity. My observation of music festival communities highlighted the necessity of the investment of time creating these places. Music festival communities occupied their places through trace creation in a way that enhanced the collective experience, visually displaying and inviting community members to participate in place in a way that displayed full communal occupation.

I also observed that many music festival communities used smaller-scale traces to engage in the rhythm of occupation. Flag Festival did some large trace curation and creation, but because of the limitations of the place where the festival was held, I observed that the music festival chose to leave smaller traces as a form of occupational display. Around the festival were art exhibits and stage decorations, but their scale was noticeably smaller than at other music festivals. These smaller traces invited communal participation in a way that I did not always observe for the large traces above. I observed community members interacting with the smaller art exhibits, taking pictures, and spending greater amounts of time engaging them. I made the same observation at Acoustic Festival. Acoustic Festival did create large-scale traces to dominate the place, but they also constructed smaller-scale traces as noted in the image below.



*Figure 2: A standing art exhibit at Acoustic Festival. Photograph by Kylie McCormick, 2017.*

This active art exhibit comprises a trace of material culture observed on an open field. The image I caught was one of the rare moments when community members were not interacting with and taking pictures in the smaller-scale trace material; the trace creation invited participation, allowing individuals within the community to create an individual experience within the larger communal experience. Acoustic Festival crafted smaller-scale traces such as these each year, my observation over the two summers finding repetition in trace creation.

I found the observation of smaller trace culture to be of interest, especially in observing the way in which the community interacted actively with the traces on place. Whereas the large traces seemed to reflect the communal identity and display a sense of domination and occupation

on place, the smaller trace materials seemed to display communal identity while also promoting individual participation and activity, enhancing the individual experience while still locating the trace in the larger communal identity and therefore the larger collective cultural experience of the music festival community.

With both trace patterns observed, I argue that ultimately the music festival communities engaged in trace curation because through creation and curation of traces the music festival communities could occupy place, crafting each place to reflect their core identity in material form. Through trace crafting, communities actively create, forming the communal identity through the creation of material that reflects the community. The trace creation is not only important for the formation of communal identity, but it also is purposeful because of the way in which creating traces allows communities to engage in occupational power. Through the observation of each music festival community and through the connection with cultural geography, I thus argue that trace creation is integral as a rhythm of occupation. Creating material culture that reflects the core communal ideology in a way that produces a notion of power, creation of traces is an important addition to how music festival communities establish rhythms of occupation in place, shaping the communal identity.

I observed a final way in which music festival communities established rhythm of occupation of place, focused on consumption in place. The idea of occupation from consumption as noted in this dissertation was hypothesized by cultural geographers Horton and Kraftl, who found consumption integral to place making. I observed an interesting form of occupational consumption that I argue enhances how the theme of place actively forms communal identity—the way that music festival communities promoted individual consumer activities to invite greater communal integration into place.

Each music festival I observed engaged individuals with some sort of consumer behaviour. Several music festival communities included consumer-driven activities so that individual members within the community could engage in consumption on place. Acoustic Festival and Forest Festival used the familiar music industry fixture of a merchandise stall to allow individuals to engage in consumption. Flag Festival promoted individual art vendors that aligned with the community identity, moving away from merchandise but still promoting material consumption. Other music festivals engaged in consumption by offering hair and makeup tutorials in a series of stalls staffed by vendors whose aesthetic matched the music festival identity. Eco Festival offered an interesting combination of stalls that allowed individuals to purchase products that aligned with that music festival community's eco-consciousness.

Upon reflection, I find it interesting that the music festival community would use place for these forms of individual consumption, rather than use place to promote the greater collective consumer experience. The community promoted and pointed individuals to exercise some individuality, but in a way that aligned with the greater communal identity. These observations and reflections draw me to argue that the consumption I noted in my participant observation is useful in creating communal identity through place because it intermixes individual consumer consumption within the greater community place experience, creating connection through active individual participation and consumer satisfaction. As individuals purchased material goods or experiences, they exercised individual desire and choice. Yet these choices and desires were not only rooted in the collective experiential place, but also in each music festival communal identity. The merchandise purchased at Acoustic Festival and Forest Festival shared imagery with the music festival marketing materials and often included place-specific images; the art sold

at Flag Festival resonated with the communal ideology presented through music festival stage performances. Certainly, the activities purchased at Eco Festival and Retro Festival reshaped the individual so that they aligned better with the larger communal ideology. So, the individual experience was rooted in the community, and in this way, I argue that the consumption in place and around place allowed individuals to invest in communal doctrine more fully.

The consumption in and around place enhanced the collective communal experience, allowing individuals to be more fully invested in the community itself. While the form of consumption may not be place-specific in that the individuals I observed did not buy the land, the act of consumption in place was directly linked to greater community buy-in. These observations move me to claim that individual consumption constructed in the community place ultimately yields stronger connections to the community, the individuals fully investing in the collective experience crafted in and through place. The objects of consumption shared connections to the communal ideology, so the act of consumption generated in place linked the consumer to the communal identity and thus I argue that consumption in place with communal identity-specific artefacts disseminates communal identity in a tangible way, through communal identity awareness and attachment.

The rhythm of occupation that I observed in the theme of place arguably allows a music festival community to form their identity through the theme of place. Our music festivals engaged in the theme of place by establishing historical attachment to place that informs the naming and branding of the community, by active trace creation that portrays ideology in material culture, and by encouraging consumer behaviour that allows for individual buy-in and adoption of community narratives. The occupation of place directly engages in the formation of communal identity. I thus argue that place is a foundational element to the identity among music

festival communities, which occupy place in a way that allow the community to form identity and for individuals to attach to that identity.

### 3.4.2 Place and Occupation in Church Communities

I now move to the observation and analysis of how the rhythm of occupation of place shaped the communal identity of our church congregational communities. Engaging with ecclesiological observation, I reflect on how the process of occupation identified above forms communal identity in our lived church communities. I argue that occupation is first and foremost a theologically attuned purpose for the theme of place. As noted above, our theologians found purpose in spatially aware theology. The historical nature of the relationship between place and people is found in biblical narratives, in which God dwells with people in a specified place.<sup>102</sup> From a mountain to a burning pillar to a temple, God dwelled with and in a communal place.<sup>103</sup> Beyond this, place holds purpose in both its symbolic and power connection, the promised land legitimizing the claim and existence of the community.<sup>104</sup> Contemporary church communities also link the theme of place with communal identity. This narrative of God dwelling among a community in specific places lends theological weight to the theme of place and occupation for some contemporary church communities, inspiring my observations of our church communities.

---

<sup>102</sup> Lita Cosner, “Dwelling with God: From Eden to the New Jerusalem,” *Creation Ministries International*, October 22, 2015, <https://creation.com/dwelling-with-god>.

<sup>103</sup> Exod 13:21–22; 19; 25:22.

<sup>104</sup> The promise of land was first made to Abraham in Gen 15:18–21, confirmed to Abraham’s son Isaac in Gen 26:3 and then to Isaac’s son Jacob in Gen 28:13. The promised land was later discussed in Exod 23:31. As discussed above, where the promise of land yields a sense of legitimacy for the construction of occupation of land for ancestral dwelling, the handing down of the promise of land as understood in these four passages displays how land lent a sense of legitimacy to the community by making it a promise of longevity, a multi-generational promise.



Each church community I observed engaged in rhythms of occupation of place; like our music festival communities, the church congregations established some routine of experience in their place. This rhythm of occupation begins with an understanding of historical attachment. Among the church communities I observed, their historical attachment was tied to their rate of occupation—repetitive weekly meeting. Each church community I observed met weekly, with Canal Church, Stream Church, and Ocean Church offering multiple meeting times per week. Some church communities also occupied temporary spaces. Both Lake Church and River Church occupied rented spaces, so their rhythm of occupation in many ways mirrored the music festival communities in that both groupings of communities occupied temporary places. These church communities also occupied urban school buildings, and while the actual façade and decoration of the buildings differed, I do find it interesting to note that the two communities shared patterns in their temporal occupational place.

Despite churches' regular meeting-in-place, and what I argue is a more robust historical repetition of place occupation than music festival communities practice, I found a more limited expression of historical attachment among church communities. What was obvious in my observation of the music festival communities was how the historical attachment to place was both visually represented and vocalised, the occupation of place and its historical rhythm observably an important aspect of the theme of place for the formation of communal identity. While our church communities shared some similarities with the music festivals, I observed a lack of historical attachment in the occupation of place, noted both by a lack of material culture artefacts displaying the historical rootedness to place and a lack of vocalised historical attachment.

While I would have assumed some historical attachment, church communities' lack of historical attachment on the scale of music festivals is partly understandable. In insider experience and with reflection, I have found that non-denominational church communities are less likely to overtly link their observable communal identity with the historical occupation of place. The church communities were less apt to visually display historical attachment images, and they discussed very little about the historical life of the church community. I suggest that this does not mean that place is unimportant, but rather that place is partly a utilitarian material culture for church communities. This utilitarian approach restricts some of the potential tophilia-rootedness, the lack of historical attachment limiting how place can form communal identity.

My observation and description of the occupational rhythm process moves from historical attachment to trace making, another way in which the theme of place is active in the formation of communal identity. With prior insider knowledge based on my experience in similar church communities, I approached trace observation with the understanding that the visual trace creation for these specific church communities would fall between the ornateness of orthodox church communities and the starkness of Quaker communities. Non-denominational church communities, in my insider experience, tend to craft place with some form of trace material culture artefact, but not to an extent that the traces could be categorised as overwhelming, like what was observed for some music festival communities. The normal aesthetic is therefore to participate in trace making but to not be overburdened by it. With this insider knowledge I observed that, as expected, each of the church communities engaged in some form of trace making.

Observing trace creation for the exterior of the building I found an interesting pattern: The large church communities, with average community sizes over 100 attendees, seemed to limit their trace creation of the edifice, whereas smaller-to-medium-sized church communities used greater amounts of trace material creations on the exterior. The largest church community I observed, Canal Church, had the most limited trace creation on the exterior of the building despite owning their building and therefore arguably having the most creative freedom because they did not rent a building with decorative restrictions. Canal Church did have some exterior trace artefacts, with visible signage with their name above their doors, but that was the only exterior trace creation I noted. This countered the smaller-to-medium-sized church communities of Lake Church, River Church, and Stream Church. In these three church communities I observed a great deal of outdoor trace creation; each church community engaged in the use of colourful banners and signage to interrupt the building landscape, clearly and successfully defining their existence through exterior trace making and material culture.

Upon reflection, I find the dichotomy of exterior trace making for occupation of place to be of interest. The totality of our music festival communities preceded their physical location with great amounts of trace making, crafting large-scale traces on the exterior of the music festival grounds. Only half of our church communities crafted easily observable exterior traces, and those who did engage were church communities of smaller size. I argue that church communities who had a strong emphasis and focus on church growth and community expansion were the ones who actively engaged in exterior trace creation. I make this claim based on both the conversations with some staff and leaders of the church communities, who highlighted that these church communities were actively focused on community engagement, along with what was said during church community services. The church communities focused on city

engagement actively trace crafted the exterior; in many ways the extension of their material culture mirrors their identity steeped in a desire to have a presence outside of their temporary physical space.

I hypothesize three reasons for Canal Church's notably limited exterior trace creation. The first is that ideological desires differed for the larger church community. While the church community certainly did have some greater city and community engagement, my observation of what was highlighted during community gatherings revealed a greater focus on internal community growth and connection. This ideological focus could alter their understanding of exterior trace creation, a focus on the internal community drawing the focus on trace creation to the interior of place. Additionally, Canal Church had one of the most urban locations. Urban locations can naturally bring about a different level of difficulty in trace creation, the urban locations may present more trace making limitations due to local city laws or urban planning protocols. The lack of need to promote a church community that is already attracting a large community gathering also could reflect the lack of trace making on the exterior. Each church community exhibited some form of exterior trace making, and while the theme of exterior place was less utilised for some of our church communities, it was apparent that all engaged in some trace making for the exterior of their place.

Along with exterior trace creation, our church communities also engaged in interior trace creation. Our music festival communities engaged in sensory-altering engagement and manipulation of the scale of place through material culture. In my participant observation of our church communities, I found a pattern of trace creation for the interior of the church place. Lake Church, Canal Church, and Ocean Church all had some interior trace material culture. Unlike our music festival communities who used trace creation and sensory elements in almost every room

or area of their place, our church communities implemented a more restricted use of material culture to alter the interior place. I observed a more limited number of trace creations to alter the visual aesthetics of walls, and each of these church communities focused very little on sensory experience. The focus of trace creation for these church communities was observably the digital screens used during services. In fact, many of these communities engaged with on-screen trace creation on or near the stages, crafting engaging visual experiences through differing scenes and therefore differing traces during each service.

I argue that the digital trace creation was successful in crafting visually engaging place experiences, and yet the restraint on interior trace creation led to a lack of visible occupation, limiting the occupational rhythm prompted by visible trace creation. Stream Church, one of the smallest church communities I observed, and which had only been open for a month during my observation period, was the only church who had a clear and large-scale trace creation in place. The ceiling of Stream Church was painted with a large-scale mural that drew the eye inward and upward, inviting reflection and engagement in the material culture. While the material culture was not integrated into the church community in a way that I noted during my participant observation of music festival communities, the material culture art was a point of casual conversation during the observational period, leading me to conclude that the visual culture was an important aspect of the church place.

Overall, our church communities engaged in the trace making rhythm of occupation, though the interiors of the occupied places could be enhanced with more visible material culture and trace creation. In expanding their trace making into non-digital spaces, and by crafting community-specific traces that allow for sensory and other types of engagement, the church communities could enhance their occupational rhythm in place. They could thereby curate a

stronger sense of occupational power and purpose, as our music festival communities did. The lack of trace creation for both interior and exterior place offers an interesting dichotomy between the music festival communities and church communities, an area of reflection as our church communities engage in the formation of communal identity.

The final stage in the rhythm of church community occupation was that of the consumption in place. The consumption process for music festival communities was observably focused on consumption of material products that reflected communal identity. I understood that this type of consumption of material artefacts would most likely not be found within our church communities, since the consumerism inherent in music festivals would feel odd in a church community. I did not observe any forms of consumer movement like what I noted in music festival communities, the place of church communities ultimately being void of consumption. However, this lack is not surprising and not an alarming misstep for our church communities.

My observation of the church communities yielded some important and promising ecclesiological research observations. Historical occupational rhythms paired with trace creation allowed the church communities to form patterns of occupational place that proved to be effective at creating a sense of established rootedness for each community. Yet some elements that were prevalent among music festival communities were lacking in the church communities. The minor occupational downfalls led to what I observed and heard as a lack of toponophilia connection within the church communities. Through small changes I will discuss in the conclusion, our church communities could enhance their place connection, more actively engaging the theme of place in the formation of communal identity.

To conclude, I would like to reflect on my observations of occupation of place. My participant observation of music festival communities yielded how the occupation of place can

be explained in a process of historical attachment, trace creation, and consumption, ultimately inspiring a topophilia connection that made place an integral theme for the formation of communal identity. Our church communities also engaged in the rhythm of occupation with some success but could enhance this process in place to craft stronger and more rooted connections. Ultimately, my observations of each community display how the theme of place is integral to the creation of communal identity through the process of occupation. In rooting a community in cyclical occupation and by enhancing occupational experiences through trace creation and consumption, place curates an active, ideologically focused engagement that forms communal identity.

### 3.4.3 Place and Exploration in Music Festivals

We see the idea of place holding both symbolic and explorative purpose for both theologians and social scientists. Habel offers a theological reflection on symbolic nuances of place. Ellen Semple reflects a similar theme, her social science reflection revealing the important symbolic and explorative purposes of place. We find uniformity in the purpose of place in both theology and social science reflections, and yet Semple's work highlights the way in which community and collective experience actively shapes symbolism and exploration. In Semple's fieldwork research, she notes that communities inhabit place, and through occupation the community crafts experiences of exploration that shape both the place ethos as well as the community narrative. My own participant observation unearthed a surprising pattern, suggesting that music festival communities accurately reflect Semple's assertions. A majority of our music festival communities shaped within the collective communal place areas and side areas for individual experience and exploration, allowing for new exploration that was tied to the community and yet simultaneously individual. I discovered that these areas of exploration are integral for interaction

with place and identity shaping for both the individual and community among music festivals, the theme of explorative place actively forming communal identity.

To better explain this insight, I split the music festival communities into two groups, urban and rural, discussing the explorative experiences by grouping the communities into the place they inhabited. I begin by explaining how rural, nature-oriented music festivals expertly craft experiential place to form communal identity. While the music festivals across the Midlands principally took place in urban settings, I purposely observed nature-oriented music festivals to see whether and how the place shaped the communal identity in different ways. Acoustic Festival, Eco Festival, Forest Festival, and Flag Festival all took place in nature-oriented places. Forest Festival and Eco Festival took place in large, open land anchored by green fields and lush tree-lined pockets. Acoustic Festival took place on a sprawling farm dotted with outbuildings. Flag Festival took place in a large urban park, which arguably could be seen as either urban or rural, the nature of the park imbuing the music festival with an organic theme and rural ethos.

These music festivals inhabited wide open places, and I observed that the place allowed music festival goers to move freely through the natural environment. This juxtaposed the urban music festivals, whose location and busy numbers meant that community members regularly packed tightly into areas. These natural-place music festivals not only felt unrestricted, but their access to wider places of land also allowed them to create areas that promoted exploration.<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>105</sup> Contemporary urban living is often associated with a sedentary lifestyle, leading to chronic stress for the entire city population. Combining with that the toxic environmental exposure in cities causes health issues. The article finishes with the discussion of the multiple health benefits, including prevention of cardiovascular disease and mental disorders, displaying how the investment in natural landscapes has more than just a cognitive benefit. This article parallels my observation that nature promoted an increase in health and happiness for the participants. See Nadja Kabisch, Matilda van den Bosch, and Raffaele Laforteza, “The Health Benefits of Nature-Based Solutions to Urbanization Challenges for Children and the Elderly- A Systematic Review,” *Environmental Research* 159 (2017): 362–73.



Many of the primarily outdoor music festivals included multiple side tents, which housed different explorative experiences such as meditation, yoga, holistic healing, music creation, tattoos and piercings, and the like. Those explorative tents and places invited individuals within the community to actively engage in new forms of personal identity creation, crafting a microcosm of individual experiences that formed because of the lack of place restrictions.



*Figure 3: An example of intentional explorative place creation found at Acoustic Festival. This explorative place was filled with opportunities and located next to the yoga tent. Photograph by Kylie McCormick, 2018.*

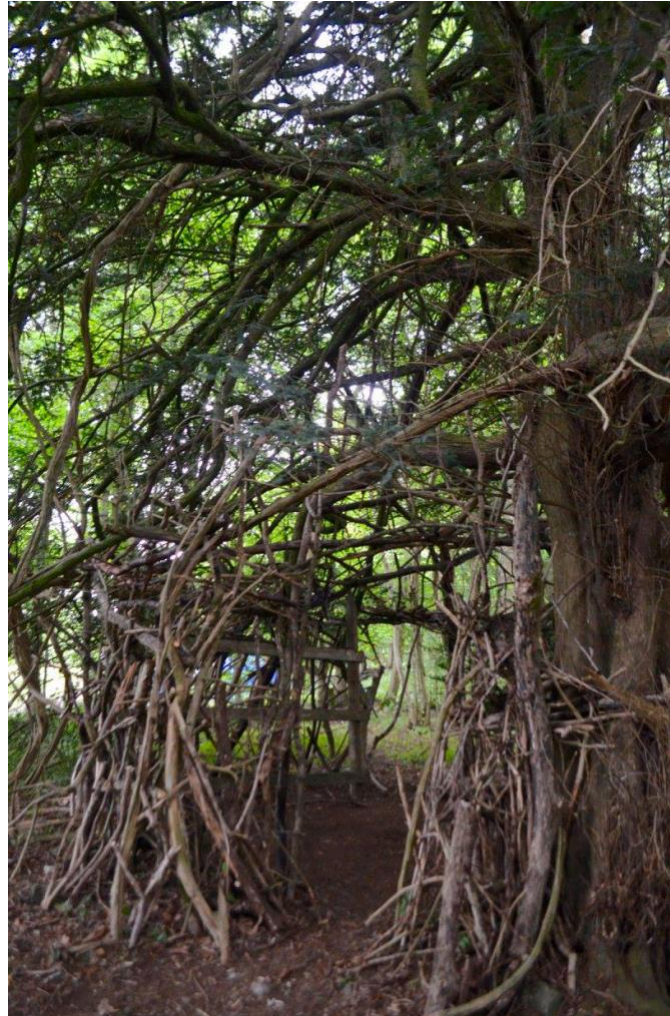
Creation of specific places that promoted exploration allowed community members to reconstruct and reimagine their identity within the music festival community. The explorative places promoted new individual narratives of identity in a way that attached the individual

---

A research team looked to use novel smartphone-based tools to monitor the mental well-being in real time and in real-world environments. The findings were that “being outdoors, seeing trees, hearing birds singing, seeing the sky, and feeling in contact with nature associated with higher levels of momentary mental well-being.” The study highlights not only the mental-health benefits of being in nature but also the dichotomy between nature and built landscapes, something evident in the experiences and observations of our music festival places. See I. Bakolis et al., “Urban Mind: Using Smartphone Technologies to Investigate the Impact of Nature on Mental Well-Being in Real Time,” *Bioscience* 68, no. 2 (2018): 134–45.

identity narrative to the communal identity narrative. The individual explored through a place constructed to implement the music festival communal identity, the individual including this in their narrative creation. Like individuals who had their faces painted to fit the theme of Flag Festival, or participants at Eco Festival who adopted new clothing that fit with the communal ideology of sustainable fashion, the microcosmic explorative places allowed individuals to reconstruct their identity to align with the larger communal identity, place being a theme that crafted the location of change and development.

The explorative places in Acoustic Festival, Forest Festival, and Eco Festival were also embedded in the nature itself. These three music festivals all created explorative place that morphed the natural to promote an explorative experience for the community. Through the manipulation of material culture and through manipulation of the natural setting, the place was transformed, promoting explorative experiences for the collective community. In and through the exploration in the place itself, the music festival communities created interesting place prompted experiences that integrated an explorative purpose into the natural landscape, like the rooms made from trees at Eco Festival or the ostrich petting stalls at Acoustic Festival.



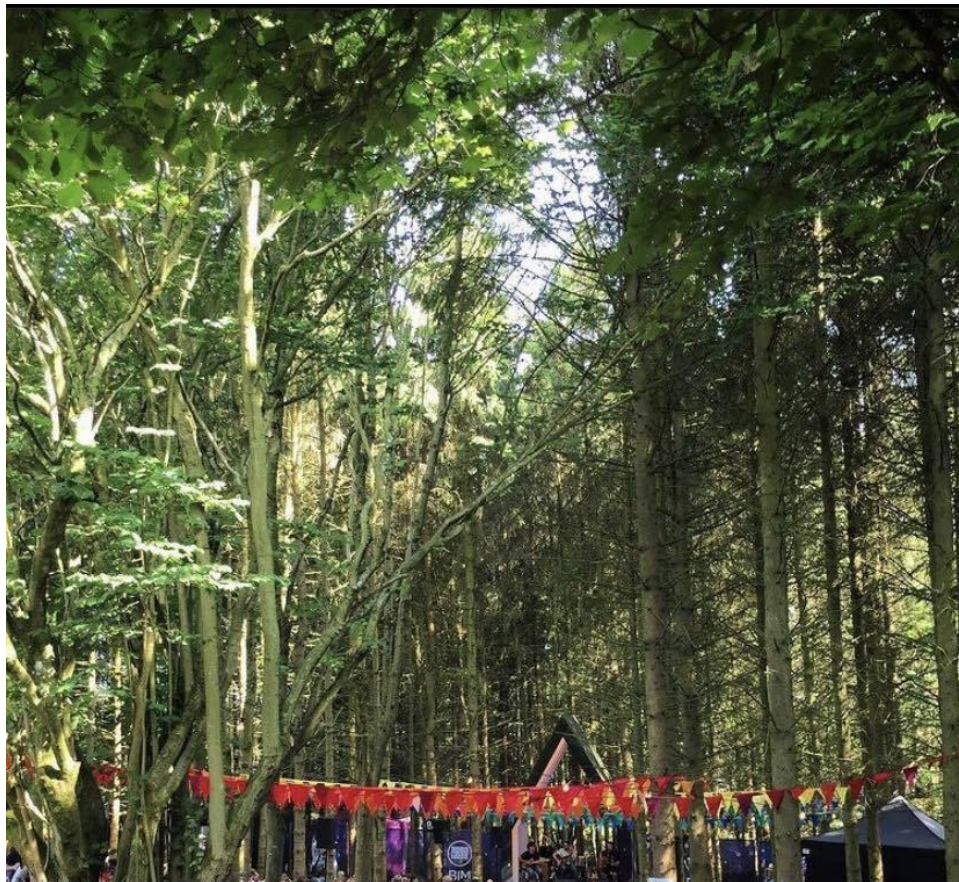
*Figure 4: An arch leading into a sitting area, branches manipulated to create an arc. Found at Eco Festival. Photograph by Kylie McCormick, 2018.*

The manipulation of material culture to create explorative places proved popular at all three rural festivals; I observed that from the early mornings to the late evenings, small communities formed within these places, community members engaging in explorative pockets. These places themselves promoted exploration for individuals, the natural surroundings providing a sharp contrast to the urban landscapes many community members journeyed from. In conversation with music festival attendees, festival journalists, and musicians I was repeatedly told how these places allowed for exploration of emotions and for active and conscious distancing from the rhythms of life, the place shaping an experience that prompted reflection and change for the



individuals. I argue that it is this reason I observed so many of these places across each music festival: The pattern of explorative place usage reflecting a communal desire to demark the uniqueness of the music festival experience drove their curation of places of exploration. These explorative places allowed individuals to experience something new and transformative, not only crafting identity within the communal place but doing so in a way that I found established even deeper connections to the place and to the music festival's communal identity.

Acoustic Festival and Forest Festival took the explorative place one step further, developing practical stage set-ups which interacted and blended with the natural landscape, and in doing so crafted explorative communal experiences that altered the communal identity in a positive way.



*Figure 5: A stage placed in the middle of a forest. Found at Forest Festival. Photograph by Kylie McCormick, 2018.*

These naturally focused side stages, pictured above at Forest Festival, crafted an engaging experience in nature. I heard numerous times by music festival musicians and festival attendees that these side stages crafted a sense of intimacy and exploration, individuals using words like “transformative” and “magical” to discuss the liminal nature of these elements of material culture. By placing the practical needs of staging within an immersive and explorative place, the music festival constructed explorative and transformational experiences, transforming the communal conversation around intimacy and transformative ideology.

I can state concretely that the nature-focused festivals took seriously the construction of place that promoted explorative moments. I observed that the explorative places and the side venue stages enhanced the community’s possibility of exploration. Juxtaposed with their urban counterparts, these nature-oriented festivals did not seem marred by barriers or restrictions; rather, attendees roamed the grounds with freedom. Along with that there was a noticeable absence of visible security structures or other barriers, despite the obvious and vast numbers of security employees mandatory at any music festival. I observed that ethos of unrestricted freedom allowed festivalgoers to inhabit a place without conscious limits, crafting their individual identity within communal freedom. However, the community was always present in and through the place creation, so even as individuals explored, they did so with the community in mind. The individuals adopted communal narratives into their own, shaping their identity in and through a communal identity that was structured through the explorative place.

The urban music festivals, those that took place in a city, had observably different abilities to create explorative places. Located in the heart of a city, Retro Festival and Electronic Festival each had observable restrictions that, while necessary, restricted explorative possibilities. The location of each of these music festivals only allowed for very specific size

stages, and the number of rooms limited any extra explorative place creation. Along with this I also observed that the urban locations had obvious security, a sense of structure that I did not observe in the natural place festivals.<sup>106</sup> As the place itself was restricted, so was the community's exploration. While some attempts were made to craft explorative moments, with Retro Festival crafting small places to change individuals' clothing and Electronic Festival curating aesthetically interesting side stages to promote small moments of exploration, overall, the restrictions left those places with a lack of explorative freedom.

It would not be a full description of the exploration promoted in music festival communities to merely discuss what I observed visually. I found that many music festivals engaged other senses to encourage exploration of place, most notably smell. Smell is a sense used by other communities and corporations to craft memory and connection.<sup>107</sup> In my engagement with music festival communities, I found something similar; Electronic Festival engaged with explorative sense in place by filling small venue rooms with floral installations, creating sensory spaces that clearly defined the smaller venues. The natural wood smell at Forest Festival contrasted with the smell of the train station and urban centre only a twenty-minute

---

<sup>106</sup> In a review of Lollapalooza, music journalists Annette Bonkowski and Norman Fleischer reflect on the difficulties for the major festival, including the restrictions of the location. The pair argues that the urban location yields a security problem: the festival requires a larger security force, making their presence more obvious. I noted the same distinction in both of our urban festivals. See Bonkowski and Fleischer, "Troubled Times: Lollapalooza 2017 and The Challenges for Major Music Festivals," *Nothing But Hope and Passion*, 2017, <https://nbhap.com/stories/troubled-times-lollapalooza-2017-challenges-major-music-festivals>.

An article released by popular music magazine *Billboard* discussed the rising need for security as a difficulty facing music festivals. This need is obvious in urban festivals where security guards are present everywhere, stripping the festival of its organic, free-floating feeling. See Megan Buerger, "4 Challenges Facing Festivals in 2015—and How the Industry Is Confronting Them," *Billboard*, March 30, 2015, <https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/music-festivals/6516734/top-challenges-facing-festivals-2015>.

<sup>107</sup> Colleen Walsh, "What the Nose Knows: Experts Discuss the Science of Smell and How Scent, Emotion, and Memory Are Intertwined—and Exploited," *The Harvard Gazette*, 2020, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/02/how-scent-emotion-and-memory-are-intertwined-and-exploited/>.



drive away, drawing the community to the natural place through the use of smell. Acoustic Festival's place itself had sensory specific exploration, the farm in which the festival took place carrying distinctive smell of animals.



*Figure 6: Pigs at the Farm Festival. Photograph by Kylie McCormick, 2017.*



*Figure 7: Another Farm Festival animal. Photograph by Kylie McCormick, 2018.*

The sensory experiences in these places added to the explorative nature of the place, promoting discovery through smell. Along with that, exploration through touch was also essential. Each music festival visibly invited individuals to some varying form of active trace creation.

Individuals could paint or create art; they could actively engage in shaping smaller venues or their own camping sites. The active process of touch exploration added to place, a pattern I observed at all of the music festivals.

I do not want to pass lightly over the importance of place; as a theme, place certainly shapes communal identity, but one of the defining discoveries from my fieldwork observation was the importance of explorative experiences generated for the individual, within the communal experience. Our theorists first proposed the idea of symbolic and explorative places, and my observation certainly demonstrated how explorative place is crafted by music festival communities. The observations also displayed the vital importance of explorative place for the formation of communal identity. In my participant observation, I found that through explorative place, the community shaped the narrative identity of individual members. Semple found this in her work, finding that the explorative place of her communities shaped their understandings of after-life communally and in beliefs of individual community members. I observed something similar in our music festival communities, patterns of community members exploring specific places through multi-sensory activities to engage with greater communal narratives while also shaping their individual narrative. Explorative place creation in music festivals is integral because it allows communal identity ideology to be clearly expressed, influencing and shaping both the community as a whole and the individual within the community.

To conclude, I suggest that the explorative nature of place is a key attribute to the theme of place and its ability to actively form communal identity. The explorative opportunity of place



allows for dynamic individual engagement in place, the engagement shaping the identity and connection to place. As the individual explores and is shaped, they do so within the collective community place, crafting deeper connections to the place and to the community. A community that promotes and shapes explorative place allows members to engage in practices of place that form individual identity experiences within the collective community, and in doing so the community crafts rooting connections to itself. This not only forms the identity of the individuals, but also allows the community to form communal identity by solidifying communal practices through the theme of place. Thus, an explorative creation in the theme of place is integral for the formation of communal identity, forming the communal identity through the shaping of and dissemination of communal ideology.

#### 3.4.4 Place and Exploration in Church Communities

Exploration within place was influential for our music festival communities, who crafted opportunities for individual active engagement in explorative places through material culture and sensory experiences. In doing so, I argue that music festival communities allowed for explorative place to shape the individual and communal identity. This idea moves us to reflect on parallel efforts in our church communities.

The music festival communities I observed crafted explorative moments in place through sensory experiences and curated enclaves in which individuals could actively engage with identity shaping within the greater communal identity structure. During my observational periods for each church community, I noted a pattern that highlights this desire to craft explorative experiences within place. Every church community observed took some time, either before or after each service, to craft a moment of community engagement in a different room than their main service room. These times were also filled with some sort of food and beverage, a common

form of community engagement in church communities. Each church community formed specific place areas to hold these interactive engagements. River Church, Stream Church, Canal Church, and Ocean Church all designated specific rooms off the main worship room, defining the place for these moments. As Lake Church rented only a large room, they used a hallway as the designated place for such an experience. These designated community experiences could arguably align with the explorative place creation I noted in the music festival communities. While the church communities vocalise these experiences as times of hospitality and community engagement, they also serve as explorative place engagement stemming from a communal desire for hospitable community formation. When treated as such, these practices align with explorative place curation by both sensory experiences and place engagement.

Each church community curated a specific place to hold this gathering experience and used sensory objects in the food and beverages to create a distinctive time. In some ways I would attribute these designated places and experiences to explorative place engagement, and yet as the specified desire for these moments was not necessarily purely explorative the place experience lacked some explorative possibilities. While I noted the sensory and tactile engagement, the explorative nature of these elements was limited in comparison to music festival exploration. The places were also lacking potential decorative elements and material culture to enhance place engagement. These factors, paired with the church communities' overall lack of acknowledged desire to craft experiential places, contributed to a lack in places for exploration. I argue that explorative places enhance both the formation of communal identity and the individual adoption of communal identity, and with small recommendations our church communities could enhance this explorative engagement to better engage the theme of place in formation of communal identity.

One church, Ocean Church, did craft a place that invited explorative engagement, enhancing their place usage in a way that was engaging for the community. Ocean Church purposefully created a small place in the back of their main worship room. The designated seating space was intimately created with a few couches and seating options, curating a place specifically for small group engagement. While the place did not hold much visual material culture, and while it was still open to the larger room, the intentionally crafted place was always filled with people engaging in conversations, intentional community engagement prompted by the place itself.

The explorative place at Ocean Church enhanced the connective possibility for community members, community members engaging in that place to discuss services and community-oriented topics. While some others would pass over the seating area, I argue that the place created important community connective points in a way that mirrored the explorative place I noted at music festivals, drawing me to conclude that the place curated was explorative in nature. The place allowed the community to engage more deeply in theological discussion and questions about sermons, inviting the members to engage in communal ideology discussion. While the place lacked some tactile and sensory engagement, it was successful in crafting engagement that allowed an individual to grow within the communal identity.

I found that the church communities overall did engage in some form of explorative place, and while Ocean Church was observably the community who best curated an intimate place for explorative identity creation, the church communities did recognise the importance of explorative place creation. As I observed in the music festival communities, crafting sensory rich explorative places was integral for individual experience as well as the greater communal narrative structure. I found it interesting that in my music festival observations, individuals

seemed to seek out the explorative place, engaging actively and physically to craft transformational moments. These transformational moments not only rooted the individual in deeper connection with place, but also linked the individual identity creation with the communal expression. For church communities to craft bonded communities, I argue that an explorative, sensory, and activity-driven place is important. By creating more engaging explorative places, the church community can create community engagement through the theme of place that will integrate the individual deeper into the communal narrative.

To construct communal identity, in part, is to craft a unified communal narrative and set of ideologies in which individuals discard their individual identity for the adoption of the communal, and the explorative place did this. The formation of communal identity through the theme of place is obvious in some areas and through some theories. My participant observations made it easy to understand the necessity of occupational place, leading to a legitimized and authoritative place. Explorative place, in my observation, is a less defined and therefore a potentially more difficult purpose to acknowledge. I was struck by how the explorative place fuelled communal connection in music festivals, and I suggest that with small additions it can do the same for church communities. Engaging with full sensory, explorative place, church communities can unify individuals into the communal identity narrative, crafting bonds of identity and ideological unification through the theme of explorative place.

#### 3.4.5 Place and the Sacred in Music Festivals

A discussion of the theme of place and its influence on the formation of communal identity is incomplete without a discussion of sacred place. The idea of a place being sacred is obviously central to our theologians and also features in our social science reflection. Eliade argued theologically that the sacred manifested through hierophany and was ultimately purposeful for

creating a centring experience. Mitchell argued that the sacred is as much dialectic as it is manifested, displaying the importance of vocalising sacred place as a community forms the communal identity through the theme of place. I argue that sacred place is influential for all communities. In this section we explore the notion of sacred place and how the theme shapes the communal identity for both our music festival communities and our church communities.

It should be understood that music festivals do not necessarily intend to display a religiously affiliated notion of the sacred. Just as church communities did not orchestrate place around consumption, music festivals do not inherently propose a dialectic connection between place and the sacred. Yet I found through my participant observation that music festivals could arguably curate sacred place in a way that influenced the formation of communal identity. Eliade argued that the sacred is fostered through an experiential dichotomy between the sacred and profane, and the sacred manifests as a community makes place the centre of its world. I observed Eliade's description of sacred at music festivals, so while I do not propose that music festivals are inherently religious or religions, I do suggest that one could reasonably ascribe a sacred notion of place to music festival communities. I observed that music festival places created a natural separation from the normal rhythms of life, which created an important distinction and specialness, something akin to sacredness in the way that Eliade delineates sacred as a split from the profane. I observed that music festivals create this separation from normal rhythms by creating a distinctive musical experience, combining the solo and communal music listening experiences. This coalescing of individuals into the community crafted a unique listening experience, drawing together the community in a way that was sacred.

Music is, for many, partially a solo experience. The rise of the personal music devices and individually generated streaming services allows us to curate and consume music not in a

community but in our own specified places.<sup>108</sup> And while we can certainly experience music within a community by visiting a live music show or watching Instagram Live sessions, the ease of individualized musical experiences has shifted our cultural acceptance and understanding of music consumption.<sup>109</sup> I suggest that the individual experience is completely overturned during a music festival experience. I observed at all of our music festivals that large groupings of like-minded listeners gathered together in a specific place, creating a distinctive state of music listening. Not only does the community listen to music, but the fans also eat together, share aesthetic displays, and are completely transported by the experience. Music festivals take a solitary activity and make it communal, making music festivals an unparalleled time for the community. This dichotomy between the solo experience and the communal experience marks a moment of sacredness, as the music festival juxtaposes the mundane. Along with that I observed another mark of specialness curated in music festival place, enhancing the potential for sacred place prescription.

The manifestation of experience at nature-based festivals certainly inspired my argument for sacred place. For example, the travel needed to reach Eco Festival, Acoustic Festival, and Forest Festival created a place through separation. Using place to craft new rhythms that juxtaposed the different seasons or elements of life, the place manifested a sacred experience.

---

<sup>108</sup> Media and film scholar Michael Bull writes about how the iPod has given individuals unparalleled connection to their curated playlists, a vast departure from community stereos and radios. The article highlights how products like the iPod have turned music consumption into individualized media consumption. See Michael Bell, "No Dead Air! The iPod and the Culture of Mobile Listening," *Leisure Studies* 24, no. 4 (2006): 343-356.

Economics scholar Abhijit Sen writes about the growing tension of digital music, specifically the balance between the money of music production and the connection to fans. Sen highlights the shift away from consumer exchange for music and towards a highly individualized picking and choosing of entertainment. See Abhijit Sen, "Music in the Digital Age: Musicians and Fans Around the World 'Come Together' on the Net," *Global Media Journal*, n.d., <http://www.globalmediajournal.com/open-access/music-in-the-digital-age-musicians-and-fans-around-the-world-come-together-on-the-net.pdf>.

<sup>109</sup> Meira, "As Coronavirus Pushes Millions Inside, Everyone Is Streaming on Instagram Live," *Digital Trends*, March 21, 2020, <https://www.digitaltrends.com/social-media/as-coronavirus-pushes-thousands-inside-everyone-is-going-live-on-instagram/>.

Festival attendees themselves confirmed this, vocalising that they considered the music festival to be a transformative experience, alluding to Eliade's definition of the sacred. The separation from the profane paired with the vocalised importance of the music festival place for many music festivals lead me illustrate my assertion that the music festival place is sacred. Yet sacrality itself was not named. This is perhaps because the music festival lexicon is not attuned to theological language, and because manifestation of the sacred is not a primary purpose of the music festival experience. Yet my participant observations lead me to argue that the theme of place holds within it some notion of sacred for the music festival communities, forming the communal identity in this exceptional place.

One other piece that Eliade discussed when naming the sacred was the sacred place ability to act as the centre of the communal world. This understanding of sacred is more applicable for some music festival communities. The community members attached to genre-specific festivals, such as Acoustic Festival, Electronic Festival, Forest Festival and to some extent Retro Festival, experience few calendar events in which their preferred music genre is dominant, so these music festivals themselves centre the genre subcultures. Music festivals focused on minority characteristics, such as Eco Festival who focused on ecological research and advocacy, or Flag Festival that focused on representation of countries, or even Retro Festival which celebrated a time period, also arguably found a centring in the place established for the music festival. I observed that for all of these music festivals the festival place itself was the only time in which the community was fully represented, highlighted in discussion with a music festival attendee at Forest Festival and many music festival musicians at Acoustic Festival who both expressed that their music festival of choice was the only time they could gather with their

community. Place itself was thus important for the subculture music communities, place acting as this centring of world location, as Eliade suggests.

