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TREATMENT OF RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION AND BELIEF IN UTAH PUBLIC
SCHOOLS: PERSPECTIVES OF THE RELIGIOUS MINORITY

by

Eric-Jon K. Marlowe

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations

Brigham Young University

April 2005

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the dissertation of Eric-Jon K. Marlowe in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

TREATMENT OF RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION AND BELIEF IN UTAH PUBLIC SCHOOLS: PERSPECTIVES OF THE RELIGIOUS MINORITY

Eric-Jon K. Marlowe

Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations

Doctor of Philosophy

Recorded members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (also known as Mormon or LDS) comprise over 70% of Utah's population. This qualitative study identifies the unique concerns and challenges that members of Utah's minority religions may face in public schools. Semi-structured interviews, designed to elicit rich, detailed information, were conducted with 48 participants (13 leaders, 17 parents, 18 students) from seven different minority religions in Utah. Each interview was audio taped, transcribed, and then analyzed using the qualitative analysis program N-Vivo. Looking at the school *institutional treatment* (laws, policy, teachers, administrators) of participants' religions, few expressed major concerns or challenges. Ignorant LDS favoritism and school accommodation of LDS Released-Time Seminary were issues most

commonly expressed. In contrast to institutional treatment, *social treatment* of participants' religion in school received significantly more comment, and related concerns ran considerably deeper. Participants identified areas of occasional peer exclusion such as LDS cliques, Seminary, conversation, and dating. Participants further identified areas of occasional uncomfortable peer interaction such as LDS proselytizing, sense of superiority, and assumptions or stereotypes. Several participants cited LDS ignorance, cohesiveness, and their doctrine of *one* true church as general causes of this peer exclusion and uncomfortable interaction. Furthermore, the data suggests that the challenges mentioned by participants are enhanced in the higher LDS populated and more rural areas of Utah. The findings also suggest that the prevalence of such challenges have been decreasing over time. All participants identified some concerns or challenges they face as members of a minority religion in their Utah school communities. However, it appears most participants, with some clear exceptions, did not view treatment of their religion in Utah public schools as a major issue.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background – Three Models

The First Amendment to the *Constitution of the United States* reads: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . .” This provision, known as the *religion clause*, has become the basis for legally protecting individual religious liberty in our country. However, religious liberty – a balance found somewhere between religious anarchy and religious tyranny – has historically proven elusive, particularly in our increasingly diverse public schools. The *Williamsburg Charter*¹ (1988, Appendix A) explains in broad terms two models of religious liberty that have struggled to provide this balance in our nation’s public schools:

In earlier times, though lasting well into the twentieth century, there was a de facto semi-establishment of one religion in the United States: a generalized Protestantism given dominant status in national institutions, especially in the public schools. This development was largely approved by Protestants, but widely opposed by non-Protestants, including Catholics and Jews.

In more recent times, and partly in reaction, constitutional jurisprudence has tended, in the view of many, to move toward the de facto semi-establishment of a wholly secular understanding.... During this period, the exclusion of teaching about the role of religion in society, based partly upon a misunderstanding of *First Amendment* decisions, has ironically resulted in giving a dominant status to such wholly secular understandings in many national institutions [i.e., public schools]. Many secularists appear as unconcerned over the consequences of this development as were Protestants unconcerned about their de facto establishment earlier. (p.6)

In further reference to these historical imbalances of religious liberty in public schools, Charles Haynes (2000), senior scholar and director of the First Amendment

¹ Named after Williamsburg, VA for its historical role in the preservation of religious liberty, the Williamsburg Charter is a reaffirmation of the *First Amendment* religious liberty principles. Drafted and endorsed by more than 200 prominent U.S. religious, civic, and business leaders, the Charter was signed by 100 national signers representing a wide range of political and religious belief (i.e., Presidents Ford and Carter; Chief Justices Rehnquist and Berger; Senator Dole and former Governor Dukakis; Norman Lear and Phyllis Schlafly [Eagle Forum]; Coretta Scott King and Reverend James Dobson [Focus on the Family]) (see Appendix A – list of signatures and summary of principles)

Center and a leading activist in resolving conflicts involving religion in public schools, likewise explains, “From the protestant hegemony of the 19th century to the religion-free zones that characterize many public schools today, we have failed to find a proper constitutional role for religion and religious expression in public education” (p. 29). Haynes then asserts that “today, in various forms, these two models persist in various parts of the country – and both are unjust and, in some cases, unconstitutional” (p. 29).

In response to the inadequacies of these two models (de facto² establishment of the majority religion, de facto establishment of secularism), a third model has emerged. With a remarkable amount of consensus among civic, religious and educational leaders, this third model primarily assumes that religious indoctrination is left to the family and religious institutions and dictates that schools must respect religion, yet at the same time, be neutral among religions and belief (cannot show preference to one religion, including non-belief, over another). Neutrality concerning belief does not mean that public schools must ignore religion. Haynes and Thomas (2001) explain that excluding religion, or barely mentioning it, is not neutral, and that its exclusion may give students the false impression that the religious life of humankind is insignificant. Basically, this third model asserts that public schools need to find ways to acknowledge the importance, complexity, and impact of religion on our world and calls on public schools to ensure that student religious speech and expression is protected and taken seriously (Haynes, 2000).

Third model agreement among many religious, civic and educational leaders has carried over into the development of guidelines and other resources aimed at promoting proper respect (in and out of the legal arena) for religion in public schools. Perhaps the most notable of these efforts has been the jointly produced, broadly sanctioned, and

² De facto – acting or existing in fact but without legal sanction (Garner, 2001)

widely distributed guidelines found in *Religious Expression in Public Schools* (Appendix B). Under the direction of the U.S. Department of Education, this guide explaining Court held rights of religious expression in public schools has been developed and broadly distributed to public schools.

The tendencies in these three models in their various forms and degrees (de facto establishment of a majority religion, de facto establishment of secularism, respectful treatment of all religions and belief), appear to surround the treatment of religion in our public schools. None appear mutually exclusive in a school setting, and it might be expected that shades of each could be involved in any school community.

Statement of the Problem

While the religions of our nation are increasingly diverse (Finke & Stark, 1992), one can find numerous school communities³ that contain a majority religion⁴ across the country. Such communities face the continual challenge of avoiding the unintended yet often reckless disregard of the religious minority⁵. In addition to the possible de facto establishment of the majority religion in such communities, these communities also face the challenge of honoring the secular to the point of unjustly excluding religion from the curriculum and squelching rightful religious expression in public schools. Thus, a religious minority in a school community containing a religious majority potentially faces not only the threat of de facto establishment of the majority religion but faces the threat of de facto establishment of secularism as well.

³ *School community* – a group of people living in the same area and participating in the same public school district thus receiving directives from the same school board, superintendent, and other district-determined administration (i.e., school principals, curriculum committees)

⁴ *Majority religion* – when more than 55% of participants in a school community (i.e., students, parents, teachers, school board members, district administration) are members of the same religion (i.e., Catholics, Baptists, Muslim, Mormons)

⁵ *Religious minority* – persons who believe in a form of religion within a school community that is not affiliated with the majority religion

Aware of such challenges to the religious minority in school communities with a religious majority, Charles Russo (2002), past president of the Education Law Association, indicates that his main concern for religious liberty in U.S. public schools is in school communities and states that contain a majority religion. Russo asks how do we ensure that minority belief is respected in such community schools?

Utah, a state with 72% of its population recorded as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints – Mormons⁶ (Avant, 2002), has multiple school communities that contain a religious majority. Under the double threat of de facto establishment of the majority religion and de facto establishment of secularism, how does the religious minority in Utah view the treatment of their religious expression and beliefs in Utah public schools? In comparison with the guidelines provided by the U.S. Department of Education, how well are the religious rights of the minority being respected in Utah public schools? What forms, variations, or divergences of the three models (de facto majority religion, de facto secularism, respect for all religions and belief) does Utah's religious minority experience, or at least perceive, in their public schools?

Statement of the Purpose

This research study examined the treatment of religious expression and belief in Utah public schools from the perspective of the religious minority. The investigation sought to:

- Better understand the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of religious minority students, their parents and religious leaders regarding religious liberty in Utah public schools

⁶ Also referred to as The Church of Jesus Christ, the Church, and the LDS church.

- Identify how the treatment of religious expression and belief in Utah public schools as described by the religious minority corresponds with the legal guidelines outlined in *Religious Expression in Public Schools* (Appendix B)
- Develop *grounded theory* (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) from the gathered data that can help explain in greater detail the circumstances faced by the religious minority in Utah public schools

The general purpose of this study is to offer Utah public school communities information that can increase awareness and understanding of conditions surrounding religious expression and belief from the perspective of the religious minority in Utah public schools. Schaefer and Bass (1996) assert that efforts to create a better respect for all religion in public schools “should begin with a greater sensitivity to the feelings of those who are not in the majority.” They further deem that “while one can discuss general concerns, firsthand testimonies [from the minority] are an effective method to help majority members acquire new perspective” (p. 309). Therefore, a general purpose of this research is to provide Utah education personnel and participants a “new perspective” with the intent that it assist in producing “greater sensitivity” to the unique religious freedom issues faced by the religious minority therein. Thus this research aims to offer Utah public school communities better awareness and a deeper understanding of religious liberty conditions confronted by their religious minorities in an effort to assist in the protection of their religious liberty.

At the state level, Utah public schools have acknowledged through written policy (Davis, 2002) a preference for the third model – respectful treatment of all religions and belief. In addition to written policy the Utah State Office of Education has attempted the

statewide implementation of the *3R's project*, a program based on First Amendment principles of rights, responsibilities, and respect, which further aims to prepare teachers to teach about religion in ways that are constitutionally permissible and educationally sound (Haynes, 2001). Awareness and insights into the experiences and perceptions of the religious minority provided in this study can aid Utah public schools in this principled effort to promote greater respect for all religious beliefs in their increasingly diverse school communities.

In addition to greater public school awareness and understanding, Utah's majority religion, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), can also derive benefits from this study. The LDS Church espouses the basic doctrine of respect for all religions. A document clarifying some of the Church's core beliefs explains that "We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege; let them worship how, where, or what they may" (Smith, 1981, p. 61). As the *Williamsburg Charter* suggests, the majority seldom acts out of deliberate malice, but more often from reckless disregard for the minority. The findings in this study provide awareness to the majority that may help its members' efforts to avoid disregard of minority religions in matters of belief in Utah public schools.

Extending the purpose of this study beyond the classroom, Haynes and Thomas (2001) assert that our public schools need to be places where we learn as much as we can about one another, and about how religious liberty can work for all citizens in a respectful way. *The Salt Lake Tribune* (Egan, 2001), a major Utah newspaper reporting on a survey it conducted in several Utah counties, indicated that 68% (58% Mormon, 86% non-Mormon) perceive a divide, whether socially, culturally and/or politically, between

Mormons and non-Mormons. The findings in this study offer some insight and reasoning into this perceived divide, and it identifies behavior, which if changed, may lead to its reduction.

In addition to the aforementioned benefits, Doty (1999), Haynes (2000), Riley (1998) and others have indicated that respectful treatment of the religious rights of the minority can help avoid conflicts that lead to costly litigation, diverting time, energy and funds away from a school's main purpose of educating students. Haynes (2000) further suggests that increased respect for all religions may help stem the tide of students leaving public schools because they are dissatisfied with the way their public school treats their religious convictions and rights.

As indicated, the general purpose of this study was to gather information that could be used by Utah public school communities containing a majority religion to improve awareness, understanding, and potentially invoke sensitivity toward barriers of religious liberty experienced by the religious minority in their public schools. Finally, this study is about the golden rule: treating others the way one would like, even expect, to be treated. It is intended that these findings provide conscientious educators and members of the LDS majority insight into how they might better treat those of minority religions in their school communities. It is anticipated that the findings of this study can have their greatest effect when conscientious persons availed of the information use it in a manner that extends the spirit of religious liberty: helping one genuinely respect that which is most sacred to another.

CHAPTER 2

FRAMING THE RESEARCH

Due to the minimal research related to the treatment of religious minorities in Utah public schools and the research intent to understand their potentially wide-ranging experiences, this study logically takes a qualitative approach. When conducting a qualitative study, Miles and Huberman (1994), Maxwell (1996) and other respected qualitative researchers explain that a framework of what is to be studied – the key factors, concepts, variables, relationships, etc. – needs to be understood. Maxwell (1996) describes this framework as a literature review that produces “the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs . . . [the] research” (p. 25). Miles and Huberman (1994) and Maxwell (1996) further explain that one of the most important aspects of a qualitative literature review is the formulation of what is taking place regarding the phenomena being studied. Thus, this review of literature helps provide a framework around what is taking place regarding religious liberty in public schools, specifically those in Utah.

Brief History

Kern Alexander and David Alexander (2001), experts in educational law, view the interrelationship between religion and government as a core divisive issue in American public schools and believe that a better understanding of the problem requires a look back to antecedents of the church-state issues surrounding schools in this country. Centuries of state-established religion in Europe, accompanied by centuries of religious strife, were the backdrop of newly settled America. Handy (1998) explains that nine of the thirteen original colonies that became the United States had established churches in

some form or another, and for most people that came to North America during colonial times, a society without an established religion was unimaginable. However, due in part to the increasing number of religious movements that were often seeking places of refuge within the colonies, establishments of religion were not popular among many settlers and resisted by others. As religious toleration spread (e.g., Roger Williams) in the later 1600s and into the 1700s, these colonial establishments of religion became increasingly insecure and ended shortly after the American Revolution (Handy, 1998). Later, the Framers broke with European tradition, and responded to the people's fears of religious establishment in Article Six of the Constitution of 1787 by providing that "no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States (Burger, 1991, p. 16). While the *Constitution of the United States* ensures no religious test, it contains few explicit limitations on the power of the federal government regarding religious matters.