Eliade argues that in the centring of their worlds, communities unearth a sacred purpose for the place they inhabit. My observation of these music festival communities also suggests that the place manifestation was integral for the music festival community in a way that could be described as sacred. In treating the place as sacred, the community forged connective experiences and a sense of legitimacy. This legitimacy is arguably different from the power-focused legitimacy noted during the discussion of occupation; rather, the legitimacy produced in the sacred manifestation of place denotes the acceptability of the community by the greater culture. I both saw and heard community members discussing how gathering together helped them experience like-mindedness in a way that solidified their individual and therefore their communal choices. The legitimacy engineered by place allowed the community to feel some sort of acceptance, their culturally minority choices becoming a dominant choice as the subculture community gathered in place. A by-product of the sacred centring was thus this legitimization of the existence of the community, a powerful element as a community crafted its identity.

Ultimately, I still find the notion of sacred and its manifestation in music festival communities difficult, as my observation of communities' material culture and ideological culture did not fully engage with the dialectic construction of place for sacred purposes. My observations hint at the sacred understanding for music festival place, but because the music festival place is not preoccupied with the sacred, my argument draws from connections among theories and observations. The sacred manifestation and purpose of place is significant, as noted across our theorists, and while I could make an argument for the sacred in music festival



communities, I ultimately find music festival communal identity is not heavily dependent on the theme of sacred place.

#### 3.4.6 Place and the Sacred in Church Communities

It could be argued that the sacred nature of place is perhaps the most important aspect of place in the formation of the communal identity for the contemporary church. Even as church communities adopt non-religious spaces or rent without full occupation, the sacred place is still of key importance. This notion of the sacred manifestation of place was also important for our theologians. From Brueggemann who argued for a connection between God, people, and place, to Eliade who argued for a two-pronged prescription for sacred, the manifestation of a sacred divine presence in place is essential for the church community and for the formation of church communal identity.

The sacred manifestation in place was evident in our church communities in ways proposed by Mitchell and by Eliade. Mitchell proposed that the sacredness of place was dialectically imposed by the community itself; the community vocalises the sacred and therefore implements a nomenclature of sacred on the otherwise-mundane place. I observed and heard the same in our church communities. I heard and observed in all the church communities members verbally comment on the sacred nature of place. Often the language that community members used acknowledged God's presence in the place and welcomed God to dwell amongst God's people.<sup>110</sup> All the church communities, including leaders at many of the church communities,

---

<sup>110</sup> The words used in these instances were often found in the prayers and sermons themselves. Specifically, every church made a prayer for God's presence to fill the space, with many sermons aligning with this prayer. Practical theologian Gerrit Immink writes that a key notion in the practice of prayer is awareness of God's presence during the ritual. While Immink writes on the 'doubt' of our secular age, he does highlight this almost universal Christian understanding of how prayer and God's presence intertwined, substantiating my observational fieldworks. See Gerrit Immink, "The Sense of God's Presence in Prayer," *Theological Studies* 72, no. 4 (2016): 1-7.

commented on how the place the community gathered in was sacred, a clear example of the dialectic prescription of sacred, a verbal transcription.<sup>111</sup> My observations made it clear that the place was in many ways connecting the communities to God, God dwelling in the physical place and material culture of the place. God, people, and place intertwining in our contemporary church communities. The dialectic expression of sacred allowed the place to fit within the ideological framework of each community.

I observed dialectic expression of sacred place continuously among the church communities, leading me to conclude with certainty that community insiders viewed their church places as sacred. Aligning with our theologians, community members described their place not only as sacred but to also be a place that housed a deified connection, creating a communal place filled with sacred purpose. Connecting Brueggemann's explanation of the connection among God, people, and place with the dialectic purpose of sacred, I observed and heard that the church communities readily aligned their place with this relational connection, even if the communities did not own the place they inhabited; in turn, the place manifested as sacred because of the relational connection that community members ascribed to it. I argue that this prescriptive sacrality of place was paramount for the formation of communal identity; by deeming the place as sacred, community leadership and members connected the present worship in the present place with their communal ideological structure. The community readily attached itself to the structure and to the deified sacred. The manifestation of a sacred experience shaped the purpose of the experience and allowed for deeper ideological adoption, place directly forming the communal identity.

---

<sup>111</sup> The words alluded to here are notes I made from marketing tools from the church services and language used on the church websites.

Mitchell's theory was certainly obvious in my observation of each church community. Eliade also had insights that explained sacred in the theme of place I observed in each church community. I observed and heard less about the centring experience of the sacred, something that I observed in music festival communities, and yet each church community expressed a sacred and profane dichotomy in a way that aligns with Eliade's theory. Many of church communities observed discussed numerous times the sacred manifestation of the place they inhabited, while also discussing from pulpit the dichotomy of the profane around them. Many of the church communities vocalised this sacred and profane split, again a clear observation of a sacred manifestation in place.

I observed that the repetition of the divide between sacred and profane was rooted in the place the communities operated in, something I find interesting as some of the communities operated in rented spaces. Even though these communities had no permanent rooting in place, their habitation there and the sacred understanding of the place led them to link it with the sacred. Again, I observed a pattern among the church communities: many of the church community leaders vocalised how their space and the experience curated there was in some way juxtaposed with the outside world. The sacred and the profane was dichotomised in and through the place, directly correlating with Eliade's highlight of a hierophany. Thus, my observation led me to concretely understand place-based manifestation of the sacred through both the dialectic prescription and the sacred/profane divide.

The purpose of the sacred place, while the church communities did not discuss this directly, is an area I reflected greatly on because of the importance of the sacred that I found in my observation. The sacred manifestation of place was most purposeful because the church communities understood that the sacred place served as a connective point, so that the

community could connect relationally with God in and through their experience in place. Theologically we find the connection of God, people, and place to have historical roots. Brueggemann argued for such a connection. By aligning the sacred place with this relational connection, I suggest that each church community was ultimately trying to do the same, relate the connection of place with the community's connection to God.

This connection ultimately influences the formation of a communal identity. Based on my insider knowledge and participant observation of each community, I argue that each community was focused both ideologically and interactionally on crafting relational connections within the community and with God through place. This is a foundational ideology for each church and their ethos, as noted in their websites,<sup>112</sup> that highlighted the importance of living lives in accordance with God. It makes sense then that the church communities would desire for this relational connection to be manifested in the place of worship. Place thus became purposeful as the centre of the manifestation of the core communal desire, the core communal ideology. By attributing sacredness to place, each community rooted their ideological structure and communal purpose in material culture. In doing so the community not only found purpose in place but they found a material culture manifestation for their lived community experience. Place was thus integral for the creation and curation of communal identity for the church communities I observed.

Sacredness is perhaps the most important theme for place attribution in our church communities. While I observed very little material culture to attribute to a sacred place, the dialectic and communal expression of the sacred was observable in great quantity, leading me to conclude that the place of each observed church community was sacred. I suggest that sacred

---

<sup>112</sup> To retain the privacy of the church communities the websites have not been included as a source.

place rooted the community; through the foundation of the sacred place, the community sprung forth so that their entire experience was manifested as sacred because it was rooted in sacred, the theme of place directly shaping the communal identity for each of our church communities.

### 3.5 Conclusion

Lefebvre argued that “space is not empty; it always embodies meaning.”<sup>113</sup> From our theorists and in my observation of communities, we find that the theme of place certainly holds meaning for the formation of community identity. Place holds purpose and power, with physical material culture playing a contributing role. Our theologians understood this, writing on the centrality and purpose behind place. Walter Brueggemann noted the centrality of place in the biblical narrative, adding how this narrative was formative or purposeful for its recognition of legitimacy. Norman Habel wrote on place and its symbolic power. Jeanne Halgren Kilde wrote on the power purposes behind place, a legitimizing power and a political power. Mircea Eliade noted how place also holds sacred manifestations.

Our social scientists built upon and added to our theoretical understanding of place. Yi-Fu Tuan rooted our social science reflection, addressing topophilia and the connection to place for community. John Horton and Peter Kraftl opened our eyes to the consumer nature of place and the importance of occupation for communal identity. Jon Anderson also noted the importance of occupation, displaying how occupation and legitimization are central in the theme of place. Ellen Semple found place to be important for its ability to inspire exploration, which leads to ideology and communal creation. Don Mitchell completed our social science reflection, displaying how sacred place is important in its dialectic affirmation.

---

<sup>113</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 154.

Our theoretical reflections allowed us to understand differing ways that the theme of place actively engages in the formation of communal identity. Once understood, I observed our two community groups—the music festival communities and the church communities. Through my observations I found that three central elements were important for our communities: occupation, exploration, and the sacred. Occupation was observably important for its production of a notion of power as each community engaged in the rhythm of occupation in the theme of place. Exploration was a key element of place for integrating experiential narratives, crafting deep bonds for the community and its formation of identity. Sacred place was also of importance, crafting relational connections for our church communities. I conclude by noting that I find place to be a central theme to the formation of communal identity. Place births a narrative of legitimization, of power, of sacredness, and in doing so greatly influences the formation of communal identity.

## CHAPTER 4 SYMBOLS

### 4.1 Introducing Symbols

In this chapter, we examine the theme of symbols and how their creation and use adds to the formation of communal identity. As Morgan notes, Christianity as a materially focused religion is engaged with crafted, physical symbols.<sup>1</sup> Christian communities and others explore communal identity through the creation of symbols, expressing their built world and identity through physical objects.<sup>2</sup> I argue that an examination of symbols is crucial to understanding the formation of a communal identity. Starting this chapter with an exploration of contemporary theological reflection on symbols, we consider their importance for the formation of communal identity through a religious lens. We then look at symbols in a social science context, before proceeding to explore the importance of the theme of symbols for the formation of communal identity in church communities and music festival communities.

### 4.2 Framing Symbols through Theological Reflection

A brief survey and timeline of church history will find stories of enthusiastic embrace, rejection, and partial toleration of the use of symbols.<sup>3</sup> Inspired by this history, this chapter reflects on the

---

<sup>1</sup> Morgan, *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief*, 7.

<sup>2</sup> McDannell, *Material Christianity*, 1; Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 16.

<sup>3</sup> Luci Shaw notes that the “role of arts has not always been received blindly in Christian churches. Often art has been seen as too experimental, too self-indulgent, or too disturbing to be recognized as a gift of grace,” showing this lack of embrace that has slowly become a more concerted appreciation for and small allocation for arts in contemporary church communities. See Luci Shaw, “Foreword,” in Taylor, *For the Beauty of the Church*, 9.

way in which the material culture of symbols influences the contemporary Christian church. This theological reflection focusses on differing purposes and uses of symbols, allowing us to grasp why the material culture and the theme of symbols is integral for the formation of communal identity.

#### 4.2.1 Paul Tillich: The Reflective Purpose of Symbols

Paul Tillich begins our reflection on how the theme of symbols actively engages in the formation of communal identity by helping us appreciate how symbolic material culture can be used for a dual function of reflection. For Tillich, symbols move the transcendency of God and the stories of Scripture into visible forms, offering experiential, accessible ways for communities to form their communal identity around and through the divine.<sup>4</sup> Writing in “The Religious Symbol,” Tillich identifies a link between visual aids and culture, or the link between symbols and the formation of communal identity.<sup>5</sup> Here I explore how Tillich draws together the notions of symbol and culture, alluding to how the creation and use of symbols forms a communal identity by promoting reflective experience.

Tillich begins his explanation of symbols by outlining specific characteristics that religious symbols adopt. He discusses how religious symbols are figurative in nature, are

---

Comparative religion scholar Elena Narinskaya briefly explores the political and religious call for the iconoclastic movement in the eighth century. This declaration exemplifies the undulating relationship between the church and the use of images. See Elena Narinskaya, “On the Divine Images: Theology Behind the Icons and Their Veneration in the Early Church,” *Transformation* 29, no. 2 (2012): 139–48.

The relationship between church and icons is demonstrated in the Church of England during the reign of King Edward VI. England was a doctrinal battlefield with the dispute of public religious imagery in the forefront of the doctrinal upheaval. The 1547 declaration of Edward VI called for the destruction of the icons. See David J. Davis, *From Icon to Idols* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016), 1–25.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Tillich, “The Religious Symbol,” *Daedalus* 87, no. 3 (1958): 3–21.

<sup>5</sup> Tillich, “The Religious Symbol,” 4.



perceptible, imbue power, and are important for the formation of communal identity because of their acceptability in the community.<sup>6</sup> It seems for Tillich that symbols are important for communities because they encapsulate and edify community identity, serving as physical representations pointing toward communal beliefs. I find two of the characteristics Tillich highlights to be particularly important for our contemporary church reflection—symbols as figurative and symbols as powerful.

Tillich understands that one of the important characteristics of symbols is their figurative nature, their ability to both embody and point towards something that has no physical reality.<sup>7</sup> Tillich writes that a symbol is a “representation of that which is unconditionally beyond the conceptual sphere,” pointing to the “ultimate reality.”<sup>8</sup> A symbol is a sort of representational beacon working both to represent an ideology and to point toward divine truth.<sup>9</sup> Tillich uses different language to discuss this characteristic of symbols, moving from discussing symbols as a representation to an expression. Tillich adds that symbols “express an object that by its very nature transcends everything in the world that is split into subjectivity and objectivity. A real symbol points to an object which never can become an object.”<sup>10</sup> Tillich, by identifying the

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>7</sup> Jeremy Begbie echoes Tillich, arguing that art and therefore symbols go beyond what is given (*Beholding the Glory: Incarnation through the Arts* [Baker Academic, 2001], 4). This language hints at that figurative understanding of symbols.

<sup>8</sup> Tillich, “The Religious Symbol,” 4, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Garrett Green seems to echo Tillich’s ideas when discussing the concept of imagination and theology. Green notes how “imagination is the means by which we are able to represent anything not directly accessible, including both the world of the imaginary and recalcitrant aspects of the real world; it is the medium of fiction as well as fact.” Green seems to hint at what Tillich notes, that art or imagination allows individuals and communities to construct something accessible as a way to organize and reflect thought. Green thus adds another layer of understanding to Tillich’s explanation of the reflective purpose of art, a purpose that shapes the communal identity. See Green, *Imagining God: Theology and the Religious Imagination* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 66.)

<sup>10</sup> Tillich, “The Religious Symbol,” 4, 5.

figurative characteristic of symbols, articulates how symbols physically structure and embody that which is ideological.<sup>11</sup> For Tillich, this crafting of physical objects is oriented around understanding and physically revealing the divine, symbols acting as material culture artefacts that point towards the non-visible, which give object to a subject, allowing a community to hold core communal identity and ideology in the form of material culture.

For Tillich, this characteristic of symbols as figurative is rooted in the notion that symbols craft objective forms of ideology to figuratively represent the divine in a material culture artefact. David Gross finds a connection between the figurative symbol and an eschatological reading, writing that Christians are often focused on metaphysical and theological constructs that create a specific lens of understanding.<sup>12</sup> Among these notions are the understandings that there is “an afterlife created by God for human beings; that men and women are placed here on earth for one principle reason, to gain salvation in this afterlife,” so symbols in the Christian tradition are at times crafted with this specific eschatological focus.<sup>13</sup>

Whilst Gross details very specific concepts in his exploration of the potential for an eschatologically sensitive symbol, Tillich notes both eschatological potential and a broader theological potential for symbols. Tillich argues that as figurative objects, symbols can be and are crafted around numerous Christian ideologies; so, while some traditionally used symbols reflect eschatological ideas, symbols can hold any number of theological ideas. I suggest that symbols are useful because of the totality of the figurative possibilities, and not merely because of potential eschatological reflections. Symbols are thus important and useful because they in

---

<sup>11</sup> Johnson adds that symbols function to educate, aligning with the embodiment of ideology (*Religious Symbolism* [Kennikat, 1969], 129).

<sup>12</sup> Tillich, “The Religious Symbol,” 4, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Gross, “The Religious Critique of Culture,” 392.

material form represent and express core communal identity themes and beliefs, putting the figurative and invisible into visible forms.

Tillich finds another purpose for symbols: creating power.<sup>14</sup> Tillich argues that symbols are innately powerful due to their ability to place that which is divinely transcendent in a physical object.<sup>15</sup> Tillich notes that a religious symbol has a “power inherent within it that distinguishes it from the mere sign,” and when these symbols are experienced, they give way for a community to identify and align with power.<sup>16</sup> While the symbols “are not the same as that which they symbolize,” the community through the symbols can “participate in its meaning and power” and in the participation find and adopt additional power.<sup>17</sup> When a community creates and beholds a symbol, they are participating with the divine in a powerful experience that shapes their understanding and adoption of the transcendent.

Jonathan Brant reflects on Tillich’s notion of experience, expanding the communal experience of symbols to the individual.<sup>18</sup> Brant adds that individuals can experience the power of symbolic interaction, expanding my understanding of the power of symbols from the community to the individual. I appreciate Brant’s reflections on Tillich, particularly the notion that symbols also are in part curated by individuals. Symbols for both the community and for the individual can then curate a revelatory experience that crafts a powerful connection. In this way

---

<sup>14</sup> Once again Begbie picks up a similar understanding, the notion that religious symbols are intertwined with a sort of power. What is interesting is that Begbie notes that symbols participate in power, while Tillich suggests that symbols create power. Begbie writes that “all symbols, unlike signs, participate in reality, power and meaning,” pointing out this difference (Begbie, *Voicing Creation’s Praise*, 51). While the nuance may be slight the theologians propose that power can either be created or reflected in symbolic usage, something I find to be true.

<sup>15</sup> Tillich, “The Religious Symbol,” 1.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Brant, “A Theology of Revelation through Culture,” 5.

the symbol still acts as a conveyor of ideology, promoted or understood through the individual or through communal transcendent experience. Tillich's characteristic of symbols as seats of power thus resonates both with the community and for the individual, both the symbol and the physical experiential existence of it creating power that forms the communal identity.

Tillich aligns his understanding and reflection of symbols around the characteristics of figurative symbols and powerful experiences. He highlights two areas of reflective potential for symbols that are key for the foundational integration of theological symbols into the formation of communal identity. Tillich's identification of symbols as figurative displays the first area in which symbols are reflective; symbols reflect the invisible, giving form to the formless. Tillich acknowledges that symbols are not mirror representations of the figurative but rather symbols reflect the figurative, suggesting but not perfectly capturing the transcendency of the divine. So, the theological foundation for symbols is an understanding that symbols reflect the divine, giving objective form to something intangible. When these symbols are experienced by the community and individual, they reflect an experience with the divine that generates a notion of power, the second way in which Tillich observes that symbols act reflectively. The power understood within the divine is reflected into the symbol beholder, an experience with a symbol crafting a transitive connection with and adoption of power. Tillich thus presents a dual purpose of reflection for symbols: Symbols reflect both the divine and a notion of power. These two insights allow a community to use the theme of symbols in the formation of their communal identity, using the visual material culture to display ideology and craft connection.

Tillich opens our discussion of symbols, therefore, by defining symbols as a physical reflection of that which cannot be contained or objectified. Tillich understands that symbols portray the divine and, when experienced, shape a communal culture. Through experiencing and

engaging with symbols, individuals and communities are endowed with power and connection, forming communal identity through the material creation and visual experience of symbols.

#### 4.2.2 Margaret R. Miles: The Emotional Purpose of Symbols

While Tillich understands that a function of symbols is to give material culture form to the transcendent, Margaret R. Miles notes that a function of symbols is to give material culture form to emotions.<sup>19</sup> In doing so, Miles underscores a second purpose for symbolic use— emotional transformation that propels the formation of communal identity.

For Miles, the power of the theme of symbols aligns with the construction of symbols as a form of art. In *Image as Insight* Miles explains the purpose of art, writing that the “function of art is to identify and articulate a range of subjective patterns of feelings and to give objective forms to feeling. Religion needs art to orient individuals and communities, not only conceptually but also affectively, to the reality that creates and nourishes.”<sup>20</sup> I find Miles’s definition of art helpful for two reasons. First, Miles addresses the function of art as organization of emotions into material culture artefacts, creating objects from emotion and ideology. Miles and Tillich both seem to address symbols as a form for the formless, with Miles exploring symbols as tools of emotional construction.<sup>21</sup> The second reason I find Miles’s definition of art helpful is her

---

<sup>19</sup> David Martin writes that a person “entering a church is receiving signs and signals designed to alter his world,” alluding to what I would argue is this emotional reflection of symbols (*The Breaking of the Image: A Sociology of Christian Theory and Practice* [Oxford: Regent College, 2006], 89,); Margaret R. Miles, *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christian Culture* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> Miles, *Image as Insight*, 4. Theologian W. David O. Taylor seemingly agrees with Miles and the notion of the emotional purpose of art. Taylor writes that “art brings us into the intentional and intensive participation in the physical, emotional, and imaginative aspect of our humanity” (*Glimpses of the New Creation* [Grand Rapids,: Eerdmans, 2019], 39–40). I appreciate Taylor’s description of the purpose of art for he displays not only the physicality of art but also, and perhaps more importantly when looking at Miles, its emotional aspect.

<sup>21</sup> Tillich, “The Religious Symbol,” 1. Miles, *Image as Insight*, 4.

emphasis on the need for religious communities to create and consume art.<sup>22</sup> It may seem like a simple addition, but her stance on the necessity for religious communities to create and engage with art displays, in my opinion, the foundational necessity for symbols in contemporary church communities.<sup>23</sup> For Miles, art and therefore symbols play a key role in culture creation, therefore also contributing to the formation of communal identity.

In using and elevating art, Miles writes that symbols hold within them a transcendent ability so that symbols are not merely visual stimuli but potential portals to religiously attuned concerns.<sup>24</sup> Miles notes that as religion both “articulates and responds to the life experiences,” so do symbols, which are crafted in the experience as well as crafted to enhance the experience.<sup>25</sup> This experience is not necessarily limited to religiously focused moments, or a phenomenological notion, but Miles notes that symbols are experienced daily, moving the symbols into the culture and therefore into the greater rhythm of communities. Symbols are meant to be experienced, and when experienced daily the symbols cultivate an emotional transcendence. Again, this notion mirrors Tillich’s in that Tillich also found that through the experience of symbols a community could reflect on and engage with the divine, crafting

---

<sup>22</sup> Miles, *Image as Insight*, 4.

<sup>23</sup> John D. Witvliet would agree with Miles, arguing that symbols and liturgical art “express and deepen corporate nature of a Christian way of life and worship.” The ties between corporate worship and art, or as Miles puts it community and symbols, displays universal agreeance amongst our theologians. See Witvliet, “The Worship,” in Taylor, *For the Beauty of the Church*, 49.

Robert Wuthnow echoes Miles by noting that an emphasis must be placed with the experiential side of religion, rather than an emphasis on the dogmatic. While Wuthnow notes that experience is tied to dogma, the scholar adds that experience, or engagement, is key for religious communities. Miles parallels this, exploring the need for symbols that are experienced. See Robert Wuthnow, *Creative Spirituality: The Way of the Artist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 22.

<sup>24</sup> Miles, *Image as Insight*, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

transcendancy through symbols.<sup>26</sup> In a review of Miles, Julia Marshall highlights the importance of experiencing the symbolic, writing that the

central premise of [Miles's] theory is that clarity and meaning are engendered when ideas, concepts or information is transformed into visual images, objects, or visual experiences. This transformation either organizes ideas and information in ways that make it accessible, concrete and understandable or allows information to be seen differently, in a fresh, more meaningful, personal and experiential way.<sup>27</sup>

Marshall highlights Miles's central thesis, that symbols bring clarity to ideology and hold transformational emotional potential. Miles argues that symbols in the form of art relocate esoteric concepts and emotions into neatly defined patterns of colour, an experience of which draws a community to a new emotional state of being and fosters communal identity.

Miles further explains that symbols are created out of a specific culture and ideology, noting that "every culture does in fact educate its members, by commission or omission, to a particular feeling" and ideology visually observed in symbols.<sup>28</sup> Using accepted images (a characteristic of symbols Tillich also notes), to connect ideology and emotion, Miles finds that daily exposure to and engagement with culturally attuned symbols leads a community to form uniformity of emotional connection, crafting a communal structure through bonds of emotional similarity.<sup>29</sup> While this idea has been sharply criticized,<sup>30</sup> I find it remains an important reflection on the theological importance of symbols, with Miles's principal insight being that

---

<sup>26</sup> Tillich, *On the Boundary*, 69–70.

<sup>27</sup> Julia Marshall, "Image as Insight: Visual Images in Practice-Based Research," *Studies in Art Education* 49, no. 1 (2007): 23–41.

<sup>28</sup> Miles, *Image as Insight*, 3.

<sup>29</sup> Tillich, "The Religious Symbol," 5; Miles, *Image as Insight*, 3.

<sup>30</sup> Miles, *Image as Insight*, 52–53. In his critique of Miles, John W. Dixon points out that her feminist criticism is incomplete, ignoring major trends in feminist theory and making grandiose assumptions. Dixon thus asserts that Miles's feminist criticism is bad or poor feminist criticism. See Dixon, "Image as Insight. Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture by Margaret Miles," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 58, no. 2 (1990): 267–76.

communities use symbols to establish a common emotional connection. For Miles, symbols are reflective visual manipulations of the extraordinary into the everyday, this movement curating the emotional pulse that promotes communal uniformity.

The notion of emotionally purposeful symbols is not necessarily new. To fully articulate the emotional purpose of symbols Miles illustrates from history how symbols have often been used for communally oriented, emotional purposes.<sup>31</sup> Miles reaches into the fourth and fourteenth centuries to explain how some pagans became Christians through the use of symbols and visual splendour of the religion's art.<sup>32</sup> Miles notes that in the "fourth century people were aware of the unique capacity of images to arouse strong emotions," adding that "fourth century pagans were drawn to faith" through symbols.<sup>33</sup>

In a review of Miles's work, art historian Christine Havice writes that the people of the "fourth and fifth centuries understood the act of seeing as truly active; the eye sent forth a ray that struck the object seen and transmitted in return the image of the object focused upon. From this Miles considers the more vigorous role that visual images played in early medieval society and speculates as to the impact that those images had upon their beholders."<sup>34</sup> Even outside of

---

<sup>31</sup> Miles, *Image as Insight*, 45.

<sup>32</sup> Dixon notes that the specific works from this century have "no inherent content" and thus Miles presents an erroneous argument ("Image as Insight," 273). Carolyn M. Craft notes that Miles, pulling from the fourth century, infers the reality of spiritual symbolism in culture today. Craft writes that Miles's chapter "defines the applicability of image use findings to a contemporary society flooded with secular media images, yet spiritually impoverished in terms of images." Craft's interesting expansion of Miles displays the resounding reflection of the construction of symbols both in the fourth and twentieth. See Craft, "Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture.," *Library Journal* 110, no. 20 (1985): 50–53.

<sup>33</sup> Miles, *Image as Insight*, 45. Nicholas Wolterstorff notes that art or symbols are "objects and instruments of action. They are inextricably embedded in fabric of human intention. They are objects—instruments of action whereby we carry out our intentions with respect to the world, our fellows, ourselves, and our gods." I find parallels between his ideas and those voiced by Miles who understood that symbols drew some to faith. See Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987): 3, 57.

<sup>34</sup> Havice, "Image as Insight," 51.



the artistic images, Havice points out that Miles understands that visual stimuli can come about through church architecture and other functional creations so the totality of visual splendour curated in a church community leads to this emotional engagement.<sup>35</sup> For Miles, historically, symbols were used for vast emotional connections and experiences, enhancing her argument of the current theological necessity for the experiencing of symbols. While she has been critiqued for being historically selective, Miles's work does yield some helpful insight into the purpose of symbols.<sup>36</sup>

Miles also focuses on specific Christian historical individuals, displaying how the emotional purpose of symbols transforms identity in such church history figures as St. Francis of Assisi. Francis was said to have reached a moment of conversion while gazing at a crucifix, a storyline that is not unique.<sup>37</sup> Such conversion narratives come from the emotional purpose of symbols. Miles understands that symbols invoke awe at the inspiring power of God, displaying "implicit critique of secular value by presenting alternative and transcendent values, engaging and directing infinite longing to an infinite object."<sup>38</sup> In this way, as detailed by Jerry Stone, the visual image "affects us by attracting us to them and by changing and enriching us through our contemplation of them."<sup>39</sup> The symbols found in the church are not merely powerful because they prescribe some emotional reaction. They are powerful because they literally display the transcendent nature of the religion and have done so throughout church history.

---

<sup>35</sup> Havice, "Image as Insight," 51.

<sup>36</sup> Dixon, "Image as Insight," 268.

<sup>37</sup> Miles, *Image as Insight*, 65.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>39</sup> Jerry H. Stone, "Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture by Margaret R. Miles," *Studies in Art Education* 28, no. 2 (1987): 123–25.

Yet not all scholars argue that the emotional power evoked by symbols is altruistic. Some scholars see an agenda akin to propaganda in the emotional power of symbols. John Dixon writes that images can be used as visual guides, that “propaganda and advertisings move people to action. Not only do images yield precise information, but they are also the only way of yielding much precise information.”<sup>40</sup> Dixon is critical of Miles for what he finds is a major flaw in her work—the ambiguity of terms and the absence of definition for image—and yet his critique seems to actually parallel Havice and Miles, who assert that images have an ability to emotionally move or motivate people and communities. While Dixon derides this utility as propaganda, I find that religiously oriented symbols can act to motivate and move people, so I argue that Dixon’s critique supports some of Miles’s original thoughts.

Miles’s understanding of the emotional transcendence of symbol seems to me to parallel Tillich’s tight focus on the transcendence of symbols through experience.<sup>41</sup> I argue that Miles understands that symbols are of great importance because of how they interact on the individual level. Stone upholds this concept of the importance of the theme of symbols, writing that images influence both “our culture and our individual personalities,” drawing the conclusion from both Tillich and Miles.<sup>42</sup> For Miles there is great power in the emotional transformation that comes through beholding a symbol. The symbolic purpose is supported through communal experiences, on which Miles writes that for the symbol to yield its greatest power it must be tied to liturgy.<sup>43</sup> I

---

<sup>40</sup> Dixon, “Image as Insight,” 269.

<sup>41</sup> Miles, *Image as Insight*, 65; Tillich, “The Religious Symbol,” 19. Julia Marshall seems to agree with Tillich and Miles, writing that the theorists who write on the study of visibility “understand all vision to be filtered through experience and culture” (“Image as Insight,” 25). Thus, we can safely conclude that there is an extreme movement of individual experience when looking to understand the influence of symbols.

<sup>42</sup> Stone, “Image as Insight,” 124.

<sup>43</sup> Miles, *Image as Insight*, 8. Writing on the dichotomy between liturgy and the visual, Havice concludes, “the visual...reaffirmed the beholder’s place at the lower reaches of the heavenly and ecclesiastical hierarchies”

agree with Miles that symbols hold an emotional factor that when paired with liturgy can create a euphoria that binds together a community.<sup>44</sup> Margaret R. Miles illuminates, then, the emotional ethos that comes from the theme of symbols, even those created with rudimentary imagery that mirrors the everyday, and how these emotional experiences can be important for communal life.

In conclusion, Margaret R. Miles continues our understanding of the theme of symbols by explaining the emotional power and purpose attributed to them. She invites us to understand how symbols can be used to form communal ideology by crafting shared emotions, creating lines of communication that allow for ideological certainty and communal uniformity. In this way Miles expertly illuminates how the theme of symbols create an emotional power and purpose, which aids in the formation of the communal identity. Miles's emphasis on the emotional purpose of symbols adds to our understanding of how the theme of symbols actively forms communal identity structures, adding another layer of theological reflection to the theme of symbols.

---

("Image as Insight," 51). Havice notes that images concretely organize hierarchical power so that the symbol acts as a control system that reinforces dogmatic liturgy. I would argue that Havice rightly hints at the power of the image but misses its purpose. I do not see the visual stimuli as a hierarchal fixation but rather a powerful movement of redemption and purpose. It is a freeing power produced through visual stimuli.

<sup>44</sup> This connection proves to be of importance for John Witvliet, who argues the "communal character of Christianity is under threat in the individualistic, privatistic orientation of Western culture. There are constant temptations to reduce Christianity to a private experience that avoids any sustained contact with others. In this context, artists have some of the most potent anti-individualism medicine available; the aesthetic tools necessary to shape experiences of profound solidarity and interpersonal discipleship" (Witvliet, "The Worship," 49). Thus, Witvliet would argue that symbols are of key importance because of the way they act as a social cohesion theme, this binding overcoming the individual nature of western culture.

#### 4.2.3 Avery Dulles: The Relational Purpose of Symbols

In *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System* Avery Dulles uses postcritical theology to argue for the relational connection between God, community, and symbols.<sup>45</sup> Dulles argues that the Christian religion is one of relationship and that this relationship between deity and human is curated in part through the theme of symbols.<sup>46</sup> These two truths will be explored, illuminating how Dulles adds to our theological understanding of how symbols are important for the formation of communal identity.

Dulles notes that a foundational aspect of Christianity is centred around a relational idea, that the “Christian religion is a set of relationships with God.”<sup>47</sup> The idea resonates with our theologians who, in a previous chapter, noted the intricate connection between God and people and place. Dulles extends this relational connection into the realm of symbols by arguing that the relationship with God is crafted and “mediated” through the material culture artefacts of symbols.<sup>48</sup> Dulles notes that the relational connection with God and the symbols work together, not in isolation but in synchronicity, to craft an engaging communal connection.<sup>49</sup> I find the strong focus on symbols as the mediator of relational connections in Christian community to be of interest. It is not merely words nor liturgical events that craft connections within the

---

<sup>45</sup> Avery Robert Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System* (New York: Crossroads, 1992). In a review, theologian Gabriel Fackre notes that the “intellectual history of Dulles is a mirror of the theological journey of the Roman Catholic church.” The review is helpful in giving us a framework of Dulles’s potential biases as well as to understand the parallel of theology and religiosity in Catholic thought. While this dissertation focuses on evangelical and not Catholic churches, Dulles’s thoughts are transient in that they do not focus or are not theologically marked for one church over another. See Gabriel Fackre, “Avery Dulles, ‘The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System’ (Book Review),” *Modern Theology* 9, no. 3 (1993): 315. See also Anne Carr, “The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System by Avery Dulles,” *The Journal of Religion* 73, no. 4 (1993): 643–44.

<sup>46</sup> Dulles, *The Craft of Theology*, 16.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

community and with the divine; Dulles focuses rather on symbolic interaction as one of the main coordinators of this relational connection.

Perhaps Dulles is so focused on symbols as relational curators because of what has been referred to as the “lack of a common language” in theological academia.<sup>50</sup> Dulles instead finds commonality in the power and purpose of symbols, which usher in a common connection, allowing individuals to experience a community through the material culture of symbols. Dulles notes that symbols open this relational and communal experience through the process of sensitisation. Dulles writes that “symbols sensitize people to presence of divine in their lives” and that it is through this sensitizing that people’s consciousness transforms into a meditative, enlightened state.<sup>51</sup> In many ways Dulles mirrors Miles’s strong focus on the emotional aspect of experiencing symbols, Dulles adding that when a community engages with symbols they are sensitised to the presence of the divine. In a sort of “symbolic realism,” the community is transported to a relationally deeper understanding of the divine in their lives through the symbolic power and presence, sensitised to the divine movement through the experience and engagement with the material.<sup>52</sup>

In a review of Dulles’s work, Anne Carr praises Dulles’s “reiteration of his understanding of revelation as symbolic communication and of theology as a work of imagination that displays the illumination and beauty of faith.”<sup>53</sup> Carr shares my extrapolation from Dulles, that symbols

---

<sup>50</sup> Steven A Rogers, “The Parent–Child Relationship as an Archetype for the Relationship between God and Humanity in Genesis,” *Pastoral Psychology* 50 (2002): 377–85.

<sup>51</sup> Dulles, *The Craft of Theology*, 18.

<sup>52</sup> Begbie argues that we must “construct art to move us beyond” the material world to a “higher realm” (*Voicing Creation’s Praise*, 205). This language mirrors Dulles, who finds that symbols transport a community into a deeper understanding and connection with the divine. See also Fackre, “Avery Dulles,” 315.

<sup>53</sup> Carr, “The Craft of Theology,” 643.

allow for transformational communication, opening the potential for the community to engage in a deeper relationship with God. Dulles also includes the idea that God is a conveyor for such an experience so that symbols are not transcendent alone but rather that God, along with the visual stimuli of the symbols, generates this sensitization that propels the onlooker into a transcendent state of contemplation and belief.<sup>54</sup> God opens Godself as the “revealer” through the symbol, stooping into the relational aspect through a material culture visual aid.<sup>55</sup>

Dulles finds great importance in this role of revelation and connection with symbols, writing that “revelation is salvific because it introduces one to a world of meaning and value,” something that the “human effort could neither disclose nor attain.”<sup>56</sup> Dulles continues to expand the point that God acts as the revealer through relationally focused symbols: “He gives them ideas and insights that they would otherwise lack.”<sup>57</sup> The relational connection Dulles derives from symbols is integral for the Christian community because through the creation and use of the material culture, the community encounters and is drawn to God in revelatory ways. Dulles argues that symbols used in worship experiences instils “personal familiarity with Christian mysteries,” stretching the divine into the material culture artefact to invite the community to encounter and reflect on their lived religious experience.<sup>58</sup>

While Dulles does not directly address how this understanding and purpose of symbols affects the formation of communal identity, we can find connection points to symbols and the

---

<sup>54</sup> Dulles, *The Craft of Theology*, 23.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 19.

way in which this theme forms communal identity. As a community crafts and engages with the symbol, they craft a unified relational connection, something that brings them together. Along with that, the singularity of emotional construction formulated with the engagement of the revealed, drawing from Dulles's argument, curates a shared experience that crafts communal bonds. The relational connection for symbols as proposed by Dulles actively engages in forming communal identity around common ideology; the edification and experienced nature of the symbol unifies a community as they participate with the one ideology that produces and experiences the image. This engagement actively forms communal identity. Dulles's understanding of symbols can greatly influence the formation of communal identity for theologically attuned communities.

Avery Dulles adds to our theological reflection on the theme of symbols by examining the relational power and purpose for symbols. The creation and curation of symbols facilitates relational and ideological ties that are integral for the formation of communal identity. Dulles thus allows us to fully understand how some theologians approach the purpose and power of symbols, adding to the theme of symbols and its importance for the modern church community in their formation of communal identity.

#### 4.2.4 Mircea Eliade: The Transcendent Purpose of Symbols

Scholar of religion Mircea Eliade has written extensively of the transcendent transformation that comes from the use of symbols, expanding our theological reflection on how communal identity is crafted through the adoption of the theme of symbols.<sup>59</sup> The transcendent possibility of

---

<sup>59</sup> Allen Douglas notes that Eliade was often described as the world's most influential historian of religion and the world's foremost interpreter of symbols and myth ("Eliade's Legacy 25 Years Later: A Critical Tribute," *International Journal on Humanistic Ideology* 4, no. 2 [2011]: 16). While Eliade may then not be a theologian strictly understood, I find that his work within the religious field makes him an excellent source to draw

symbols is of key interest when approaching a theological understanding of symbols, opening our understanding of the pointedly religious purpose for symbol usage. In *The Sacred and the Profane* Eliade presents an interesting reflection on the cognitive transformation and transcendental possibilities of symbol usage, continuing our reflection on how the theme of symbols aids in the formation of communal identity.<sup>60</sup>

Eliade begins by noting that symbols are firmly rooted in the Christian experience and are important because they display the transcendent and sacred in material form. He writes that “for Christian apologists, symbols are pregnant with messages; they showed the sacred.”<sup>61</sup> This language highlights symbols importance for religiously attuned communication. Many of the theologians engaged with in this chapter take a similar understanding of symbols. Like Tillich and Miles, Eliade explains that symbols in their material form reflect and communicate the divine. For Eliade, symbols show the sacred, aligning with Tillich’s understanding of the

---

from for our theologically stimulated reflection. Religion and arts scholar Frank Burch Brown writes that with the “voluminous writings on religious phenomena, Eliade attempted to show how different religious stories, rituals, places and artefacts—especially in the pre-modern settings—share a common concern for establishing a sacred centre, distinguished from the profane space outside” (“Making Sacred Places, Making Places Sacred,” *Encounter* 59, no. 1–2 (1998): 98). This reflection helps us to understand the sphere of influence that we can pull from to understand Eliade, specifically for symbol. Mihaela Paraschivescu notes how Eliade’s methodology is one of “creative hermeneutics,” using both “reason and imagination, his endeavour opened up documents for the historian to “see” the spiritual message” (“Mircea Eliade and the Quest for Religious Meaning,” *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 9, no. 25 (2010): 59–68). I appreciate Paraschivescu’s creative attempts at illuminating what made Eliade so special, a mixture of cultural competency and theological astuteness that lends great amounts of clout to this work.