While the Constitution of 1787 may lack explicit limitations on government in religious matters, like most political agreements, the Constitution is the result of compromise. On 12 September 1787, just days before the signing of the Constitution, George Mason of Virginia implored the delegates of the Constitutional Convention to include a bill of rights because he believed it would "give great quiet" to the people (Levy, 2001, p. 13). Yet Roger Sherman of Connecticut argued that State Declarations of Rights were sufficient and assured his colleagues that Congress could be trusted to preserve the rights of the people. The weary delegates unanimously opposed even forming a Bill of Rights committee and the Constitution was signed on the 17th with only

three of the forty-two remaining delegates abstaining (Mason among them), citing among other things the lack of a Bill of Rights (Rohde, 2001).

Yet approval of the Constitution at the Philadelphia Convention did not automatically preclude ratification by the requisite nine of thirteen states. For the next nine months political debate took place throughout America. Advocates for ratification of the Constitution became known as Federalists, while opponents were characterized as Anti-Federalist. The Anti-Federalists' objections to the Constitution were founded upon their favor of state sovereignty and individual liberties, both of which they felt were threatened by the new Constitution. Rohde (2001) further explains that no Anti-Federalist argument was more powerful during the ratification debates than that the designers of this new plan of government had deliberately refused (through denial of a bill of rights) to guarantee the liberties on which the nation had been founded. Mason (considered an Anti-Federalist) published his own list of objections, with the absence of a Bill of Rights at the very top (Levy, 2001). James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay countered with the now famous Federalist Papers (Rossiter, 1999). Yet incessantly the Anti-Federalists drew public attention to the dangers of a strong central government uninhibited by a bill of rights. The Anti-Federalists were further bolstered in their argument for a bill of rights, and James Madison was swayed from his disapproval, by letters sent from Thomas Jefferson to Madison in support of such a bill (Noonan & Gaffney, 2001). It appeared that if the Federalists were to achieve ratification and suppress recurring talk of a second Constitutional Convention, they needed to commit to amending the Constitution to include a bill of rights (Rohde, 2001). With this understanding, combined with the persuasive words of Jefferson and others, Madison

urged states to ratify the Constitution first with the assurance that amendments in the form of a bill of rights would be proposed later (Veit, Bowling, & Bickford, 1991). With ratification of the Constitution, Madison then moved to fulfill his promise to fight for a bill of rights by presenting the idea to the floor of Congress on 8 June 1789.

Debate and multiple revisions followed Madison's introduction of a Bill of Rights. What was to become the religion clause of the First Amendment – originally the third clause of Madison's fourth proposition (Noonan & Gaffney, 2001) endured several revisions and encountered intense debate (Levy, 2001). Some early draft amendments were (Robinson, 2000):

- *James Madison*, 7 June 1789 "The Civil Rights of none shall be abridged on account of religious belief or worship, nor shall any national religion be established, nor shall the full and equal rights of conscience be in any manner, nor on any pretext infringed. No state shall violate the equal rights of conscience or the freedom of the press, or the trial by jury in criminal cases" (§ 4).
- *House Select Committee*, 28 July 1789 "No religion shall be established by law, nor shall the equal rights of conscience be infringed" (§ 4).
- *Samuel Livermore*, 15 August 1789 "Congress shall make no laws touching religion, or infringing the rights of conscience" (§ 4).
- *House version*, 20 August 1789 "Congress shall make no law establishing religion, or to prevent the free exercise thereof, or to infringe the rights of conscience" (§ 4).
- *Initial Senate version*, 3 September 1789 "Congress shall make no law establishing religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" (§ 4).

- *Final Senate version*, 9 September 1789 "Congress shall make no law establishing articles of faith or a mode of worship, or prohibiting the free exercise of religion" (§ 4).
- *Conference Committee* "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" (§ 4).

The House of Representatives and the Senate accepted the final wording from the conference committee in September 1789. The States ratified it in 1791. By separating religion and government, but not religion from public life, and by protecting the religious rights of all citizens, America began what was then a political experiment previously unknown in history.

While the first ten official amendments to the Constitution – the Bill of Rights – were ratified in 1791, for the first 150 years of this nation’s history the religious freedom provisions in the First Amendment only applied to Congress and the federal government. Citizen conflicts over religion were dealt with generally at the state and local levels. After the Civil War, in 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment was passed and included the provision “no state shall...deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law” (Burger, 1991, p. 25). In 1940 the Supreme Court in *Cantwell v. Connecticut* (1940) held that free exercise of religion is one of the liberties protected by the due process clause in the Fourteenth Amendment. Later, the Supreme Court in *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947) added the establishment clause to the list. Together, these dual protections of free exercise and non-establishment have become the guarantee of American religious liberty (Beschle, 2002; Haynes & Thomas, 2001).

Bill of Rights – Protector of the Minority

From its inception, a particularly clear reason for the Bill of Rights was to ensure and protect certain rights of the minority in a system governed by the majority. George Mason, Virginia delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1787, stated “We ought to attend to the rights of every class of the people . . . provide no less carefully for the . . . happiness of the lowest than of the highest orders of citizens” (Rohde, 2001, p. 72). Mason, as previously explained, had serious doubts about endorsing a Constitution that created a powerful central government. Mason believed that a bill of rights would protect the individual and minority against the aggression of the government, which under this new system could be aggression willed by representatives of the majority of the people. In the ensuing debate over the need for a bill of rights, James Winthrop of Massachusetts argued that a bill of rights “serves to secure the minority against the usurpations and tyranny of the majority.” He further explains that history proves the “prevalence of a disposition to use power wantonly. It [a bill of rights] is therefore as necessary to defend an individual against the majority in a republic as against the king in a monarchy” (Levy, 2001, p. 30).

Federalist James Madison, who initially opposed a bill of rights but was later recognized as the father of the Bill of Rights, hoped that such a document would limit the powers of government, thus preventing legislative as well as executive abuse, and above all prevent abuses of power by “the body of the people, operating by the majority against the minority” (Levy, 2001, p. 35). While Madison initially may have seen a Bill of Rights only as a means to educate the majority against acts to which they might be inclined, Jefferson believed that an independent court could withstand oppressive

majority impulses by ruling unconstitutional an act violating a bill of rights (Levy, 2001; Noonan & Gaffney, 2001).