<sup>60</sup> W. David O Taylor, a theologian noted in our reflection on Miles, also agrees with the transcendent power of symbols noted by Eliade. Taylor notes that symbols not only hold emotional purpose but that they also can bring about metaphorical insights that prompt transcendent reflection. Taylor writes that symbols “immerse us in a sphere of metaphors by which human beings make sense of their personal and social lives” (Taylor, *Glimpses of the New Creation*, 3). Taylor’s notions extend the transcendent purpose of symbols; Taylor understands how symbols immerse the individual and the group, and the transformational reflection influences the personal and social identity. In this way Taylor reflects the ideas prompted by Eliade in *The Sacred and the Profane*.

<sup>61</sup> Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 137.



figurative characteristic of symbols, and with Miles's description of how symbols identify and articulate the sacred.

Eliade explores this sort of divine messaging through material forms in more ways, linking symbols to the manifestation of the sacred. Eliade notes that the sacred is not only represented in symbols but also manifested through them: "Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself" in the material form.<sup>62</sup> In many ways Eliade's manifestation of symbols parallels Dulles's ideology of God as "revealer," opening this manifestation or revelation of the divine through symbols.<sup>63</sup> The symbols craft a visual moment that invites viewers and participants to engage with the divine, manifesting divinity in their own materiality. Eliade argues that the manifestation of the sacred in symbols creates a transcendent moment in which the community engages with a reality that is cosmically other.<sup>64</sup>

For Eliade symbols usher in the transcendent, inviting the community to experience a division of reality between sacred and profane. Like Tillich, who argues that symbols hold innate power that moves beyond the mere image to reconstruct the communal identity, Eliade argues

---

<sup>62</sup> In a critique of Eliade, Rennie notes that unlike other scholars Eliade "can be seen to leave aside the question of the putatively independent ontological status of the sacred in favour of a concentration upon observable human claims that some sacred or divine presence is apprehensible in the objects of veneration of the variety of religious traditions" ("Mircea Eliade and the Perception of the Sacred in the Profane," 75). What I find is most helpful here is Rennie's observation that Eliade bases the construction of sacred on the observable human claims about the sacred. Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry, Jr. note that this concept of emotional experiences is not uncommon when looking at the creation of communal identity ("The Sacred and the Profane in Consumer Behaviour," 8–11). They note that Durkheim had a similar understanding, ecstasy and flow, which creates an ecstatic experience moving the person to a transcendent or liminal state. This concept will be discussed in great length during the ritual chapter. They extend this notion, understanding that objects can take on a similar power so that objects or symbols can trigger ecstasy.

<sup>63</sup> Dulles, *The Craft of Theology*, 23.

<sup>64</sup> Baudrillard, like Eliade, hints at the cosmically other nature of symbols, arguing that "we require a visible past, a visible continuum, a visible myth of origin, which reassures us about our end" (*Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser [University of Michigan Press, 1994], 10.). I find Baudrillard's description of the need for visible myth origins to in many ways parallel this idea of symbols reflection of the cosmic other, symbols allowing a community to engage with that which is beyond the present.

that symbols craft an experience in which the community finds divinity. This discovery and experiencing of divinity opens a sacred reality, so that the community exists in a sacred world. I find this explanation of the manifestation of the divine and the transcendent probability of symbols to be of great interest when reflecting on the theological purpose of theme of symbols. Eliade seems to argue that symbols usher in liminal revelation, that in the creation and use of symbols religious experiences move the community from the mundane to the transformational. The visual material culture creates a connection that pulls the community into the sacred, shaping the communal identity in this experience.<sup>65</sup>

This movement towards the sacred prompted by interaction with symbols allows the community to enter into what Lessa calls the “paradise situation,” the unhampered indwelling of perfection.<sup>66</sup> Long details this experience as the humanity’s quest to live fully in the sacred life: the “religious life in all of its complexity shows the efforts of man to participate in being—to live the sacred life.”<sup>67</sup> While the ultimate reality or utopian world is in many ways unreachable, the symbol creates a bridge that allows an individual to mentally construct a crossing to be with their deity or with the higher ideology that the symbol promotes.<sup>68</sup> Perhaps Lessa picks up on the connection Eliade makes between cosmic rhythms and the ability for symbols to display the

---

<sup>65</sup> This thought is seemingly upheld by Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry Jr.: “Ultimately the meaning of the sacred may lie in the discovery or creation of connectedness” (“The Sacred and the Profane in Consumer Behaviour,” 13).

<sup>66</sup> William A. Lessa, “Religion: The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion. Mircea Eliade” *American Anthropologist* 61, no. 6 (December 1959): 1147.

<sup>67</sup> Charles H. Long, “The Sacred and the Profane by Mircea Eliade and Willard Trask,” *The Journal of Religion* 40, no. 1 (January 1, 1960): 50.

<sup>68</sup> Taves adds to this discussion on the utopian possibility of symbols: “Things that stand out as special because they seem ideal, perfect, or complete. They may stand out in this way in a relative sense or, if they are thought to approach an ultimate horizon or limit, they may signal an ideal in an absolute sense” (*Religious Experience Reconsidered*, 36). Things, or symbols, stand out because they represent or house the complete, the utopian. The symbolic utopian vision is a powerful purpose of the theme of symbols.

sacred. While I do not suggest, as Lessa does, connecting Eliade's insight to utopian ideas, I find for Eliade the purpose and power of symbols is in part influential because the symbols are connected to rhythms of divine nature. Symbols thus offer transcendent purposes both because of the phenomenological experience of them but also because of the cosmic affiliation of symbol interaction.

For Eliade, the greatest purpose of symbols (perhaps unsurprisingly for a scholar of phenomenological religion) seems to be the opportunity they afford for community to encounter transcendence through the experience of symbol creation and curation. The visual and material culture manifests divinity in a way that crafts an experiential separation, so that as a community engages in the crafting and veneration of the symbols, the community experiences a divide between their collective existence and the world around them. Symbols generate a new reality, which can be described with a linguistic structure connected to the communal doctrine. Symbols offer communities transcendence, ushering in a new lived experience through the manifestation of the sacred in material form, inviting the community into a sacred reality. This shapes the communal identity, allowing the community to craft an insider only experience that transcends the profane, crafting unique and bond-forming experiences that form communal identity.

Mircea Eliade concludes our theological reflection on the theme of symbols by exploring their transformative and transitive purpose. Concluding Eliade's thoughts, I suggest we can understand how the theme of symbols create a transitive ideological reflection that allows communities to form and shape their communal identity. This transitive purpose of symbols proves integral for communities, allowing Eliade's reflection to add weight to our theological understanding of how the theme of symbols aid in the formation and curation of communal identity.

#### 4.2.5 Conclusion

Our theologians reflect on not only the power of symbols but also their purpose, inspiring reflection on how the theme of symbols form communal identity. Paul Tillich begins our theological reflection, exploring how symbols both act in figurative form and infuse a community with power.<sup>69</sup> Margaret R. Miles continues our understanding, exploring the emotional purpose and power behind the use of symbols.<sup>70</sup> I particularly appreciate the way in which Miles uses both a historical and an almost anthropological structure to suggest how theologically attuned symbols have held emotional purpose for the church, allowing us to understand how symbols can and should be used in the church today to curate emotional movement.<sup>71</sup> Avery Dulles follows Miles, writing on the relational power of symbols.<sup>72</sup> Mircea Eliade concludes our theological reflection on symbols, alluding to the way in which symbols create a transcendent experience for communities.<sup>73</sup>

For our theologians, symbols hold great historical and contemporary importance for our Christian communities. These theologians open a wide potential for symbol creation and curation, allowing us to understand not only the importance of the theme of symbols in the formation of communal identity but also the myriad of ways in which they can do so. Symbols shape how communities form their communal identity by reflecting great ideological, emotional,

---

<sup>69</sup> Tillich, "The Religious Symbol," 19.

<sup>70</sup> Miles, *Image as Insight*, 4.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>72</sup> Dulles, *The Craft of Theology*, 23.

<sup>73</sup> Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 55.

and transcendent connections. We now move on to engage with some key social scientists, seeking to understand how communal identity is formed in part by the theme of symbols.

### **4.3 Framing Symbols through Social Science Reflection**

Symbols, like places, hold powerful purposes for the formation of communal identity. Our theological reflection yields insights into ways to begin to reflect on and understand the theme of symbols. We now move on to a social science reflection of symbols. In this reflection we will begin to understand how social scientists construct the structure of symbols, adding to our reflection on the way in which the theme of symbols contributes to the formation of communal identity.

#### **4.3.1 Clifford Geertz: Creating Cultural Identity through Symbols**

Observing a myriad of differing cultures and communities to understand how symbols work, Clifford Geertz understands that a link exists between symbols and identity.<sup>74</sup> In his exploration and observation of Balinese cockfighting, Geertz observes that symbols are central to the formation of communal identity as well as individual identity creation. While the symbols Geertz addressed differ from the art form of symbols we tend to address, his reflection on the power of symbols is purposeful as we understand how the theme of symbols actively engages in the formation of communal identity.

In this observation of the Balinese community, Geertz discovers a link between people's personal symbols and their own identity. Geertz writes, "the deep psychological identification of

---

<sup>74</sup> Austin notes that other theorists, like Durkheim, also use symbols as a way to define culture ("Symbols and Culture: Some Philosophical Assumptions in the Work of Clifford Geertz," *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Anthropology* 3 [1973]: 45–59). Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," *Daedalus* 134, no. 4 (2005): 55.

Balinese men with their cocks is unmistakable.”<sup>75</sup> Geertz highlights how the animal became a direct symbol for the men, an animal coming to represent some deeper meaning about its owner. Geertz notes that not only do these cocks owned by the Balinese men come to represent their own sense of masculinity but also of power and of political standing.<sup>76</sup> The physical element of the cock becomes a symbol for the Balinese men’s station in society, a direct use of symbols influencing identity construction, or as Geertz notes, psychological identification. These observations display directly how symbols craft psychologically altering identity, something I suggest applies to the individual as much as to the community. As understood by Geertz, the use of material forms of symbols directly reflects and actively forms communal identity, a patterned observation found across disciplines and communities.

Geertz displays the effective connection between symbol and identity. While he observes the individual identity of the Balinese men in connection to their fighting animals, I venture to claim that we can expand the scope to argue that symbols and identity are intricately connected for whole communities.<sup>77</sup> Like what is observed in the Balinese community, symbols filled with inherent communal meaning define and affect the community. It can be argued that any form of symbol, art or animal, has deeply tied meaning to the formation of individual and community identity. Not only do the symbols create a culturally acknowledged image, but also a communal

---

<sup>75</sup> Geertz, “Deep Play,” 55.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>77</sup> Austin warns that some anthropologists “confuse the act of encoding in a common and communicable form, with the act of creating symbol system within the context of that code. Consequently, symbolism subsumes behaviour, and representation rather than communication becomes the universal feature” (“Symbols and Culture,” 46). What Austin warns here is the alignment of the symbol with the perpetual cultural nuance of the community. Geertz is aware of such a problem, and while I would note it could be argued that he places too much emphasis on the connection of symbol and individual and therefore falls into that trap that ultimately Geertz draws important connections between symbols and identity and therefore his potential fault is moot. Austin’s warning allows us to uphold the core thought of Geertz while distancing from the example that Geertz uses.

meaning that endows image and individual or community with a specific, culturally understandable ethos. There are inherent community symbols that add power and weight to the cultural identity of communities.

Geertz continues this notion of the connection between symbols and identity by suggesting that symbols “store” meaning.<sup>78</sup> In many ways this notion aligns with the work of Susanne Langer, who observes symbology in a linguistic pattern, arguing that words are images of the objects they denote.<sup>79</sup> Langer, like Geertz, finds a connection or transitive symbolic purpose behind image and word so that words, like symbols, store meaning. Geertz writes on specific forms of symbols, but the notion can once again be extended to the totality of symbols.<sup>80</sup> Geertz writes that symbols store or hold a special meaning and “relate to an ontology and a cosmology to an aesthetic...their peculiar power comes from their presumed ability to identify fact with value at the most fundamental level, to give what is otherwise merely actual, a comprehensive normative import.”<sup>81</sup> Geertz upholds this idea that symbols are purposeful in their ability to aesthetically outline a specified communal thought, the ontology of belief articulated through material culture artefacts and images. It is this observation and conclusion that I would argue lends importance to our study. Geertz observes and argues that symbols are both reflections of and creators for communal reality and identity.

---

<sup>78</sup> Clifford Geertz, “Ethos, World View, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols,” *Antioch Review* 74, no. 3 (2016): 622–37.

<sup>79</sup> Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* (New York: Scribner, 1953), viii.

<sup>80</sup> Geertz looks at both the Christian symbols and the symbols of the Javanese. Geertz ultimately details how symbols come to outline both the positive and negative or evil aspects of religious beliefs and how these symbols interact in the creation of communal identity (“Ethos, World View, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols,” 622–637).

<sup>81</sup> Geertz, “Ethos, World View, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols,” 623.

It is these symbols, and the storing of meaning, that moves Geertz to promote the ideas that symbols are tools for communal creation. Diane Austin summarises Geertz's conclusion by noting that symbols create "models of, and models for, reality."<sup>82</sup> Geertz understands that symbols aid in the creation of a cultural system, or what I would call a communal identity. For Geertz, symbols are not merely an outlying power for individuals and community but rather aid in the construction of a cultural makeup for the community. Culture becomes a "totally symbolic system of action," a notion present in Geertz's later work.<sup>83</sup> It is this understanding that I find important: The purpose and power of symbols goes beyond a mere ideological reflection to act as a reflector and modifier of a greater cultural structure.

In conclusion, Clifford Geertz lays a foundational understanding for us. His observations of communities identify patterns, allowing him to articulate how the theme of symbols not only construct a major individual identity marker, but how the theme of symbols also connect to and reflect ideology for the community. Geertz argues that there is an intrinsic purpose and power of symbols, something we can understand through social science to help us articulate how the theme of symbols interact within our communities to form communal identity. As symbols connect to and reflect ideology, the theme of symbols coordinates an ideological unification within the community, an integral process in the formation of communal identity.

#### 4.3.2 Alan Barnard: The Communicative Purpose of Symbols

Social anthropologist Alan Barnard focuses on the ideology of language and how language has shaped the notion of community. While his work focuses on the spoken aspects of language, he

---

<sup>82</sup> Austin, "Symbols and Culture," 49.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 56.



does include a reflection on the link between symbols and communication, adding a social anthropological reflection to the theme of symbols. In *Genesis of Symbolic Thought* Barnard claims that symbols are a tool of communication, similar to spoken language. Barnard's valuable contribution notes that the theme of symbols is necessary as symbols serve as a tool of communication for communities, forming and shaping the communal identity.

Barnard makes the bold claim that communities cannot “exist without symbolism.”<sup>84</sup> This claim is, as Antonis Iliopoulos writes, a notion of “interdependence of kinship and sociality with the totemic, mythological, and cosmological milieu,” a symbolic sharing within and outside of the community with the expressed purpose of articulating the ideology of the community.<sup>85</sup> Barnard's intriguing observation identifies an innate desire to intermix communal ideology—often set by mythological narratives—with visual culture and material culture artefacts, displaying the purpose and the use of symbols to coordinate and form a communal identity.<sup>86</sup> The community needs communal narratives; steeped in myth, these narratives use material culture artefacts to form symbols, fuelling the creative material culture creation but also serving as a lifeline for the communities. Communities exist with symbols, and these symbols drive the material culture of the community.

---

<sup>84</sup> Alan Barnard, *Genesis of Symbolic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 86. While Barnard's work is regarded in the most part as a seminal interdisciplinary work, some, like C. L. Thompson, do regard his work as “highly speculative and therefore potentially controversial” (“Genesis of Symbolic Thought,” *Middletown* 51, no. 6 [2014]: 1054–55).

<sup>85</sup> Antonis Iliopoulos, “Genesis of Symbolic Thought by Alan Barnard,” *Anthropos* 109, no. 1 (2014): 265–66.

<sup>86</sup> Kelton Cobb reflects this desire for communities to return to myths, arguing that a “community must return periodically to its founding myths and re-examine itself in light of those myths” (*Blackwell Guide to Theology*, 143). The rhythm of examining myths seems central to the formation of communal experience, leading us to better understand how myths and symbols intertwine as a theme for the formation of communal identity.

Barnard articulates the human desire to use symbols, especially visual symbols. Drawing from a comparative study of neuroscience and linguistics, Barnard suggest that symbols may have developed “200,000 years earlier than syntax,” quantifying the historical notion of the usage of symbols.<sup>87</sup> While the date and timeframe of the syntax development is debatable, Barnard’s notions do prompt an interesting point of reflection.<sup>88</sup> For many thousands of years ancient peoples used images to convey thoughts, to convey ideology, to communicate. I argue we could extend this past the historical context to show how symbols still act in communicative roles for communities today. Even though language has far advanced, the need and desire to display innate communal identity in the form of symbols still exists.

Primitive tribes without the evolutionary use of syntax crafted and created symbols to display some identity and ideology, something I argue has not been lost.<sup>89</sup> Barnard seems to agree that symbols are not merely a useful tool for the languageless but that symbols also offer a prevailing tool for the transportation and transmission of ideology. The proliferation of this idea is what some argue gives Barnard’s work a sort of “self-help” feel, but I find that Barnard’s thoughts rightfully point out not only the historical entrenchment of symbols but also the continuation of symbolic usage to explore communal ideology.<sup>90</sup> Barnard notes that symbols are

---

<sup>87</sup> Barnard, *Genesis of Symbolic Thought*, 100. Daeges (“Genesis of Symbolic Thought by Alan Barnard,” 405) notes that Barnard’s previous work *Social Anthropology and Human Origins* (2011) deals with a similar study of our ancestors. Barnard is thus a credible source for historical anthropology.

<sup>88</sup> Levi Strauss argued that dating the notion of symbolic thought is impossible. I agree; so, while Barnard gives an interesting thought, I would only uphold that symbolic patterns predate syntactical language. See Daeges, “Genesis of Symbolic Thought by Alan Barnard,” 405.

<sup>89</sup> Iliopoulos notes that this conclusion of Barnard is distinctive among anthropologists. Iliopoulos notes that for some the Neolithic period and these primitive tribes can be noted by an impoverishment of symbols. Iliopoulos notes that Barnard’s interdisciplinary study actually shows a wealth of potential that establishes the vitality of symbolism missed by prehistoric archaeologists (“Genesis of Symbolic Thought by Alan Barnard,” 265).

<sup>90</sup> Daeges, “Genesis of Symbolic Thought by Alan Barnard,” 405.

representations of the community and its ideology, linking art to social behaviour used to communicate messages filled with meaning.<sup>91</sup> I appreciate and agree with Barnard's notion that symbols are a physical representation of thoughts, a notion our theologians also propose.<sup>92</sup> Barnard rightly captures this communicative purpose of symbols, adding to the formation and the display of communal identity.

Barnard perfectly highlights the importance of symbols as well as the importance of interpretation, since symbols and symbolic behaviour require translation both within and outside of the community.<sup>93</sup> While symbols do require interpretation, their ultimate purpose is to create and solidify a communal ideology.<sup>94</sup> Raymond Schmitt and Stanley Grupp uphold this notion, writing that individuals within their greater community form "perspectives through interactions in symbolic reality."<sup>95</sup> The symbols, while fluid and mythological, do mirror the core ideology of the community, and thus I argue that we can claim that the formation of a communal identity and ideology is perceived and perpetuated through the theme of symbols.

---

<sup>91</sup> Pierre Bourdieu adds to this understanding by arguing that not only do symbols represent a community but that a community also generates a structure in which symbol deciphering occurs. Crafting a "complex code" to decipher the symbols allows the community to not only curate symbols that are communal specific, but also allows the community to unify communal thought as the community proposes ways in which to see and decipher the symbol. I find this adds to the complexity of symbols, and the layers in which symbol production crafts communal connection integral for the formation of communal identity. See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (Columbia University Press, 1993), 218; Daeges, "Genesis of Symbolic Thought by Alan Barnard," 9.

<sup>92</sup> Tillich, "The Religious Symbol," 5.

<sup>93</sup> Barnard, *Genesis of Symbolic Thought*, 80.

<sup>94</sup> The notion of needing translation for symbols is something other groups of scholars find. Both the institutionalism and interactionism schools of symbolic through recognize the importance of change or manipulation that takes place when using symbols. This congruence is noted in the article by economist scholars Harvey and Katovich, "Symbolic Interactionism and Institutionalism: Common Roots," *Journal of Economic Issues* 26, no. 3 (1992): 791–812.

<sup>95</sup> Raymond Schmitt and Stanley Grupp, "Resource as Symbol," *Social Science Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (1976): 324–339.

What I find fundamental in this social scientific reflection is Alan Barnard's notion that symbols physically represent and construct a community's identity and ideology by communicating in material form. Symbols as forms of communication, materialised forms of thought and representation that are creative and metaphorical, help us to understand how the theme of symbols is an integral theme for the formation of communal ideology.

#### 4.3.3 Conclusion

Our social science theorists conclude similarly to our theologians, both groups noting the importance of the theme of symbols for the formation of communal identity. Geertz prompts our continued understanding of how symbols are integrated into the ideological creation and structure, providing insights into the way that symbols directly reflect and create ideology for individuals and communities.<sup>96</sup> Barnard finds a similar thread in his research, reaching into linguistic and artistic history to understand how the theme of symbols crafts identity by organising material culture through communal ideology.<sup>97</sup> Barnard links the construction and use of symbols to the communication of core ideological pillars for each community, displaying the multiple ways in which communities engage with the theme of symbols to craft and display communal identity.

Concluding our social science reflection, we find that symbols are integral for creating and upholding ideology, propelling communities to creative ideological structure, and propelling communities to action. Reflecting on the power and purpose of symbols, I find our social

---

<sup>96</sup> Geertz, "Ethos, World View, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols," 622–637.

<sup>97</sup> Barnard, *Genesis of Symbolic Thought*, 77.

scientists show how the theme of symbols is integral for the formation of communal identity by exploring the ideological and action-based purpose and power of symbols.

#### **4.4 Observations in Music Festival Communities and Church Congregational Communities**

One noticeable similarity emerged among our theologians and our social scientists—the need for the theme of symbols to form communal identity. Some scholars brought to light specific purposes for symbols in the formation of communal identity that became evident through fieldwork. The significance of Tillich’s and Eliade’s notion of the transcendent power of symbols and Miles’s and Geertz’s notion of the emotional power of symbols all became obvious when observing our own fieldwork communities.<sup>98</sup> Along with this, the conclusive uniformity prompted by many of the theorists of the ideological purpose of symbols was also observed across fieldwork communities. Thus, with those theorists in mind we explore how the theme of symbols may aid in the formation of communal identity by promoting transcendent shifts, emotional shifts, and ideological shifts. The reflection on symbols in our fieldwork will uncover how the theme of symbols influenced a community’s identity formation by adopting symbols for transcendent moments, for emotional moments, and for ideological moments.

##### **4.4.1 Symbols and Transcendent Shift in Music Festivals**

Our music festival communities used the theme of symbols in a myriad of ways, opening my eyes to the reality of how symbols are used in the formation of communal identity. One obvious way, observable at almost all the music festivals, was the way in which music festival communities used symbols and visual stimuli to create transcendent experiences. This section

---

<sup>98</sup> Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 55; Miles, *Image as Insight*, 4.

will explore how music festivals used symbols to usher in transcendence, aiding in the formation and curation of music festival community's communal identity.

Many of our scholars theorize how symbols curate the transcendent. Tillich proposed that symbols are created to usher in a communal transcendent state, that through the adoption of images and actions communities can cross over into a different reality through the portal a symbol opens. Eliade and Miles also noted that part of the purpose of symbols aligns with creating a transcendent reality using material visual stimuli.<sup>99</sup> Even Geertz hinted at transcendency of symbols, noting how the symbols transcended individual identity narratives for culturally embedded identity structures for the Balinese men. I found this notion of the transcendent possibility and purpose in symbol usage of great interest when surveying and observing music festival communities. I observed a pattern across the music festival communities: Each used visible material culture to craft an experience that transcended normality. This pattern and the repetitive uses of visible symbol was a key theme in communities' formation of communal identity, meaning that what the theorists proposed was actualised in our music festival communities. I observed that symbols in music festivals usher in a transcendent reality in two ways. First, music festivals engaged with repetitive and overwhelming symbol usage to create a transcendent atmosphere, and second, some used historically entrenched symbols to continue the narrative of transcendence.

We will explore the first way I found music festivals use symbols to usher in a notion of transcendence. I observed that music festivals in general had a pattern of creating the notion of

---

<sup>99</sup> Eliade argued that symbols create a threshold experience (*The Sacred and the Profane*, 42, 55). We can tie this conclusion to the liminal experience, something observed in van Gennep, Turner, and Durkheim. Miles is not as explicit in her usage of transcendent semantics and yet I find that Miles's understanding of the revolutionary possibilities of symbols equates to this transcendent verbiage. Miles displays the sort of otherworldly purpose, or the transcendent purpose, of symbols, aligning with her theorist counterparts. See Miles, *Image as Insight*, 11.

transcendence before the festival even began, initiating the transcendent through branding and marketing material culture.<sup>100</sup> Music festivals use symbols through traces like marketing materials to create a desired narrative.<sup>101</sup> I identify there a link to and reflection of Eliade's understanding of the cosmic narrative, as the tools of marketing storyboard the music festival and projects the desired transcendent ethos. In doing so the music festivals not only convey a specific message to their community but also create a cultural narrative so that one can engage with the music festival identity in and through symbols. I observed that a majority of the music festivals used symbols for branding in this way, the symbols creating a sort of theatre of consumer consumption that transports communities to a new reality.<sup>102</sup> Music festivals use symbols through their branding and through the curation of the place to create a desired ethos, creating a symbolic narrative that moves the community into the collective experience. Music festival transcendence begins with the initiative of branding.

I found that music festivals used two symbolic categories in their branding to create this transcendence: nature-oriented and carnival-themed. Nature-themed symbols were used most

---

<sup>100</sup> Naomi Klein notes that companies have morphed their understanding of branding, moving from the creation of products to the curation of a branded reality. Klein notes that "successful corporations must primarily produce brands, as opposed to products," these brands invoking emotional, and I would call transcendent, possibilities (*No Logo* [Picador, 2009], 3,6). Klein highlights the way in which symbols, and specific branding, can usher in the transcendence as companies curate another world through the symbols used. I find parallels between Klein's understanding and what was observed in the music festival communities.

<sup>101</sup> Music festivals also uphold Tillich's understanding of using symbols to generate or create a culture. The communities through the symbols used create a sort of mono-narrative through visual stimuli, crafting not only a transcendent push but also a greater communal cultural narrative.

<sup>102</sup> Christina Goudling and Michael Saren study theatre in its more predominant form, the sort of stage theatre that we are familiar with, concluding that this theatre creates the same sort of transcendent reality that I argue is observed in our music festivals. I find it interesting that the two authors note that the experiential element of theatre creates this transcendent ethos. I find that their article highlights the notion of art in its myriad of forms creating a transcendent space; since theatre can create this transference, I would argue that we can parallel and assert that festivals can also create this transference of reality through visual stimulation. See Goudling and Saren, "Transformation, Transcendence, and Temporality in Theatrical Consumption," *Journal of Business Research* 69, no. 1 (2016): 218,

often. Forest Festival's repetition of forest symbols is an excellent example. From the name to the marketing aesthetics to the images on the festival ticket and lanyards, Forest Festival had a repetitious use of forest symbols permeating every bit of their material culture.



Figure 8: A branding image from Forest Festival. Twitter, 2018.

The organic, nature symbology interestingly juxtaposed the hard-edge rock music that typifies the festival, imbuing the festival with an ethereal balance, a hard-line sound represented by a hyper-organic symbol. The branding also highlights the historical attachment to the place, something noted in our place chapter.

Other music festivals followed similarly and infused their symbolic branding with nature. Acoustic Festival and Eco Festival each used an intermixing of their place and nature imagery for branding. Acoustic Festival used animal imagery, including ostriches, to brand the festival. Eco Festival used numerous different types of plant life to brand and symbolically display the



music festival brand, a more traditional interjection of nature into the branding. Nature imagery was surprisingly not necessarily genre-specific, but rather music festivals of differing genres and sizes all integrated symbols of nature into their marketing and into their embodied experiences and events.

The pattern of nature-oriented symbols allowed the music festival communities to ground their collective experience in the purity of nature. By instilling symbols of nature into the communal experience, the music festival communities offer an experience marked not by city construction but rather the experience of nature's openness and purity. I suggest that the nature symbols promote a return to nature narrative for the communities, similar to Eliade's idea of the cosmic myth aligning with symbol usage. The repetition of nature symbols allows the communities to form identity around a nature narrative, something unhindered and pure, and therefore transcendent.

I observed that the other music festivals used symbols of events and excitement, or what I have termed circus symbols, to brand their festival. Using a more playful approach to their symbols, music festivals like Flag Festival, Electronic Festival, and Retro Festival all used bright colours and tent-like structures in their branding and lived experience. The visible colour palette drastically differed from the nature-oriented symbols; lacking the blues and greens, these music festivals opted for banners with oranges and yellows, bright colours and images of tents and fireworks. The branding symbols distributed around the music festival crafted a visible material culture that displayed the party ethos and transcendence of the community, symbol reflecting the communal ideology.

These types of circus or carnival symbols invited identity to be crafted around the identity of play, another sort of transcendence of reality that Eliade theorized.<sup>103</sup> In this way the music festivals create a narrative of escapism; while not necessarily the rebirth or narrative freedom of nature, I argue that the carnival or circus symbols uphold a sort of playful party atmosphere. In this way there is still an undertone of freedom that fosters transcendence, highlighting what Arnould, Price, and Otnes noted as the transcendence of rational. The community is able to “transcend rational logic that dominates everyday life and the ordinary experience of commercial leisure services consumption.”<sup>104</sup> There is a transference into a new reality crafted through this deep development of symbols, the community shaping their communal identity through symbols reminiscent of the spectacle of the circus.

A pattern emerged amongst our music festival communities. Half of the communities, those whose place was in nature, crafted and used symbols oriented around natural elements, even when the nature seemed to juxtapose the music genre. The other music festival communities crafted patterns around carnival symbols, fantastic and fun colour palettes and images that represented their party ethos as well as the urban location they existed in. I argue that in both cases the music festival communities used symbols and branding to construct a communal narrative and structure, the community organised their identity around and through the symbols they used. In doing so the music festival community indoctrinated members into the community before the experience, and while in the experience symbols created visible reminders of the music festival communal identity. Using symbols in this way crafted a transcendent

---

<sup>103</sup> Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 55.

<sup>104</sup> Eric J. Arnould, Linda L. Price, and Cele Otnes, “Making Magic Consumption: A Study of White-Water River Rafting,” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 20 no.1 (1999): 60. Goulding and Saren noted the same transference of reality or transcendence in the Gothic plays they observed (“Transformation, Transcendence, and Temporality,” 220).

expectation, the community knowing what to expect through material culture. Once at the festival, the music festival communities all used their branding symbols in their place, creating a visible post marker so that the community experienced the community in a way that allowed the members to transcend their own culture into the music festival community. In my participant observation I found each music festival community used some form of symbol in both marketing and event experience, curating expectations and experiences through the visual material culture. I observed directly how symbols act as tools of transcendence, shaping the expectations and ideology of the community such that symbols indeed formed each music festival communal identity.

Not only was the repetition of symbols important for the transcendence of symbolism, but I also observed that these symbols were implemented in the music festival visual landscape in overwhelming scales. The repetition of both large-scale and historical symbols ushered in a transcendent visual experience, the symbols being an integral theme for the formation of communal identity. Each music festival not only used the symbols in repetitious branding, but once at the music festival I observed that each music festival replicated these symbols in their visual landscape. I often found these symbols in exaggerated scales, the large tents at Eco Festival looming over the open lawn, the giant trees and signage at Forest Festival gleaming in the centre of the landscape, the tents at Retro Festival creating an atmosphere that made the time of day impossible to determine. The mere scale of each symbol was therefore transcendent; at larger-than-life, abnormal size, the symbols superseded the built landscape and crafted a transcendent reaction to the visual material culture.

The visual stimuli and material culture forced a perspective that immediately transported the community to a new reality, the scale of each symbol ushering in the transcendence through a

visual vortex, the large-scale symbols displaying communal ideology and identity in a dominating way. Most of the music festivals crafted repetitive and large-scale symbols to highlight communal ideology and identity markers. As music festival attendees interacted and engaged, they were transported to a transcendent new reality through the material culture, a reality that was rooted in the music festival community. These symbols and their manipulation allowed each community to craft visual material culture that prompted transcendent engagement, representing and mirroring communal identity.

Apart from these transcendent symbols, music festival symbolisms also draw from historical foundations, similar to what we see in some religious symbol usage, communities using entrenched symbology to create a link between past and present. I find a connection with this type of symbols and Barnard's observations of the use of non-linguistical elements to highlight community history and communal identity. In using historic symbols, music festivals pull from the backstory of experiential transcendence to encourage continuation of a transcendent state. Perhaps the greatest example of this comes from one of the most well-known festivals, Pop Festival. Pop Festival certainly has a history steeped in creating a transcendent atmosphere for its participants; to craft this transcendence the festival uses one of the oft-noted, great symbols in music festival history, that of the focal stage.

The iconic stage structure has hosted some of the greatest musical acts across the decades. It is now a symbol of the music festival used in promotional branding and festival merchandise, as well as being the focal stage for the large festival. The symbol of the stage is synonymous with the music festival itself, and interaction with this symbol in branding and at the event itself leaves no question as to which music festival this is. I suggest this use of historical symbol firmly roots the community in its own transcendent history, aligning the symbol beholder

with the larger community in a way to transcend time. In using historical symbols, the community forms an identity through historical rooting, promoting the historical experience typified by transcendent moments. Symbols crafted of historically sensitive material culture add to the formation of communal identity.

Tillich and Eliade proposed the transcendent possibility and purpose of symbols, observing that communities form communal ideology through explorative identity creation.<sup>105</sup> I observed that our music festivals seem to create a transcendent ethos and atmosphere using symbols before the music festival and at the events, crafting transcendence through repetition, scale, and historical rooting. In many ways the symbolic interactions at music festivals are a key element to the music festival communal experience, each festival engaging in the material culture in a way that actively forms the communal identity. The symbols are prolific in number, in scale, and in meaning, adding to the collective experience. Music festival communities draw from their ideology and their community identity to craft symbols, using the collective experience to curate their material culture, and in doing so the music festival communities craft transcendent expectations that anticipate and then facilitate transcendent experiences. I therefore argue that the theme of symbols directly forms communal identity as music festival communities use visual stimuli and material culture to indoctrinate community members through symbol integration.

#### 4.4.2 Symbols and Transcendent Shift in Church Communities

Symbol creation and usage offers up transcendent possibilities for our communities. The obvious, observable pattern at music festival communities was the combination of symbols in

---

<sup>105</sup> Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane*, 33.

marketing and the experiential place to usher in this transcendence. In church communities, I found a mixture of symbol usage; while some symbols could be noted, most of the church communities engaged in less overt symbol creation and usage, inviting the interesting need for reflection on the theme of symbols in our church communities. I examine this use of symbolism to understand how the church communities engaged in the theme of symbols for communal identity formation.

Each of our church communities engaged in some sort of small-scale symbolic creation, most notably in the branding. Again, a pattern emerged amongst the church communities, with each of our church communities crafting branding that was geometric in pattern and simple in design. Each church community I observed also included some aspect of their name into the branding, crafting clear and definable connections between the symbol and the community. Each church community successfully branded their community through symbol in that they crafted a recognizable brand that displayed their name, and yet I struggled to observe the fullness of transcendent possibility in those branding symbols. Music festival communities used symbols to both craft communal experience expectations and reach into their historical narratives, producing a partly transcendent experience through the theme of symbols. While the church communities observably used branding and symbols, their geometry symbol style, and the lack of repetition within the communal place softened the impact of this material culture artefact, and thus the theme of symbols was less engaging in the formation of communal identity for the observed church communities.

Tom Wagner, an ethnomusicologist who focuses on Hillsong Church, has drawn similar parallels between branding and transcendent potential from his fieldwork observations.<sup>106</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> Theologian Tom Beaudoin also finds interest in a theological approach to branding, addressing the theoretical rather than the practical like Wagner. Beaudoin notes that “for those of us who live deeply immersed in

Wagner notes the importance of branding: “Religious branding is one of the latest forms of communication and experience,”<sup>107</sup> and he asserts that Hillsong brands with excellence.

Symbolic communication and transcendence potentiality has ecclesiological and lived religion research importance, and Wagner’s notion of the communicative tool also recalls Barnard, who also argued that symbols act as a non-linguistic form of communication.<sup>108</sup> Wagner notes that the communicative power of symbols is often passed over, symbols often considered a last form of reflection for many church communities, but not for Hillsong. Wagner’s research into Hillsong reveals how this communication and experience is materially formed by symbols in a way that displays how symbols are on the forefront of communication. Using sweeping, on trend and intentional colour palates with modern font, Hillsong promotes transcendency through visually stimulating, organic images. The branding offers a sense of fluidity and exploration, and while not explicitly natural their images conjure up visually interesting movement.

---

the branding economy, we make an identity for ourselves, and an identity is made for us, by our relationships to consumer goods” (*Consuming Faith: Integrating Who We Are with What We Buy* [London: Sheed and Ward, 2003], 5). Identity both in the church and in secular culture is rooted in adoption of symbols, transcending the individual to form some sense of identity. I find the notion to mirror Wagner, while also bringing to prominence the importance of branded understanding in theology.

<sup>107</sup> Tom Wagner, “The ‘Powerful’ Hillsong Brand,” in *The Hillsong Movement Examined: You Call Me Out Upon the Waters*, ed. Tanya Riches and Tom Wagner (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 255.

<sup>108</sup> Beaudoin notes that symbols communicate in the way that symbols come to take on characteristics that distribute a message. Beaudoin notes “by focusing on branding, companies hope to make their logos into a ‘personality’—that is, a lifestyle, an image, an identity, or a set of values” (*Consuming Faith*, 4). The notion of personality linked to logos or branding interestingly highlights the way in which branding in general distributes and communicates for those consuming the branded symbols.



Figure 9: A branding image from Hillsong Church London. Hillsong Church London Facebook. 2018. [https://www.facebook.com/pg/hillsongchurchlondon/photos/?tab=album&album\\_id=10150581563586681&ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/hillsongchurchlondon/photos/?tab=album&album_id=10150581563586681&ref=page_internal).



Figure 10: A branding image from Hillsong Church London. Hillsong Church London Facebook. 2018. [https://www.facebook.com/pg/hillsongchurchlondon/photos/?tab=album&album\\_id=10150581563586681&ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/hillsongchurchlondon/photos/?tab=album&album_id=10150581563586681&ref=page_internal).

I argue Hillsong creates fluid, visually interesting branding that is organic and filled with movement, their material culture artefacts opening the transcendent potentiality. The script font suggests a flowing stream, and the background image above suggests both neon light and natural marble stone. Movement attracts and entices the eye and reflects the explorative undertone of the contemporary church community.<sup>109</sup> These hint at natural properties, while not overtly nature,

---

<sup>109</sup> Journalist Robin Hicks notes that in general the “culture of Hillsong branding is based on ‘leaning in’ and ‘giving yourself’ to the church.” The notion of joining community reverberates throughout the music festival branding, a shared purpose of all branding. See Robin Hicks, “Hillsong-Australia’s Most Powerful Brand,” *Mumbrella*, July 26, 2012, <https://mumbrella.com.au/hillsong-australias-most-powerful-brand-104506>.



and are arguably organic enough to propose transcendency. While different from the music festival communities, the natural elements and fluid aesthetics of Hillsong's branding brings about a transcendent potential, especially when repeated throughout the church's visual and material culture.

In exploring the media-ecological view of Hillsong's branding, Wagner found that branding allowed Hillsong to usher in a symbolic environment, the branding being the launching pad or the first visual experience for the church consumer.<sup>110</sup> Drawing both from the greater popular cultural codes as well as the transcendent narrative possibility formed through the church communal identity, Wagner concludes that Hillsong's branding and reverberating media provides a "discursive thread and the contextual loom" needed so that "individual worshipers, through participation, constructed and experienced the final product."<sup>111</sup> Utilizing a symbol and brand with aesthetic nuances and transcendent possibilities, Hillsong uses branding to invite the community into a transcendent but still communally focused experience, something the church communities I observed failed to produce with geometric and generic branding.

Hillsong seems to mirror our music festival communities in creating branded symbols that invite and reflect the transcendent possibilities of community, juxtaposing the rigidity of many observed church community brandings. In my observation there is something inherently welcoming and explorative in the organic branding of Hillsong and our music festival communities, something that draws in the community and individuals. In recrafting symbols and using either the symbol or the colour way in the collective experience, I would argue that the church communities I observed could craft stronger connections between their visual symbolism

---

<sup>110</sup> Wagner, *The Hillsong Movement Examined*, 258.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 258, 260.

and the collective transcendent potential and experience they offer. Drawing both from the Hillsong symbols and my participant observation of music festivals, I argue that our church communities can reflect on the way they craft symbols, reconstructing their branding and symbols to better encourage transcendent potential.

Along with the symbols and branding, I observed a pattern in some of our music festival communities that used historically entrenched symbols to craft a transcendent ethos, forming their communal identity in both historical symbols and annual branding projects. Certainly, church communities in general have used historical symbols for centuries, placing elements such as crosses or narrative images of the acts of Christ in the church buildings. Historical Christian symbols are noted across many denominations and traditions, displaying the unifying use of symbols for many church communities that hold denominational acceptability of symbol usage.

In using these historically reverberating symbols, the church communities link historical narratives with the present, allowing individuals to cross into a threshold understanding of reality and connecting to the historical life of Christ. Many churches today continue to use symbols to usher in a sense of the presence of God, inviting in the Spirit, transcending the world, and reaching into a spiritual realm. Historical symbols, for both the observed music festival communities and for some church communities, employ the important theme of symbols forming communal narrative and communal identity. I approached my observation of church communities with the postulation that they too would use some sort of historical symbol in their visual landscape experience, and yet found that the use of historical symbols was less observable than what was observed in our music festival communities.

What was obvious and repetitive in the music festival communities was less obvious in our church communities, which used historical symbols in more covert ways. River Church most

obviously used historical symbols, most notably a symbol of the cross, placing a symbol in their branding and in the material culture artefacts noted in the buildings. The other communities, including Canal Church and Lake Church, often placed historical symbols like a cross on their screens during worship times. However, these historical symbols did not seem to be at the forefront of symbol usage. Perhaps this was because the church communities placed their greatest focus on a symbol that displayed their community's name, as opposed to a historical symbol. Yet some historical symbol was noted on the digital screens used during liturgical moments, and so some church communities did show some recognition but not a full focus on the potential transcendence of historical symbols. Symbols that draw from the communal history, which often offer points of artistic interest and reflection, craft transcendence, and yet I observed that our church communities did not take full advantage of that possibility limiting the impact of the theme of symbols for the formation of communal identity.

I would argue that, as has been theorised and as I observed in music festival communities, church communities could engage in more transcendent symbol creation and usage.<sup>112</sup> Symbols invite participation in both individual and community, which can yield transcendent identity and ideology connections that are integral to formation of communal identity. To better align with Tillich and Eliade's understanding of the transcendent purpose of symbols, and to better craft the type of communal bonds noted by Dulles, I encourage church

---

<sup>112</sup> Pastor and author Mark Galli would argue that mainline evangelical churches are not just missing opportunities in the symbolic usage but that they are missing this opportunity to communal creation in many ways. Galli writes that "there is no greater signal that evangelicals have long forgotten their roots than the disrepair into which the sacraments have fallen in our day." What I find Galli is arguing is that modern church communities are turning from adoption of historically entrenched sacraments and symbols, vying for cultural nuances that are not creating a transformative setting. Galli's argument is compelling, and I find that we can transpose his notion of the sacraments to our study of symbolism in the church communities. See Galli, "Whatever Happened to Communion & Baptism?," *Christianity Today*, July 10, 2019, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/july-web-only/whatever-happened-to-communion-baptism.html>.

communities to rethink how they form symbols, incorporating both repetitive branding symbols and historical symbols to allow the theme of symbols to form the communal identity.

#### 4.4.3 Symbols and Emotional Shift in Music Festivals

As we saw through the work of Miles, the theme of symbols creates a new emotional connection that can form communal identity. I found this notion to be of great interest when starting my observations at music festival communities and found that a multitude of music festivals use symbols to craft emotional experiences. Through the manipulation of the everyday, the ordinary, music festivals create emotionally charged experiences. There is a sense of mythological orientation or experimental hyperreality that comes with the visual symbols of music festivals that heightens the emotional experience. We explore here how the theme of symbols create an emotional experience that fosters communal identity for our music festival communities.

All the music festival communities I observed used some form of symbol to both reflect their communal identity and curate an emotional experience for their community members. I observed that each music festival did this by either recreating a symbol on a large scale or repeating a symbol throughout the music festival experience. Some of our music festivals installed material symbols on a large scale, shifting the emotional reaction because of the oddity of size. My participant observations suggested that it was not the location of the music festival nor was it the size that generated this scale of reconstruction; both urban and rural locations, and music festivals of all sizes, manipulated symbols in this way, a uniformity in that all the music festivals used the theme of symbol for emotional experiences.

Acoustic Festival and Forest Festival both enlarged music festival important symbols to dramatic sizes, curating material culture that the community could participate in individually but

also view from most parts of the music festival's location. Eco Festival used large-scale material formations in the form of tents to clearly delineate the heart of the festival.



*Figure 11: Eco Festival's large-scale tent village. Photo by Kylie McCormick, 2018.*

Many of the music festivals I observed used large-scale symbolic material culture to curate the music festival experience, the scale of each symbol crafting a new emotional reaction. This is a pattern I noted across these music festivals, and many others. When images of Wild Life festival circulated, I found that the (now discontinued) music festival perfectly demonstrates the way in which many music festivals curate symbols on a large scale to craft emotional engagement.



Figure 12: Wild Life Festival. Photograph by Max Langran. Wild Life Facebook. 2017.  
<https://www.facebook.com/disclosure.wild.life/photos/a.1939033499712558/1939040406378534/?type=3&theater>.



Figure 13: Wild Life Festival. Photograph by Sam Neil. Wild Life Facebook. 2017.  
<https://www.facebook.com/disclosure.wild.life/photos/a.1939033499712558/1939612866321288/?type=3&theater>



At Wild Life festival, the large-scale animal material culture provided a shocking visible display, overwhelmed by the size, one reacts to the symbol because of the mere scale. The immense scale of each of the material culture symbols dwarfed the built landscape and the participants. Our music festival communities used symbols in a similar way, using large-scale symbols in material form to curate an emotional reaction in the music festival experience. Both the music festivals observed and the case study of Wild Life festival illustrate the way in which music festivals use large-scale symbols to curate an emotionally engaging experience for their community.

Upon reflection of my music festival observation, the examples of music festival material culture align well with Miles's identification of the purpose of symbols for the curation of emotional interactions for two main reasons. First, I argue that music festivals engage in scale-driven emotional symbols because it allows them to edify communal ideology and identity in a way that is overt but still engaging for community members. As a music festival community uses large-scale symbols, they explicitly signal core identity markers. As the community members engage with these large-scale symbols, they ingest and adopt the communal identity. This engagement is emotionally driven, offering a liminal symbolic adoption for the community. Ultimately, the use of large-scale symbols allows for easy adoption of major communal identity markers, the emotional attachment driving the creation of quick bonds and communal adoption.

The second reason I find emotionally focused symbols helpful for our music festival communities is because emotionally focused symbols create a communal insider experience. One must be present at the music festival, engaging in the experience of the symbol, in order to fully be a part of the collective experience. The large-scale symbols curate experiences that community members want to be a part of, crafting emotional connections to the specific experience and to the specific community. This emotional, symbolic experience ultimately crafts

important communal insider bonds, which I suggest help curate a communal identity. Large-scale symbols are thus integral because through their use a community generates emotionally focused engagement that both solidifies communal ideology adoption and bonding.

I observed that music festivals also used repetitive symbols to craft emotional attachment. Not all music festivals have the locations or the means to craft numerous large-scale symbols, and so while every music festival used at least one large-scale decoration, some turned more often to the repetition of small-scale symbols to craft this emotional engagement. Acoustic Festival was a leading example of repetitive symbol usage, beginning in their social media campaigns and branding. The symbols were then printed on material culture artefacts throughout the music festival. Acoustic Festival placed the symbol on merchandise, including on the reusable cups most music festival participants drank from. The symbol of Acoustic Festival filled every material form at the music festival, obvious small-scale symbol repetition easily observed over the multiple weekends.

These observations and reflections uncovered connective bond-making similar to what I noted when music festivals used large-scale symbols. I observed that the repetition of symbols allowed the community to attach their collective experience to the material culture form, so that when they saw the symbol, they understood its rootedness in the music festival community. The repetitive use of symbols prompts the community to continuous reflexive contemplation, meaning that music festival communities who use repetitive symbols continuously prompt collective bonding. I argue that music festivals continuously refresh the communal connection, using the emotional interaction and collective experience to fortify bonds as the symbol is observed again and again.



Using symbols in visual media and material culture artefacts, music festivals craft an experience both transcendent and emotional, inviting a total of shift for the individual and the community. That exploration prompts communities to form and shape their communal identity. I would argue that, through the use of large-scale and repetitive symbols, music festivals create emotional shift of transcendence, offering a new sense of community and a new sense of reality.<sup>113</sup> I suggest this emotional movement through symbolic usage is not merely temporary but that it holds more longevity than a weekend experience. Robert Heath and Paul Feldwick found that in the world of advertising, emotional rather than information-based persuasion models were more effective.<sup>114</sup> Similarly, Wood and Moss summarise their findings by writing “that emotional resonance” with marketing symbols in a consumption experience is “significantly more effective than rational processing through knowledge transmission...it is the live event *experience* [that] creates an emotional response,” meaning that symbols that curate an emotional response offer communal importance.<sup>115</sup>

I suggest that a community’s intentional use of material symbolism and therefore emotional stimulation creates such a euphoria that it sets the emotional norm of its community. I repeatedly observed that music festivals manipulate emotional states through symbols so that the music festivals begin to redefine the levels of emotional normativity. This does not end at the

---

<sup>113</sup> Philosophers Jenefer Robinson and Robert Hatten argue that with appearance emotionalism communities can actually create mirrored behaviour that displays inner emotional states. I used this idea to observe the emotional states of music festival attendees. Music festival attendees tended to act without hindrance, ignoring the confines of typical cultural stigmas. Like the vivid images around them, festivalgoers take on differing characteristics and personas that exhibit unstoppable glee. This observation seems to parallel Robinson and Hatten’s understanding of appearance emotionalism and how this comes to create a communal cultural narrative. See Jenefer Robinson and Robert S. Hatten, “Emotions in Music,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 34, no. 2 (2012): 76.

<sup>114</sup> Robert Heath and Paul Feldwick, “Fifty Years Using the Wrong Model of Advertising,” *International Journal of Market Research* 50, no. 1 (2008): 29–60.

<sup>115</sup> Wood and Moss, “Capturing Emotions,” 45.

close of the experience, rather music festival attendees and musicians continue to chase the high of the music festival experience. I draw this conclusion from informal conversations I had during my festival observations; many attendees vocalized extreme emotions during their festival experience, emotional states that they continued to chase but only found in the annual music festival experience. I argue that the paralleling studies display the ability for symbols to reconstruct emotional states that alters the perceived state of reality, ultimately creating a communal identity based in extreme emotional encounter created through symbol.

Through this emotional manipulation, symbols create new boundaries for a community's shared life. This shift in reality moves the community to create a unique set of bonds and relationships that they are unable to replicate in other contexts. This is why music festival communities seem to form such strength in such a short period of time. The alteration instigated by symbolic visual stimuli creates a new reality that a community invests in; the present experience alters future expectations, while at the same time creating a hyperreal past. Concluding my observations, I found the use of symbols to be extraordinarily obvious in our music festivals, the theme of symbols continually crafting bonds of emotion and ideology, forming the communal identity through material culture.

#### 4.4.4 Symbols and Emotional Shift in Church Communities

One of my favourite churches to visit is the fourteenth-century royal chapel in Paris known as Sainte-Chapelle. Sainte-Chapelle is a stunning building formed almost completely of stained glass.



*Figure 14: The interior of Sainte-Chapelle. Photograph from the Convention and Visitors Bureau website.  
<https://en.parisinfo.com/paris-museum-monument/71380/Sainte-Chapelle>.*

It is not large, probably only holding one to two hundred people, but its adornment is truly beyond comprehension. At all times of the day the church gleams like a million gemstones, the cascading sunlight filling the floors with glimmering punctuations of coloured light filtered through the stained glass. Even during the evening, the chapel dimly glows like a flickering candle. It is a chapel beyond words, awe-inspiring, and emotion-generating.

The material culture of Sainte-Chapelle certainly induces an emotional reaction, bringing viewers into a state of awe and wonder as they enter the chapel. While it is obvious that not every church can be crafted like Sainte-Chapelle, I propose that this level of emotional connection can be obtainable if church communities use symbols. Theory around the emotional connection of symbols, like that proposed by theologian Miles, finds that through the emotional connective bonds communal formation can occur through symbols, adding to our understanding of how the theme of symbols actively forms communal identity for ecclesiological communities.

Symbols in church communities can arguably stir emotional connection for the community, paralleling my observation of our music festival communities. Religious symbols, and other symbols that may represent a community, can be emotionally formative, adding to the construction of communal identity. As discussed in the above section on transcendence, the symbols I observed in our church communities were not as overt and obvious as in our music festival communities. While I argue that our church communities do not have to replicate the symbols and material culture of other communities, I would encourage our church communities to craft in similar ways, to exaggerate scale and repetition to craft an emotionally stimulating material culture experience. To substantiate this encouragement, I first describe my observations of symbols in church communities so that we can understand how they engage symbols to craft emotionally engaging experiences.

I observed that our church communities did successfully use both Christian and community-specific symbols in their lived religious experience, mostly adorning the digital screens during worship services. Each church community used similar symbols, shaping a pattern that I observed across our church communities. These symbols alternated between what I would describe as organic colour movements on the digital screens and religiously affiliated symbols that pulled from historical Christian imagery. The digital material culture brought in observed emotional movement and engagement, as the community reacted to the change of colours, and yet the symbols acted more as background for worship and text than a stand-alone symbol. This is a departure from how music festivals used symbols; while the music festivals did use symbols in congruence with other text, many of the music festivals used symbols as independent pieces of material culture, curating an emotional connection only in the symbol itself. Our church communities observably used images and symbols as a part of a greater visual

experience, meaning the symbol was at times blurred or overtaken by text. The symbols thus used in the church could be described as both symbol and general form of liturgical display, diluting some of the emotional engagement with the symbol itself. While some symbols were used and intended to shift an emotional state, the symbols were ultimately limited producing demurred emotionally transfixion of symbols compared to what I noted among music festival communities.

The form of the symbols I observed in church communities differed from what I observed in the music festival communities, not only in the type but also scale. While not on the same scale as the symbols at the music festivals, the church communities did use some artistic display on a large scale that fit their community. These symbols were embedded in the digital material culture, adorning screens used during the communal experience. However, the church communities observed missed out on some of the potential symbol benefits of exaggerating the size of their symbols to set apart the specific worship experience. Some church communities outside of the ones observed, and other communities of worship, mirror the music festival communities in crafting large-scale material culture symbols to usher in a state of emotional movement. For example, under the direction of Makoto Fujimura, the worship chapel at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California regularly featured large-scale panel paintings and symbols for emotional response. While the chapel setting is different from our church communities, and while the chapel at Fuller Seminary is no longer overseen by Makoto but rather features a new rotation of artists, this example can inspire our church communities to discover emotionally experiential symbols.



*Figure 15: A panel created by Makoto Fujimura, an example of the type of art that can be used in symbol creation.*

The panels crafted by artists at Fuller Seminary adorned the chapel walls and were used to brand the seasonality of the worship series, uniting liturgical rhythm and large-scale material culture. While not overtly prescriptive, as some of the exaggerated symbols our music festivals used, the non-figurative style of the art used during Fuller's chapel services prompted reflection in attendees without explicitly pointing towards one specific meaning, the emotional interaction of the symbol through scale proving effective for theological engagement. The exaggerated scale of those symbols allowed for emotional, curated symbolic interaction, inviting the community to both reflect on communal commitments while also inviting the community to engage among individual members. The church communities I observed could adopt the model of symbol usage that Fuller Seminary promoted, and the symbol usage that was obvious in our music festival communities.

A similar observation comes from church communities' use of repeated symbols to curate emotional interactions. While each church community used some form of digital symbolism, I observed that the most-repeated symbol was one attached to the church community name. The repetition of these symbols allowed the community to organise its communal identity around their name; while this is not necessarily a poor use of symbols, I would argue it mitigates the community's emotional interaction with the material culture surrounding them. The lack of symbol usage in either exaggerated scale or repetition to enhance the emotional connection and bonding led me to wonder why the church communities tempered their use symbol, compared to music festival communities. Upon reflection and discussion with some members of church leadership, the pattern of a lack of symbol usage reflected the understanding that the church communities are strongly focused on ritual liturgical practices, rather than the material culture of their community. The church communities focused more on liturgical praxis than built traces, concerned only with a very specific part of the community's lived experience.

Other ecclesiological researchers propose a different reason as to why the church communities lack symbol usage. In *Millennial Consumer Response to Christian Religious Symbols in Advertising: A Replication Study*, the trio of authors suggest the use of religious symbols in secular advertising spurs a negative emotional response in consumers.<sup>116</sup> The authors explain that for non-religious millennials in the United States, the use of "Christian symbol significantly reduced perceptions of service provider quality," incurring backlash against

---

<sup>116</sup> This study replicates Taylor's 2010 original study of the Christian fish symbol and its cultural narrative impact. See Valerie A. Taylor, Diane Halstead, and Gaelle Moal-Ulvoas, "Millennial Consumer Response to Christian Religious Symbols in Advertising: A Replication Study," *Journal of Empirical Generalisations in Marketing Science* 17, no. 1 (2017): 1–19.

religious symbols.<sup>117</sup> This cultural notion has perhaps seeped unconsciously into church communities, discouraging ritual symbolism. This compelling negative cultural understanding of religious symbols does depress exaggerated, repetitive symbology, but this does not fully explain the lack of symbols in our church communities. Rather, a community's lack of interest in material culture prompted their lack of symbols, which they explained through an expressed desire to focus on liturgical, emotional transformation rather than material culture. The lack of symbolism thus displays a praxis focused not on the material creation but on the rhythm of liturgy. While these church communities held no theological or doctrinal abhorrence toward symbol usage, it was not a religious focus. While this is a pattern I observed across each of our church communities, I encourage some reflection on the potential power that symbols can hold, suggesting that our church communities reflect on how they might use symbols to form communal identity.

My observations of music festivals showed that the music festival communities crafted material culture symbols by identifying core communal identity markers and crafting symbols to reflect them. The exaggerated scale and repetitive use of symbols crafted emotional experiences that ultimately led to communal ideology adoption and collective experience bonds, purposes that formed the communal identity. Our church communities could adopt a similar tact: Drawing from communal identity and ideology, our church communities could better shape their symbol usage to reflect core communal structures. In adopting symbols, the church communities could

---

<sup>117</sup> Taylor, Halstead, and Moal-Ulvoas, "Millennial Consumer Response to Christian Religious Symbols in Advertising," 1. The study does note that for those with a religious connections or beliefs the image enhanced their quality perception so while the majority found this sort of backlash for religious symbols, they do not represent the totality of the people studied. The original study by Taylor found that the fish symbol brought about negative reactions, a notion stemming "from what participants perceived as exploitive and an otherwise inappropriate use of a religious symbol" (*ibid.*, 3). Some viewed the usage of Christian themes in advertising with complete scepticism. The strongest negative avoidance reactions came from those indicating low religiosity or from those describing themselves as Christians but who never or rarely attended church.



potentially avoid using culturally negative symbols and rather form their symbolic interaction with communally contextualised symbols. Experimenting with ways to enact these at exaggerated scale or in repetitive ways would allow communities to craft emotional experiences and bonds anchored in the material culture. Thus, with some reflection and additions, church communities could better enhance their use of emotionally generating symbols, forming stronger communal identity through the theme of symbols.

Many of our theologians argued for the importance of symbols, with Miles and Dulles asserting that the theme of symbols craft both emotional experiences and relational bonds. I observed this emotional and relational connection in some church communities, and still suggest that our church communities can adopt some of the way in which the music festival communities use symbols for emotional interaction through exaggerated and repetitive symbol usage. Interacting with and creating their own material culture, church communities can engage theologically with the theme of symbol to explore the relational connection that engages their faith and community. Symbols propel interaction and connection, and in better organising their symbol usage, church communities can use the theme of symbols to engage in emotionally transcendent lived experiences, forming communal identity through interaction with material culture.

#### 4.4.5 Symbols and Ideological Shift in Music Festivals

Clifford Geertz noted that symbols often function to coordinate and edify individual and communal ideology. The theme of symbols can be influential in that symbols reflect and craft ideology for a community. As I have suggested, direct evaluation of symbols and their ability to craft material culture reflection of ideology is important, as the theme of symbols for curating ideological movement is important in the formation of communal identity. I observed that music

festival communities used symbols to edify and indoctrinate the community, the symbols reflecting the core ideology of the community, which is formed through the theme of symbols.

In many of the music festivals I attended for my participant observation, symbols created the atmosphere needed to push forward a way of thinking, and symbols became reflectors and orators for the communal ideology. These symbols adorned not only the music festival branding and the festival landscape, but I also noted that many of the music festivals adorned community members with the symbols, the community adopting the visual material culture of communal ideology. I observed that the symbols promoted by the music festival could be seen in the dress of individuals, on the items they brought into the festival with them, and on items purchased during the music festival experience. This transference of symbols from the broader community to the individual displays adoption of communal identity into individual identity, adopting communal ideology to the individual through the coordinated symbol usage.

I find this idea to be of great interest, especially when reflecting on the pseudo-tribal idea of music festival communities. That is, a majority of the music festivals I observed provided strong identity formation for individual members; the community members identified with the music festival community, attaching their individual identity to the music festival itself. I argue that this is because the music festival communities offered a lived experience for the music subculture community. Eco Festival, Acoustic Festival, Retro Festival, Forest Festival, Flag Festival and even to some extent Electronic Festival all represent music subcultures. Some of these focused subcultures are curated around the ideology presented in the community, Eco Festival being an example I observed and participated in. Eco Festival is part-music-festival and part-eco-community, centred on sustainable living.<sup>118</sup> Their ethical values and social focus craft a

---

<sup>118</sup> A 2014–2015 study found that music festivals are not the only consumer-driven product to use natural symbols to elicit positive feelings or communal notions. The study found that brands that used symbols that

culture that is not necessarily reflective of the greater cultural norm; thus, the music festival represents a cultural abnormality, a subculture. The other music festivals all represent to some degree subculture of music listeners; from the rock-infused Forest Festival to the folk style of Acoustic Festival to the mid-century sound of Retro Festival, each of these communities brought together music listeners who are under-represented in mainstream music consumption. The experience of bringing these subcultures together crafts an experience that unites dispersed members, and I would argue that the symbols used both represent these subculture beliefs while also edifying the subculture connection once the experience is over.

Genre-specific symbols were evident to me as a participant observer in the music festival communities and in wider music culture. Clothing company and music festival organisers Impericon represent a great case study to understand this. Impericon curates branded content for heavy metal music, the symbols used reflect the death-consciousness of the community and the themes present in the music itself.<sup>119</sup>

---

promoted ethical or altruistic choices were “stereotyped as warm.... Brand ethicality generates warmth because it implies that consumers are acting out of altruistic intentions.” This study exemplifies how consumer culture adopts naturalistic symbols to convey a positive narrative ethos. This study almost seems to link natural symbols to a brand ethos that promotes a sense of altruistic investment, a trend in consumer culture. We can link this to festivals, the use of a natural icon or symbol suggesting that the altruistic community is in touch with nature. Music festivals may adopt natural symbols to create communal warmth by aligning with consumer culture, creating an ecological ethos that promotes preservation of environment and community. See Paolo Antonetti and Stan Maklan, “Hippies, Greenies, and Tree Huggers: How the ‘Warmth’ Stereotype Hinders the Adoption of Responsible Brands,” *Psychology & Marketing* 33, no. 10 (2016): 796–813.

<sup>119</sup> The heavy metal subculture is certainly not the first or only subculture to employ countercultural symbols. In an early study of punk rock, Levine and Stumpf note that the first bands of 1970s punk genre affiliates used symbols of death and fetishism for cultural juxtaposition. Rock genres have for many years used obvious symbolic imagery to assert extreme juxtaposition with cultural norms. See Harold G. Levine and Steven H. Stumpf, “Statements of Fear through Cultural Symbols: Punk Rock as a Reflective Subculture,” *Youth and Society* 14, no. 4 (1983): 422.



Figure 16: Impericon poster, 2019. <https://www.impericon.com/uk/impericon-never-say-die-13-11-2019-london-ticket.html>.



Figure 17: Impericon poster. 2018. <https://metalanarchy.com/tag/alaska/>.

Impericon's images are striking. The bright colours and carnival atmosphere used to promote other events are absent; darker images and colour palette reflect the community that the brand targets and seeks to attract. The symbols seem to echo through the heavy metal and hardcore music community's ideology of death and darkness. Robert Gross's study of heavy metal culture argues that its symbology tends to be organized around power, a notion that I find hard to observe.<sup>120</sup> Certainly there is a notion of death and destruction, with a question of power

<sup>120</sup> Gross, "The Religious Critique of Culture," 392–400.

dynamics intermixed within. This structure of revelling in a concept of the darkness and pain of life is a cornerstone of the heavy metal community, as reflected in their symbols. In a study of the punk scene, Levine and Stumpf note that punk's "characteristic style...sets members off from those in the mainstream culture; a set of focal concerns that give this style its meaning; and a private code through which aspects of punk style are expressed."<sup>121</sup> Their study replicates my observation of rock music festivals: Icons and symbols display a countercultural ideology that highlights death and destruction or the ethos of heavy metal and rock music.<sup>122</sup> While it has been argued that heavy metal culture is actually being absorbed into normative culture, its symbols still reflect the community, and they constitute a visible material culture that unifies the community members.<sup>123</sup>

The case study offered by Impericon and other genre-specific music groups is substantiated by my observations of our other music festivals. I found it most interesting that the symbols curated for music festival communities were not merely branding exercises, but I observed that the symbols were also adopted by the individuals in the community. At Acoustic Festival, individuals wore merchandise with the community symbols; at Retro Festival and Forest Festival individuals wore items of clothing and material culture aesthetics that reflected

---

<sup>121</sup> Levine and Stumpf, "Statements of Fear through Cultural Symbols," 422.

<sup>122</sup> Historian Robert Gross would argue that these countercultural narratives align with the definition of cultic communities. Pulling from Willa Appel, the author of *Cults in America*, Gross notes that cults are defined by the alienation of its community from societal norms. It would seem that heavy metal communities could align with cult narratives. Their ideology, in my observation, serves even greater importance as it not only reflects the community but also their cult-like juxtaposition from popular culture. See Robert Gross, "Heavy Metal Music: A New Subculture in American Society," *Journal of Popular Culture* 24, no. 1 (1990): 121.

<sup>123</sup> Gross argues, based on observations of heavy metal radio, that part of the heavy metal cult has been absorbed into popular culture. Noting the assimilation of 1960s hippie movements, Gross argues that some aspects of heavy metal are in fact commercialized. While Gross's argument is compelling, I assert that punk, more than modern heavy metal, has been culturally appropriated. There is still a distinction in heavy metal communities that continue the counter cultural ideology. *Ibid.*, 122.

the community symbols. This observation displays how symbols that mark ideology were ingrained into the individual community members, a transference of identity that edifies individual and communal identity through ideology focused symbols.<sup>124</sup>

Music festival communities reflect on their core communal ideology, shaping symbols from this reflection. These symbols are adopted to the individual who reconstructs and then adds the symbols in their own way, crafting deep connective bonds to the greater community through their adoption of the material symbols. This symbolic process allows the community to both physically engage its core ideological structure and engage in the dissemination of ideology in a way that contributes to rooted community connection. The music festival community crafts symbols in a way that promotes core communal ideology, drawing the genre or the purpose of the music festival into the symbol. These symbols are noted both in branding and in material form across the music festival experience, allowing festival attendees to craft their collective experience around the ideologically reflective symbols. The collective experience is edified as community members adopt these symbols, adorning their bodies with clothing that represents the communal symbols. In doing, the individuals adopt the communal ideology, transforming their individual identity with the symbols of the community. As the individuals experience the community, and as they step away from the community and exist in other spaces, they carry with them the symbols of the collective communal experience, reflecting the community ideology and thus the communal identity.

---

<sup>124</sup> When discussing warmth stereotypes propelled by brand symbols, Antonetti and Maklan note that consumers purchasing products using nature symbols are buying into a warmth stereotype that benefits the “larger social group” (“Hippies, Greenies, and Tree Huggers,” 796–813). Buying or consuming a product that uses these warmth stereotype symbols benefit not only from the consumer culture but also from the ethical ethos perpetuated through the purchase. This interesting idea is reflected in the generation of relaxed music festival communities. By creating a benevolent ethos through symbols, music festivals allow consumers to buy into a narrative of social beneficiary, giving to charity festivals or to charities through festival affiliates.

This process shows the important ideological transformation and transference when music festival communities use the theme of symbols to form communal identity. Ideological symbols reflect and manifest the communal collective experience, crafting relational ties to the community even if a member is outside of the lived experience. Many of our theorists proposed a similar reflection to symbols. Tillich noted that symbols reflect an experience with the Divine; Dulles, that symbols curate relational connections; Geertz, that symbols become adopted by the individual but do so with a firm rooting in the communal. Barnard asserts that symbols communicate. All of these relate to the way in which the music festival communities used symbols to craft and adopt ideology, crafting an experience that curated relational ties in a way that the individual is identified in the greater communal context. Symbols thus prove to be integral to the formation of communal identity, by being ideology bearers and propagators symbols form communal identity by placing the ideological structure into material form, inviting communal adoption and reflection on core ideological narratives for each music festival community.

#### 4.4.6 Symbols and Ideological Shift in Church Communities

Reflecting on the way in which religious symbols effect the consumer community, Henley writes that “individuals derive their worldview and relate to their environment from the interpretations of various symbols that they know or learn from their social interactions.”<sup>125</sup> This reflection directly correlates to symbolic coordination of ideological foundation, forming the communal identity of church communities in and through symbol curation. We now explore the way in which our church communities used the theme of symbols to reflect and craft communal identity.

---

<sup>125</sup> Henley, Jr. et al., “The Effects of Symbol Product Relevance and Religiosity,” 91.



For centuries the church has used symbols to display the major tenets of their faith, ranging from the cross to biblical figures, to “proclaim and enact the gospel.”<sup>126</sup> At times these symbols have been contextually shaped, with the images created to reflect the community that uses them. The symbols in the church also can change depending on the season; stations of the cross often adorn churches during Easter season; images of the nativity or the Magi adorning churches during Advent and Christmastide. Dulles noted that the Christian faith is a lived experience of symbols. These symbols reflect core communal ideology and not only display important Christian narratives but also invite participation into these stories. Symbols that promote communal ideology are central to the lived Christian experience, the theme of symbols forming communal identity.

In my observation of the church communities, symbols articulated the branding of the church community, and some digital symbols were used in the liturgical rhythms. I suggest, based on those observations, that our church communities understand the need for some symbol curation and usage, and they exhibited a desire for some symbolic aestheticism. Yet the church communities used less obvious symbols than what I observed in the music festival communities. The pattern moves me to argue that, despite the expectation of symbol use, the church communities were less interested in overt displays of symbols, focusing rather on other liturgical rhythms to coordinate the formation of communal identity. Having observed few symbols of ideology in the church communities, I now move from a reflection on observed reality to greater reflection on why I find the symbols of ideology important for our church communities, ending with an encouragement for our church communities to reflect on their visual material culture,

---

<sup>126</sup> W. David O. Taylor, “And God Said to Pastors: Use More Sermon Puns and Plan More Parties,” *Christianity Today*, June 6, 2019, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/june-web-only/pastors-worship-and-god-said-more-sermon-puns-more-parties.html>.

promoting a way that symbols of ideology can be used with more clarity and greater understanding of communal identity formation processes.

If we take our theologians and the theories they proposed seriously, we can begin to understand how symbols are influential for contemporary Christian communities and the formation of their communal identity. Symbols interact with the community in relational ways, God interacting as revealer in the manifestation of the symbol. The creation and observation of these symbols allows for emotional and transcendent interactions that curate a sense of power for the community. When a community crafts ideologically focused symbols, all the characteristics and purposes of symbols come into play, including ideological edification and individual indoctrination. Because of this, and the history of symbol usage by some church communities, ideologically reverberating symbols are important for each of our church communities.

To mirror the success of the music festival communities, I propose that our church communities could craft symbols that reflect the core biblical narratives as well as the community's core ideology. Church communities that focused on integration into the city, on service, could craft symbols that detail this ideological cornerstone. Church communities that are interested in seasons of deep worship and small group coordination could likewise create symbols that reflect these themes. Each community could also use symbols to reflect important liturgical dates and experiences; this is one area of symbol use that our music festivals could not do because of the brief duration of their annual experiences but something I suggest would allow our church communities to engage their liturgical calendar rhythms more deeply.

Curation of these types of symbols would have theological significance, allowing each church community to find more established, stronger relational connections in their religious rhythms. Symbols with ideological focus would, in theory, allow each church community to

highlight significant ideological markers in each of their distinctive communities. In doing so the church communities would also invite individual community members to understand and adopt the key ideological focus of the larger community. Along with that, I propose that symbols that reflect core biblical ideology would allow church communities to better engage in their collective experience with the divine. Theologically attuned symbols would visually focus and encapsulate core theological truths, allowing the community to potentially encounter its foundational identity beliefs in the theme of symbols.

As Christianity is at least a religion of relationships, relationships in part curated through the material and visible, I hypothesize that our church communities could enhance their communal experience and their formation of communal identity by using ideologically focused symbols. Not only would these symbols invite communal ideological clarification and participation, but in theological reflection these symbols could also open experiences with the divine. As our church communities did not vocalise any theological aversion to symbols, the theme of symbols could be enhanced to align with the church communities' doctrine and theological standing. My suggestions aim to counter the pattern of limited symbol use that I noted in the church communities, proposing that the symbol usage in church communities can still be helpful in crafting a communal identity that enhances the visual symbolic expression already established in our church communities. Thus, I would encourage our church communities to reflect on their symbol usage, thinking through the potential use of symbols to edify ideology. To end, I argue that it is theologically appropriate for church communities to articulate their ideology in and through the theme of symbols, to craft experiences and unity, forming communal identity.

## 4.5 Conclusion

The formation of communal identity is a complex process, constituted by multiple different structures and layers. Place yields significant purpose in communal identity, and so do symbols. The use of symbols allows communities to create transcendent experiences, emotional experiences, and ideological frameworks. For the contemporary church, as Jeremy Begbie argues, art is paramount: “At stake here is the health of the body of Christ. In its worship and mission, the church will require different media at different times for different purposes, and these need to be honoured for their particular powers.”<sup>127</sup> The power of the theme of symbols makes it necessary to adopt symbols for the formation of communal identity.

Our theologians understood the importance of symbols. Tillich started our theological reflection, establishing symbols’ ability to manifest and reflect communal ideology.<sup>128</sup> Miles continued our theological reflection, detailing the emotional power of symbols.<sup>129</sup> Dulles followed, identifying the relational aspect of symbols.<sup>130</sup> Our theological reflection ended with Eliade, who expressed the transcendent potential of symbol usage.<sup>131</sup> Our social scientists built upon our reflection on symbols. Geertz’s study on Balinese cockfighting revealed the individual and communal ideological connection of symbols, an expansion of the ideology noted by our

---

<sup>127</sup> Begbie, “The Future: A Hopeful Subversion,” in Taylor, *For the Beauty of the Church*, 170.

<sup>128</sup> Tillich, *On the Boundary*, 69–70.

<sup>129</sup> Miles, *Image as Insight*, 4.

<sup>130</sup> Dulles, *The Craft of Theology*, 16.

<sup>131</sup> Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 55.

theologians.<sup>132</sup> Barnard offered another reflection on the ideological and communicative purpose of symbols.<sup>133</sup>

The theoretical reflections of both our theologians and our social scientists seemed to all articulate that the theme of symbols aids in the formation of communal identity by creating transcendent engagement, emotional transference, and ideological congruence. My participant observations and material culture research confirmed that these were in fact ways in which the theme of symbols aided in the formation of communal identity. Symbols allowed music festivals to create transcendent experiences for their community, the scale and festivity promoted by symbols adding to the whimsical experience. Many of the music festivals also used large-scale symbols and repetitive historically focused visual imagery, facilitating emotional engagement that created a bonding experience for the community. All the music festival communities used symbols to solidify and exemplify their ideological pillars, indoctrinating the community into the core ideology and identity.

I also observed that our church communities used symbols, but in different, smaller ways. The church communities paired liturgical rhythm with some symbols and branding to suggest the transcendent. Church communities also used some symbols to curate an emotional experience, and I noted some potential of ideologically tinged symbols. In a religion based on relational connection and experiential connection, I observed a pattern for our church communities in which the theme of symbols appeared to be a secondary consideration when crafting communal identity. This observation draws me to argue for greater reflection on the importance of symbols,

---

<sup>132</sup> Geertz, "Ethos, World View, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols," 622–637.

<sup>133</sup> Barnard, *Genesis of Symbolic Thought*, 77.

encouraging each church community to engage in contextually specific and ideologically focused symbol curation and use.

I ultimately conclude by reasserting once more the importance of the theme of symbols, something found both in the theoretical literature and in the communities I observed. Symbols allow communities to create bonds and engagement that promotes a singular communal narrative, creating and upholding the communal identity. While our church communities seemed to at times struggle to create and curate symbols, I propose that the opportunity to craft symbols is easily accessible. Our church communities might form a communal identity that is as strong as the numerous music festival communities I observed with a revitalised exploration of the theme of symbols. Symbols resonate deeply, stirring the community to experiential connections and ideological recognition that are vital to the formation and curation of communal identity.

## CHAPTER 5 RITUALS

### 5.1 Introducing Rituals

We have explored the ways in which place and symbols form communal identity both in the theoretical and in our observed fieldwork communities. We will now examine our final theme for communal identity creation—rituals. Beginning again with a theological understanding, we explore how the theme of rituals forms communal identity. We then approach rituals through the lens of social science. The chapter ends with an understanding of the ways in which the theme of rituals plays a part in the formation of communal identity in music festivals and in church communities.

### 5.2 Framing Rituals through Theological Reflection

Every community participates and engages with some form of ritual. Whether simple or intricate, ritual actions are a part of everyday life, and when placed in a specialized context these rituals often reveal a deeper truth about identity for both individuals and community. The church has also often participated in ritual activity, from the rituals of liturgical rhythms to the spiritual practices of individual believers.<sup>1</sup> Rituals are in many ways aligned with an experienced religion. To begin this chapter on ritual, we observe how theologians and biblical scholars understand the theme of ritual, moving on to how rituals are understood in social science, ultimately concluding

---

<sup>1</sup> Andy Crouch notes that “one of the great good things about the Christian liturgical years is its rhythm of fasting and feasting,” finding importance in the liturgical rhythms and rituals (“The Gospel,” in Taylor, *For the Beauty of the Church*, 29).

with ritualized practices in the fieldwork and how these actionized rituals form communal identity.

### 5.2.1 Paul Tillich: The Ontological and Moral Experience and Rituals

Paul Tillich's work *Dynamics of Faith* offers a focused set of writings organized around doctrines of faith.<sup>2</sup> Tillich discusses the connection between ritual practices and an ontological and moral understanding of faith, so that a communal identity is formed and solidified through ritual-focused experiences.<sup>3</sup> Tillich's understanding progresses from a definition of faith, to an experience of faith, to the awareness of how the theme of rituals shape the lived experience of faith. We engage Tillich to establish how the theme of rituals add to the formation of communal identity.

Tillich's discussion of the lived faith experience is rooted in his definition of faith. Even though Tillich writes that "faith is a concept—and a reality—which is difficult to grasp and to describe," he still attempts a robust working understanding of faith.<sup>4</sup> Tillich calls faith the "most centred act of the human mind," which is focused on "concern about the unconditional....The

---

<sup>2</sup> Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1957). John Smith helps to better understand how *Dynamics of Faith* is organized into two sections: "One deals with the essence of religion in the individual and the religious community while the other sets forth, in a series of short papers, the theme that religion is the soul of culture and social life" (Smith, "Reviewed Work(s): Dynamics of Faith by Paul Tillich; Theology of Culture by Paul Tillich and R.C. Kimball," *Journal of Philosophy* 58, no. 15 (1961): 413). I find that *Dynamics of Faith*, even if it is a "restatement of one of the major Tillichian themes," organizes Tillich's original ideology in a succinct and comprehensive way, making the work important as we reflect in this theological reflection (Albert Cook Outler, "Review of Tillich, Paul. Dynamics of Faith," *Interpretation* 11, no. 4 (1957): 473-475).

<sup>3</sup> Ferre has the same understanding of Tillich, writing "types of faith are construction not found in reality. There are two main types concerning the holiness of being (ontological) and the holiness of what ought to be (moralistic)" ("Book Reviews," 277). In this parsing of Tillich's viewpoint Ferre highlights that faith and reality are in fact created, with the human being in mind with an ontological focus. This in many ways upholds my understanding of what Tillich is doing and how Tillich organizes his definition for faith.

<sup>4</sup> Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 327.



ultimate concern is a concern about what is ultimate.”<sup>5</sup> Commenting on Tillich’s definition of faith, John Smith notes that by centring an individual faith at the core of humanity, Tillich is creating an ideology that includes theological, philosophical, and psychological factors, a cross-discipline approach that highlights the complexity of defining faith.<sup>6</sup> I find the simplicity of Tillich’s understanding of faith astoundingly rich, for it places a religious identity at the centre of all identity. While Tillich is focused on the individual, I argue that we could extend this definition of faith into the community, so that a religious experience is central to the identity of a community. The lived experience of faith, crafted through ritual, is integral for identity shaping for both the individual and the communal.