In a retrospective observation of the role of the Bill of Rights, Frank Cobb, editor of the *New York World*, explained in 1920, “The Bill of Rights is a born rebel. It reeks with sedition. In every clause it shakes its fist in the face of constituted authority . . . it is the one guarantee of human freedom to the American People” (Peck, 1992). In a university forum at Brigham Young University, Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor (2002), in her remarks concerning the role of the Judiciary, U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights, explained:

Majority rule has always been considered the foundation of a democratic political system. The American Constitution was written in terms of what the three branches of the national government can do and contains few explicit limitations on the power of government... most Americans think of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights as going hand in hand but the more appropriate analogy is ‘ball and chain’. The Bill of Rights was a restraint imposed on the new federal government to keep it from running out of control. While the *Constitution* is the cornerstone of our commitment to our principles of representative government and majority rule, the Bill of Rights is a decidedly anti-majoritarian document. In the bill of rights the framers built a wall around certain fundamental individual freedoms limiting forever the majority’s ability to intrude on them.

As those past and present have indicated, a general purpose of adding the Bill of Rights to the Constitution was to protect the rights of the minority, the individual, in a system generally ruled by the majority. In the case of religious freedom, we find that specific protection in the religion clause – the first sixteen words of the First Amendment, which include the dual protection clauses of non-establishment⁷ and free exercise⁸.

⁷ Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion

⁸ Congress shall make no law prohibiting the free exercise of religion

The Challenge of Interpretation

Jellinek (1901), an influential European jurist, wrote: “To reconcile the true boundaries between the individual and the community is the highest problem that thoughtful consideration of human society has to solve” (p. 98). In *Marbury v. Madison* (1803), Chief Justice Marshall argued that the judicial oath to support the Constitution supports the Court’s power and duty to pronounce on the constitutionality of federal law (Noonan & Gaffney, 2001). Thus, early in our nation’s history, the function of defining individual freedom (i.e., freedoms guaranteed in the Bill of Rights and – of particular interest to this study - the First Amendment became the responsibility of the judiciary and particularly of the Supreme Court, from whom there is no further appeal.

Although rights guaranteed in the Constitution (Bill of Rights and other amendments included) are in written text, the Court’s interpretation and application of these rights is a challenging task. Peck (1992), an expert in constitutional law, explains that Justices may agree on the meaning of a constitutional provision and still reach different conclusions about its application to a specific case. Even more problematic, room for disagreement exists because the Constitution embodies concepts written in such spacious language as free exercise of religion, freedom of speech, due process of law, and equal protection of the laws. Peck (1992) then points out that little interpretive guidance is provided by these generalized guarantees of rights and that this generality is further complicated when a case raises issues between two competing sets of facts or fundamental values.

These challenges confronting constitutional interpretation have motivated a vast amount of literature aimed at developing a principled and intelligible approach that limits

judges from writing their personal views into the Constitution – this is particularly the case with the First Amendment religion clause (e.g., Gedicks, 1995; Sheffer, 1999; etc). Several interpretive approaches have been developed to keep judges from the preferential or intuitive process in resolving Constitutional questions, yet none of these approaches to constitutional interpretation has been able to stop the continual debate over which should be preeminent. Based on Daniel Hall and Ransford Pyle (1997) and Michael Dorf and Laurence Tribe (1991) assessments, Steve Mount (2000), specialist on the Constitution, identifies four general methods of constitutional interpretation: original intent, modernism, literalism – historical and contemporary, and democratic. Each is now briefly discussed.

Original intent asserts that the best way to interpret the Constitution is to determine how the Framers intended the Constitution to be interpreted. They look to several sources to determine this intent, including the contemporary writings of the framers, newspaper articles, the Federalist Papers, and notes from the Constitutional Convention itself. Original intent proponents argue that it is the most pure way of interpreting the Constitution; the opinions of the Framers were, for the most part, well documented – if there is an unclear term or phrase in the Constitution, who better to explain it than those who wrote it? Opponents of original intent note several flaws. First, the Constitution and the included Bill of Rights may have been the product of the Framers, but they were ratified by hundreds of delegates – should not the opinions of these people hold even more weight? Also, the Framers disagreed on many specific parts of the Constitution – whose opinion should be used? Lastly, do the opinions of a small,

homogeneous group from 200 years ago have the respect of our large and diverse population today? (Mount, 2000; Hall & Pyle, 1997; Dorf & Tribe, 1991)

Modernism looks at the Constitution as if it were ratified today. What meaning would it have, if written today – how does modern life affect the words of the Constitution? Modernists contend that the Constitution is deliberately vague in many areas, expressly to permit modern interpretations to override older ones as the Constitution ages. It is this interpretation that best embodies the “Living Constitution” concept: the Constitution is flexible and dynamic, changing slowly over time as the morals and beliefs of the population shift. Modernists do not reject original intent – they recognize that there is value in a historical perspective; but the contemporary needs of society outweigh an adherence to a potentially dangerously outdated angle of attack. In response, those who espouse original intent feel that modernism does a disservice to the Constitution, that the people who wrote it had a pure and valid vision for the nation, and that their vision should be able to sustain us through any Constitutional question (Mount, 2000; Hall & Pyle, 1997; Dorf & Tribe, 1991).

Literalism – historical literalists believe that the contemporary writings of the Framers are not relevant. The only thing one needs to interpret the Constitution is a literal reading of the words contained therein, with an expert knowledge of the 18th century meaning of those words. The debates leading to the final draft are not relevant, the Federalist Papers are not relevant – only the words of the Constitution. The historical literalist takes a similar look at the Constitution as original intent does, but the literalist has no interest in expanding beyond the text for answers to questions. Similar to a historical literalist, a contemporary literalist looks only to the words of the Constitution

for guidance, but this literalist has no interest in the historical meaning of the words. The contemporary literalist looks to modern dictionaries to determine the meaning of the words of the Constitution, ignoring precedent and legal dissertation, and relying solely on the definition of the words. Just as the historical literalist view parallels the originalist view, but much more narrow in focus, so too does the contemporary literalist mirror the modernist; and again, the main difference is the literalist looks only to the words of the Constitution for meaning (Mount, 2000; Hall & Pyle, 1997; Dorf & Tribe, 1991).

Democratic interpretation advocates that the Constitution was not designed as a set of specific principles and guidelines; rather, that it was designed to be a general principle, a basic skeleton upon which contemporary vision would build. Decisions as to the meaning of the Constitution must look at the general feeling evoked by the Constitution, then use modern realism to flesh out the skeleton. As evidence, advocates point out that many phrases, such as *due process* and *equal protection* are deliberately vague, that the phrases are not defined in context. The guidance for interpretation must come from that basic framework that the Framers provided, but that to fill in the gaps, modern society's current morals and feelings must be taken into consideration. Changes in the Constitution that stem from this kind of philosophy will end up with principles of the population at large, while ensuring that the Framers still have a say in the underlying decision or ruling (Mount, 2000; Hall & Pyle, 1997; Dorf & Tribe, 1991).