Philosophers and theologians today debate the rationality of Tillich’s definition of faith, pushing against Tillich’s defence of its centrality, but scholars such as John Smith champion the purpose and power of Tillich’s thoughts.<sup>7</sup> Smith notes that Tillich desires to display that faith is a “response of the self as a whole in the experiential situation.”<sup>8</sup> Smith lends clarity to what others

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 43, 56.

<sup>6</sup> Theologian Nels Ferre notes that the importance of personal experience seems to align with Tillich’s understanding that humanity (or, as Ferre calls it, Beings) is alone ultimate. This hegemony over nature allows humans to not only connect to the divine but also strive forward. Ferre’s comments on Tillich better helps us explore the notion of the individual and why humanity seems to be so concerned with the ultimate concern. See Nels Ferre, “Book Reviews: The Dynamics of Faith, by Paul Tillich,” *Theology Today* 14, no. 2 (1957): 279; Smith, “Reviewed Work(s),” 412.

<sup>7</sup> Jake Chandler and Victoria Harrison conclude that faith can be noted as rational both practically and through an epistemological lens, seeming to negate the debate on the rationality of faith (“Probability in the Philosophy of Religion,” in *Probability in the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Jake Chandler and Victoria Harrison [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012], 1–31). Offering a critique of evidentialism, Kelly James Clark and Raymond VanArragon conclude that Christian faith can be understood as a rational system that relies not on evidence but rather on the understanding of human fulfilment that permeates the Christian culture and teachings. Like most participants in this debate, they conclude that faith is rational as understood from the different possibilities for study (*Evidence and Religious Belief* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 76–93). Using Adler’s criteria for rational truth, Mark Boespflug takes the question a step further by engaging Augustinian hermeneutics understanding to examine rationality of faith. Boespflug notes that Augustine maintained five of Adler’s six criteria, concluding that Augustine does propose a rationality for faith. See Mark Boespflug, “Is Augustinian Faith Rational?,” *Religious Studies* 52, no. 1 (March 2016): 63–79.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, “Reviewed Work(s),” 412.

find troubling. Faith, despite its difficulty of definition, is an explanation of an experience. This definition suggests how an individual and community are drawn to faith through differing dynamics. Likewise, Albert Cook Outler notes that *Dynamics of Faith* “seeks to rescue faith from destructive competition with science, history and philosophy.”<sup>9</sup> R. A. Markus seems to agree, writing that *Dynamics of Faith* is a work in which Tillich looks to “rescue the word ‘faith’ from the morass of confusing and distorting connotations, some of which are the heritage of centuries.”<sup>10</sup> These scholars defend a simple definition of faith against theological complexity. I stand with them, arguing that Tillich’s definition of faith is at least helpful because it is effective in reflecting on the theme of ritual for the formation of religious communities.

Tillich holds that faith is defined as a core concept of the human experience, driven by a concern for and occupation with questions of the ultimate. Tillich says this is a driving force, which “gives depth, direction, and unity to all other concerns and, with them, to the whole personality.”<sup>11</sup> Yet faith is not contained in the mind only; rather, Tillich extends faith to include embodied experience, bringing us to see how the theme of ritual actively integrates into the faith experience and in many ways into the formation of communal identity. Tillich deconstructs this integration into two types— ontological and moral faith experiences. While he offers the caveat that “types are constructions of thought, and not things to be found in reality. There are no pure types in any realm of life. All real things participate in several types,” Tillich’s discussion of the ontological and the moral do bring about interesting ways to understand the theme of ritual.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Outler, “Review of Tillich, Paul,” 473.

<sup>10</sup> R. A. Markus, “Dynamics of Faith. By Paul Tillich. George Allen & Unwin. 9s. 6d.,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 11 (1958): 200.

<sup>11</sup> Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 278.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

Ontological experiences, and the rituals aligned with ontological faith, is focused on the experience of the holy. “The holy is first of all experienced as present. It is here and now, and this means it encounters in a thing, in a person, in an event. Faith sees in a concrete piece of reality the ultimate ground and meaning of all reality.”<sup>13</sup> In the ontological faith Tillich argues for the experience of the holy through events, or what here I call ritual, and it is in these rituals that a community concretely defines meaning and reality. In this definition we can see how Tillich aligns ritual practice with the formation of communal identity: Rituals actively craft embodied practices that connect the community with the holy. In the experience the community encounters the ultimate and builds their reality, or communal identity, in this encountering.

For Tillich the ontological faith experience is the universal thread for all communities and all religions, bridging an experience with the holy through material and embodied forms.<sup>14</sup> Tillich connects ontological experience with sacramental rhythms, like that of Eucharist. Tillich argues that these rituals and sacraments express the holy for the community’s experience. Ritual expression through sacramental rhythms then invites the community to experience the other: “Faith, in the sacramental type of religion, is not the belief that something is holy and other things are not. It is the state of being grasped by the holy through a special medium.”<sup>15</sup> The sacramental rituals and material culture used for these rituals are not themselves sacred.<sup>16</sup> Rather, the ritual connection among the community brings about a sense of holy connection, forming the communal identity through communal expectations of embodied action. For Tillich, the ontological faith of ritual is integral because through the embodied set of acts the community

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 173.

encounters the holy; likewise, the community is grasped by the holy, the ritual curating an experience that infuses the community with an identity of sacred connectedness. Ferre writes that the ontological ritual experience crafts “certainty” within the community, concretizing the connection formed during the ritual process.<sup>17</sup> That understanding reflects Brueggemann’s discussion of how place acts as a relational connection point; in the same way, I suggest that Tillich finds rituals to be a connective experience. Ontological experiences of faith coordinate through ritual a holy experience, forming the communal identity and perceivable connection through the ritual process.

Tillich also discusses the moral types of faith and the rituals attributed to these types, both “characterised by the idea of the law.”<sup>18</sup> While the “law in the ontological types demands subjection to ritual methods or ascetic practices,” the law in the moral type of faith simply “demands obedience.”<sup>19</sup> Drawing from the Old Testament, Tillich notes certain rules must be followed in order to experience the holy.<sup>20</sup> This understanding of moral faith rituals implies rituals can be used by contemporary communities to shape and uphold their ideological foundations. Crafting rituals around specific communal doctrine allows a community to put into practice embodied practices for daily life and larger communal gatherings, and in doing so the communal identity forms around the community’s ideological structure. The holy is experienced within the structure of the communal ideology, adding to the way in which the theme of rituals form and maintain communal identity.

---

<sup>17</sup> Ferre, “Book Reviews,” 277.

<sup>18</sup> Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 185.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 190.

For Tillich, both the ontological and moral types of faith craft ritual. As the two unite and intertwine they craft communal experiences that form communal identity in ritualised practice. This is “not a matter of the mind in isolation, or of the soul in contrast to mind and body, or of the body (in the sense of animal faith), but it is the centred movement of the whole personality towards something of ultimate meaning and significance.”<sup>21</sup> This faith extends into the community as the “life of faith is life in the community of faith, not only in its communal activities and institutions but also in the inner life of its members.”<sup>22</sup> It is through the ontological and moral rhythms, the rituals crafted in both of these, that communities engage with the holy, shaping their communal identity in the various ritual practices. Communities craft embodied practices in which members, through ecstasy, find and experience the ultimate, forming a shared identity through ritual.

While Tillich’s ideas are not always accepted, with some calling his thinking too idealistic in the tradition of the Enlightenment rather than the Reformation, Tillich’s theological reflections on ritual and community are important in their implications for this study.<sup>23</sup> I find that Tillich not only defines a communally sensitive definition of faith, aligning faith with the collective experience, but Tillich also gives us structure to understand the types of rituals and their necessity for forming communal identity. This opens our theological reflection by exploring how the theme of rituals are integral for a faith community, and how the theme of rituals is universally paramount for the formation of communal identity. In understanding faith as an experienced, embodied connection to the holy, Tillich highlights the foundational necessity for

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 280.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 308.

<sup>23</sup> Outler, “Review of Tillich, Paul,” 474.

the community use of bodily rituals. The ontological ritual and moral ritual coordinate practices for differing purposes, but both ultimately connect the community with the holy, crafting important connective bonds and ideologically sensitive actions. Tillich's theological foundation allows us to understand rituals' importance as a theme in the formation of communal identity.

### 5.2.2 Mircea Eliade: Rituals and Their Historical Purpose

Mircea Eliade expands Tillich's notions of the ontological and moral ritual, reflecting on how the theme of ritual coincides with communities' mythological or historical narratives. While, as John F. Hayward notes, Eliade is not a historian, his reflection on rituals allows us to understand another layer of the ritual purpose, a historically entrenched and theologically propelled ritual.<sup>24</sup> Eliade continues our theological reflection on rituals, noting the way in which the theme of rituals explore the historical foundation and mythological creation of communities, adding to the formation of communal identity.

Eliade begins by noting that the function of ritual can be understood by exploring the way in which the ritual action reflects core ideological narratives. Eliade understands rituals as a set of actions that align with a mythical structure connecting a community with its own communal narratives of history and ideology.<sup>25</sup> Through ritualized actions and activities, communities re-

---

<sup>24</sup> In a review of Eliade's work, minister and theologian John F. Hayward notes that the understanding of rituals is basic in that Eliade "makes no claims to study historical origins or to present social or psychological theories...he puts the phenomena in order and seeks to penetrate their essential theological significance" ("Eliade, The Myth of the Eternal Return [Book Review]," *Journal of Religion* 35 [1955]: 264). I appreciate Hayward's note of the scope of Eliade's research, which was limited to specific contexts and specific theoretical approaches. While Hayward notes issues with the ambiguity, his observations are helpful.

<sup>25</sup> The idea of myths and their creation can be found throughout the work of comparative religion scholar Joseph Campbell. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, *The Power of Myth*, and *Myths to Live By*, Campbell organizes mythical structure and narrative that permeates individual identity creation. This work parallels Eliade's construction of communal narratives and myths; Eliade and Campbell agree about the sociological construction of myth, for individual and community. Cyril Morong notes that Joseph Campbell's model of the hero's adventure seems to parallel Eliade's notion of what constructs a myth. I appreciate this connection and agree that both Campbell and Eliade ideate a similar structure for myth creation, a similarity in sociological deconstruction of

enact the primal myth of creation, bringing this idea of the beginning of humanity to the ever-present mind.<sup>26</sup> Ritual is not necessarily then some sort of enhancing or correlating performance, it is rather a set of actions that continuously shifts a community's gaze to the start of existence, the rituals aligning the community with their doctrine or ideology.

Eliade is not alone in this understanding; sociologists including Robin Horton find that ritual is a literal and serious "means of explanation, prediction and control of the world," actionized communication of thoughts specific to a community.<sup>27</sup> Others such as Will McWhinney and Jose Batista take this notion one step further, arguing that "remythologizing" narratives through rituals allows communities to revitalize identity structures. Summoning "back to the consciousness the founding ideals and the often-told tales that helped establish and maintain an organization's identity" creates links with the "primal energy with present conditions," creating a rooting notion of rituals.<sup>28</sup> While these other scholars are not necessarily theologians or biblical scholars, their ideas mirror Eliade, and thus show how rituals of any kind can be supportive of communal ideology.

---

identity for both the individual and the communal. Campbell and Eliade also display a cultural propensity to mythify a journey in monstrous proportions, displaying for us an understanding of the culturally acceptable and often repeated desire to create and reconstruct myths for identity purpose. See Cyril Morong, "Mythology, Joseph Campbell, and the Socioeconomic Conflict," *Journal of Socio-Economics* 23, no. 4 (1994): 363–73.

Peter Berger argues that rituals are crucial for the process of "reminding." I find links between this understanding and the historical understanding that Eliade promotes. See Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Open Road Integrated Media, 1990), 25, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bham/detail.action?docID=1804802>.

<sup>26</sup> Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954). In an article on Australian puberty rites, Eliade writes that every act is a "repetition of an event that took place in the beginning." See Mircea Eliade, "Australian Religions. Part III: Initiation Rites and Secret Cults," *History of Religions* 7, no. 1 (1967): 61–90. According to Campbell, creation driven myths have mystical, cosmological, and sociological function (*Myths To Live By*, 61–82).

<sup>27</sup> Robin Horton, *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West: Essays on Magic, Religion, and Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 361.

<sup>28</sup> Will McWhinney and Jose Batista, "How Mythologizing Can Revitalize Organizations," *Organizational Dynamics* 17, no. 2 (1998): 46.

Re-mythologizing is key in establishing a rooted sense of identity, a longevity of community that ultimately births some sense of power and purpose. Ritual action prescribes story, creating a narrative that adds to the formation of communal identity. While some scholars directly link this ritual to religious actions, I argue that Eliade's notion spans beyond a religious boundary to show that all communities reorganize and remythologize to create a communal identity structure.<sup>29</sup> Ritual has the function of cognitive enhancement and unification, a reconstruction of the past to bind the community to its shared history.<sup>30</sup>

There is some merit and importance in Eliade's prescription for rituals and the function to be a mythologizing tie to the community. Expanding Tillich's notion of the way in which ritual aids in the definition and dissemination of doctrine, Eliade explores how ritual can outline very specific doctrinal narratives, the narrative of birth and core communal myth. While brief, I find Eliade's reflections allow us to understand another way in which the theme of rituals shape the communal identity by exploring the ways in which the theme of rituals solidify through action differing myth narratives that are of great importance for communities and for the formation of communal identity.

---

<sup>29</sup> Stelian Manolache notes that rituals in Eliade's understanding bring "contemporaneity into a temporal sequence- a relevant for the intelligible metamorphosis of the sacred" ("The Dialogue between Sacred, Symbol and Ritual to Mircea Eliade's Thinking," *Dialogo* 4, no. 1 (2017): 104). While I understand his premise, Manolache cheapens the concept of universalist truth that comes from mythology and ritual. Placing this in a spiritual metaphor I find misses Eliade's point that rituals' historical function in the recreation of myths is cross-spatial and not only reserved for religious communities.

<sup>30</sup> Ronald Grimes mirrors this understanding, arguing that rituals "invites participants to surrender idiosyncrasies and independence to some larger cause," finding this unification prompted by the engagement with rituals. Ronald L. Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (University Press of America, 1982): 41.



### 5.2.3 Theodor Herzl Gaster: Rituals and Their Future Purpose

Biblical scholar and comparative religions theologian Theodor Herzl Gaster continues our theological reflection on rituals.<sup>31</sup> In *Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East* Gaster argues that rituals engage in a process of seasonality, combining action with myth to promote repetitive actions that in part help communities engage with future-thinking narratives.<sup>32</sup> The idea clearly mirrors Eliade's argument involving myth, but Gaster also illuminates the future potential of rituals. It is in the process of ritual creation and ritual enactment that communities form their communal identity, supporting theologically attuned communal identity.

Gaster begins *Thespis* by examining ritual as a focused set of embodied and mythical actions, a "regular program of activities established which, performed periodically under communal sanction, will furnish the necessary replenishments of life and vitality."<sup>33</sup>

Standardized repetition of rituals is rooted in seasonal cycles, so that communities engage in rituals as a way to understand rhythms of life and as a form of ideology maintenance.<sup>34</sup> Gaster

---

<sup>31</sup> Albrecht Goetze also notes that Gaster can be referred to as a historian of religion. See Albrecht Goetze, "Thespis. Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient near East by Theodor H. Gaster," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 6, no. 2 (1952): 99–103.

<sup>32</sup> Theodor Herzl Gaster, *Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East* (New York: Harper and Row, 1906); Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*.

<sup>33</sup> Gaster, *Thespis*, 17, 22. G. L. Anderson comments on Gaster's examination noting that the work was done with "extreme care," his work detailed by "detailed evidence from both comparative religion and philosophical sources." Whereas some of our theologians are critiqued for their loose methodology, Anderson seems to uphold Gaster as focused and diligent, adding weight to Gaster's hypothesis. See G. L. Anderson, "Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient near East by Theodor H. Gaster," *Western Folklore* 10, no. 1 (1951): 92–93.

Stith Thompson notes that Gaster understood that there was a performative, dramatic component to ritual. Thompson parallels my understanding of Gaster, that rituals are employed or used or performed by a specific community for a specific outcome. See Stith Thompson, "Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East by Theodore H. Gaster," *American Journal of Archaeology* 55, no. 4 (1951): 412.

Locating the Sacred adds that "ritual with a focus on memory and repetition" outline the best "means of creating a sense of community." I find the insight parallels Gaster's observation that narrative and repetitive rituals craft this unified community. See Claudia Moser and Cecelia Feldman, eds., *Locating the Sacred: Theoretical Approaches to the Emplacement of Religion* (Oakville: Oxbow, 2014): 88.

<sup>34</sup> Gaster discusses four seasonal patterns or elements of ritual: mortification, purgation, invigoration, and jubilation. Gaster, *Thespis*, 26.

categorises cyclical rituals as “rites of *kenosis* or emptying, and rites of *plerosis*, or filling.”<sup>35</sup>

*Kenosis* rituals “portray and symbolise the eclipse of life and vitality” whereas *plerosis* “portray and symbolise the revitalisation,” bringing about thoughts of new life.<sup>36</sup> The activity of the ritual represents and reflects the cyclical exchange of death and life of the community. Gaster notes that the ritual itself is based around this “conception that what is in turn eclipsed and revitalised is not merely the human community of a given area or locality, but the total corporate unity of all elements.”<sup>37</sup> A community’s ritual is not merely a contextualised act but rather reflects a broader entity and seasonality.

Gaster calls this wider entity of rituals “topocosm.” Representing both place and world order, the concept refers to the “twofold character” of rituals, so that every ritual is “at once real and punctual, and ideal and durative, the former aspect being necessarily immersed in the later.”<sup>38</sup> I appreciate Gaster’s understanding of ritual; the alignment of ritual acts with seasonal cycles displays a desire for a community to align their communal identity formation around natural cycles, inviting community members to envision their existence within the community while also understanding the greater community in these ritual cycles. Gaster’s understanding of rituals importantly identifies both the metaphorical and physical, the duality of rituals displaying the importance of both embodiment and myth.

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>36</sup> Theologians note that rituals standardized symbolic behaviour, containing non-verbal elements these rituals craft strong connections. See Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi and Michael Argyle, *The Psychology of Religious Behaviour, Belief and Experience* (Routledge, 1997): 49.

<sup>37</sup> Gaster, *Thespis*, 24.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

Gaster's description of ritual is of interest because it illustrates how communities are actively propelled to craft historically rooted rituals but also rituals rooted in a future communal narrative: "Ritual represents not only the actual-present community but also the ideal-continuous entity of which the latter is but the current manifestation."<sup>39</sup> For Gaster the ritual is a repetitive act steeped in cycles, which both highlight and indoctrinate the community into seasonal communal mythology, crafting communal identity that solidifies ideological unity and promotes reflections for future communal existence. I find connections between Gaster's outline of the ritual process and Eliade's understanding of rituals' reflection of a community's mythological communal birth. Commenting on Gaster's work, Thompson notes that rituals use myth to secure ideology and doctrine, thus equating representation to the mythical.<sup>40</sup> Both Gaster and Eliade note that rituals reflect these cyclical communal narratives, with Gaster helpfully contributing by highlighting rituals' ability to construct future perspectives.

G.L. Anderson adds that Gaster's concept of a relationship between the "human community" and "its extension in space and time" engages in a sort of mixture of rituals used to both edify the present and propose a communal existence in the future.<sup>41</sup> The community is not fixed in time. Instead, it engages in rituals to extend itself into space and time. While it would be impossible to concretely outline and structure a specific future for a community, the ritual allows community to hypothesize about the whereabouts and vitality of the community for its future.

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 55. Other scholars, like Goetze, uphold Thompson's understanding of the mythological nature of Gaster's rituals. Goetze notes that for Gaster these rituals are indeed mythological, so much so that rituals are "placed in the realm of timeless, i.e., the eternal" ("Thespiis," 99). Goetze not only upholds Thompson's understanding but also adds a sacred nature of rituals that Gaster seems to highlight.

<sup>41</sup> Anderson, "Thespiis," 93.

We can theologize this notion of the function found in ritual. In church communities, one ritual that functions in this way is baptism, a perfected example of the future narrative function of ritual practices.<sup>42</sup> Baptism's ritual process uses established historical movements that pull from ideology of the community; the actions involved in baptism are historically rooted in the totality of Christian practices as well as shaped by the culture of an individual congregation or confessional community. The baptismal ritual integrates rites of emptying and rites of filling, embodying communal narratives of past and future for the ritual actor. The ultimate intention of the baptism ritual is to propose a vision of the community's future that includes a now-accepted member, the person receiving baptism. The new sanctified member is accepted into the community through the ritual, promising the continuation of the community, especially with baptism of younger community members. The baptismal ritual demonstrates this past and future duality that Geertz describes, the theme of ritual forming and continuing communal identity.

The function of ritual is to ultimately construct a concept of immortality for the community, a focus on the future. The need for existence sits at the core of the communal ideology, and rituals ultimately establish indoctrinated action built so deeply into the structure and the culture of the community that regular ritual action extends the communal life. With this theological understanding, Theodor Herzl Gaster reveals that the rituals serve to create ties and actions that reflect a communal identity rooted in the future. Gaster expands our understanding of the purpose and power of rituals. By explaining the ritual's future intent, Gaster displays ways in which communities use the theme of rituals to evoke future identity, allowing us to see how rituals aid in the formation of communal identity.

---

<sup>42</sup> Baptism seems to align with Goetze's understanding ("Thespis," 99) that, for Gaster, rituals act as a form of pattern purification and renewal. Goetze saw these rituals as seasonal and yet I find that baptism is certainly an example, but perhaps not a repetitive, of this ritualized purification. Despite its lack of repetition, baptism still seems to parallel Gaster's understanding of ritual purposes, exposed by Goetze's critique.

#### 5.2.4 Catherine Bell: Rituals and Their Communicative Purpose

American religious studies scholar Catherine Bell brings together her predecessors to offer a reflection on what ritual has been, while also pushing boundaries to suggest what ritual can be.<sup>43</sup> In her work, Bell likes to counter established narratives, giving us what she calls “liturgical reform.”<sup>44</sup> Her ideas are debated and critiqued, yet I find her structuring of ritual theory gives great insight in how to understand and categorize rituals. From Bell we begin to see how to describe the theme of rituals as a communicative process completed in the body. Along with that we also note how to categorize or determine the genre of rituals, lending to our understanding of how the theme of rituals forms communal identity.

Bell starts by defining the concept of ritual in an ethological perspective, formulating that rituals are “actions designed to improve communication during encounters.”<sup>45</sup> For Bell, the

---

<sup>43</sup> While Bell certainly seems to mirror some scholars, she is also known for questioning and pushing against the intellectualism of previous theorists. Curtis Hutt notes this, writing that Bell questioned the earlier generation. This anti-establishment mentality makes Bell a fresh thinker who really helps us to understand the theology and culture dichotomy of the study. See Curtis Hutt, “Catherine Bell and Her Davidsonian Critics,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 23, no. 2 (2009): 69–76.

Jeffrey Carter notes that the concept of rituals is one of the most frequently used and misused constructs in religious studies and so it is no surprise that Bell continues this study. As we find in other chapters, there seems to be a congruence amongst our theologians displaying an evolution and acceptance that Carter seems to pick up on. See Jeffrey Carter, “Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions by Catherine Bell,” *The Journal of Religion* 79, no. 2 (1999): 344–45.

<sup>44</sup> Catherine Bell, “Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals,” *Worship* 63, no. 1 (1989): 31–41. Bell notes that “liturgical renewal illuminates the poverty of traditional ritual theory” (31). Bell displays her importance as a boundary-pushing theologian who helps us to integrate forward thoughts within a structured theory.

<sup>45</sup> Catherine Bell, *Teaching Ritual* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 18. Ethnologists Johannes Quack and Paul Tobelmann note that Bell’s connection between ritual and thought is in some ways influenced by the theory of Pierre Bourdieu. Both Bourdieu and Bell, counter to some other theorists, understood that ritual was constructed of both action and thought, an intertwining of two components that adds to the full reality of ritual practices. This propels Bell to discuss the communicative power and purpose of ritual; for Bell, ritual was not just an action-based activity but an embodied practice that revealed the fullness of the ideology and action of the community. See Johannes Quack and Paul Tobelmann, “Questioning ‘Ritual Effect,’” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 24, no. 1 (2010): 13–28.

theme of ritual is centred in and around the body.<sup>46</sup> Distinguishing embodied practice from other themes of communal identity creation, Bell explains ritual through action, writing that the “theoretical describing of ritual generally regarded it as action and thus automatically distinguishes it from conceptual aspects of religion such as beliefs, symbols and myths.”<sup>47</sup> By defining ritual according to embodiment, Bell clarifies action’s important ties to ritual, providing not only a clearer understanding of the theme of ritual but also an object for participant observation, informing both theoretical discussion and fieldwork for the researcher. I find that, like Tillich, Bell uses the concepts of defined action in a specialized context to formulate her understanding of ritual. Unlike her predecessors, Bell pushes this definition by placing ritual in a cultural and theological context that is under pressure or in some sort of trouble, adding that these rituals are usually used or at least formulated for the community during troubling times.<sup>48</sup>

In “Discourse and Dichotomies: The Structure of Ritual Theory,” Bell describes rituals as a “type of critical juncture wherein some pair of opposing social, or cultural, forces come together.”<sup>49</sup> In other writings Bell clarifies this idea of ritual for opposition, noting that ritual practices have “distinctive social practices” that draw “a privileged contrast between what is being done” in the ritual for that community and the actions that take place outside of the community.<sup>50</sup> Again, Bell links the body and action of ritual with this production of dichotomy. She argues that rituals constituted by action create an embodied separation, something that Bell

---

<sup>46</sup> Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 19.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Bell, *Teaching Ritual*, 18.

<sup>49</sup> Catherine Bell, “Discourse and Dichotomies: The Structure of Ritual Theory,” *Religion* 17, no. 2 (April 1987): 95–118.

<sup>50</sup> Catherine Bell, “The Ritual Body and the Dynamics of Ritual Power,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 4, no. 2 (1990): 299–313.

argues is powerful for the creation of communal identity. Bell notes that “through a series of physical movements ritual practices construct an environment structured by practical schemes of privileged contrast,” later echoing that “ritualisation is a way to generate privileged contrast between the acts being performed and those being contrasted or mimed so as to produce ritualised bodies—actors imbued with the disposition to engender practices structured by such privileged contrast.”<sup>51</sup> Bell understands rituals as embodied acts that dichotomize the community and its surrounding culture, crafting communal movement in a way that indoctrinates individuals into the community with the expressed purpose of creating powerful communicative and cohesive networks.

It is perhaps an obvious statement that the type of ritual found in communities can be vastly different in terms of order and purpose—a different genre or structure—and yet Bell continues the discussion of the theme of rituals but delineating individual genres of ritual.<sup>52</sup> Midway through her book *Ritual*, Bell pauses to discuss the archetypes of ritual and the characteristics that often align within these genres.<sup>53</sup> In a review of this work, Jeffery Carter notes that this distinguishing importantly allows the reader to understand the movement from ordinary behaviour to ritual or ritual-like behaviours.<sup>54</sup> Considering the three genres most

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 304–305.

<sup>52</sup> Carter notes that these categories are not necessarily Bell’s originally theory but rather that Bell pulls from theorists such as “Aliade, Gluckman, Levi-Strauss, Rappaport, Geertz, Turner, Bourdieu, and many others” to construct the six categories or genres for ritual (“Ritual,” 344). We discuss a few of these theorists below, but it is helpful to note that Bell pulled from a wide range of theorists and backgrounds to construct her genres.

<sup>53</sup> Bell, *Ritual*, 129–50.

<sup>54</sup> Carter, “Ritual,” 345.

applicable to my present research, we can see how Bell categorizes ritual and the attributes that help promote communal cohesion.<sup>55</sup>

The first of the three categories is formalism, a ritual that “uses a more formal series of movement and activity, effective in promoting loose social acquiescence. Formalization forces the speaker and audience into roles that are more difficult to disrupt.”<sup>56</sup> This notion of formalised rituals seems to mirror what Bell understands as ritual study rooted in the maintenance of social groups, a “mechanism of continuity.”<sup>57</sup> The notion of a ritual that reflects the maintenance of the community, a formalized ritual, is helpful for our understanding of the theme of rituals. I argue that formalized rituals are entrenched in order to maintain, and at times progress, a societal social structure and dogma contextualized in the communal ideology. By juxtaposing the rituals outside a culture, formalized rituals offer structural dogmatic action that uphold communal uniqueness.

Carter notes that this ritual structure is important for conveying meaning, giving “people a sense of order.”<sup>58</sup> Formalised rituals yield a concrete structural organization that produces uniformity in the community. While I find there is still a theatrical undertone to these rituals, their staunch formalism limits creativity as compared to rituals in other genres.<sup>59</sup> Bell observes

---

<sup>55</sup> As Carter notes (*ibid.*), Bell describes fourteen schools and six ritual genres. The sheer number is incredible, so I am parsing the few I find have direct importance for the creation of communal identity.

<sup>56</sup> Bell, *Ritual*, 129.

<sup>57</sup> Bell, “Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals,” 32.

<sup>58</sup> Carter, “Ritual,” 345.

<sup>59</sup> The theatrical nature of rituals is not often included in Bell’s reflection on rituals. In a review of Bell’s work *Ritual: Perspective and Dimensions*, Frederick Bird, despite singing praises for Bell, laments the limited inclusion of understanding rituals as performances or theatrical enactments. I appreciate Bird’s note that we at times reify rituals and therefore negate the description of theatrics in rituals, something I find is vital to the construction of rituals and something that Bell seems to dismiss. This critique of Bell by Bird allows us to dissect an aspect of ritual that is at times pushed aside in academic reflection, but that I argue is crucial for the ritual narrative and structure of communication from ritual. See Frederick Bird, “Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions by Catherine Bell,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38, no. 4 (1999): 566–68.



that the construction of formalized rituals yields a formalized hierarchical community structure. Bell does not fall into the trap of what Hutt calls the “organizational fiction” that can surface in research on established communities.<sup>60</sup> Rather, I find Bell understands that communities use ritual to effectively establish a communication strategy that upholds hierarchical roles and structures while also upholding and disseminating communal dogma, and thus the theme of rituals and core communal identity work together to suggest an appropriate form for their communities. Bell’s notions of formalized rituals importantly identify systematic actions that allow communities to understand and entrench dogmatic notions, shaping the communal identity by fortifying doctrine.

As Bell understands, some rituals are formal<sup>61</sup> in nature, creating a support structure for a separation of the community. Other rituals fall under the genre of traditionalism. Traditional rituals have a “set of activities that appear to be identical or consistent with older cultural precedents.”<sup>62</sup> Traditional rituals bring forth a memory of the community’s past, drawing strength by highlighting the lineage and lifespan of the group while being materialized in the context of the current community, thereby communicating a longevity of people that is helpful for the continuation of a community narrative that constructs identity. Bell points out that

---

<sup>60</sup> In a review of Bell’s work, religion and critical thought scholar Curtis Hutt (“Catherine Bell and Her Davidsonian Critics,” 70), quickly addresses Bell’s desire to oppose her predecessors’ use of organizational fiction in ritual research. Highlighting Bell’s critique of Geertz and performance theorists like Max Gluckman and Victor Turner, Hutt notes that Bell found that many theorists imposed a limitation on what Bell called “theoretical flexibility.” By approaching rituals and fieldwork data with pre-conceived notions, Hutt helpfully notes that Bell found that the theorists limited the full scope of the possibility of ritual and its importance in culture creation. Especially when reflecting on categories of ritual we can understand Bell’s focus on the actualization of ritual rather than the previously understood community, allowing us to really take on the ritual categories and research ritual through fresh eyes, unlike Bell’s predecessors. We can approach Bell with limited caution as she clearly tried to approach her research without the limitations of dichotomous notions of ritual theory.

<sup>61</sup> Bell, *Ritual*, 129.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

traditional rituals are a powerful “tool of legitimization.”<sup>63</sup> As in the study of symbols,<sup>64</sup> aesthetic representation of traditional ideology through symbol brings about an innate sense of power, the traditional rituals create a metamorphosed sense of community through orthopraxy. Bell explains that traditional rituals “presupposes authoritative ideals embodied in earlier times. There is a dominance of certain social classes, a symbolic power of cultural ideals.”<sup>65</sup> We can understand the power of such rituals, especially as communities often vocalize or otherwise communicate this explicitly. Tapping into a community’s lineage or adopting communal narrative through ritual brings a strong sense of rootedness, longevity that supersedes the ending of existence. Traditional rituals create steadfastness, legitimacy, and strength to form communal identity.

The last genre of rituals is that of the political.<sup>66</sup> Bell writes about political rituals that use “symbols and action to depict people as a coherent and ordered community based on shared values and goals; they demonstrate legitimacy of values by establishing iconicity with perceived values and orders of the cosmos.”<sup>67</sup> Political rituals display shared values and goals, creating iconicity through action and aesthetics. In doing this, communities push against outsider cultural norms, so political rituals are of great importance for a community’s definition of their

---

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Bell also notes the congruence between ritual and symbols in a study on Mass that intermingled rituals and symbols to construct the experience for the assembled community (“Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals,” 39). The “quiet orchestration of symbols of the group’s identity” paired with the shift in ritualized practices created an “idiomatic self-assertion” that Bell found interesting. I point this out to display what Bell understood to be the connection between ritual and symbols to create a synthesized experience for communities.

<sup>65</sup> Bell, *Ritual*, 145.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

ideological structure, especially when that structure disrupts cultural normativity.<sup>68</sup> As Hutt notes, “ritual causes a disruption in the taxonomic order imposing a reorder of culture,” an understanding that I find aligns perfectly with Bell’s disordering notion of political rituals.<sup>69</sup> Bell also notes such an importance for some other rituals. Through a study of shifting religious ceremonies, specifically an experience at Mass,<sup>70</sup> Bell notes how the shift of normalized rituals to include lay members and the whole of the congregation forced a “transcending historical change” in the dogmatic structure of Mass. Bell’s understanding of how the new Mass rituals transformed and transcended structural dogma displays how rituals disrupt this entrenched order. In doing so, Bell’s fieldwork displays an example of political ritual that adheres to Hutt’s understanding that political rituals disrupt taxonomic order.

A political nomenclature ascribed to rituals gives an interesting purpose and nuance to an otherwise traditional or formal ritual. I argue that by placing a political genre structure on the ritual, communities acknowledge the power of the ritual to supersede established culture, endowing the political ritual with power for proclamation and procedural adherence that is otherwise not as noted or as obvious in the other genre structures. In identifying a political genre of ritual, Bell elevates the purpose and power of ritual, displaying how politically attuned rituals create new constructs in the communal identity.

In conclusion, Bell, like other theologians, structures our understanding of what exactly rituals are and why they add to the formation of communal identity. Bell’s work is necessary not

---

<sup>68</sup> Quack and Tobelmann note that this notion of reconfiguring societies through ritual was of key importance to Bell (“Questioning ‘Ritual Effect,’” 20). Bell noted that the ability to shift societies was rooted in rituals’ power in and over the body to drastically shift both the individual and the habitus of the community.

<sup>69</sup> Hutt, “Catherine Bell and Her Davidsonian Critics,” 70.

<sup>70</sup> Bell, “Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals,” 39.

only because it organizes frameworks for ritual genre but because it also displays how these rituals yield communicative purpose that directly influences a community's sense of identity by creating "social settings" that are adopted by the community through "imitation and habit."<sup>71</sup> All rituals create a separation from the ordinary to create a new sense of reality that the communities can structure their identity on. Bell extends the core understanding of our other theologians, highlighting a communicative structure that helps us to understand the purpose and power of rituals in a new way. This structure allows us to see how the theme of rituals is integral for the formation of communal identity, shaping identity through formal, traditional, and politically attuned rituals.

#### 5.2.5 Conclusion

Our theologians conclude that in many ways the theme of rituals is paramount for the formation of communal identity. Tillich begins our reflection by detailing the experiential nature of rituals, each individual and community experiencing some form of ritual.<sup>72</sup> This universality of ritual experience compounds, rituals developing within the community to ultimately reflect the dogmatic or conceptual structure of the community.<sup>73</sup> Eliade and Gaster follow, both exploring the ideological expression of rituals. Eliade notes how rituals can be used by a community to stimulate reflection on the community narrative, a reflection through embodiment of the community's own mythical beginning.<sup>74</sup> Gaster offers the opposite reflection, noting how rituals

---

<sup>71</sup> Hutt, "Catherine Bell and Her Davidsonian Critics," 71.

<sup>72</sup> Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 4.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>74</sup> Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, 17.

can be used to syncopate the community in a way that allows the community to have a future-focused structure.<sup>75</sup> With both Eliade and Gaster, rituals stimulate an ideological solidification for community, highlighting together the doctrinal importance of rituals. Catherine Bell shifts the theological reflection of rituals away from the dogmatic, discussing the communicative purpose and power of rituals. Bell notes that rituals coordinate multiple features, highlighting the three genres of formal, traditional, and political rituals to understand how communities communicate through rituals.<sup>76</sup>

Our theologians highlight the importance of ritual for the formation of communal identity. Each find differing purposes and methods by which the theme of rituals shapes the formation of communal identity in a theological sense. To conclude, our theologians understand that rituals do in fact aid in the formation of communal identity, the embodied action concretely unifying doctrine and members into the product of the communal identity.

### **5.3 Framing Rituals through Social Science Reflection**

Rituals in the theological lens is best understood as embodied rhythms designated for purpose, placing community longing and ideology into ritualised action. This action ultimately crafts and forms a communal identity that aligns both with the present and future. We look now to social science scholars, who add to our understanding of how the theme of ritual adds to the formation of communal identity.

---

<sup>75</sup> Gaster, *Thespis*, 17.

<sup>76</sup> Bell, *Teaching Ritual*, 18, 129, 145.

### 5.3.1 Arnold van Gennep, Victor Turner, Emile Durkheim: Rituals and the Liminal Process

Some of our theologians hinted at the transformational possibility of rituals, and yet very few highlighted the liminal processes created through ritualized communal movements.<sup>77</sup> Arnold van Gennep, Victor Turner, and Emile Durkheim together describe how rituals craft a liminal experience to form communal identity.

The early concept and construction of liminal experience created through ritual action is often attributed to Arnold van Gennep. In *Les Rites de Passage* (*The Rites of Passage*), van Gennep studies certain ritual practices, surmising that ritual creates an experience in which individuals and community “pass from one defined position to another.”<sup>78</sup> Tessa Watts notes that for van Gennep the purpose of rituals is to “symbolically mark and accomplish transition and to maintain social cohesion and order during potentially harmful liminal phase.”<sup>79</sup> I argue that these seasonal and celestial rituals are important for marking a change for the community, a notion we see in theologians Eliade and Gaster as well.<sup>80</sup> In the creation of this liminal ritual, communities move from one defined position to another. While some scholars argue about the specificity of the liminal process and its application to religious and non-religious communities, van Gennep

---

<sup>77</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 25; Bell, *Ritual*, 129.

<sup>78</sup> Other scholars mirror the notion of the liminal rituals, adding that rituals universally mark changes of state or status. This can be tied to both religious and non-religious communities. See Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi and Michael Argyle, *The Psychology of Religious Behaviour, Belief and Experience* (Routledge, 1997): 49. See also Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), 33. In a review of his work, Tessa Watts writes that van Gennep “identified, differentiated and described the sequence and pattern of culturally specific ceremonial rituals marking life-course transitions” (“Big Ideas: ‘Les Rites De Passage’ Arnold van Gennep 1909,” *Nurse Education Today*, n.d.: 312).

<sup>79</sup> Watts, “Big Ideas,” 312.

<sup>80</sup> Cultural studies scholar Nicole Hochner attempts a fresh epistemological view of van Gennep and argues that his notion in *Rites of Passage* is actually a proposal of rituals as social kinesis or social rhythms. While I appreciate her reflection and conclusion that van Gennep’s work is a cosmological and biological reflection, it strips the rituals of their spiritual and religious notions, pushing against the purpose for which van Gennep understood rites of passage, and therefore Hochner’s explanation is without weight. See Nicole Hochner, “On Social Rhythm: A Renewed Assessment of van Gennep’s Rites of Passage,” *Journal of Classical Sociology* 18, no. 4 (2018): 299-312.

suggests that the liminal ritual creates a process in which identity changes, a liminal experience prompting transformation through embodied rhythms.<sup>81</sup>

Van Gennep notes that liminal rituals move through three stages, the pre-liminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and post-liminal rites (rites of incorporation).<sup>82</sup> Van Gennep's description of the liminal process gives a clear structure to understand the liminal process and highlights how the liminal ritual has the potential to form communal identity.<sup>83</sup> I identify two ways in which the liminal process is active in the formation of communal identity, first by understanding how ritual reflects core communal ideology. Like theologians Eliade and Gaster who noted that rituals can be used to mirror communal narratives (or, as they called them, communal myths), van Gennep's explanation of the liminal process comes to a similar conclusion: When communities engage the liminal process, they draw from communally oriented narratives, so the rites of transition reflect the community itself.<sup>84</sup> In other words, the integration of communal narratives into rituals of transition displays what I consider to be a desire to fuse communal narratives and history together with the present, so that the ritual

---

<sup>81</sup> Anthropologist Robert F. Spencer notes that van Gennep, like many other French sociologists, understood there to be a sacred- secular distinction, so van Gennep may not necessarily adhere to my claim for the universality of liminality when tied to rites of passages. See Robert F. Spencer, "The Rites of Passage. Arnold van Gennep. Translated by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L Caffee. Introduction by Solon Kimball.," *American Anthropologist* 63, no. 3 (1961): 598-599. Sylvester Sieber seems to add weight to my understanding that rituals as understood by van Gennep carry a universal notion. Sieber writes that while van Gennep discussed religious rituals, his categorization was limiting. Sieber notes that many rituals are not religious at all, and yet I find they seem to resonate with van Gennep's characterization. Sieber then seems to uphold my claims that van Gennep's scope of rituals and liminal rituals can be extended to a universality for all rituals. See Sylvester A. Sieber, "The Rites of Passage by Arnold van Gennep, Monika B. Vizedom And Gabrielle L. Caffee," *The American Catholic Sociological Review*, 21, no. 4 (1960): 364.

<sup>82</sup> van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 11.

<sup>83</sup> As Watts notes, van Gennep understood transition to be an "intrinsic component of existence" and so it would make sense that from his anthropological viewpoint a ritual that highlighted the transition would be of great importance ("Big Ideas," 313).

<sup>84</sup> Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*; Gaster, *Thespis*, 17.

actors transform in a way that aligns with the community history. Ritual actors enter a liminal process within the narrative of the community, meaning that the ritual pulls from communal identity and ideology for its structure. Structuring the liminal ritual within the communal history edifies communal connection, allowing the liminal actors to form new, deep connections to the community.

The liminal process also allows communities to shape a new, future-oriented reality through the ritual, the second way that liminal rituals form communal identity. Gaster hinted at this in his theological reflection, and van Gennep reflects the notion in a social scientific reflection. The ritualized progression of the liminal process allows the community to create and forecast new realities for the future. This is best noted in the third stage, in which the liminal community finds a way to reintegrate. The reintegration stage of the liminal process allows the community to craft new, future-focused rhythms that propose ways to integrate the new into the community culture. The liminal ritual is thus influential for the formation of the communal identity in that it simultaneously upholds entrenched communal dogma and allows fluidity of future communal expression, an embodied combination of past and future.

Other scholars have added to van Gennep's notion of the liminal ritual process. Victor Turner expands the outline for liminality and the liminal process, coining the now-popular phrase "betwixt and between" to explain the ritual phases of liminality.<sup>85</sup> Turner explains liminality as the ritual state in which individuals are "neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony."<sup>86</sup> Turner seems to

---

<sup>85</sup> Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), 95. Turner is called the "father of symbolic anthropology," a description penned by Tim Olaveson ("Collective Effervescence and Communitas: Processual Models of Ritual and Society in Emile Durkheim and Victor Turner," *Dialectical Anthropology* 26, no. 2 [2001]: 92).

<sup>86</sup> Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 95.



focus, like van Gennep, on how the ritual promotes transition.<sup>87</sup> Turner finds rituals to be a fluid processes of embodiment in which the community enters a stage of transformation.<sup>88</sup> Betwixt and between, the rituals propels individuals and the community to be fixed between identity structures, the ritual opening the potential for exploration of identity and creative change.

For Turner, the community in the liminal state is locked in a threshold between two identities, between the culture they emerged from and the community they are being pulled to. In a liminal state, communities and liminal actors are in a status of transformation, leaving one presence behind to become another. For Turner, the notion of liminality is important for the formation of communal identity in that the liminal process produces *communitas*, a binding of the community through social bonds.<sup>89</sup> This notion of *communitas* is key for us, because it displays how the liminal processes creates new social ties through the ritual, creating a tighter sense of community and a more immersive sense of individual and communal identity. While Turner was aware of the possibility of further “outsiderhood” that can come through liminality, the positive notion of a *communitas* arguably imbues liminal rituals with a connective purpose.<sup>90</sup> I argue this connection gives liminal rituals their purpose, the rituals connecting and crafting roots in which the community forms their communal identity as a cohesive unit.

---

<sup>87</sup> Social anthropologist Jenny Hockey notes that for van Gennep the structural study of rites of passage highlights the importance of transition. While Turner seems focused on the actual transition and van Gennep on the totality of the process, both had an interest in the notion of transition. See Jenny Hockey, “The Importance of Being Intuitive: Arnold van Gennep’s The Rites of Passage,” *Mortality* 7, no. 2 (2002): 213. The transition creates a homogenous social state equalizing the members participating in the community and in the ritual. See Deirdre M. O’Loughlin, Isabelle Szmigin, Morven G. McEachern, Belem Barbosa, Kalispo Karantinou, and Maria Eugenia Fernandez-Moya, “Man Thou Art Dust: Rites of Passage in Austere Times,” *Sociology* 51, no. 5 (2017): 1050–1067.

<sup>88</sup> Olaveson, “Collective Effervescence and *Communitas*,” 92.

<sup>89</sup> Victor Turner, *Drama, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

Emile Durkheim contributes to van Gennep's and Turner's descriptions of liminality by understanding how communities can use liminal rituals to craft experiences of collective hysteria.<sup>91</sup> This collective hysteria is better described as collective effervescence, a term used by Durkheim in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. While that text is not without its problems, the focus of collective effervescence adds an additional understanding for the liminal ritual process and the importance of liminality for communal identity creation.<sup>92</sup> Collective rituals, as understood by Durkheim, combine interlinking ideology and passions with actions creating a single communal life.<sup>93</sup> Durkheim writes that "when we find ourselves at the heart of an assembly animated by a common passion, we become capable of sentiments and actions of which we are not capable were we reduced to our own efforts."<sup>94</sup> An individual within the communal ritual "feels in himself a sort of abnormality, a plethora of forces bubbling and spilling out," this intense energy created through the communal ritual giving the individual an

---

<sup>91</sup> While reviewing van Gennep's work Spencer critiques Durkheim by noting that Durkheim's work is not "bound to behavioural reality" like van Gennep ("The Rites of Passage," 598). The praise for van Gennep is solid, and yet I find that Durkheim's hypotheses are in fact founded also in reality of behaviour, linking the two sociologists.

<sup>92</sup> Tim Olaveson calls Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1912) his most "comprehensive and definitive treatment of religion." I agree. Olaveson also notes that Durkheim's work is problematic due to its "misuse of ethnographic materials, its severely flawed methodology and its logical flaws." Despite this, I argue Durkheim's presentation of communal effervescence is of great importance for our ritual study. Olaveson, "Collective Effervescence and *Communitas*: Processual Models of Ritual and Society in Emile Durkheim and Victor Turner," 91–92.

<sup>93</sup> Some scholars call this passion a "collective emotion." I appreciate their reconstruction of our ideology of passion for it seems to emulate Durkheim's notion of collective movements found in ritual. Nick Hopkins et al., "Explaining Effervescence: Investigating the Relationship between Shared Social Identity and Positive Experience in Crowds," *Cognition and Emotion* 30, no. 1 (2014): 21.

Sociologist William Ramp addresses the notion of a communal life. Pulling from Durkheim, Ramp phrases the communal life as a "lived fabric of our existence," noting intentional creation or weaving narrative for the construction of communal identity. I appreciate Ramp's expansion on Durkheim as it gives as an understanding of a sort of tapestry quality to Durkheim's notions. See William Ramp, "Transcendence, Liminality and Excess: Durkheim and Bataille on the Margins of 'Sociologie Religieuse,'" *Journal of Classical Sociology* 8, no. 2 (2008): 210.

<sup>94</sup> Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 128.

“impression that he is dominated by a moral power which transcends him.”<sup>95</sup> The individual is consumed within the community, “no longer a single individual [but] a group incarnate and personified.”<sup>96</sup> The liminal ritual pulls the heart of an individual; enveloped in the liminal experience the individual is propelled to a hyperreality in which their identity of personhood is diminished and replaced with the identity of the community.<sup>97</sup> In a sort of “collective intimacy,” the individuals connect to the greater community, adhering to the communal identity and shunning any sense of individualism. One body, one breath, one truth, the communal identity becomes the cornerstone.<sup>98</sup>

When communities engage in ritual, they experience a connection to the community, a sense of engagement with the larger communal body. When these rituals are constructed in a liminal process, the ritual takes on a new purpose and a new meaning. Arnold van Gennep begins the exploration of the liminal process by outlining how rituals structure themselves in a way that promotes a liminal experience.<sup>99</sup> Victor Turner continues this, noting how the rituals propel the community to be in a state of in between, ultimately using the ritual as a way to create a new form of identity.<sup>100</sup> Emile Durkheim concludes the reflection on liminal rituals, outlining how the

---

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>97</sup> Tara Isabella Burton calls this process a process in which social glue is established. The collective effervescence both creates connections as well as propels conversations that allow the community to define ideology and purpose. See Tara Isabella Burton, *Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World* (New York: Public Affairs, 2020), 43–44.

<sup>98</sup> Hopkins et al., “Explaining Effervescence,” 21.

<sup>99</sup> van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 11.

<sup>100</sup> Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 95.

totality of the ritual process creates an effervescent bond, forming the communal identity through connection.<sup>101</sup>

I find the link between ritual and the liminal to be fascinating. The transcendent and identity-shaping capability of rituals is something our theologians hint at, but this trio of social scientists displays directly how the process of ritual aids in the formation of communal identity. Van Gennep, Turner, and Durkheim argue for the importance of the theme of rituals in creating a communal identity, rituals ushering in a process of transformation and transference, creating a cohesive community that is indoctrinated into a singular identity. In this process the theme of rituals directly engages in the formation of communal identity.

### 5.3.2 Clifford Geertz: Rituals and Their Social Glue Purpose

American anthropologist Clifford Geertz is acutely aware of the social significance of rituals for community, and while Geertz was also influential for our understanding of the theme of symbols, I find his notion of how the theme of rituals are constructed for the formation of communal identity to be of great importance.<sup>102</sup> Thus, we engage Geertz once again. In his interpretation of Balinese cockfighting and in his studies of Javanese rituals Geertz finds that ritual practices became social glue, yielding a sense of continuity and control to the community.<sup>103</sup> Geertz

---

<sup>101</sup> Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 128.

<sup>102</sup> Geertz is often well praised for his work. Ben White calls Geertz the “foremost anthropologist of his generation,” and credits Geertz for founding the school of “interpretive social science” (“Clifford Geertz: Singular Genius of Interpretive Anthropology,” *Development and Change* 38, no. 6 [2007]: 1187–1209).

<sup>103</sup> Theologian John D. Witvliet finds parallel to Geertz thoughts, arguing that symbols and not rituals craft this social cohesion. Witvliet writes, “liturgical art functions to overcome our isolation, to help us realise a corporate identity” and yet I find that both rituals and art act in such a way and are therefore important for social cohesion. See Witvliet, “The Worship,” in Taylor, *For the Beauty of the Church*, 50.

Geertz’s study on the two cultures is not without major criticism. Most of the criticism circles around Geertz’s loose methodological structure, presenting scholars with what anthropologist Maurice Freedman details as a book that is “loosely written (in places shoddily).” Freedman continues lamenting that he “cannot really understand what virtue Professor Geertz sees in reproducing slabs of his notes...and I am sure that he is wrong to

continues our social science reflection on the theme of rituals, explaining how rituals can act as a cohesive, bond-creating experience important for the formation of communal identity.

In *Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example*, Geertz explores how rituals are used for a social purpose. In his observation of Balinese cockfighting Geertz found that rituals curate a physical process that emulates the greater community and culture, ritual actions crafting a “simulation of the social matrix.”<sup>104</sup> The rituals Geertz observed craft an experience “in which belief and particular ritual reinforce the traditional social ties between individuals,” the ritual highlighting “the way in which the social structure of a group is strengthened and perpetuated.”<sup>105</sup> The rhythmic rituals he observed craft a social experience within the community to reinforce its structure. For Geertz, rituals are purposeful because of how they add to and reinforce the social arrangement, forming communal identity.

Geertz notes elsewhere that rituals not only craft a social matrix, but that rituals are also integral for illuminating “underlying social values” of the community, a link to the communal ideology.<sup>106</sup> I find great purpose in what Geertz observed. Geertz understands that in the physical acts of rituals the community unifies its movement and experiences in a way that upholds social structure and social ties; rituals are therefore purposeful for their ability to act as social glue.

---

suppose that by giving us direct access to selected notes that he has made himself translucent.” Freedman highlights the majority of critique surrounding Geertz’s studies, and yet I find the notes on ritual to be of great help. See Maurice Freedman, “Bali, Studies in Life, Thought, and Ritual,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 15, no. 1 (1964): 84.

<sup>104</sup> Clifford Geertz, “Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example,” *American Anthropologist* 59, no. 1 (1957): 73.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 32. Praising Geertz’s innovative work with the Javanese, White writes that Geertz drew “profound implications from an ethnographic detail” (“Clifford Geertz,” 1187). And yet White’s praise also seems to be a point of contention from other scholars, with White reflecting that Geertz is often criticized for being careless in research and making “too-casual generalizations.”

<sup>106</sup> Geertz, “Ritual and Social Change,” 32.

Rituals are also purposeful for the ways in which they can explore social values, or what I would call communal ideology. Geertz draws a connection among social cohesion, communal ideology, and the ritual process, concluding that ritual is integral for the formation of communal identity.

The ultimate function of ritual for Geertz is that the ritual creates a bond that upholds the community through a myriad of potential trials.<sup>107</sup> In many ways I find that this notion reflects the work of Bell, who hypothesised that rituals are used to create social cohesion and ideological conditions so that communities unite when social change, or change in general, is proposed. Geertz suggests that the bonding created during ritual aids in the construction of unique community cultures, or as I would call it a unique communal identity. For Geertz, culture is the “fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action; social structure is the form that action takes, the actually existing network of social relations.”<sup>108</sup> Geertz asserts that ritual is the social interaction, some sort of actionized process that supports and creates the community ideology and the community social structure. I argue that these two factors, two by-products of ritual, are integral for the formation of communal identity. Through ritual, communities can embody their core communal elements, indoctrinating members into both the communal structure and ideology. As the rituals foster cohesive groupings through embodied practices, the community forms its communal identity through an experience that ultimately promotes uniformity and unification.

---

<sup>107</sup> Pulling from Geertz’s study of funeral rites, archaeologist Alison Rautman notes that for Geertz there is a unifying importance of combating the discontinuity of different cultural frames of reference that promote confusion. I find it makes sense then that when looking at other rights and rituals Geertz would note the unification understanding as a way to combat the fragmentation that he observed during funeral rituals. See Alison E. Rautman, “Thick Description of a Visit Home: In Tribute to Clifford Geertz,” *Anthropology and Humanism* 33, no. 1–2 (2008): 7.

<sup>108</sup> Geertz, “Ritual and Social Change,” 32.

I find it interesting that Geertz understands these purposes of ritual, but his fieldwork suggests that the rituals held little to no actual change for the actors. He finds that for the Balinese cockfighting ritual the “function, if you want to call it that, is interpretive: it is a Balinese reading a Balinese experience; a story they tell themselves about themselves.”<sup>109</sup> I find this end reflection of worth because it reveals that rituals are purposeful for creating social cohesion, and yet this experience is not necessarily transformative for the individual. This reflects the contextuality of rituals; Geertz observed that rituals do in fact enact social structure and social importance for communities, but they are highly contextual, leading me to claim that rituals are insider experiences of importance for a certain group. As simulations of specific social matrixes or communal identities, rituals are purposeful for creating social ties and cohesion, but unlike theoretical liminal rituals, some rituals observed through fieldwork effect little change. Rituals are thus purposeful for creating a contextually specific set of acts that allow a community to engage in communal cohesion and unification, forming a communal identity by establishing social structures and upholding social values.

Geertz’s reflections on his observed community highlight for this research the way in which rituals as a theme are integral for connection of the community, the purpose of ritual being to allow a community to develop social cohesion and social ideology. To conclude, Geertz finds that the theme of rituals impacts the formation of communal identity by crafting syncopated rhythms of action that integrate communal ideology and symbol, forming a singular communal identity as the community engages in rituals.

---

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 82.

### 5.3.3 Roy Rappaport: Rituals and Their Encoding Purpose

Our theorists all held a similar conclusion when it came to the way rituals coordinated a communal identity around doctrine. Tillich noted that ritual was infused with dogmatic expression of faith.<sup>110</sup> Bell noted that rituals acted as a communicative tool used to legitimize a communal ideology.<sup>111</sup> Gaster and Eliade saw rituals as a symbolic tool used to parallel doctrinal beliefs.<sup>112</sup> In this way our theologians understand that ritual reflects doctrine. Similarly, social scientist Roy Rappaport understands that ritual shapes doctrine.<sup>113</sup> Much of his work focuses on ritual and ecological anthropology, schools that are linked in many ways to religious reflection. Rappaport's work of interest for this dissertation does pull from religious reflections, and yet his role as an anthropologist and not a theologian means that he adds to our social science reflection. Rappaport is important because of his reflection on the encoding purpose of ritual. In his work *Ritual and Religion in Making of Humanity*, Rappaport notes that the standardization of behaviours through ritual serves as an observable form of encoding, rituals playing a central role in the formation of communal identity.<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup> Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 22.

<sup>111</sup> Bell, *Teaching Ritual*, 145.

<sup>112</sup> Gaster, *Thespis*, 23; Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, 17.

<sup>113</sup> As an anthropologist, Rappaport notes the importance of understanding the evolutionary purpose of religion. A keen focus on ritual has led Rappaport to his claims. Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1.

<sup>114</sup> A critique by sociologist Robert N. Bellah notes that Rappaport observed mostly "tribal societies and several of the great literate traditions, Rappaport did not refer to China, where Confucianism had more to say about ritual." Bellah's important note allows us to understand the scope of observational material. That being said, as the communities studied can be seen as tribal, Rappaport's notes are helpful. Bellah also links Rappaport's notion of behaviours to Durkheim's notions in *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. As Durkheim is present throughout this dissertation, the link is helpful to understand the anthropological and sociological ties across theorists. See Robert N. Bellah, "Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity by Roy A. Rappaport," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38, no. 4 (1999): 570.

Rappaport defines ritual as "the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performs" (*Ritual and Religion in Making of Humanity*, 24). This definition



Rappaport defines ritual as “the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by performers.”<sup>115</sup> Rituals are repetitive, embodied acts that produce uniformity, or as Rappaport notes the “behaviour in ritual tends to be punctilious and repetitive. Ritual sequences are composed of conventional, even stereotyped elements, for instance stylized and often decorous gestures and postures.”<sup>116</sup> This helpful definition reiterates that ritual is a set of formal acts, once again edifying the embodiment of ritual, as well as the extension of rituals as a form of encoding. This feature of “encoding” is of great importance for Rappaport: “Performers of rituals do not specify all the acts and utterances constituting their own performances. They follow, more or less, punctiliously, orders established or taken to have been established, by others.”<sup>117</sup> Rappaport argues that rituals are generally physical acts that hold specific performative messages that can be both transmitted and adopted by the actor. In the performance the ritual both displays communal narratives and ideology, as well as simultaneously inviting the actors of the ritual to adopt them. Rituals are physical acts that facilitate important communal reflections, so when the community participates in them, the ritual actions open formative options.

Rappaport is important not only because of this understanding of what a ritual is, but also because of his argument that rituals as physical acts establish “conventions,” the rituals adding

---

yields connections to the performative or dramatic narrative of myth (Geertz) as well as ubiquitous symbolism (Eliade). Rappaport thus parallels other social science theorists.

<sup>115</sup> Rappaport adds that while we normally reflect on ritual in the human sphere, and specifically in the religious communities, that his definition can be extended to encompass ecological reflections as well. Rituals in this definition can be used to observe animals, “the birds, the beasts, and even the insects” (Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in Making of Humanity*, 24–25).

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 32.

meaning to the actors in a way that connects them to the greater community.<sup>118</sup> Rituals set up conventions, structure, and meaning, that propel the community to greater levels of identity formation. Rituals done in community carry meaning, and while Rappaport outlines three levels of meaning, the one I find of greatest interest is high order meaning. High order meaning rituals promote “identity or unity, the radical identification and unification of self with other.”<sup>119</sup> Rappaport notes that high order meaning is “not so much, or even at all, intellectual but is, rather, experiential.”<sup>120</sup> High order rituals are propelled by participation, and meaning is crafted in and through the participation.

Rappaport makes it clear that the meaning produced in the experience focused ritual is one in which the individual both transmits and receives communal information:

To say that performers participate in or become parts of the orders they are releasing is to say that transmitter-receivers become fused with the messages they are transmitting and receiving in conforming to the orders that their performances bring into being, and that come alive in their performance, performers become indistinguishable from others, part of them, for the time being.<sup>121</sup>

This is of great importance for what I understand to be a purpose of ritual; rituals with high order meaning invite participation of the community, and in doing so the ritual actor acts as both a receiver of the communal ritual order as well as the transmitter through both the speech and action of the ritual. In embodying and participating in the ritual the actor both performs and adopts the message of the ritual, and in doing so their identity is influenced by the greater communal narrative and ideology. The participation in the ritual moves the single actor into the communal, transforming their identity so that the communal identity overtakes the individual

---

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 119.

identity. This ultimately yields a uniformity of action, and I would argue of identity, so that the high order ritual encodes the actor with the communal identity.

I find this distinction of the type of meaning made in rituals helpful when explaining how the theme of ritual forms communal identity. Rappaport's idea of high order meaning rituals highlights how the ritual acts are purposeful because they shape meaning. Rappaport helpfully notes that meaning making is produced when a ritual is experienced communally; the experiential nature of the ritual enacts meaning in a way that brings the individual into the communal, the participatory nature of the high order ritual connecting the actor to the community. This is significant for our understanding of the way in which the theme of ritual forms communal identity because it displays both the necessity of communally experienced ritual, and that ritual connects the community to produce unified meaning. Ritual is of great importance because in and through ritual a community can communicate with individuals, inviting the members into the communal structure and into communal ideology.

Paul Cassell responds to Rappaport's notions with the understanding that rituals create a "system of social relations" reproduced by "communicating to individual participants in a way that has powerful effects on the psyche."<sup>122</sup> While mirroring the 'social glue' purpose of ritual discussed by Geertz, Cassell highlights how Rappaport's meaning making acts as a sort of induction into the system of community, creating standards by which the community upholds communal structure, communal ideology, and communal narratives. In this, rituals create conventions or actions that distribute a community's uniform identity, rituals encoding a communal identity into the actors. We can thus understand the importance of ritual in the formation of communal identity. In the institution of high order rituals, communities can craft

---

<sup>122</sup> Paul Cassell, "Rappaport, Revisited," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 26, no. 4/5 (2014): 422.

actionized participatory events that seal social contracts. Within their specific community context, the embodied actions draw from communal narratives and identity to create a standardized set of actions that, when participated in, form a communal unity. Communities thus can form communal identity by crafting ideologically sensitive rituals, proposing a participation that shapes an experience in which ideology is encoded, unifying and forming communal identity.

Roy Rappaport proposes an important way to define the theme of ritual. His understanding describes the way in which rituals enacts a process of encoding. In the high order of ritual, this encoding produces an experience that brings about unity, allowing communities to craft a singular identity through the ritual process. Roy Rappaport displays how the formation of communal identity is steeped in the ritual process, embodied acts enabling a unification that is integral as communities craft and curate communal identity.

### 5.3.4 Conclusion

Our social scientists build on our understanding of rituals, illuminating both the substantive and functional attributes that outline ritual interaction for the formation of communal identity. A trio of social scientists open our reflection. Van Gennep, Turner, and Durkheim coordinate to reveal that rituals usher in a liminal experience, ultimately allowing communities to create new identity structures and create tight communal bonds.<sup>123</sup> The liminal process facilitated by rituals is a key to communal identity; these rituals steeped in liminality not only allow for doctrinal understanding and unification, but they also allow the community to engage in transcendent

---

<sup>123</sup> van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 11; Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 95; Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 129.

experiences, solidifying bonds through the ritual process. Geertz follows our introduction, reflecting on rituals as social glue.<sup>124</sup> Rappaport finishes the social science reflection, including how rituals can create ideology, embodied practices that display core truths for communities that encode and indoctrinate the individual into the communal identity.<sup>125</sup>

Our social scientists add greatly to our understanding of the way in which the theme of rituals aid in the formation of communal identity. The liminal process often affiliated with rituals provides important insights into their transcendent and identity shaping potential and purpose, a key factor that proposes a way in which to view rituals. The solidification of our understanding of how rituals add to the social binding and doctrinal creation also prove to be significant insights, allowing us to understand how rituals act as a theme for the formation of communal identity.

## **5.4 Observations in Music Festival Communities and Church Congregational Communities**

The above theorists give us a template for the differing ways in which the theme of rituals construct or aid in the formation of communal identity. Drawing from our theorists, we now examine rituals formation of communal identity in our music festival and church communities through the liminal process and fortification of communal doctrine.

### **5.4.1 Rituals and the Liminal in Music Festivals**

Our theorists describe many different purposes for rituals, detailing how the theme of rituals form communal identity. One of the ways in which music festivals form communal identity

---

<sup>124</sup> Geertz, "Ritual and Social Change," 32.

<sup>125</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in Making of Humanity*, 33.

organises rituals around the liminal process, curating liminal experiences that shape the identity of the individual within the communal setting. While the ritual process found in music festival communities could be described as pilgrimage rituals,<sup>126</sup> I will approach the process of music festival rituals specifically from a liminal perspective: The repetitive nature of the liminal ritual process overcomes the boundaries of a singular pilgrimage experience. I observed that music festival communities promoted liminal rituals, forming the communal identity in and through the liminal ritual process.

Arnold van Gennep's description of the liminal ritual experience starts with separation, followed by a ritualised specific rhythm, ending with assimilation back to cultural normativity.<sup>127</sup> While the ritual subject is, in Turner's phrasing, betwixt and between, they undergo a transformation of identity. The liminal ritual, paired with Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence, forms communal and individual identity, the totality of the liminal ritual process ultimately forming communal identity. The liminal ritual process is one of identity transformation, which I observed in some way at many of the music festivals featured in this research.

I observed that music festivals that required some sort of extensive travel, what I would deem to be ritualised travel, established liminal experience better than those in urban city centres.<sup>128</sup> Forest Festival and Acoustic Festival typified this observation. Forest Festival offers a

---

<sup>126</sup> Jaimangal-Jones, Prichard, and Morgan often found language of religious pilgrimage in research conversations, which highlighted the importance of the transformational travel journey ("Going the Distance," 260). Their research paralleled my own; for festival attendees, the journey became a part of the ritual transformation without which the experience would merely have been a day out. Both in club culture and in music festival culture there then seems to be an importance of the ritual of travel.

<sup>127</sup> van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 11.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. Maria Laura Toraldo, Gazi Islam, and Gianluigi Mangia note the importance of travel when it comes to the creation of liminal experiences. The authors note that the geographical separation from ordinary life "symbolically gesture toward the limits of social control," allowing attendees to feel fully the separation quality and

unique experience in that attendees are for the most part bussed in from train stations, allowing the music festival attendees to begin the communal separation together. In passive conversations with music festival attendees, I found that this ritualized movement clearly initiated the ritual process for the liminal communal experience; the community vocalized how the experience that started with these bus journeys allowed them to begin their music festival experience quickly and easily, the bussing crafting an immediate ritual of separation.<sup>129</sup> I argue that this sort of immediate separation acted as a ritual that promoted liberation from everyday constraints and life, imbuing the bus trip with powerful purpose.<sup>130</sup> Similar notions were present at Acoustic Festival, where I heard the musical artists express how the separation period of travel to the music festival created a sense of separation from life, marking the journey as an important part of the experience.

The rural music festivals also required that attendees participate in some form of camping experience, interestingly furthering the separation narrative. As music festival attendees built

---

drive forward the liminal experience (“Serving Time: Volunteer Work, Liminality and the Uses of Meaningfulness at Music Festivals,” *Journal of Management Studies* 56, no. 3 (2019): 62).

<sup>129</sup> Authors of a study on club culture found similar results. The authors found that desire or willingness to travel considerable distances for a unique or transformative experience existed. Their study mirrors my observations, including the important notion of separation for the rituals of experience in festivals. See Dewi Jaimangal-Jones, Annette Prichard, and Nigel J. Morgan, “Going the Distance: Locating Journey, Liminality and Rites of Passage in Dance Music Experiences,” *Leisure Studies* 29, no. 3 (2010): 259.

<sup>130</sup> Some scholars argue that rituals are not necessarily liberation from the everyday, but rather “transformative” of everyday experiences. I would argue that both could be true; therefore, the reflection of contextually specific rituals allowed me to observe the transformative form of rituals in music festivals that liberate from the everyday. See Stewart M. Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark, eds., *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media: Explorations in Media, Religion, and Culture* (Columbia University Press, 2002): 224. Hanya Pielichaty picks up on this notion as well, referring to Turner’s notion of liberation as a way to discuss how liminal experiences connect “fantasy and the manipulation of reality” (“Festival Space: Gender, Liminality and the Carnavalesque,” *International Journal of Event and Festival Management* 6, no. 3 [2015]: 4). Certainly, the liminal process produced in music festivals does that, the travel and separation adding to the manipulation of everyday life by creating physical movement. Pielichaty notes that “liminal zones” can be manipulated so that people are given a sense that they are leaving reality when they, are in fact, not. I find that the sort of loose set of rules and the lack of societal formalities make our festivals liminal experiences that do not conform to Shield’s structurally non-liminal zones. In this way I argue the music festivals are in fact liminal experiences created by the separation.

their own shelter and temporary home, they recrafted their space and, in the trace-making crafted something new, offering separation from previous dwelling places but also giving them a place to root. This new home propelled the liminoid into the liminal experience through the creation of a separate but still-important home. I suggest that the ritual of separation prompted the liminal experience in a way that invited the music festival community to begin preparation for the communal experience, prompting a notion of separation and change, integral to the liminal ritual.

These observations of transition were not totally reflected in urban music festivals. At festivals like Electronic Festival and Retro Festival, the city landscapes mitigated the need for extended separation rituals. I observed less communal fusing at these festivals; groups seemed to remain separated from others, unlike the music festivals placed in open landscapes. While there is certainly still a transformational liminal process at play in urban music festivals, the ability to create the first process of separation through ritualized movement seemed to be greater in the music festivals located outside of cityscapes. It would make sense, in my understanding, that urban music festivals were limited in their liminal capacity from this initial point. As we understand that separation is the key to the liminal process, music festivals that do not fully engage in separation would naturally create less liminal processing.<sup>131</sup>

Despite that difference, I observed that all music festivals engaged in a form of separation that I refer to as visual or aesthetic separation. We know from the earlier chapters on place and symbol that each music festival used material culture and place reconstruction to craft engaging experiences focused on material culture. I argue that these reconstructions of place and symbol in material culture acts as a form of separation, the visual nonconformity of music festivals directly

---

<sup>131</sup> As festivals create what Toraldo, Islam, and Mangia called the “anti-structural” space that propels liminality the lack of separation would inadvertently not allow for anti-structure and therefore not create a separated space (“Serving Time,” 621). This construction of the anti-structural understanding gives us a theory to processes the lack of liminal projection, suggesting why our festivals yielded observational differences.



juxtaposing the visual normality of everyday life. With exaggerated place manipulation and repeated symbols, each music festival, whether urban or rural, curated a visually interesting location that I would argue separated the community from the mundane landscapes of the everyday and so initiated the liminal rites of separation through the ritual of decoration. I find this incredibly interesting because it suggests that van Gennep's ritual liminal process can be enacted without significant separation travel; rather, communities can craft the liminal separation through successful material culture artefact curation. The ritual of travel paired with the ritual of visual creation in my observation created separation from normality that launched the process of liminal experiences, rites of separation integrating into and therefore forming the collective experience for each music festival community.

Van Gennep's liminal process progresses from rituals of separation to rituals of transformation.<sup>132</sup> In my observations I found standard rituals that music festivals engaged to usher in the liminal process and communal transformation. The most observable rituals, intuitively, involve music experiences. The rituals of attending different artists' performances, the ritual of collective effervescent oriented movement during shows, the rituals of crafting identity through clothing choice, the ritual of reconstructing the rhythms of routines to fit into the music festival schedule, are all rituals I noted at each music festival that I would argue are liminal in some form. For many, these rituals take place both on the individual and on the collective communal level, intermixing the notions of liminality with Durkheim's expression of communal effervescence.<sup>133</sup> I attribute these observed rituals to the transformational setting I

---

<sup>132</sup> van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 11. The music festivals observed seem to bring about a myriad of similar rituals. As Pielichaty notes, these rituals for the community provide "liminal space to momentarily lose themselves and behave in a care-free manner that promotes the ethos of chaos as limited, constrained and restrictive" ("Festival Space," 4).

<sup>133</sup> Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 129.

found at every music festival, showing in some ways that the generalized structure of music festivals invites liminal experiences and transformation.

These liminal rituals allow attendees to explore the transformational time of a music festival, the experience that creates an intense formation of communal identity and ideology. I both visually observed and heard this experience of transformation echoed through many music festivals. During my informal conversations with music festival attendees, individuals voiced the transformational change that occurs in their music festival time; for many, it was the reason they returned year after year. The separation from normal life paired with the liminal ritual experience altered the state of identity and communal notions, bringing about this experience that I find seamlessly aligns with van Gennep's liminal process.<sup>134</sup>

Of course, van Gennep's liminal process ends with the immersion back into society. The ritual of packing up campsites, returning to the normal rhythm of life, can be a bit jarring for many attendees, which is, I argue, why we see the extension of music festival communities into everyday life. I observed that many music festival attendees extended their ritual experiences, following musicians from the music festivals or engaging with the music festival community through social media. While the movement back into ordinary life was shaped by the new identity acquired during the music festival events, the continued attachment to the music festival community displays the importance of the communal liminal rituals and the way in which the collective ritual experience formed a communal bond and identity. Observable changes happen to music festival communities when the theme of rituals create a liminal process that brings about a transformation for the individual, tying them to their own experience and to their music festival community.

---

<sup>134</sup> van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 11.

Communal identity is formed in the liminal process as the community establishes communal specific rhythms that align with the community ideology and community focus. As the music festival attendees—festivalgoers, musicians, and others—engage in the liminal process, they note some form of change. The process of separation, liminal experience, and reintegration shifts the identity of the individual within the framework of the communal ideology and communal rhythm, allowing the individual to in part craft their identity in a way that closely mirrors the whole community. Rituals present opportunities for communities to craft ideology and doctrine, including these important communal ideas in an embodied process for the individual in the transformative liminal experience. The theme of rituals, and liminal rituals, in my observation allows a community to form doctrinally sensitive rhythms, ultimately so that a community member is indoctrinated into the larger communal identity through the ritual process.

There were rituals created through the liminal process in some capacity at every music festival I observed, leading me to conclude that the rituals crafted for the liminal process are a key aspect for the music festival communities. In this way rituals shape the communal identity by creating rituals of separation, rituals of transformation, and rituals of cohesion. All of the music festivals I observed instituted one or more of these ritual processes, offering attendees multiple opportunities to interact with the liminal. In doing so, music festival communities crafted communal bonds and communal experiences that fully infused the collective identity into the individual identity, the ritual process and therefore the theme of rituals forming the communal identity.

#### 5.4.2 Rituals and the Liminal in Church Communities

The liminal ritual process is familiar to Christian communities.<sup>135</sup> Historically, the church has engaged with rituals that I identify as liminal; from rituals that appear regularly on the liturgical calendar like that of Eucharist to rituals that are liminal identity-shaping processes like that of baptism, the historical church is not unfamiliar with the theme of ritual or with the liminal. This familiarity allows us to explore the liminal process in our contemporary church communities. In my church community observation, I found some instances of the liminal process, offering understanding of how the contemporary church engages in the theme of ritual to form communal identity.

We approach observation of the liminal process in our church communities in a way that mirrors the approach to our music festival community, exploring stage by stage the way in which the church community engaged in the liminal ritual process. The first stage of the liminal process is the ritual of separation; it is not surprising, considering the urban and suburban location of our church communities, that the rituals of separation in terms of travel proved to be limited. Like our urban music festivals, the church communities exist in spaces that require little travel for the community, meaning that the ritual of travel was mitigated when compared to the rural music festivals. While some travel was needed, the ritual proved to be less extensive, meaning that the liminal ritual of separation was stunted for our urban and suburban church communities.

Yet, as discussed, this is not the only form of ritual separation that can be used to prompt the liminal process. The music festivals in the urban spaces relied on symbol integration and visual stimuli to prompt the liminal separation, crafting through the ritual of decoration a visibly

---

<sup>135</sup> Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle argue that individuals encounter religion most directly in the liminal rituals or rites of passages. In addition to the historical use of liminal rituals, this also displays the importance of liminal rituals for contemporary Christian communities. See Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi and Michael Argyle, *The Psychology of Religious Behaviour, Belief and Experience* (Routledge, 1997), 51.

separated community. As discussed in the chapter on symbols, our church communities varied in their symbolic material culture. Stream Church, River Church, and Lake Church certainly prompted the liminal ritual of separation in their obvious use of symbol and branding outside of the church place. The material culture marked the community, and while the overt symbol usage did not extend as much to the interior of the rented places for Lake Church and River Church, the exterior symbol usage did in some way craft a ritual of visual separation that prompted the liminal separation.<sup>136</sup> Stream Church extended the exterior decoration into the interior, their church building offering up the most visually interesting and therefore liminally separated community.

The other church communities utilised symbols and visual stimuli sparingly, but I did observe a pattern of ritual separation used to mark the liminal process. The ritual that many of the church communities used to mark the liminal separation was a ritual of service welcome, which vocally addressed the separation for the community. I observed and regularly heard an introduction and welcome that invited the community into a new space, a sacred separation from the outside, the leaders ushering in the ritual of separation that would spark the liminal process. While it may not necessarily be what our theorists proposed as a ritual to start the liminal

---

<sup>136</sup> James Rodgers writes on the unintentional bias that comes along with communities as we occupy space, noting that some church communities are not actively surveying their space, leading to the lack of creative place decoration. "Welcome or Warning?," *Christianity Today*, December 1, 2008, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2008/december-online-only/8.31.html>.

Simon Coleman writes on awe-inducing image of traditional cathedrals. Coleman writes, "typically occupying prime areas of real estate, these building conjoin ecclesiastical authority with civic heritage and cultural capital." Most interesting here is the notion of cultural capital. Congregations' movement out of cathedrals and into rented spaces has come along with a lack of legitimacy and sense of power. This is interesting when reflecting on the ritual of separation, for I observed that the sort of powerless notion of place seems to be conjoined with a lack of desire for separation rituals, displaying again what I argue to be an acknowledgement of the lack of power of place. While there is also movement away from using cathedrals as traditional houses of worship, the relation between ritual separations and a decrease in power in the contemporary sense is compelling. See Coleman, "From the Liminal to the Lateral: Urban Religion in English Cathedrals," *Tourism Geographies* 21, no. 3 (2019): 384–404,

process, I would argue that the vocalisation of separation signalled and initiated the liminal process in a contextually appropriate and understood format.

While from an outsider perspective the church communities' liminal vocalisation may not be as effective as what I observed at the music festival communities, an insider perspective allows me to propose that a verbal liminal separation that is repeated weekly allows the community to engage with the liminal process in a repeatable way, forging a pattern of liminal separation. I argue that our church communities prompted the liminal process in a less overt but still successful way, and while I would still encourage the communities to engage in material culture that would heighten the ritual of separation, the vocalisation of the liminal separation did prompt the ritual process.

I also propose that the vocalisation of separation, a ritual that highlighted the sacredness of the service and the distinction between sacred and profane rhythms, prompted the formation of communal identity. Reminiscent of Eliade's distinction of the sacred from the profane, these churches' ritual of liminal separation often observably included some sort of separation from the profane, the leaders inviting the community into the relational worship of the divine. I argue that church communities then used the liminal ritual of separation in its vocalised form to both enact the liminal process while also forming the communal identity through the idea of sacred and profane separation. In doing so the liminal separation prompting suggested core communal differences from outside world rhythms and rituals, forming the sacredness of the communal identity through the short ritual of separation.

The next stage of the liminal ritual, arguably the most important stage in the liminal process, is rhythms of transformation. In this stage the community engages in rituals that transform the identity of the community and individual, redefining them. As noted in the

introduction to this observational reflection, these rituals are common in many church communities. I identify rituals such as communion and baptism as active liminal rituals, moving the identity of the community from one stage to the next. I was surprised in my observation period to see no practice of these normal rituals; in deeper exploration of each community, I noted through their social media and website information that these rituals are present in some way in each church community, so my time of observation must have merely been out of pace with the ritual rhythm.

Without the observation of major rituals of liminal transformation, I originally would have identified this as a lack of liminal ritual, and yet upon further reflection I propose that the liturgical rhythm for each church community did enact some form of liminal ritual. Each church community I observed followed a similar pattern for service, beginning with a welcome and vocalisation of separation, followed by some form of musical worship, then a sermon or discussion, ending with a goodbye that was often accompanied with song. My insider experience proposes that rites of worship and rites of sermon reflection are both in many ways rituals of the liminal process. As the community engages in worship, individuals and the group are transformed by the sound and collective experience. The ritual ushers them to deeper reflections of emotional states and religious truths, coordinating the communal ideology with transformational rhythms. To some extent even the ritual of teaching is liminal; as the community listens, they are cognitively challenged and changed, the passive ritual still promoting liminal transformation.

I thus argue that in my observation I found patterns of the liturgical process that could be understood to be liminally transformative. Promoting new states of being and identity, these liminal rituals form and coordinate communal action and communal ideology in each church

congregation. Yet in some ways these liminal rituals miss a key factor for liminal transformational rituals, a characteristics noted in our music festival communities.