The religion clause of the First Amendment has neither escaped the tangle of competing methods of interpretation nor the accompanying challenges of spacious language, little interpretive guidance, competing sets of facts or fundamental values, and differing conclusions about application. Add to this mix of complex challenges the

expectancy, sensitivity, politic and high emotions that surround religious liberty, and the Judicial challenge to balance the rights of the individual/minority with the will of the majority in religious matters becomes daunting. When dealing with religious matters, the Judiciary – ultimately the Supreme Court – has struggled to reconcile the boundaries between the individual and the community (Jellinek, 1901), and has often allowed the pendulum to swing back and forth between protection of the individual/minority and the will of the majority. The Supreme Court’s inconsistency in its interpretation of the religion clause is well documented (Gedicks, 1995; Schaefer & Bass, 1996).

Supreme Court, the Religion Clause and Public Schools

Two clauses in the First Amendment, previously indicated, guarantee freedom of religion. The Establishment Clause (“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion”) prohibits the government from passing legislation to establish an official religion, or from preferring one religion to another. It enforces the separation of church and state, yet the Supreme Court has declared some governmental activity related to religion constitutional. The Free Exercise Clause (“Congress shall make no law . . . prohibiting the free exercise thereof”) prohibits the government, in most instances, from interfering with a person’s practice of his religion (Martin, 1998). The *Williamsburg Charter* (1988) explains:

Religious liberty is the only freedom in the *First Amendment* to be given two provisions. Together the clauses form a strong bulwark against suppression of religious liberty, yet they emerge from a series of dynamic tensions which cannot ultimately be relaxed. The Religious Liberty provisions grow out of an understanding not only of rights and a due recognition of faiths but of realism and a due recognition of factions. They themselves reflect both faith and skepticism. They raise questions of equality and liberty, majority rule and minority rights, individual convictions and communal traditions. (p. 7)

The Supreme Court has wrestled with the scope and application of both the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses for decades (Beschle, 2002). This struggle has often included issues of religion in public schools.

Within the public education arena, the establishment clause has been the more frequent subject of Supreme Court cases. Perhaps this is because even initially, the non-establishment principle was supported for different reasons. For example, Thomas Jefferson supported non-establishment because he feared that orthodox religious believers would insist on political power to the detriment of individual rights (Berns, 1976), whereas Roger Williams favored separation of church and state in order to protect churches themselves from outside corrupting influences (Hall, 1998). On the other hand, few cases before the Supreme Court have been based on the free exercise clause. Perhaps this is due in part to the treatment of religious expression as a form of free speech (i.e. *Good News Club v. Milford Central School*, 2001) and Court recognition that public schools are a nonpublic forum (*Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*, 1988). Whatever the reason for the Court's lopsided dealings with these two clauses, as previously explained, neither was incorporated into the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, and both escaped explicit application to the states until the 1940s. Prior to this, issues of establishment were dealt with at the state and local levels (Beschle, 2002). While not complete, a brief review of Supreme Court rulings on cases involving religious issues in public schools follows. First, those cases involving religion in public schools⁹:

⁹ Information on these cases was obtained by accessing the Supreme Court decisions themselves through (Court, 2003) and a review of (Alexander & Alexander, 2001; Beschle, 2002; Levendosky, 2003)

Minersville v. Gobitis (1940) - Supreme Court rules that a public school may require students to salute the flag and pledge allegiance even if it violates their religious convictions.

West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette (1943) - Court overturns *Gobitis* but is broader in its scope. No one can be forced to salute the flag or say the pledge of allegiance if it violates the individual's conscience.

McCullum v. Board of Education (1948) - Court finds religious instruction in public schools a violation of the establishment clause and therefore unconstitutional.

Zorach v. Clausen (1952) - Court finds that released time from public school classes for religious instruction does not violate the establishment clause.

Engel v. Vitale (1962) - Court finds school-directed prayer unconstitutional

Abington School District v. Schempp (1963) - Court finds Bible reading over school intercom unconstitutional & *Murray v. Curlett* (1963) - Court finds forcing a child to participate in Bible reading and prayer unconstitutional.

Epperson v. Arkansas (1968) - Court says the state cannot ban the teaching of evolution.

Wisconsin v. Yoder (1972) - Court decides that the Amish do not have to follow state law that required that children attend school until the age of sixteen. The Amish stop their children's formal education at eighth grade.

Stone v. Graham (1980) - Court finds posting of the Ten Commandments in schools unconstitutional.

Wallace v. Jaffree (1985) - Court finds state law enforcing a moment of silence in schools had a religious purpose and is therefore unconstitutional.

Edwards v. Aguillard (1987) - Court finds state law requiring equal treatment for creationism has a religious purpose and is therefore unconstitutional.

Board of Education of Westside Community Schools v. Mergens (1990) - The court rules that the Equal Access Act does not violate the *First Amendment*. Public schools that receive federal funds and maintain a "limited open forum" on school grounds after school hours cannot deny "equal access" to student groups based upon "religious, political, philosophical, or other content."

Lee v. Weisman (1992) - Court finds a nonsectarian prayer at public school graduation ceremonies violates the establishment clause and is therefore unconstitutional.

Lamb's Chapel et al. v. Center Moriches Union Free School District (1993) - Court says that school districts cannot deny churches access to school premises after-hours, if the district allowed the use of its building to other groups.

Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe (2000) - Court rules that student-led prayers at public school football games violate the establishment clause.

Good News Club v. Milford Central School (2001) - Court rules that Milford Central School cannot keep Good News Club from using its facilities because the school had created a limited public forum and prohibiting the religious club was viewpoint discrimination.

Cases involving the establishment clause often involve aid to religious or parochial schools. Over the years, the Supreme Court has approved some forms of aid to parochial school students and their parents while denying others. A brief review of Supreme Court cases dealing with support for nonpublic schools follows:

Pierce v. Society of Sisters (1925) - Court invalidates an Oregon law that required all children between the ages of eight and sixteen to attend public schools. A Roman Catholic orphanage and military academy brought suit. The court said the Oregon law interfered with parents' right to oversee and guide their children's education.

Everson v. Board of Education (1947) - Court says that state reimbursement for bus fares to attend religious schools is constitutional.

Board of Education v. Allen (1968) - Court says that the state's lending of textbooks to private and religious schools is constitutional.

Lemon v. Kurtzman (1971) - Court finds state supplements to the salary of Catholic school teachers to be unconstitutional.

Tilton v. Richardson (1971) - Court finds that federal funding to private, religious, and public colleges in order to build classrooms is constitutional.

Committee v. Nyquist (1973) & *Sloan v. Lemon* (1973) - Court rules that states cannot reimburse parents for sending their children to religious schools.

Meek v. Pittenger (1975) - Court rules that states can lend textbooks to religious schools but no other materials.

Roemer v. Board of Public Works (1976) - Court rules that states can provide grants to private and religious colleges.

Committee for Public Education v. Regan (1980) - Court rules that states can reimburse religious schools for the cost of giving standardized tests.

Mueller v. Allen (1983) - Court rules that taxpayers can deduct tuition, textbooks, and transportation expenses from state income taxes that were incurred by attending private and religious schools.