In my observation and reflection, I found that part of the liminal process of music festivals was a characteristic of individual action and choice; while contextualised within the larger communal narrative, the liminal rituals of transformation are chosen and enacted by individual music festival attendees and musicians, meaning that the transformational liminal ritual is both a collective ritual and an individual ritual. Our church communities mirrored this to some extent, through the ritual of worship, and yet I suggest that the church communities could reflect on and instil more rituals for individual liminal transformation, increasing the liminal transformational process and influence for the communal identity. In doing so the church communities could not only craft more liminal opportunities but also allow individuals to adopt communal narratives and identity through individually stimulated liminal transformation. This would promote greater communal connections, meaning that the liminal process would curate identity formation with the larger communal identity, crafting communal bonds.

The final stage of the liminal process is the liminal ritual of reintegration of the community into the greater culture. The music festival communities integrated back into the greater culture by establishing ritual travel and ritual connection after the annual music festival. Our church communities offer a different liminal ritual; because of their weekly connection, I observed that the church communities issued rituals of reintegration that highlighted the need to serve the greater community while also crafting rituals that brought together the community in a way that was important but slightly different from the main communal experience. I observed at each church that some ritual of service or desire to be in the greater culture was vocalised; I identify these as rituals of reintegration, each community finding ways to, as liminal beings,



integrate into the rhythm of the city. With a locally missional mindset, the church communities crafted rituals of service that allowed them to actively engage with the city.<sup>137</sup> Along with that I observed that many of the church services ended with an invitation to some form of small group or extended worship experience, an addition of focused rituals that promoted communal gathering outside of the weekly collective experience.

I find this extension of rituals to be of interest; for the church communities, the process of integration crafted rituals for communal identity of service, an arguably positive ritual that would allow for effective, productive integration with the surrounding culture. Along with that the ritual of small groups forms communal bonds, a microcosm of the collective experience. This ritual highlighted the distinction between the church communities and the profane outside world. This was observed in the language the church members used, who discussed the need to stay connected in the community even in the integration period. The sacred and profane distinction thus was continued in the ritual of integration, continuing the communal identity formation around the idea of sacred separateness. The ritual of integration in many ways mirrored the music festival communities, who found online rituals to continue some form of communal integration for the purpose of maintaining communal bonds. This moves me to argue for the importance of the ritual of integration, which edifies the communal experience of difference, so the community maintains its members.

Each of our church communities successfully engaged in patterns of liminal rituals that ultimately served to promote ideology and indoctrinate individual members into the community.

---

<sup>137</sup> The local missional trend has grown recently. Some church communities are splitting their missional efforts between home and international bases. Ed Stetzer locates this a personalized understanding of missions as well as the focus on the “hurting” in the local setting and not the “global lost.” See Ed Stetzer, “Five Reasons Missional Churches Don’t Do Global Missions—and How to Fix It,” *Christianity Today*, September 24, 2009, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2009/september/five-reasons-missional-churches-dont-do-global-missions.html>.

I suggest that more liminal ritual reflection could enhance the church communities, specifically regarding rituals of individual choice, as I observed among our music festival communities. The liminal process and its rituals are integral for the formation of communal identity. Through them, the church communities engaged in separation, transformation, and integration in a way that solidified communal ideology and connections.

#### 5.4.3 Rituals and Fortification of Doctrine in Music Festivals

When reflecting on our theorists, I found many of them connected the theme of rituals to the formation of communal ideology or doctrine.<sup>138</sup> Tillich noted that the experience of rituals created and solidified communal doctrine, Eliade and Gaster linked the rituals to the communal creation of mythical doctrine in a way that outlined both past and future, and Bell noted how rituals contained differing features some of which allowed for the formation of communal doctrine.<sup>139</sup> Our social scientists also found links between ritual and the dogmatic communal expression. Geertz noted that rituals create a form of social glue, akin to creation of dogma.<sup>140</sup> Rappaport also found great importance between the link of rituals and ideological formation for community, the theme of rituals encoding on community individuals.<sup>141</sup> It seems logical then to expect our observed communities to use the theme of rituals to form some amount of communal

---

<sup>138</sup> Begbie notes an interesting value for performed music, writing that “people’s musical experience is far more performance oriented than work oriented, in the sense that the value of music is found chiefly in what is enacted through performance, between the music makers and the music hearers.” While not explicitly referring to ritual, Begbie highlights how music and the action enacted in music adds value to the art form, the performance and the ritual both. Begbie values ritual sprung from music. See Jeremy Begbie, *Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007): 73.

<sup>139</sup> Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 22; Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*; Gaster, *Thespis*, 17. Bell, *Ritual*, 129–145.

<sup>140</sup> Geertz, “Ritual and Social Change,” 32.

<sup>141</sup> Rapport, *Ritual and Religion in Making of Humanity*, 33.

doctrine. In this section we explore how rituals establish and fortify doctrine for our music festivals, allowing us to observe the ways in which the theme of rituals aid in the formation of communal identity.

The notion of ritual action used purposefully to solidify or fortify communal doctrine is something I find interesting, especially when reflecting on how this notion seems to be upheld in our music festival communities. In my observational research I found that rituals are often used to fortify certain communal doctrinal notions. Rituals are certainly used to fortify doctrinal ethos, both for specific elements of dogma and to uphold a general ethos that curates a communal identity. Upon reflection I found that music festivals upheld and fortified doctrine by curating dogmatic expression through ritualised practice.

When thinking about the purpose of rituals as a tool used to fortify doctrine through dogmatic expression, I found myself reflecting on certain rituals associated with metal and hardcore music. Forest Festival, a rock and metal festival, used ritual to highlight the ideological structure of the rock music community.<sup>142</sup> At Forest Festival, and I would presume at other rock music festivals based on my experience at stand-alone rock shows, rituals are created and curated in a way that aligns with the more visceral, emotionally charged or ferocious music.<sup>143</sup> Gaster

---

<sup>142</sup> A 2019 review of Download Festival by music journalist Dom Lawson uses the headline “Download Festival Review—Fire, Fury and Hymns to the Dark Side.” The rock elements are clear not only in the acts playing on the stage but also in the prevailing culture that encompasses these distinctive festivals. *The Guardian*, June 17, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2019/jun/17/download-festival-review-donington-park-leicestershire-slipknot-def-leppard>.

<sup>143</sup> Aksel Tjora also researched music festival communities with keen interest on the rhythms of the festivals. Tjora makes a note about the social observation at rock festivals: “the rock music festival community in general can be characterization by specific forms of communication such as more direct body language, identification with a particular type of music style and wardrobe that is typical for the festival, activities such as camping and constant alcohol consumption, a situational understanding featuring a great deal of openness and a situated community based on simultaneous physical presence” (“The Social Rhythm of Rock Music Festival,” *Popular Music* 35, no. 1 [2016]: 3). What I appreciate most about Tjora’s comment is the understanding of specified motions and rituals found in rock festivals. In this way Tjora’s observation matches my own, showing a prevailing observation in music festival research.

would link these rituals to ancient battles, physical and potentially violent rituals, but I propose they have to do with emotive, communal-doctrine-specific forms of action.

Rock music, in my observational listening, is typified by pounding sonic movement that often creates an animalistic, militaristic feel.<sup>144</sup> Along with the sonic elements, there are also reverberations of death and destruction in the lyrical content. Writing on death metal, Jack Harrell lists what he found to be the typical lyrical content, “angels, saints, crucifixion, resurrection, judgment, tombs, Armageddon, apocalyptic plagues, nuclear destruction, Satan, possession, sin, hell and dragons.... Clearly, death metal did not invent its discourse of destruction, but has borrowed heavily from the culture around it.”<sup>145</sup> It is not only death metal that pulls from this notion of destruction and death. I observed that the notions of death filled several sets at Forest Festival. This sonic element creates a communal dogma that postulates a darker notion of reality.

Contrary to any other music festival observed, the rock-oriented festival engaged in rituals such as the mosh pit to engage with the communal dogma actively and bodily.<sup>146</sup> The mosh pit is perhaps an archetype of ritual noted at rock music performances, a regularly

---

Writing on rock music and the evolution of rock music, journalist Peter Wicke defines the larger genre as producing sound that is “loud, aggressive and chaotic.” While the rock genre has a wide range of sonic offshoots, the core of the rock sound is helpful for understanding how dogma is crafted through the sound. See Wicke, *Rock Music: Culture, Aesthetics and Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 137.

<sup>144</sup> Death metal and rock music is characterized by an advance speed, a tempo of a quarter note = 220, emphasized by drums. Sudden tempo changes and the use of a chord progression known as the triotone give the sound of rock music a “haunting” sound. Jack Harrell, “The Poetics of Destruction: Death Metal Rock,” *Popular Music and Society* 18, no. 1 (1994): 93

<sup>145</sup> Harrell, “The Poetics of Destruction,” 94.

<sup>146</sup> Carrithers, Collins, and Lukes note that “under dance individuals merge in mind and body,” suggesting synchronization of community through embodied ritual actions. See Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes, eds., *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History* (Cambridge University Press, 1985): 37.

appearing ritual. Mosh pits form during music performances. In moments of musical tension or climax, a large circle forms in the inner grouping of the audience members. The circle leaves an open space, or the pit. At the climax of the song fans descend into the circle or pit, punching and whirling around in an almost animalistic fashion.<sup>147</sup> The moment is brutal<sup>148</sup> and sometimes bloody, with many emerging from the mosh pit with cuts and smeared noses and yet, as Tjora notes in his reflection on music festivals, it is a ritual defined by rules.<sup>149</sup> This sort of ritual was present in countless sets at Forest Festival but not at any of the other music festivals I observed, suggesting the bloody nature of these rituals are the dogmatic expression of doctrine specific to the music genre community. They seem to uphold rock music's metal edge, which doctrinally aligns with brutish physical and emotional ecstasy. I assert that this ritual for Forest Festival perfectly outlines Rappaport's notion of fortification of doctrine encoding, and certainly resembles Tillich's reflection on dogmatic expression found in the ritual practice.<sup>150</sup>

Our other music festivals also used community-specific rituals to portray and organise communal doctrine. Retro Festival, organised around communal ideology that promoted experience of older time periods, instilled rituals of dress that invited communal participation.

---

<sup>147</sup> Tjora notes "mosh pits are particularly found in more extrovert concerts, in front of the stage, in which a form of aggressive dancing involves, among other things, running into each other" ("The Social Rhythm of Rock Music Festival," 76).

<sup>148</sup> A cheat sheet for rock music and dance calls this a "violent collision." See "Dancing Off Stage: Moshing, Circle Pit, Wall of Death," *Rock and Metal Dance*, n.d., <http://rockmetaldance.com/mosh-circle-pit-wall-of-death/>.

<sup>149</sup> Tjora notes that the mosh pit is a rough and tumble part of "punk, metal and industrial" festivals. Tjora reflects that "even though this can be quite rough, there are clear rules regarding behaviour in the mosh pit: people who fall are to be picked up, or perhaps picked up and propelled out of the pit; people should not grope each other or hit anyone, and an apology is to be offered if this occurs accidentally; anyone trying to get out should be helped; no one should be pulled into the pit who is standing on the side-lines, and so on" ("The Social Rhythm of Rock Music Festival," 76). The reflection shows the dogmatic legislation that seeps into ritual coordination for these communities.

<sup>150</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in Making of Humanity*, 33; Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 22.

Flag Festival, focused on communal doctrine of music of specific countries, organised rituals around different dances and genre sounds to enhance the communal identity experience.

Acoustic Festival, with an identity centred on intimate experiences with an organic aesthetic, crafted rituals that used outdoor venues to align with its naturalistic communal ideology and smaller experiences to highlight the intimate identity curated throughout the music festival experience. I observed that each music festival curated some form of ritual to reflect and enhance their own key ideology. In doing so, music festivals align with our theorists, using the theme of rituals to curate communal identity within the communal doctrine.

Using such rituals crafts important communal edification, so that in and through the ideological rituals the community crafts a unified action that brings itself together. Crafting a cohesive communal unit, these doctrinally focused rituals indoctrinate individuals into communal ideology, allowing them to participate in the community in a way that connects them with the greater communal narrative. In using rituals that edify communal ideology, the music festivals form a communal identity unified by ideological understanding and acceptance. These rituals are contextually formed, purposeful and powerful in their ability to reflect and coordinate communal doctrine. I argue that these rituals are integral as the music festival communities form communal identity, allowing the community to form an integrated, active structure unified under an ideological framework. In this way the theme of rituals shapes the music festival communal identity, crafting and edifying communal doctrine through participatory action.

#### 5.4.4 Rituals and Fortification of Doctrine in Church Communities

Rituals for doctrinal purposes, similar to the rituals used during the liminal process, are not abnormal in many church communities. I assert that baptism and communion are clearly rituals for doctrinal fortification, actionizing the ideological framework of church communities.

Interestingly these ritual examples are also the rituals discussed during the liminal ritual reflection, showing how specific rituals can be both liminal and doctrinal in nature. We now examine the lived experience of our church communities, understanding how rituals of ideology and doctrine are integrated into the collective experience, forming the communal identity.

I observed that each church community successfully participated in a set of rituals that reflected communal ideology, reflecting the theorists and the music festival communities. I organise these rituals into two categories, passive rituals and hospitality rituals. Many of the observed church communities engaged in what I would call passive rituals, which highlight and inspire discussion of communal ideology. These rituals were observed in the liturgical form of worship and preaching. It could be argued that the church's use of sermons and worship is not necessarily ritualistic, but I suggest that if we think of rituals as a repeated action that fortifies doctrine through dogmatic expression, sermons and worship do align with the ritual notion.<sup>151</sup>

These rituals and the oration of communal doctrine serve as the dogmatic expression for the communities. Heightened by the emotional notion of the doctrinal affiliation of communities, these rituals were expressive forms of ideology. The community's desire to align itself theologically (dogmatically) was brought to life as preachers spoke<sup>152</sup> on theologically rich topics. Certainly, church communities understand the power and purpose of the preaching ritual.

---

<sup>151</sup> Pastor and theologian Joseph Blosser would seemingly agree with this notion. Blosser writes that the sermon has "become singularly responsible for creating powerful worship services and transforming congregations." Blosser calls for a more robust ritualized process of preaching so that it once again connects with the community, a thing he hopes will revitalize the dwindling church. He identifies the ritualized necessity for sermons, creating a ritual process of delivering doctrine for a specified purpose. See Joseph Blosser, "Ritual Reveal for Playful Protestant Preaching," *Encounter* 67, no. 3 (2006): 245.

<sup>152</sup> Even the ritual of preaching has come under critique. Blosser writes that "there is arguably no better explanation for the diminished numbers and decreased influence of the white mainline Protestant churches than the acknowledgement that we have neglected the gospel" ("Ritual Reveal," 3). While I find Blosser's methodology too narrow and his chastisement is not true of all church communities, he does reveal perhaps a small truth that even the rituals used are not purposeful and, compiled with the overall lack of rituals, explains diminished church numbers.

In fact, a conversation with a pastor revealed that they prioritised good preaching. The ritual of preaching and teaching aligns with a strong focus on creating a theologically unified community, and I observed that the church communities succeeded in creating a unified doctrinal understanding through the ritual of preaching.<sup>153</sup> In this way our church communities proved more successful than our music festival communities. The ritual of preaching created a unified and universal understanding, creating a solid community who all seemingly agreed with the same major tenets of faith. In this way the rituals of the church community were successful in the unification of doctrine, thereby shaping and reflecting the communal identity.

The ritual of teaching is a key ritual observed in many of our church communities, and yet I would argue that this ritual is passive. By that I mean that the ritual did not require communal interaction, rather congregant members engaged but did not actively contribute to the ritual. Lake Church did leave time in the service for a non-passive community focused ritual, allowing congregation members to speak out loud during times of prayer. In this way Lake Church integrated active doctrinally focused rituals into their community, observably crafting an experience that allowed individuals to enhance their communal bond. Yet the majority of the church communities engaged in doctrinal rituals that could be categorised as passive, the doctrinally sensitive ritual patterns limiting individual engagement. Still aligning with and reflecting on the dogmatic expression of the rituals, congregant members passively participated in the ritual process, the theme of ritual successfully being used for dogmatically focused communal and individual identity formation.

---

<sup>153</sup> As professor of church planting and evangelism W. Jay Moon notes, rituals “connect deep spiritual significance to the community development.” In oral cultures these rituals create a bond similar to what we find in music festival communities. In mitigating rituals that uphold an ecumenical social structure, church communities seem to be delineating the potential for communal creation. See W. Jay Moon, “Rituals and Symbols in Community Development,” *Missiology: An International Review* 40, no. 2 (2012): 141-152.



Along with passive rituals in the liturgical experience, I also observed that each church community engaged some active ritual of hospitality. Each of the church communities organised a ritual before or after a worship service in which community members would gather for beverages or food. Each church community made sure to include these rituals, extending their ideology of connection and communality through structured hospitality. These rituals prescribed specific rhythms. Stream Church was the only community that I observed using different coloured cups that their members could choose from, the rest used standardised vessels or disposable cups, rituals of hospitality that were coordinated within the communal structure. The coloured cups at Stream Church did not seem to be consciously distinguished, meaning they did not designate a colour for tea or coffee, rather the multitude of cup options displayed this ability for individual member choice done within the larger communal ritual. I note this because while the rituals in the church communities promoted participation based on individual choice, I argue that the rituals of hospitality were still mostly structured, limiting some of the participatory action I observed in the rituals of music festival communities. Stream Church, however, opened the ritual to some form of individual choice within the larger communal ritual. This in my observation was one example of the community's sincere investment in the ritual process, engaging hospitality for longer durations than other church communities did.

The rituals of hospitality highlight the communal desire of each of the church communities, a theologically reflective ritual with biblical foundations that instilled a collective experience outside of the liturgical rhythms of the service. Expressing doctrines of hospitality and community, these rituals allow each church community to coordinate communal indoctrination as well as connections among members. But these rituals could be enhanced with more communal participation; as I noted in the music festival communities, part of the success of

rituals of ideology is individual, elective participation, aligning their identity with the ideology of the communal rituals. I argue individual, active participation in doctrinally focused rituals is important, through these rituals the individuals and the community form unified ideological structures.

The observed church communities used rituals steeped in communal ideology to craft unique collective experiences. These rituals are integral for each church community, who through the theme of rituals bring theological insights and reflection to the individuals and to the community. Of most interest was also the ritual of hospitality, a new form of ideological ritual that enhances the connective bonds of the community. While I encourage our church communities to reflect on ways to enhance the participatory nature of some of the rituals, rituals of doctrine are of key importance to the church communities. Through the rituals of ideology church communities actively embody and bring together their members, forming the communal identity through the ideology mirrored in active rituals.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

Communal identity is constructed around numerous themes. Place and symbols hold weight and importance for the communal, but they are not alone in their impact. Rituals pair with place and symbols to form a communal identity, creating and curating the way in which communities identify themselves. The theme of rituals is influential in creating communal identity in the way that the theme of rituals synchronizes members, allowing for a transformational liminal process and doctrinal unification.

Our theologians reflected the importance of the theme of rituals. Tillich began our theological reflection, noting how the experiential nature of rituals aids in the solidification of

communal doctrine.<sup>154</sup> Eliade and Gaster continued this thought, both describing how rituals take on mythical narratives to provide clarity for the communities past and future.<sup>155</sup> Bell added to our theological reflection by outlining features or genres of rituals, influential for understanding ritual purpose.<sup>156</sup> Ultimately, our theologians uncovered important aspects of ritual, allowing us to understand not only how the theme of rituals function but their purpose in shaping and forming communal identity.

Our social scientists continued this reflection on the theme of rituals as a tool for the formation of communal identity. We began this reflection by examining three theorists who coordinated to reveal the connection between ritual and the liminal. Van Gennep outlined the process of liminal experiences.<sup>157</sup> Van Gennep was followed by Turner, who explored the transformational betwixt and between phase of the liminal process.<sup>158</sup> Rounding out the reflection was Durkheim, who noted the collective nature and effervescence of the liminal ritual.<sup>159</sup> Geertz continued our social science reflection, identifying how ritual acts as a social glue for communities.<sup>160</sup> Rappaport ended our social science reflection, concluding once again the importance of the theme of ritual for creating doctrine or ideological structures.<sup>161</sup>

---

<sup>154</sup> Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 4, 22.

<sup>155</sup> Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*; Gaster, *Thespis*, 17.

<sup>156</sup> Bell, *Ritual: Perspective and Dimensions*, 129–45.

<sup>157</sup> van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 11.

<sup>158</sup> Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 95.

<sup>159</sup> Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 129.

<sup>160</sup> Geertz, “Ritual and Social Change,” 32.

<sup>161</sup> Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in Making of Humanity*, 33.

The theoretical reflections of both our theologians and social scientists made it clear that rituals are important in the formation of communal identity. Through my observations at music festival and church communities, I found that the theme of rituals aided in the formation of communal identity in two areas: by creating a liminal process and by creating a doctrinally establishing practise. Our music festival communities seemed to highlight greatly the ability and importance of rituals creating a liminal experience; through the separation, transformation, and unification, the differing rituals present in every music festival created a liminal process. This liminal experience allowed communities to not only create an immediate identity through the creative process but also allowed the community to extend their identity creation into other places and seasons. In this way our music festival communities highlight the ability for rituals to craft a liminal experience, greatly impacting and outlining the music festival identity. Doctrinally sensitive rituals also outlined the music festival experience, each music festival community forming embodied action that unified the community through the ideological communal identity. Our church communities also crafted liturgically focused rituals that enhanced the liminal experience and the doctrinal unification. While I observed some ways that these rituals could be reshaped to enhance the communal identity, I do find each church community utilised the theme of rituals in a way that shaped the collective experience and thus the communal identity.

## CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION

### **6.1 Reflections on the Research**

I begin this concluding chapter by reflecting on what I suggest might be some the strengths of this project. I identify three main strengths, the engagement of multiple communities, the description of themes, and the practical recommendations that reveal new ecclesiological research insights.

The first strength of this research is the observation of multiple communities that ultimately uncovered patterns that aligned with themes central to the formation of communal identity. I made the decision to observe multiple communities in both the music festival and church community groupings in order to observe patterns of thematic use, lending important insight into how multiple communities use themes for the formation of communal identity. Some researchers, especially those in the music festival research field, observe only one community. This is not an inherently bad approach, but I found that I gained a similar thick observational understanding of each community while observing multiple music festival and church communities. I was able to do so because of the length of observation, which yielded deep understanding of each community. This approach is a strength of this research. Observing multiple communities allowed me to both gain a complete understanding of how similar communities form communal identity and offered a large observable foundation for comparing the general music festival communities with the church communities. Observing multiple communities verified patterns of thematic usage, allowing me to make concluding

recommendations. The observation of multiple communities is thus a strength because through it I found observable patterns of thematic usage that allows us to understand how the three themes are universally important for the formation of communal identity for both music festival communities and church communities.

The second area that I find is a strength for this research is the compilation of themes used to form communal identity. The themes detailed in this research—place, symbols, and ritual—are often discussed in both the social sciences and theology, as observable in the detailed literature review above. Yet I found few researchers addressed the three themes in co-relation. Especially for ecclesiological research, my intentional observation of all three themes and their intertwining, is a great strength of this dissertation. Not only does it yield new insights into the way in which communal identity is formed, but the connection of the three themes also lends to contextually adaptable recommendations.

The final strength of this dissertation is the practical resource that this dissertation will produce. As the research actively engages with contemporary church communities, and as the research is also focused on finding contextually appropriate solutions to declining church communities, the recommendations found later in this chapter is an area that I argue should be noted as a strength. Providing a practical element, this research enhances the contemporary theological dialogue, adding to the field of ecclesiological and lived religion research and practical theology.

Along with its strengths, this research has limitations. I would argue that one challenge to this project was a lack of interviews present in this research. Interviews, and general qualitative surveys, are frequently used in qualitative research to mitigate some observational bias and to gain a clearer understanding of the community. I had originally planned to engage in interviews

with music festival attendees and with church community members and leaders, but it became clear from early in the research process that these opportunities would not be granted. While I understood community organisers' hesitance to survey their entire community, I was surprised that many of the leaders and active community members in both groupings did not have interest in participating in interviews and rather engaged in casual conversation. This limitation is not abnormal; some ecclesiological researchers and practical theologians observe that hesitancy. I overcame that limitation with a strong focus on pattern observation, which displays uniformity in the thematic formation of communal identity. Yet, the lack of interviews does present a limitation of the research that is worth addressing in this reflection.

Overall, I argue that this research presents new theological insights, provides practical adoptions for lived communities, and displays a new process for the research of cultural and ecclesiological communities. While I also acknowledge the limitations of the research process, the strengths highlight the importance and purpose of the research, yielding key findings that advance our theological dialogue. With an understanding of the research strengths and limitations, we now move on to the recommendations based on the research findings.

## **6.2 Church Community Recommendations**

During the research process it became evident that, while the church communities all engaged with each theme successfully, the integration was at times not as successful as music festival communities' efforts. While it is also worth noting that the observation also found themes that the church communities integrated with more success, the limitation of some of the themes is an area that allows for recommendations. In some ways this lack of theme integration is not surprising; the research question and introductory statistics on the rise of music festival attendance and the decline of church attendance would naturally lead one to assume that the

music festival communities engage communal formation differently than the church communities. I observed music festival communities engage in the themes in a way that promoted deeper formation and adoption of communal identity. Drawing from some of the key findings of my participant observation among a variety of music festivals, I propose recommendations for place, symbols, and rituals, that could allow our church communities to craft stronger communal identities.

Before the recommendations, I note that these recommendations are community-specific, crafted for the church communities I observed. That being said, I encourage other church communities outside of those included in my fieldwork to critically analyse and reflect on their theological understanding and practical application of the three themes, perhaps finding new ways to engage in their formation of communal identity. For now, I will highlight recommendations for the church communities that, when implemented, will aid in the formation of communal identity.

#### 6.2.1 Recommendations for Place

Place is a central theme in the formation of communal identity. In my participant observation of music festivals, I discovered that the theme of place ultimately generated an occupational connection, yielded a ground for explorative engagement, and enhanced a sacred ethos and bond for the community. These three key findings from the theme of place outline my recommendations, suggesting how the theme of place can enhance the formation of communal identity for our church communities.

The first observation, and one of the important research findings, was the impact of occupation in the theme of place; I observed that through a rhythm of occupation the music festival communities established a connection to place in a way that formed their identity. One



key area that I found most interesting in this rhythm of occupation was how music festival communities curated historical connection to place. While the church communities also engaged in some rhythm of occupation, they could enhance the occupational rhythm by improving their historical attachment to place.

I recommend that the church communities reflect on and coordinate ways to articulate or display their historical attachment to the places where they gather for religious practise. To craft a stronger connection to the physical place, and to best use the theme of place for the formation of communal identity, church communities are encouraged to reflect on the historical rooting in their current place, and to create material culture to acknowledge and celebrate that history. Like the music festivals, our church communities could include historical pictures within their place or tie their vocalised identity to place, displaying the historical rootedness within their place. I argue that exploring the historical attachment within place, the historical narrative of occupation, through visual material culture or other means will allow the church communities to attach their communal narrative to the history, providing a sense of rootedness to place that is currently missing for some of our church communities.

Visual displays of history within place are easy recommendations to adopt; a simple use of material culture to highlight the community's history will greatly impact the topophilia connection over time. Along with that, and my second area of recommendation, is to reflect and engage with active trace making within place. A key finding from my research was that trace making was integral for the coordination of communal identity in the theme of place. The music festival communities used sensory objects within place to invite communal participation and promote communal engagement. Trace making was observed across music festivals, each music

festival using a form of physical, sensory, and visual trace making to encourage attachment to place, forming the communal identity.

I have two recommendations for church communities regarding trace making, the first being that the church communities reflect on the need for cyclical trace making to enhance the theme of place. By that I recommend that each community critically engages in visual trace making and sensory-oriented trace making, creating both large- and small-scale traces to reflect the liturgical cycle. Church communities could easily create trace material representations of the liturgical cycles, or of the sermon themes, crafting traces that reflect the communal ideology and teaching. I recommend both physical and digital material culture, curating a thematic narrative across the church community's place. Critically engaging in trace making allows for a notion of occupation and ownership in place, while also promoting the seasonality of different series and liturgical rhythms, encouraging better communal understanding of important communal ideology while also crafting deeper place connections.

I would also add that the music festival communities interestingly engaged in multisensory trace making, enhancing the communal experience of place through smell. While some may think of orthodox Christian communities' embrace of multisensory liturgical experiences, I recommend that all church communities reflect on the total sensory engagement when crafting a community in place. I do not necessarily recommend that the church communities in my fieldwork emulate their orthodox counterparts, which may be denominationally odd and perhaps off putting, but rather I recommend that they reflect on how the totality of the sensory trace making could enhance communal interactions.

My second recommendation for trace making as a form of occupational experience in the theme of place is for the church communities to curate engagement in which the church members

can be active in the trace making process. One of my key findings about place among music festivals was that music festival attendees could actively engage with trace making in the music festival place, forming topophilia connections to the place through the engagement. While the church communities cannot necessarily allow the church members to build tents in their worship area, or allow community members to spray paint the walls, active trace making is an integral part of the rhythm of occupation in place and thus something the church communities could add. In promoting ways to integrate individual engagement, church communities will not only be able to articulate communal identity in new ways, but they will also be able to indoctrinate the individual into communal ideology, leading to communal identity adoption. Thus, I recommend that our church communities think of ways for members to actively participate in trace making, enhancing place through individual action that aligns with the greater community. This can be as simple as inviting community engagement when setting up chairs or can be as large as inviting community trace engagement for symbol curation. An active trace engagement will allow our church communities to enhance their occupation of place through trace making.

Finally, I observed how the theme of place prescribed explorative engagement, a key finding worth highlighting; I observed that music festival communities purposefully created immersive, multi-sensory-stimulating, experiential niches within the larger music festival place. These explorative places became central to the music festival experience, allowing individuals to pause and engage more deeply with specific communal ideology and identity, facilitating their personal adoption of communal identity. Ocean Church expertly crafted a similar explorative place, promoting their communal identity marker of hospitality and theological reflection into place. I observed that many of the community members engaged in this place, forming communal connections through interactions between small subsets of the wider group. What was

fruitful for both the music festivals and for Ocean Church could be adopted by others. Thus, my recommendation for the church communities is to actively create explorative place alternatives, allowing the community to engage in more intimate experiences, promoting engagement for the individuals within the larger community. The physical explorative places craft an intimate place for engagement, producing active community integration into communal structure and ideology through place.

Ultimately the recommendations that come from the observed use of place illuminate how the physical location of a community can greatly enhance its formation of communal identity. Historical rootedness, active trace making, and explorative engagement are important aspects of place that allow the theme to form the communal identity, and all are areas that our church communities can enhance. The recommendations above will allow the church communities to contextualise what was so successful in the music festival communities, crafting stronger communal identities in and through the theme of place.

### 6.2.2 Recommendations for Symbols

Symbols prove to be an integral theme for the formation of communal identity, observed both in the music festival communities and in the church communities. My observations showed that while the church communities integrated symbols into their community, the theme of symbols is where the church communities lacked the most in comparison to what was observed in music festivals, meaning that these recommendations have great potential for impact for church communities' formation and dissemination of communal identity. This section highlights recommendations for the theme of symbols, discussing recommendations for the church communities for transcendent symbols and for symbols that hold emotional and ideological purpose.

I will first address the recommendations for the transcendent purpose of symbols, later discussing emotional and ideological symbol recommendations together. My observation of music festival communities highlighted the transcendent purpose of symbols, many music festival communities engaging in differing forms and sizes of symbols in marketing and in the physical material culture to usher in a transcendent state. One of the key findings was the way in which symbols, and their repetitive use, was integral to the formation of communal identity. The music festivals engaged in crafting and repeating symbols that mirrored the community, its name, communal history and ideology, and distinctive factors through the material culture. Both branding symbols and the physical symbols curated key identity markers for each music festival, forming the communal identity.

The church communities branding and symbols was less visually fluid and therefore arguably availed for less transcendent potential. This leads to my first recommendation for the church communities, that they evaluate their branding image and engage in potential reconstruction of the branding to better display the transcendent potential of communal-specific symbols. This form of symbols was noted among music festival communities, and in Hillsong Church, which used visually stirring branding to usher in transcendent potential. While a change in branding is not an easy task, the rigidity of the church branding for the communities limits the visual transcendence and I would argue does not rightly display the vitality of each church community. Therefore, I recommend that the church communities revise and reconstruct their branding and symbols, creating visual interest and transcendent possibility through the symbols. Adoption of this recommendation would allow each church community to better promote the transcendent ethos of their community, forming the communal identity through a more engaging symbol.

The transcendence of symbols is not only curated through branding, but the music festival communities also used repetitive, community-specific symbols to promote transcendent engagement with symbolism in material culture form. Moving the symbols from branding into the material culture, the music festival communities crafted communal specific symbols and then physically produced them, dotting their community with material culture artefacts. I recommend that each church community does the same, actively constructing in material form the improved communally contextualised symbols. In doing so they could usher in transcendent engagement as church community members recognise and engage with symbols specific to their community. These symbols not only aid in the formation of communal identity by visually representing core communal truths and narratives, but when produced as a physical trace the symbols in material culture draw the community into better engagement, transporting them into a transcendent experience as they engage continuously with the community-specific symbols. Church communities could craft engaging, transcendent branding and symbols, and could physically alter their visual landscape by producing these symbols in the material so that the community can fully engage with and adopt them.

My second area of recommendation for the theme of symbols aligns with the purpose of symbols to be conveyors of both emotion and ideology. A key finding from the research was the music festival communities' success in using emotionally transfixing and ideologically coordinating symbols for the formation of communal identity. The music festivals expertly crafted material culture symbols to manipulate emotion and ideology, using scale and repetition to stir emotional engagement and ideological adoption. In my observation I found that the emotional and ideological symbols could be enhanced for our church communities, leading to the recommendation that church communities craft and use symbols in a more obvious way, to

encourage emotional engagement and ideological focus for the community. Large-scale symbol creation and repetitive symbol use will usher in an ideologically attuned emotional experience, altering the communal state. Church communities could enhance the formation and adoption of their communal identity, using symbols to create long-lasting ties to the community through emotional engagement and ideology awareness. I confidently suggest that a revitalised usage of symbols will allow our church communities to enhance their lived experience, the theme of symbols actively forming the communal identity when used to promote transcendent emotional and ideological engagement.

Symbols proved to be an integral theme for the formation of communal identity among music festival communities, which all engaged in a pattern of symbol usage. These material culture artefacts formed communal identity by visually displaying core communal narratives and ideology, which curated emotional and transcendent engagement. Symbols and visual culture should not be dismissed by church communities; rather, I strongly recommend a revitalisation in the use of symbols for the formation of communal identity. A more engaging display of and interaction with symbols will allow church communities to visually display their core communal principles and will allow the church communities to prompt greater levels of engagement, forming a more cohesive and more complete communal identity.

### 6.2.3 Recommendations for Ritual

The final chapter of my fieldwork observation focused on how the theme of ritual aided in the formation of communal identity. I observed that the music festival communities organised their ritual practice around liminal rituals, ushering in transformation of members' identities. Along with this, the theme of ritual was also integral for the ideological uniformity of the community, individuals actively participating in rituals that indoctrinated them into the larger music festival

community. I assert that rituals not only engaged in the formation of communal identity but also in its distribution and adoption, rituals thus serving to be of great importance as a theme for the formation of music festival communal identity. While rituals could be observed in the church communities, I found that the theme could be enhanced for the formation of communal identity.

It was clear during my observation that the music festival communities engaged in rituals that ushered in the liminal process, forming individual identity within the larger communal identity. This certainly adds to the list of key findings, the research revealing the importance of the liminal ritual process for the formation of communal identity. During the observational period I found that our church communities engaged in some liminal rituals, but they could be enhanced by a more focused approach. Thus, I recommend that the church communities reflect on their use of rituals with the intention to offer more opportunities for liminal ritual engagement. More intentional attention to a liminal liturgical calendar would allow communities to enact regular liminal ritual integration, bringing the individual into the communal identity through the ritual process. Along with that a more robust liminal ritual calendar would allow church communities to highlight important phases, inducting community members more deeply into the community by creating repetitive bonding rituals. A liminal ritual calendar would allow each church community to better form communal identity around cyclical rites of passage, allowing the community to feel deeply rooted in their shared identity through the ritual process.

Along with an enhanced liminal ritual calendar, I also recommend that church communities reflect on ways to individualise some rituals, enhancing individual participation in the ideologically focused communal practise. Stream Church most notably engaged in this form of ritual. Anchored by their desire to be a hospitality-focused community, Stream Church actively and weekly set out rituals of meal sharing. These included times of drinks, something



not abnormal amongst the observed church communities. But what was notable was that Stream Church's ritual process allowed individuals to choose their drinking vessel, a small moment of individual participation within the larger communal ideological framework. This small act of individual engagement ultimately yielded a more connected ritual process, observing people spending more time with their chosen object and more time within the ritual process.

I found the individual interaction within the larger communal ritual in music festivals as well, giving way to an interesting observation and reflection. I found that allotting small individual participatory choices within the larger communal ritual allowed the community to not only engage ideological frameworks but to also feel more connected to the ritual. In doing so the ritual moved the individual from mere consumer to active engager, bringing about a new sense of connectedness to community and to ritual. While rituals are present in many of the church communities, they still hold a consumer mentality in that the ritual actors are merely following along and consuming. A more robust focus on small individual participation within the larger ritual framework could change this, allowing individuals to personalise the rituals in a way that promotes better ritual engagement and therefore stronger ideological and communal connection. If church communities adopt this recommendation, I would argue that they would allow rituals to better form communal identity and communal participation, enhancing their use of the theme of ritual in the formation and integration of communal identity.

Rituals embody communal ideology and identity, encoding the community in the embodied practice. The music festivals succeeded in crafting both liminal rituals and ideology focused rituals, ushering in the formation of communal identity through the theme of ritual. Theological reflection on ecclesiological communities will often find some sort of ritual integrated into the community, and the recommendations I presented above will enhance what is

already understood to be of importance for our church communities. A more engaging and liminally focused ritual process will allow the church communities to actively encourage embodied participation, forming the communal identity of the church communities through the theme of ritual.

### **6.3 The Contribution of this Project to Ecclesiology**

I conclude with some reflection on how the research presented here fits into larger theological discourse. In doing so, I also hope to illuminate how this research opens a new potential area for reflection, moving theological research forward. I would argue that this research firstly aligns with theological scholarship focused on practical theology or lived religion research.

Ecclesiological and lived religion research is a theological field of research interested in understanding the lived reality of church communities. From the prompting research question addressed in the introduction, to the methodological structure, to my actual observational analysis, the research is focused on understanding patterns and rhythms of communities in a way that aligns with and reflects the current process for ecclesiological research. Like other ecclesiological and lived religion research, the research explores and understands intricacies present in each community, giving us a thick descriptive analysis of the lived reality of specific church communities. The concluding recommendations found above also aligns with the research process of formulating new insights for the observed communities, enhancing both the research for this dissertation and the broader ecclesiological and lived religion research field. In this way the research I have presented reflects and adds to the existing ecclesiological research, adding depth and additional understanding to the broad theological field.

The research presented also aligns with theological research and dialogue focused on the integration of the arts into the lived religion experience. The theologians featured in *For the*

*Beauty of the Church: Casting a Vision for the Arts* add clarity to how this research fits into the larger theology and arts conversation; reflection on how and why material culture belongs in theological research. Jeremy Begbie argues that “we have reached an ‘aesthetic’ moment in our culture, when artistic media are quickly assuming massive importance in shaping Western imagination.”<sup>1</sup> Begbie notes that the church is not immune to this aesthetic movement; rather, the “stuff we see,” as Eugene Peterson notes, is becoming a cornerstone of the lived religion experience.<sup>2</sup> As elements of material culture “express and deepen the corporate nature of a Christian way of life and worship” a resurgence of focus on the aesthetic and material culture in contemporary church communities leads to an understanding of how and why material culture is integral for the formation of communal culture.<sup>3</sup>

The chapters above make it clear that I align with what these theologians focused on theology and art argue, that part of the practical theological academia must be focused not only the ideological and the unseen but also on the material, a combination of the lived reality and the religious reality of contemporary church communities. In this way I would argue that the work present in this dissertation not only aligns with ecclesiological research but also aligns with theology and art research.

The work presented also expands the theology and art, or theology and culture, discourse. The theologians gathered in *For the Beauty of the Church*, and others who also specialise in theology and culture, are often focused on art in its most obvious form. By that I mean that most of the theology and culture research and dialogue is focused primality on visible culture, on art in

---

<sup>1</sup> Begbie, “The Future: Looking to the Future: A Hopeful Subversion,” in Taylor, *For the Beauty of the Church*, 178.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 95, 170.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 49.

galleries or on walls or in decorations of the church. In some ways visible art in this way is an easy place to start, as it presents the most common understanding of art, but I argue that the work presented in this dissertation extends theology and culture in a way that defines art through the music festival experience. Other theologians, such as Jeremy Begbie, Tom Beaudoin, Danielle Anne Lynch, and Barry Taylor have taken on a critical reflection of contemporary music and theology. Contemporary theologians including Kutter Callaway and Robert K. Johnston have surveyed television and film. But no theologian to my knowledge has published discussions on music festivals and contemporary church cultures as a reflection of theology and culture. Thus, the discussion presented in this dissertation opens a new area for the theology and arts discussion, opening what I find to be a new and exciting field for theological reflection.