Aguilar v. Felton (1985) - Court rules that sending public school teachers to religious schools to provide remedial education and counseling is unconstitutional.

Zobrest et al. v. Catalina Foothills School District (1993) - Court rules that the school district does not violate the establishment clause by furnishing a sign-interpreter to a deaf child in a sectarian school.

Kiryas Joel Village School District v. Grumet (1994) - Court rules that a school district carved out for religious reasons and financed by public funds violates the establishment clause.

Agostini v. Felton (1997) - Court overturns *Aguilar* and says that public school teachers providing supplemental, remedial instruction to disadvantaged students in religious schools does not violate the establishment clause.

Mitchell v. Helms (2000) - Court rules that Chapter 2 of the Education and Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 does not violate the Establishment Clause when it provides educational equipment to religious schools with taxpayer money.

Zelman v. Simmons-Harris (2002) - A five to four Court opinion upholds Ohio's voucher program that gives tax dollars to parents in Cleveland to send their children to religious or non-religious schools. It is the first time the Court has upheld a voucher system.

A particular challenge the Supreme Court has struggled with is consistently adjudicating *establishment clause* cases. On several occasions, the Court has devised a test for future judgment only to later abandon it or write a new one. For example, in *Everson* (1947) the test appeared to be *child benefit*, yet *Allen* (1968) utilized *public secular purpose*, while *Lemon* (1971) aimed to be comprehensive with secular purpose,

that the primary effect neither advances nor inhibits religion, and no excessive entanglement. *Lee v. Weisman* (1992) abandoned all previous tests for a *coercion* approach and *Kiryas Joel* (1994) opted for *neutrality*. *Agostini v. Felton* (1997) aimed to clean things up with the instructions that any aid to parochial schools should not result in governmental indoctrination, define its recipients by reference to religion, nor create excessive entanglement. However, *Mitchell v. Helms* (2000) looked at *effect* and *Good News Club* (2001) observed a *viewpoint neutrality* standard. Yet, while the Court may flounder in its efforts to find and maintain an optimal and consistent approach to the First Amendment religion clause, the purpose of the clause, though not completely realized, has not completely failed in its purpose of protecting the religious liberty of the minority and individual when confronted by the threat of majority rule (Antieau, 1997).

The confusion surrounding non-establishment and free exercise has not been relegated to the Court alone. Public schools themselves have struggled in their efforts to reconcile and implement the Court's rulings and strike a respectful balance between the majority and the minority on religious matters therein.

Religious Liberty – An Elusive Balance in Public Schools

As mentioned in the introduction, U.S. public schools throughout the 19th century and well into the 20th generally maintained a de facto establishment of Protestantism (*Williamsburg Charter*, 1988; Fraser, 1999), and Haynes (2000) maintains that many school communities still do. Viewed as non-compliant with the First Amendment protection of individual and minority belief, beginning in the early 1960s the Supreme Court, in a series of cases, sought to protect the rights of minority belief through the

elimination of public school-directed practices that favored the general majority belief.

In part, these cases included (Levendosky, 2003):

Engel v. Vitale (1962) - Court finds school prayer unconstitutional.

Abington School District v. Schempp (1963) - Court finds Bible reading over school intercom unconstitutional and *Murray v. Curlett* (1963) - Court finds forcing a child to participate in Bible reading and prayer unconstitutional.

Epperson v. Arkansas (1968) - Court says the state cannot ban the teaching of evolution.

Stone v. Graham (1980) - Court finds posting of the Ten Commandments in schools unconstitutional.

Wallace v. Jaffree (1985) - Court finds state law enforcing a moment of silence in schools had a religious purpose and is therefore unconstitutional.

Edwards v. Aguillard (1987) - Court finds state law requiring equal treatment for creationism has a religious purpose and is therefore unconstitutional.

Lee v. Weisman (1992) - Court finds prayer at public school graduation ceremonies violates the establishment clause and is therefore unconstitutional.

Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe (2000) - Court rules that student-led prayers at public school football games violate the establishment clause of the *First Amendment*.

While these prohibitive decisions handed down by the Supreme Court were often clear that these decisions only applied to public school-directed practices, the general populace, often including the public schools themselves, understood them to prohibit any expression of religion, including that initiated by students and parents. This general sentiment of religious removal from public schools resulted in feelings of governmental hostility toward religion in public schools (Ball et al., 1988; Fraser, 1999; Gedicks, 1995; Haynes & Thomas, 2001). This general elimination of all religion from public education was then replaced by secular ideologies, thus creating what many recognize as a de facto establishment of secularism (Fraser, 1999; Gedicks, 1995; Haynes, 2000). Many feel, as

Sobran (1978) wrote, “Religious conviction is now a second-class conviction, expected to step deferentially to the back of the secular bus, and not to get uppity about it” (p 48).

However, many others saw this direction taken by the Court and public schools as the proper approach to the First Amendment religion clause (e.g., Anti-Defamation League, Americans for the Separation of Church and State, American Civil Liberties Union, etc).

This new direction has sparked fierce debate on both sides of the issue and almost everywhere in between.

For example, those feeling governmental hostility toward religion are embodied by the American Center for Law and Justice (Sekulow, 2003), generally considered a more conservative organization, which explains:

Perhaps more than in any other arena, Christians find that their values and beliefs are under continual attack in the nation’s public schools. Although there are exceptions throughout the country, as a rule, the public educational establishment increasingly embraces liberal ideology and secularism, sometimes to the point of hostility against religion, particularly Christianity. The so-called “doctrine” of separation of church and state has become the battle cry of those who wish to purge all religious expression from the public schools. As a consequence, students’ rights to the free exercise of religion are too often trampled. (p. 1)

However, others argue that America has moved beyond the largely Protestant pluralism of its early history and must recognize and respect the beliefs of all by not imposing the beliefs of the majority. The Anti-Defamation League (2001), generally considered a more liberal organization, explains:

Compliance with the separation of church and state must be vigorously enforced in the nation’s public schools. Not endorsing or appearing to endorse religion is especially important in the public school . . . Moreover, the student body in America’s public schools is growing increasingly diverse. Schools must give special consideration to the fact that many school children belong to minority religions or are raised in nonreligious environments. The nation’s public schools must be hospitable to students from a variety of backgrounds students of all faiths or no faith. Public schools should inculcate students with understanding and

respect for diversity, as well as a spirit of tolerance, acceptance and inclusion. (p. 1)

The rhetoric surrounding this debate seems endless and the literature is continuous. However, Haynes and Thomas (2001) explain the two basic extremes of this debate: “On the one end of the political spectrum there are those who seek to establish in law a ‘Christian America.’ On the other end are some who seek to exclude religion from public school life entirely. Both proposals seem to violate the spirit of religious liberty” (p. 34). Haynes (2000) asserts that after successive Supreme Court rulings in the early 1960s recognized state-sponsored religious practices as unconstitutional, many Americans, including many educators, misunderstood the Court to mean that religion had no place in public schools. As a result of this confusion – or out of well-founded fear of controversy – many public schools have avoided religion as much as possible. Haynes (2000) (as shared in the introduction) then points out that “from the protestant hegemony of the 19th century to the religion-free zones that characterize many public schools today, we have failed to find a proper constitutional role for religion and religious expression in public education. Today, in various forms, these two models persist in various parts of the country – and both are unjust and, in some cases, unconstitutional” (p. 29).

Alexander and Alexander (2001) explain: “More than a century of judicial struggle has resulted in precious little resolution of the church and state conflict. In fact, it appears that the plethora of litigation over the years has merely tended to obscure the boundaries of separation . . . Thus, the issue of separation and the interrelationship between religion and government retains its characteristic preeminence as a divisive issue in American society” (p. 134).

Efforts Toward Consensus

What, then, is the proper role or balance of religion in public schools? Certainly aspects of this question will be debated as long as our nation maintains public schools. However, during the past decade and a half, significant consensus among religious, civic and educational leaders has produced a series of broadly endorsed documents containing guidelines for religious expression in public schools. Commonly based on Supreme Court precedent, these consensus documents seek to clarify and find a common ground alternative to the current debate.

Though not directly aimed at public education, *The Williamsburg Charter* (1988), a reaffirmation of the importance of the First Amendment religious-liberty principles drafted by representatives of many faiths and some 200 other prominent leaders of national life, has been a catalyst for several consensus efforts to clarify the place of religion in public schools. The *Charter* calls for a “bold reaffirmation and reappraisal of its [the Constitution’s] vision and guiding principles. In particular, we call for a fresh consideration of religious liberty in our time, and of the place of the First Amendment Religious Liberty clauses in our national life” (p. 1). Within the almost incessant debate surrounding religious rights in the public sphere, the *Charter* asks Americans to develop agreements that recognize religious diversity and affirm the principles of liberty that provide the guidelines for civil discourse.

Emboldened by such consensus, in the early 1990s Charles Haynes and Oliver Thomas brought together a broad spectrum of religious and educational groups and, after much discussion and debate, reached agreement on many religious freedom issues in public schools. The National Association of Evangelicals, the American Jewish

Congress, the National Education Association, the National School Boards Association, and many other national organizations agreed on the constitutionally permissible and educationally sound ways in which religion may be included in public schools. These efforts produced *Religion in the Public School Curriculum: Questions and Answers*, *Religious Holidays in the Public Schools: Questions and Answers*, and a third statement providing guidelines for implementing the *Equal Access Act* (Haynes & Thomas, 1996).

In 1995, twenty-four advocacy groups ranging from the Christian Coalition to People for the American Way, as well as education organizations including the National School Boards Association and the American Association of School Administration, set forth school guidelines in *Religious Liberty, Public Education, and the Future of American Democracy: A Statement of Principles* (First Amendment Center, 1995). In essence, it says:

Public schools may not inculcate nor inhibit religion. They must be places where religion and religious conviction are treated with fairness and respect. Public schools uphold the *First Amendment* when they protect the religious liberty rights of students of all faiths or none. Schools demonstrate fairness when they ensure that the curriculum includes study about religion, where appropriate, as an important part of a complete education. (p. 1)

Also in 1995, thirty-five religious groups and organizations concerned for religious liberty (i.e., the ACLU, American Jewish Congress, Anti-Defamation League, North American Council for Muslim Women, etc.) produced a document called *Religion In The Public Schools: A Joint Statement Of Current Law* (Joint Statement, 1995). This statement discusses what is and is not acceptable religious expression in our public schools under the current law.

In this same year, 1995, President Bill Clinton, based on this *Joint Statement* (and Fraser (1999) suggests aimed at offsetting the growing pressure from the Christian

Coalition and others for an amendment to the Constitution), directed then U. S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley and Attorney General Janet Reno to provide every public school district in America with a statement of principles addressing the extent to which religious expression and activity are permitted in our public schools. In accordance with this directive, *Religious Expression in Public Schools* (U.S Department of Education, 1998) (Appendix B) was produced and sent to every superintendent of schools in August of 1995.

Other organizations and advocacy groups (several of which participated in the aforementioned consensus projects) have used their newsletters, websites, monthly mailing lists, etc., to pass this information along to school administrators, teachers, parents and students. In particular, the First Amendment Center, an organization for the promotion of First Amendment rights, has developed an ambitious school district training program known as the *3R's Project* with the intent to inculcate these and other guidelines into the public schools. This training program has been received by many school districts across the country, the largest concentration being in California and Utah (Haynes, 2000).

Highlighting how much consensus has been achieved: in early 2000 President Clinton and the U.S. Department of Education sent every public school principal a packet of comprehensive religious liberty guidelines. This packet contained an updated version of *Religious Expression in Public Schools* (issued previously to Superintendents in 1995) and other materials considered the closest thing possible to a legal safe harbor for addressing conflicts over religion in public schools. U.S. Secretary of Education Riley (1999) explains that these guidelines were issued “to end much of the confusion regarding religious expression in our nation’s public schools that had developed over the

more than thirty years since the U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1962 regarding state sponsored school prayer.” Further, Riley explains his hope that “these principles will help to end much of the confusion regarding religious expression in public schools and that they can provide a basis for school officials, teachers, parents, and students to work together to find common ground – helping us to get on with the important work of education” (§ 2). Currently maintained on the Bush Administration U.S. Department of Education website, these guidelines provide clearer understanding of student prayer and religious discussion, graduation and baccalaureate prayers, official neutrality regarding religious activity, teaching about religion, student assignments, religious literature, religious excusals, released time, teaching values, and student garb (Appendix B).

As previously suggested, a de facto establishment of general Protestantism results in less respect for the religious liberty of Catholics, Muslims, Jews, and other religious minorities in public schools. Also, many view that a de facto establishment of secularism results in less respect for general religious liberty in public schools. In response to these two models’ lack of sensitivity to religious liberty in our public schools, these consensus efforts represent a third model primarily aimed at achieving a more proper role and balance of religion in our public schools. For the most part the efforts to clarify and inform school communities of students’ religious rights can be seen as an attempt to find common ground and further a more proper respect for religious liberty in our public schools.

Religious Minorities and the Achieved Consensus

Haynes and Thomas (1996), summarizing principles from the *Williamsburg Charter*, explain, “religious liberty, freedom of conscience, is a precious, fundamental

and inalienable right. A society is only as just and free as it is respectful of this right for its smallest minorities and least popular communities. Rights are best guarded and responsibilities best exercised when each person and group guards for all others those rights they wish guarded for themselves” (p. 5). The First Amendment, in a way, serves as the “Golden Rule for civic life” (*Williamsburg Charter*, 1988, p. 9). However, even with the First Amendment assurance of religious liberty, our nation’s history illustrates that these ideals, and the valiant efforts to realize them for the minority, can become ignored in a de facto current of establishment flowing in the direction of the majority.