Lastly, I add that I find the research presented in this dissertation also aligns with and adds to the field of practical theology. While it could be reasonably argued that theology and culture is a part of the practical theology umbrella, I find it important to discuss the practical theology alignment on its own. In many ways any ecclesiological research holds within it the potential to be practical, drawing praxis-focused conclusions and recommendations from the communities of observation. The research in this dissertation is very much practical as the comparison of the formation of communal identity yielded not only theoretical insights but also practical recommendations. It is this practical adaptive reflection that aligns this work with the field of practical theology, the movement of the theoretical to the actual moving the work from purely theoretical theology to partly practical theology.

#### **6.4 Future Research**

The research presented in this dissertation is a mere starting point for research in the formation of communal identity in church communities and music festivals. Other contributing themes and

insights were briefly noted during observation, but due to numerous factors were not included in this dissertation, leading to the discussion of future research potential. I thus move on to discuss the future research that comes from the initial research into the formation of communal identity in church communities and music festivals.

I address possibilities for future research in two areas; the first is future research that highlights more themes for communal identity creation, and the second is research into different communities. During the research process, it became clear from the observations that many themes add to the formation of communal identity. Due to practical challenges including word length limits and fieldwork time allotment, I chose the themes that best aligned with what was most clearly observable, as I was interested in the way that these themes impacted the formation of communal identity. Yet, I also found patterns that revealed other important themes, such as shared and expressed history, language, and communal roles. For future research, I would be curious as to how both the theoretical understanding of the themes and their lived reality shape the contemporary communal identity for our music festivals and church communities.

Along with further research on themes that add to the formation of communal identity, I would also like to expand the contemporary communities to understand how other communities utilise these themes for the formation of communal identity. To do this, I would both expand the geographical location of music festival communities and extend the denominational affiliation for the church communities. Expanding the geographical location for the music festival communities may reveal whether the patterns and themes observed in the Midlands reflect other music festival communities. Music festivals are present in many areas, including throughout continental Europe and in the United States. I chose to focus on Midland music festivals because I thought researching music festival communities with similar demographics to the church

communities would offer important uniformity. Yet I would be interested if the themes of importance for these music festivals also held importance for music festivals in differing locations. Thus, for future research, I would be interested in observing and evaluating music festival communities in differing geographic locations, offering up a more universal understanding of the way in which music festivals in general form communal identity.

Continuing my focus on ecclesiological research and practical theology, I would also be interested in researching how the themes present for this dissertation could be evaluated in other church demographics and denominations. The research I have presented was focused on specific non-denominational church communities, both because of my insider knowledge and because these church communities represent my research interest. Yet I also know that other church denominations hold theological rhythms around the themes of place, symbols, and ritual. Therefore, I would be interested in future research to extend the foundational understanding of the themes that contribute to the formation of communal identity into different church communities and denominations. I would be curious to research how the reflection on the themes, and the theological discourse and action from the reflection, could enhance the communal identity for each specific community.

The research presented in the above chapters answers the foundational research questions, but it also opens the way for future research into the topic of the formation of communal identity in church communities and music festivals. With an ecclesiological research and practical theology focus, I would extend the research to continue to engage in observation and reflection on the themes integral for the formation of communal identity. Along with that I am also interested in crafting discussion around these themes so that church communities can engage in contextually appropriate dialogue about how to form better communal identity. I argue

that this research yields helpful and important insights for contemporary church communities, and that this research can continue in theologically significant ways.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This dissertation was originally sparked by the lived experience of two distinct yet similar communities. The church and music festival communities shared an inherent desire to form community, yet they differed in their processes and in effectiveness of creating community. My own experience of this difference, when paired with the statistics about the growth of music festival communities and demise of church communities, sparked my interest in researching the way in which communal identity is formed. The research questions asked not only how the formation of communal identity is actualised, but the research questions also looked to practical theology for prescriptive recommendations that could perhaps revitalise the waning formation of communal identity in church communities.

What I discovered during the research process is that the formation of communal identity is, at least in part, rooted in the themes of place, symbols, and ritual. I found that place was integral for both music festival and church communities; the research revealed how place organises an occupational rhythm that coordinates communal identity, crafts explorative engagement that allows individuals to entrench themselves in communal existence, and manifests a sacred reality in which a community builds its communal experience and identity. Place builds roots; it crafts physically aligned connections; and it contributes to the overall formation of communal identity in striking ways. These key findings lead to practical recommendations for our church communities, rooting the formation of their communal identity in the theme of place.

The research also yields another theme of importance, symbols. I found that the visual material culture proved of great significance for the formation of communal identity, leading to the key findings of how symbols invite a community to shape their communal identity through transcendent, emotional, and ideologically focused symbols. Symbols offer visual portals of reflection that move the community to transcendent realities, emotionally focused visual stimuli that craft engaging communal moments, and material culture media for important communal ideology. The visual aesthetics are not to be dismissed, and the key findings around the transcendent potential of branding and the emotional repetition of symbols prove to be incredibly important and useful for our church communities as they engage in the formation of communal identity.

Moving from the material culture to the embodied, I observed that the third theme of importance for the formation of communal identity was ritual. Acting as a form of social cohesion for our communities, I found in the observations that both the liminal nature of rituals and the way in which rituals solidify communal doctrine add to the formation of communal identity. Rituals initiate liminally sensitive rhythms, moving the individuals within the community from one state of being to the next. Rituals also bind together individuals into the collective whole, unifying through bodily praxis. With a focus on liminal liturgical rituals and an invitation to pair communal rituals with individual choices, our church communities can enhance their ritual process, the key findings opening new doors for ritual experiences in our church communities.

Ultimately, both my theoretical and fieldwork research found answers to my original research questions. I found that communal identity is in part formed through the three themes, which are in fact used in differing ways in our music festival and church communities, the



differences illuminating adoptive recommendations that will potentially enhance the formation of communal identity for our church communities. I am confident that the recommendations I proposed at the end of the research will in some way add to the process for the formation of communal identity for our church communities, a practical theological application for the research. My ultimate hope with this research is that it not only advances theological discourse around the lived religion experience, but that the recommendations also contribute to the formation of communal identity for our specific church communities so they can revitalise their community through active formation and dispersion of communal identity.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, Paul, Steven Hoelscher, and Karen Till. *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies*. London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.
- Adelman, Madelaine, and Miriam Fendius Elman. *Jerusalem: Conflict and Cooperation in a Contested City*, 2014.  
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bham/detail.action?docID=3410187>.
- “Alazka.” Metal Anarchy: Hard Rock & Heavy Metal News, 2018.  
<https://metalanarchy.com/tag/alazka/>.
- Anderson, G.L. “Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient near East by Theodor H. Gaster.” *Western Folklore* 10, no. 1 (1951): 92–93.
- Anderson, Jon. *Understanding Cultural Geography*. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Antonetti, Paolo, and Stan Maklan. “Hippies, Greenies, and Tree Huggers: How the ‘Warmth’ Stereotype Hinders the Adoption of Responsible Brands.” *Psychology & Marketing* 33, no. 10 (2016): 796–813.
- Anttonen, Veikko. “Space, Body, and the Notion of Boundary: A Category-Theoretical Approach to Religion.” *Temenos* 41, no. 2 (September 1, 2005): 185–201.
- Arnould, Eric J, Linda L Price, and Cele Otnes. “Making Magic Consumption: A Study of White-Water River Rafting.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 1999.
- Arnould, Eric, and Linda Price. “Beyond the Sacred-Profane Dichotomy in Consumer Research.” *Advances in Consumer Research* 31, no. 1 (2004): 52–56.
- Atkinson, Paul, Amanda Coffey, Sara Delamont, John Lofland, and Lyn Lofland, eds. *Handbook of Ethnography*. SAGE Publications, 2001.
- Austin, Diane J. “Symbols and Culture: Some Philosophical Assumptions in the Work of Clifford Geertz.” *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Anthropology* 3 (December 1973): 45–59.
- Bakolis, I., R. Hammoud, M. Smythe, J. Gibbons, N. Davidson, S. Tognin, and A. Michelle. “Urban Mind: Using Smartphone Technologies to Investigate the Impact of Nature on Mental Well-Being in Real Time.” *Bioscience* 68, no. 2 (2018): 134–45.

- Ballard, Paul. "The Bible in Theological Reflection: Indications from the History of Scripture." *Practical Theology* 4, no. 1 (2011): 35–47.
- Barnard, Alan. *Genesis of Symbolic Thought*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. University of Michigan Press, 1994.
- Beaudoin, Tom. *Consuming Faith: Integrating Who We Are with What We Buy*. Lanham: Sheed & Ward, 2003.
- . *Secular Music and Sacred Theology*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013.  
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bham/detail.action?docID=4546308>
- Beery, Thomas, K Jonsson, and Johan Elmberg. "From Environmental Connectedness to Sustainable Futures: Topophilia and Human Affiliation with Nature." *Sustainability* 7, no. 7 (2015): 8837–54.
- Begbie, Jeremy. *Beholding the Glory: Incarnation through the Arts*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.
- . *Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.
- . "The Future: Looking to the Future: A Hopeful Subversion." In *For the Beauty of the Church: Casting a Vision for the Arts*, edited by W. David O. Taylor. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010.
- . *Voicing Creation's Praise: Towards a Theology of the Arts*. T&T Clark, 2000.
- Beit-Hallahmi, Benjamin, and Michael Argyle. *The Psychology of Religious Behaviour, Belief and Experience*. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Belk, Russell W., Melanie Wallendorf, and John F. Sherry, Jr. "The Sacred and the Profane in Consumer Behavior: Theodicy on the Odyssey." *Journal of Consumer Research* 16, no. 1 (1989): 1–39.
- Bell, Catherine. "Discourse and Dichotomies: The Structure of Ritual Theory." *Religion* 17, no. 2 (April 1987): 95–118.
- . *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. Oxford University Press, 2009.
- . "Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals." *Worship* 63, no. 1 (January 1989): 31–41.
- . *Ritual: Perspective and Dimensions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

- . *Teaching Ritual*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- . “The Ritual Body and the Dynamics of Ritual Power.” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 4, no. 2 (1990): 299–313.
- Bell, Michael. “No Dead Air! The iPod and the Culture of Mobile Listening.” *Leisure Studies* 24, no. 4 (August 16, 2006): 343–56.
- Bellah, Robert N. “Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity by Roy A. Rappaport.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38, no. 4 (1999): 569.
- Berger, Peter. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Open Road Integrated Media, Inc., 1990.  
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bham/detail.action?docID=1804802>.
- Bird, Frederick. “Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions by Catherine Bell.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38, no. 4 (December 1999): 566–68.
- Blosser, Joseph. “Ritual Reveal for Playful Protestant Preaching.” *Encounter* 67, no. 3 (2006): 245.
- Bonkowski, Annett, and Norman Fleischer. “Troubled Times: Lollapalooza 2017 and the Challenges for Major Music Festivals.” *Nothing But Hope and Passion*, 2017.  
<https://nbhap.com/stories/troubled-times-lollapalooza-2017-challenges-major-music-festivals>.
- Boorer, Suzanne. “Book Review: The Land Is Mine.” *Pacifica* 10, no. 1 (February 1, 1997): 93–95.
- Bosepflug, Mark. “Is Augustinian Faith Rational?” *Religious Studies* 52, no. 1 (March 2016): 63–79.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Edited by Randal Johnson. Columbia University Press, 1993.
- Brant, Jonathan. “A Theology of Revelation through Culture.” Oxford Scholarship Online. Oxford University Press, 2012.  
<https://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199639342.001.0001/acprof-9780199639342-chapter-3>.
- “Bring Back V Festival.” Change.org, n.d. <https://www.change.org/p/richard-branson-bring-back-v-festival-chelmsford>.
- Brown, Frank Burch. “Making Sacred Places, Making Places Sacred.” *Encounter* 59, no. 1–2 (1998): 95.

- Brueggemann, Walter. "Reviewed Works: The Territorial Dimension of Judaism." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103, no. 2 (1984): 278–79.
- . "The God of Joshua...Give or Take the Land." *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 66, no. 2 (2012): 164–75.
- . *The Land: Place as a Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977.
- Brun-Cottan, Françoise. "Doing Corporate Ethnography as an Outsider." In *Advancing Ethnography in Corporate Environments: Challenges and Emerging Opportunities*, edited by Brigitte Jordan, 163–74. Left Coast, 2013.
- Bruskin, Signe. "Insider or Outsider? Exploring the Fluidity of the Roles through Social Identity Theory." *Journal of Organizational Ethnography* 8, no. 2 (2019): 159–70.
- Buerger, Megan. "4 Challenges Facing Festivals in 2015—And How the Industry Is Confronting Them." *Billboard*, March 30, 2015. <https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/music-festivals/6516734/top-challenges-facing-festivals-2015>.
- Burton, Tara Isabella. *Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World*. New York: Public Affairs, 2020.
- Cacciottolo, Mario. "Occupy London: What Did the St Paul's Protest Achieve?" BBC News, February 2012. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-17188327>.
- Campbell, Joseph. *Myths to Live By*. London: Souvenir, 1973.
- . *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. London: Fontana, 1993.
- Campbell, Joseph, Bill D. Moyers, and Betty S. Flowers. *The Power of Myth*. New York: Anchor Books, 1991.
- Carr, Anne. "The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System by Avery Dulles." *The Journal of Religion* 73, no. 4 (1993): 643–44.
- Carrithers, Michael, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes, eds. *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History*. Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Carter, Jeffrey. "Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions by Catherine Bell." *The Journal of Religion* 79, no. 2 (April 1999): 344–45.
- Cassell, Paul. "Rappaport, Revisited." *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 26, no. 4–5 (2014): 417–38.

- Chandler, Jake, and Victoria Harrison. "Probability in the Philosophy of Religion." In *Probability in the Philosophy of Religion*, edited by Jake Chandler and Victoria Harrison, 1-31. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Chavez, Christina. "Conceptualizing from the Inside: Advantages, Complications, and Demands on Insider Positionality." *The Qualitative Report* 13, no. 9 (2008): 474-94.
- Chhabra, Deepak, and Eunye Grace Kim. "Topophilia and Economic Value of Lifestyle Travellers." *Leisure Loisir* 42, no. 1 (July 19, 2016): 115-23.
- Clark, Kelly James, and Raymond J. Van Arragon. *Evidence and Religious Belief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Cobb, Kelton. *The Blackwell Guide to Theology and Popular Culture*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005.
- Coleman, Simon. "From the Liminal to the Lateral: Urban Religion in English Cathedrals." *Tourism Geographies* 21, no. 3 (May 27, 2019): 384-404.
- Cosner, Lita. "Dwelling with God: From Eden to the New Jerusalem." Creation Ministries International, October 22, 2015. <https://creation.com/dwelling-with-god>.
- Craft, Carolyn M. "Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture." *Library Journal* 110, no. 20 (1985).
- Crouch, Andy. "The Gospel: How Is Art a Gift, a Calling, and an Obedience." In Taylor, *For the Beauty of the Church*, 29-44.
- Daeges, Wendy. "Genesis of Symbolic Thought by Alan Barnard." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19, no. 2 (June 2013): 405-6.
- "Dancing off Stage: Moshing, Circle Pit, Wall of Death." Rock and Metal Dance, n.d. <http://rockmetaldance.com/mosh-circle-pit-wall-of-death/>.
- Davies, W.D. *The Territorial Dimensions of Judaism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1911.
- Davis, David J. *From Icon to Idols: Documents on the Image Debate in Reformation England*. Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2016.  
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bham/detail.action?docID=4652387>.
- Detweiler, Craig, and Barry Taylor. *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.

- Dixon, John W. "Image as Insight. Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture by Margaret Miles." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 58, no. 2 (1990): 267–76.
- Douglas, Allen. "Eliade's Legacy 25 Years Later: A Critical Tribute." *International Journal on Humanistic Ideology* 4, no. 2 (2011): 15-28.
- "Dr Luis-Manuel Garcia." University of Birmingham, Department of Music, n.d.  
<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/lcahm/departments/music/staff/profile.aspx?ReferenceId=110326>.
- Drane, John. *After McDonaldization: Mission, Ministry and Christian Discipleship in an Age of Uncertainty*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.
- . *Evangelism for a New Age: Creating Churches for the Next Century*. London: Harper Collins, 1994.
- . *The McDonaldization of the Church: Consumer Culture and the Church's Future*. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2001.
- Dulles, Avery Robert. *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System*. New York: Crossroads, 1992.
- Durkheim, Émile. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. New York: The Free Press, 1912.
- Eliade, Mircea. "Australian Religions. Part III: Initiation Rites and Secret Cults." *History of Religions* 7, no. 1 (1967): 61-90.
- . *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. London: Sheed & Ward, 1958.
- . *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*. 1.1 ed. Thompson, CT: Spring, 2017.
- , ed. *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*. New York: MacMillan, 1987.
- . *The Myth of the Eternal Return*. New York: Pantheon, 1954.
- . *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. New York: Harcourt, 1959.
- Fackre, Gabriel. "Avery Dulles, 'The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System' (Book Review)." *Modern Theology* 9, no. 3 (n.d.).
- Ferre, Nels. "Book Reviews: The Dynamics of Faith, by Paul Tillich." *Theology Today* 14, no. 2 (July 1957): 276–79.

- Flinn, Jenny, and Matt Frew. "Glastonbury: Managing the Mystification of Festivity." *Leisure Studies* 33, no. 4 (2014): 418-34.
- Freedman, Maurice. "Bali, Studies in Life, Thought, and Ritual." *The British Journal of Sociology* 15, no. 1 (1964): 84.
- Galli, Mark. "Whatever Happened to Communion & Baptism?" *Christianity Today*, 2019. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/july-web-only/whatever-happened-to-communion-baptism.html>.
- Gare, Arran. *Postmodernism and the Environmental Crises*, 1948. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bham/detail.action?docID=165745>.
- Gaster, Theodor Herzl. *Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient near East*. New York: Harper and Row, 1906.
- Gebel, Meira. "As Coronavirus Pushes Millions Inside, Everyone Is Streaming on Instagram Live." *Digital Trends*, March 21, 2020. <https://www.digitaltrends.com/social-media/as-coronavirus-pushes-thousands-inside-everyone-is-going-live-on-instagram/>.
- Geertz, Clifford. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." *Daedalus* 134, no. 4 (2005): 56–86.
- . "Ethos, World View, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols." *Antioch Review* 74, no. 3 (2016): 622–37.
- . "Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example." *American Anthropologist* 59, no. 1 (1957).
- Giazitzoglu, Andreas, and Geoff Payne. "A 3-Level Model of Insider Ethnography." *The Qualitative Report* 23, no. 5 (2018): 1149–59.
- Gnoldi, Gherardo. "Thespis: Ritual, Myth, and Drama in the Ancient near East by Theodor H. Gaster." *East and West* 13, no. 1 (1951): 73–75.
- Goetze, Albrecht. "Thespis. Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient near East by Theodor H. Gaster." *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 6, no. 2 (1952): 99–103.
- Gold, Raymond L. "Roles in Sociological Field Observations." *Social Forces* 36, no. 3 (1958): 217–23.
- Goulding, Christina, and Michael Saren. "Transformation, Transcendence, and Temporality in Theatrical Consumption." *Journal of Business Research* 69, no. 1 (2016): 216-24.
- Green, Garrett. *Imagining God: Theology and the Religious Imagination*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.



- Grimes, Ronald L. *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*. University Press of America, 1982.
- Gross, David. "The Religious Critique of Culture: Paul Tillich and Hans Urs von Balthasar." *Philosophy Today* 54, no. 4 (2010): 392–400.
- Gross, Robert. "Heavy Metal Music: A New Subculture in American Society." *Journal of Popular Culture* 24, no. 1 (1990): 119–30.
- Gruneberg, Keith N. *Abraham, Blessing and the Nations: A Philological and Exegetical Study of Genesis 12:3 in Its Narrative Context*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003.  
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bham/reader.action?docID=3042759>.
- Habel, Norman C. *The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995.
- Haight, Roger, and James Nieman. "On the Dynamic Relation between Ecclesiology and Congregational Studies." *Theological Studies* 70 (2009): 577–99.
- Halpern-Amaru, Betsy. *Rewriting the Bible: Land and Covenant in Post-Biblical Jewish Literature*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994.
- Hamilton, Aretina R. "A Review of 'Understanding Cultural Geography: Places and Traces.'" *The Professional Geographer* 62, no. 4 (2010): 551–53.
- Hammersley, Martyn, and Paul Atkinson. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Harrell, Jack. "The Poetics of Destruction: Death Metal Rock." *Popular Music and Society* 18, no. 1 (1994): 91–103.
- Hartig, Terry, Gary W. Evans, Larry D. Jamner, Deborah S. Davis, and Tommy Garling. "Tracking Restoration in Natural and Urban Field Settings." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 23, no. 2 (2003): 109–23.
- Harvey, John T., and Michael A. Katovich. "Symbolic Interactionism and Institutionalism: Common Roots." *Journal of Economic Issues* 26, no. 3 (1992): 791–812.
- Havice, Christine. "Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture (Book Review)." *Woman's Art Journal* 14, no. 2 (1991): 50–53.
- Hayward, John F. "Eliade, the Myth of the Eternal Return (Book Review)." *Journal of Religion* 35 (January 1955): 263.
- Heath, Robert, and Paul Feldwick. "Fifty Years Using the Wrong Model of Advertising." *International Journal of Market Research* 50, no. 1 (2008): 29–60.

- Henley Jr., Walter Hodges, Melodie Philhours, Sampath Kumar Ranganathan, and Alan J. Blush. "The Effects of Symbol Product Relevance and Religiosity on Consumer Perceptions of Christian Symbols in Advertising." *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising* 31, no. 1 (2009).
- Hepsø, Vidar. "Doing Corporate Ethnography as an Insider." In *Advancing Ethnography in Corporate Environments: Challenges and Emerging Opportunities*, edited by Brigitte Jordan, 151–62. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2013.
- Herbert, Steve. "For Ethnography." *Progress in Human Geography* 24, no. 4 (2000): 550–68.
- Heshmat, Shahram. "How the Ownership of Something Increases Our Valuations." *Psychology Today*, June 30, 2015. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/science-choice/201506/how-the-ownership-something-increases-our-valuations>.
- Hicks, Robin. "Hillsong-Australia's Most Powerful Brand." Mumbrella, 2012. <https://mumbrella.com.au/hillsong-australias-most-powerful-brand-104506>.
- "Hillsong Church London- Photos." Hillsong Church London Facebook, 2018. [https://www.facebook.com/pg/hillsongchurchlondon/photos/?tab=album&album\\_id=10150581563586681&ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/hillsongchurchlondon/photos/?tab=album&album_id=10150581563586681&ref=page_internal).
- Hochner, Nicole. "On Social Rhythm: A Renewed Assessment of van Gennep's Rites of Passage." *Journal of Classical Sociology* 18, no. 4 (2018): 299-312.
- Hockey, Jenny. "The Importance of Being Intuitive: Arnold van Gennep's Rites of Passage." *Mortality* 7, no. 2 (2002).
- Hoffmeier, James K. *Ancient Israel in Sinai: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Traditions*, 2005. <https://www-oxfordscholarship-com.ezproxye.bham.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/0195155467.001.000/acprof-9780195155464-chapter-4>.
- Hoffower, Hillary. "Nearly One-Third of Millennials Who Went to a Music Festival in the Past Year Say They Took on Debt to Afford It, Survey Finds." *Business Insider*, September 1, 2019. <https://www.businessinsider.com/millennials-going-into-debt-music-festivals-coachella-lollapalooza-bonnaroo-2019-8>.
- Hoover, Stewart M, and Lynn Schofield Clark, eds. *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media: Explorations in Media, Religion, and Culture*. Columbia University Press, 2002.
- Hoover, Stewart M., and Knut Lundby. *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture*. SAGE, 1997.
- Hopkins, Nick, Stephen D. Reicher, Sammy S. Khan, Shruti Tewari, Narayanan Srinivasan, and Clifford Stevenson. "Explaining Effervescence: Investigating the Relationship between

- Shared Social Identity and Positive Experience in Crowds.” *Cognition and Emotion* 30, no. 1 (2014).
- Horton, John, and Peter Kraftl. *Cultural Geographies: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Horton, Robin. *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West: Essays on Magic, Religion, and Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- “How Religion Has Changed in England and Wales.” Office for National Statistics, June 4, 2015.  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/articles/howreligionhaschangedinenglandandwales/2015-06-04>.
- Hutt, Curtis. “Catherine Bell and Her Davidsonian Critics.” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 23, no. 2 (2009): 69–76.
- Iliopoulos, Antonis. “Genesis of Symbolic Thought by Alan Barnard.” *Anthropos* 109, no. 1 (2014): 265–66.
- Immink, Gerrit. “The Sense of God’s Presence in Prayer.” *Theological Studies* 72, no. 4 (2016): 1–7.
- “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace.” Pew Research Center, October 17, 2017. <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.
- Inge, John. *A Christian Theology of Place*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.
- Jaimangal-Jones, Dewi, Annette Prichard, and Nigel J. Morgan. “Going the Distance: Locating Journey, Liminality and Rites of Passage in Dance Music Experiences.” *Leisure Studies* 29, no. 3 (2010): 253–68.
- Jeppesen, Knud. “Promise and Blessing: Gen 12,1–3.” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 27, no. 1 (2013): 32–42.
- Johnson, Frederick Ernst, ed. *Religious Symbolism*. Kennikat, 1969.
- Kabisch, Nadja, Matilda van den Bosch, and Raffaele LaFortezza. “The Health Benefits of Nature-Based Solutions to Urbanization Challenges for Children and the Elderly: A Systematic Review.” *Environmental Research* 159 (2017): 362–73.
- Khan, Peter H., and Patricia H. Habsach, eds. “The Topophilia Hypothesis: Ecopsychology Meets Evolutionary Psychology.” In *Ecopsychology: Science, Totems, and the Technological Species*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2012.

- Kilde, Jeanne Halgren. *Sacred Power Sacred Space: An Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957.
- Klein, Naomi. *No Logo*. New York: Picador, 2009.
- Knott, Kim. *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis*. Durham: Acumen, 2013.
- Langer, Susanne K. *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art*. New York: Scribner, 1953.
- Lawson, Dom. "Download Festival Review – Fire, Fury and Hymns to the Dark Side." *The Guardian*, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2019/jun/17/download-festival-review-donington-park-leicestershire-slipknot-def-leppard>.
- Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.
- Lessa, William A. "Religion: The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion. Mircea Eliade." *American Anthropologist* 61, no. 6 (December 1959): 1146-47.
- Levine, Harold G., and Steven H. Stumpf. "Statements of Fear through Cultural Symbols: Punk Rock as a Reflective Subculture." *Youth and Society* 14, no. 4 (1983): 417-35.
- Long, Charles H. "The Sacred and the Profane by Mircea Eliade and Willard Trask." *The Journal of Religion* 40, no. 1 (January 1, 1960): 49-50.
- Lynch, Gordon. *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bham/detail.action?docID=228606>.
- Manolache, Stelian. "The Dialogue between Sacred, Symbol and Ritual to Mircea Eliade's Thinking." *Dialogo* 4, no. 1 (November 3, 2017): 101-07.
- Markus, R.A. "Dynamics of Faith. By Paul Tillich. George Allen & Unwin. 9s. 6d." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 11, no. 2 (February 9, 2009): 200.
- Marshall, Julia. "Image as Insight: Visual Images in Practice-Based Research." *Studies in Art Education* 49, no. 1 (2007): 23-41.
- Martin, David. *The Breaking of the Image: A Sociology of Christian Theory and Practice*. Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing, 2006.
- McAlpine, William. "Kilde, Jeanne Halgren. 2008. Sacred Power, Sacred Space: An Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship." *Practical Theology* 2, no. 2 (April 15, 2015): 293-95.
- McDannell, Colleen. *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

- McKay, George. *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance since the Sixties*. London: Verso, 1996.
- McLeod, John. *Qualitative Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy*. SAGE, 2001.
- McWhinney, Will, and Jose Batista. "How Mythologizing Can Revitalise Organizations." *Organizational Dynamics* 17, no. 2 (1998).
- Meyler, Piers, and James Rodger. "V Festival's Replacement RiZE Cancelled for 2019." Birmingham Live, January 27, 2019. <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/whats-on/music-nightlife-news/v-festivals-replacement-rize-cancelled-15738479>.
- Miles, Margaret R. *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christian Culture*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006.
- Mitchell, Don. *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.
- Moon, W. Jay. "Rituals and Symbols in Community Development." *Missiology* 40, no. 2 (2012): 141–52.
- Morgan, David. *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Morong, Cyril. "Mythology, Joseph Campbell, and the Socioeconomic Conflict." *Journal of Socio-Economics* 23, no. 4 (1994): 363–73.
- Moser, Claudia, and Cecelia Feldman, eds. *Locating the Sacred: Theoretical Approaches to the Emplacement of Religion*. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014.
- Narinskaya, Elena. "On the Divine Images: Theology behind the Icons and Their Veneration in the Early Church." *Transformation* 29, no. 2 (2012): 139–48.
- Nielsen. "2016 U.S. Music Year-End Report." Nielsen Global Media, January 9, 2017. <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/report/2017/2016-music-us-year-end-report/>.
- . "2017 U.D. Music Year- End Report." Nielsen Global Media, January 3, 2018. <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/report/2018/2017-music-us-year-end-report/>.
- . "U.S. Music Mid-Year Report 2018." Nielsen Global Media, July 6, 2018. <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/report/2018/us-music-mid-year-report-2018/>.
- O'Loughlin, Deirdre M., Isabelle Szmigin, Morven G. McEachern, Belem Barbosa, Kalispo Karantinou, and Maria Eugenia Fernandez-Moya. "Man Thou Art Dust: Rites of Passage in Austere Times." *Sociology* 51, no. 5 (2017).

- Ogunseitan, Oladele A. "Topophilia and the Quality of Life." *Environmental Health Perspectives* 113, no. 2 (February 1, 2005).
- Olaveson, Tim. "Collective Effervescence and Communitas: Processual Models of Ritual and Society in Emile Durkheim and Victor Turner." *Dialectical Anthropology* 26, no. 2 (2001).
- Ostwalt, Conrad. *Secular Steeples: Popular Culture and Religious Imagination*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2012.
- Outler, Albert Cook. "Review of Tillich, Paul. Dynamics of Faith." *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 11, no. 4 (October 4, 1957): 473.
- Paraschivescu, Mihaela. "Mircea Eliade and the Quest for Religious Meaning." *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 9, no. 25 (2010): 59–68.
- Partridge, Christopher. *The Lyre of Orpheus: Popular Music, the Sacred, and the Profane*. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2013. <https://oxford-universitypressscholarship-com.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199751396.001.0001/acprof-9780199751396>.
- Pfaff, Richard W. "Sacred Power, Sacred Space: An Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship. By Jeanne Halgren Kilde." *Church History* 79, no. 3 (September 2010): 693–94.
- Pielichaty, Hanya. "Festival Space: Gender, Liminality and the Carnavalesque." *International Journal of Event and Festival Management* 6, no. 3 (October 19, 2015).
- Punch, Maurice. "Observation and the Police: The Research Experience." In *Social Research: Philosophy, Politics and Practice*, edited by Martyn Hammersley. London: Sage Publications, 1993.
- Quack, Johannes, and Paul Tobelmann. "Questioning 'Ritual Effect.'" *Journal of Ritual Studies* 24, no. 1 (2010): 13–28.
- Ramp, William. "Transcendence, Liminality and Excess: Durkheim and Bataille on the Margins of 'Sociologie Religieuse.'" *Journal of Classical Sociology* 8, no. 2 (2008): 208–32.
- Rapport, Roy A. *Ritual and Religion in Making of Humanity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Ratzel, Friedrich. *Anthropo-Geographie, Oder Grundzüge Der Anwendung Der Erdkunde Auf Die Geschichte / Tl. 1, Grundzüge Der Anwendung Der Erdkunde Auf Die Geschichte*. Stuttgart: Engelhorn, 1921.

- Rautman, Alison E. "Thick Description of a Visit Home: In Tribute to Clifford Geertz." *Anthropology and Humanism* 33, no. 1–2 (October 30, 2008).
- "Religion: Office for National Statistics." Office for National Statistics, n.d.  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion>.
- Rennie, Bryan S. "Mircea Eliade and the Perception of the Sacred in the Profane: Intention, Reduction, and Cognitive Theory." *Temenos* 43, no. 1 (2007): 73–98.
- Roberts, Alasdair. "Why the Occupy Movement Failed." *Public Administration Review* 72, no. 5 (2012): 754–63.
- Robinson, Jenefer, and Robert S/ Hatten. "Emotions in Music." *Music Theory Spectrum* 34, no. 2 (2012).
- Rodgers, James. "Welcome or Warning?" *Christianity Today*, December 22, 2008.  
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2008/december-online-only/8.31.html>.
- Rogers, Steven A. "The Parent–Child Relationship as an Archetype for the Relationship between God and Humanity in Genesis." *Pastoral Psychology* 50 (2002): 377–85.
- Rucker, Derek D., Adam D. Galinsky, and David Dubois. "Power and Consumer Behaviour: How Power Shapes Who and What Consumers Value." *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 22 (2011): 352–68.
- Ryan, Richard M., Netta Weinstein, Jessy Bernstein, Kirk Warren Brown, Louis Mistretta, and Marylene Gagne. "Vitalizing Effects of Being Outdoors and in Nature." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 30, no. 2 (2010): 159–68.
- "Sainte-Chapelle." Paris: Official Website of the Convention and Visitors Bureau, n.d.  
<https://en.parisinfo.com/paris-museum-monument/71380/Sainte-Chapelle>.
- Sarup, Madan. *Identity, Culture, and the Postmodern World*. Edited by Tasneem Raja. University of Georgia Press, 1996.
- Scharen, Christian B., ed. *Explorations in Ecclesiology and Ethnography*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.
- Scharen, Christian, and Aana Marie Vigen, eds. *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011.
- Schmitt, Raymond, and Stanley Grupp. "Resource as Symbol." *Social Science Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (1976).
- Schock, Kurt. *Civil Resistance Today*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2015.  
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bham/detail.action?docID=2075649>.

- Semple, Ellen. *Influences of Geographic Environment on the Basis of Ratzel's System of Anthro-Geo-raphy*, 2005. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15293/15293-h/15293-h.htm>.
- Sen, Abhijit. "Music in the Digital Age: Musicians and Fans around the World 'Come Together' on the Net." <http://www.globalmediajournal.com/open-access/music-in-the-digital-age-musicians-and-fans-around-the-world-come-together-on-the-net.pdf>, n.d.
- Shah, Alpa. "Ethnography? Participant Observation, a Potentially Revolutionary Praxis." *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7, no. 1 (2017): 45–59.
- Sheldrake, Philip. *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory, and Identity*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.
- Sieber, Sylvester A. "The Rites of Passage by Arnold van Gennep, Monika B. Vizedon and Gabrielle L. Caffee." *The American Catholic Sociological Review*, 21, no. 4 (1960): 598–99.
- Smith, John. "Reviewed Work(S): Dynamics of Faith by Paul Tillich; Theology of Culture by Paul Tillich and R.C. Kimball." *Journal of Philosophy* 58, no. 15 (July 20, 1961): 415–15.
- Smith, Jonathan Z. *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*. University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Spencer, Robert F. "The Rites of Passage by Arnold van Gennep, Monika B. Vizedon and Gabrielle L. Caffee." *American Anthropologist* 63, no. 3 (1961).
- Stetzer, Ed. "Five Reasons Missional Churches Don't Do Global Missions—and How to Fix It." Christianity Today, 2009. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2009/september/five-reasons-missional-churches-dont-do-global-missions.html>.
- . "Worship as the Ultimate Act." *Christianity Today*, August 15, 2017. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/may/worship-as-ultimate-act.html>.
- Stone, Jerry H. "Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture by Margaret R. Miles." *Studies in Art Education* 28, no. 2 (1987): 123–25.
- Strudwick, Ruth. "Tensions in Ethnographic Observation: Overt or Covert?" *Journal of Organizational Ethnography* 8, no. 2 (2019): 185–95.
- Swinton, John, and Harriet Mowat. *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. SCM, 2016.
- Taves, Ann. *Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building-Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things*. Princeton University Press, 2009.



- Taylor, Barry. *Entertainment Theology: New-Edge Spirituality in a Digital Democracy*. Baker Academic, 2008.
- Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bham/detail.action?docID=3300068>.
- Taylor, Valeria A., Diane Halstead, and Paula T. Haynes. "Consumer Responses to Christian Religious Symbols in Advertising." *Journal of Advertising* 39, no. 2 (2010).
- Taylor, Valerie A., Diane Halstead, and Gaelle Moal-Ulvoas. "Millennial Consumer Response to Christian Religious Symbols in Advertising: A Replication Study." *Journal of Empirical Generalisations in Marketing Science* 17, no. 1 (2017): 1–19.
- Taylor, W. David O. "And God Said to Pastors: Use More Sermon Puns and Plan More Parties." *Christianity Today*, 2019. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/june-web-only/pastors-worship-and-god-said-more-sermon-puns-more-parties.html>.
- . *Glimpses of the New Creation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019.
- Thompson, C.L. "Genesis of Symbolic Thought." *Middletown* 51, no. 6 (February 2014): 1054–55.
- Thompson, Stith. "Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient near East by Theodore H. Gaster." *American Journal of Archaeology* 55, no. 4 (1951): 412.
- Tillich, Paul. *Dynamics of Faith*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1957.
- . *On the Boundary: An Autobiographical Sketch*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1966.
- . "Religion and Secular Culture." *The Journal of Religion* 26, no. 2 (April 1946): 79–86.
- . *The Protestant Era*. London: University of Chicago Press, 1951.
- . "The Religious Symbol." *Daedalus* 87, no. 3 (1958): 3–21.
- . *Theology of Culture*. London: Oxford University Press, 1964.
- Tjora, Aksel. "The Social Rhythm of Rock Music Festival." *Popular Music* 35, no. 1 (2016): 64–83.
- Toraldo, Maria Laura, Gazi Islam, and Gianluigi Mangia. "Serving Time: Volunteer Work, Liminality and the Uses of Meaningfulness at Music Festivals." *Journal of Management Studies* 56, no. 3 (2019): 617–55.

- Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*. New York: Columbia Press, 1990.  
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bham/reader.action?docID=3029399>.
- Turner, Victor. *Drama, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974.
- “United Kingdom | Religions in the UK.” Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project, 2019. [http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/countries/united-kingdom#/?affiliations\\_religion\\_id=0&affiliations\\_year=2030@ion\\_name=All%20Counties&restrictions\\_year=2016](http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/countries/united-kingdom#/?affiliations_religion_id=0&affiliations_year=2030@ion_name=All%20Counties&restrictions_year=2016).
- Urry, John. *Consuming Places*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- “V Festival to Get a New Name after Sponsor Virgin Pulls Out.” BBC, October 30, 2017.  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/41803081/v-festival-to-get-a-new-name-after-sponsor-virgin-pulls-out>.
- Wagner, Tom. “The ‘Powerful’ Hillsong Brand.” In *The Hillsong Movement Examined: You Call Me out upon the Waters*, edited by Tanya Riches and Tom Wagner. Palgrave MacMillan, 2017.
- Walsh, Colleen. “What the Nose Knows: Experts Discuss the Science of Smell and How Scent, Emotion, and Memory Are Intertwined — and Exploited.” *The Harvard Gazette*, 2020.  
<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/02/how-scent-emotion-and-memory-are-intertwined-and-exploited/>.
- Ward, Pete, ed. *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.
- . *Selling Worship: How What We Sing Has Changed the Church*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2005.
- Watts, Jacqueline H. “Ethical and Practical Challenges of Participant Observation in Sensitive Health Research.” *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 4, no. 14 (2010): 301–12.
- Watts, Tessa E. “Big Ideas: ‘Les Rites de Passage’ Arnold van Gennep 1909.” *Nurse Education Today*, n.d.
- Wenell, Karen. “A Markan ‘Context’ Kingdom? Examining Biblical and Social Models in Spatial Interpretation.” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 44, no. 3 (2014): 123–32.
- . “Kingdom, Not Kingly Rule: Assessing the Kingdom of God as Sacred Space.” *Biblical Interpretation* 25, no. 2 (April 11, 2017): 206–33.

- White, Ben. "Clifford Geertz: Singular Genius of Interpretive Anthropology." *Development and Change* 38, no. 6 (2007): 1187–1209.
- Wicke, Peter. *Rock Music: Culture, Aesthetics and Sociology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Winchester, Hilary P.M. *Landscapes: Ways of Imagining the World*. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Witvliet, John D. "The Worship: How Can Art Save the Corporate Worship of the Church?" In Taylor, *For the Beauty of the Church*, 45–68.
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.
- Wood, Emma H, and Jonathan Moss. "Capturing Emotions: Experience Sampling at Live Music Events." *Arts Marketing* 5, no. 1 (2015): 45-72.
- Woodward, Kath. "Hanging out and Hanging About: Insider/Outsider Research in the Sport of Boxing." *Ethnography* 9, no. 4 (2008): 536–61.
- Wuthnow, Robert. *Creative Spirituality: The Way of the Artist*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.