While Secretary Riley (1998), Charles Haynes (2000) and others have touted a degree of success achieved through these consensus efforts, Haynes (2000), as previously noted, concedes that “today, in various forms, these two models [de facto establishment of Protestantism and de facto establishment of secularism] persist in various parts of the country – and both are unjust and, in some cases, unconstitutional” (p. 29). Charles Russo (2002), former president of the Education Law Association, recently stated that his main concern for religious liberty in public schools centers on the potential discrimination of the religious minority in states and communities containing a religious majority (he specifically mentioned Roman Catholics in Massachusetts and New York, Baptists in Texas, and Mormons in Utah). The *American Religious Identification Survey* (Kosmin, Mayer, & Keysar, 2001) affirms the dominant demographic position of certain religions in regions throughout the United States and explains:

Despite the growing diversity nationally, some religious groups clearly occupy a dominant demographic position in particular states. For instance, Catholics are the majority in Massachusetts and Maine as are Mormons in Utah and Baptists in Mississippi. Catholics comprise over 40% of Vermont, New Mexico, New York and New Jersey, while Baptists are over 40% in a number of southern states such as South Carolina, Tennessee, North Carolina, Alabama and Georgia.

Such religious concentrations might well have significant impact on a host of public policy issues.... (p. 38)

Possibly, the chief menace to religious liberty occurs when a religious majority acts not so much in deliberate hostility to, but in reckless disregard of, minority belief and personal conscience. The *Williamsburg Charter* (1988) explains: “de facto establishment, though seldom extreme, usually benign and often unwitting, are the source of grievances and fears among the several parties . . . such de facto establishments, as much as any official establishment, are likely to remain a threat to freedom and justice for all” (p. 6). Fraser asserts that collectively and individually, toleration of beliefs that one considers profoundly mistaken is one of the most demanding challenges for any true supporter of both democracy and religious freedom. Yet without such toleration, a pluralistic and religiously respected association within our public schools is impossible (Fraser, 1999).

The achieved consensus over religion in our public schools provides general guidelines that can aid in the avoidance of a de facto establishment of the majority religion over the minority; however, broad consensus and elaborate documents are no guarantee. As Russo (2002) suggests, school communities with a majority religion need to vigilantly guard against the disregard of minority belief.

Utah – The Church of Jesus Christ and the Religious Minority

The connection between Utah and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is evident. The Library of Congress (2003) website explains: “The state known as Utah began when Brigham Young led a group of Mormon pilgrims seeking freedom from religious persecution into the Great Salt Lake Valley, where they established a settlement in 1847.” It further reads: “The capital, Salt Lake City is also the world headquarters for

the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Mormons make up 70 percent of the population” (§ 1). Based on the *United States Census 2000* and the 2001 membership records of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 72.94% of Utah’s population are recorded members of the LDS church (Avant, 2002). The 2001 *American Religious Identification Survey* (a random digital telephone survey) recorded that 57% of Utah’s population responded that they were members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or Mormons (Kosmin et al., 2001). More specific to Utah public schools, Matthews and Willardson (2003), educational researchers at Brigham Young University (BYU), are confident that no more than two of Utah’s forty school districts would be without an LDS majority. These numbers would indicate that most Utah public school communities face the potential challenge of avoiding de facto establishment of the majority religion; and additionally, the de facto establishment of the secular that appears prevalent in many public schools across the nation.

As previously stated, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) endorses the doctrine of religious freedom for all. A foundational Church document of belief explains that “We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may” (Smith, 1981, p. 61). Further, the Church’s founding prophet Joseph Smith said: “I am the greatest advocate of the *Constitution of the United States* there is on the earth. In my feelings I am always ready to die for the protection of the weak and oppressed in their just rights” (Smith, 1965, p. 56). James Talmage (1977), a respected Church leader, latter wrote, “The Latter-day Saints proclaim their unqualified allegiance to the principles of religious liberty and toleration. Freedom

to worship Almighty God as the conscience may dictate, they affirm to be one of the inherent and inalienable rights of humanity” (p. 385). Yet this doctrine of religious freedom espoused by the Church is somewhat paradoxical. Cole Durham (2001a), an LDS Church member and currently a professor of law at BYU, explains, “religious freedom obligates us to tolerate and respect beliefs with which we disagree – though it does not require us to accept, endorse, or support them” (p. 5).

Under the leadership of Gordon B. Hinckley, current prophet and president of the LDS Church, there appears an added effort to “cultivate tolerance and appreciation and respect,” for “varied religious persuasions” (Hinckley, 1999, p. 4). In a talk entitled *A Time of New Beginnings*, President Hinckley (2000) says:

Let us as Latter-day Saints reach out to others not of our faith. Let us never act in a spirit of arrogance or with a holier-than-thought attitude. Rather, may we show love and respect and helpfulness toward them. We are greatly misunderstood, and I fear that much of it is of our own making. We can be more tolerant, more neighborly, more friendly, more of an example than we have been in the past. Let us teach our children to treat others with friendship, respect, love, and admiration (p. 87).

M. Russell Ballard (2000), a current apostle in the LDS Church, adds:

Occasionally I hear of members offending those of other faiths by overlooking them and leaving them out. I have heard about narrow-minded parents who tell children that they cannot play with a particular child in the neighborhood simply because his or her family does not belong to our Church. This kind of behavior is not in keeping with the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have never heard the members of this Church urged to be anything but loving, kind, tolerant, and benevolent to our friends and neighbors of other faith. Parents, please teach your children and practice yourselves the principle of inclusion of others and not exclusion because of religious, political, or cultural differences. (p. 35)

In support of this doctrine of inclusion and apparently in response to the common challenges faced by many religions, Elder Ballard (2000) adds: “Perhaps there has never

been a more important time for neighbors all around the world to stand together for the common good of one another.”(p. 35)

Beyond the stout espousal of a religious freedom doctrine, the Church of Jesus Christ was historically the recipient of religious persecution by a majority (Shipps, 1987). Beyond the confines of Utah and a few other select pockets in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, over 80% of the Church’s approximately twelve million members live in communities where they are in the religious minority (Avant, 2002). As historical recipients of religious persecution and the current minority status of a large majority of its membership, it may well be supposed that Church member empathy for minority religions in Utah is prominent. Yet the *Williamsburg Charter* (1988) points out that in the “turns and twists of history, victims of religious discrimination have often later become perpetrators” (p.9).

Conflicting views exist about the current treatment of the religious minority in Utah public schools. For example, Cole Durham, an expert in religious freedom and a Utah resident, suggests – based on his interaction with the religious minority in Utah – that there are many parents and students who feel discriminated against in Utah public schools due to their religious beliefs (Durham, 2001b). On the other hand, two current Utah public school administrators indicated that they do not see any imposition of the majority religion on religious minority students in their schools, and one principal indicated that the majority religion seemed overly careful not to impose itself (Marlowe, 2002). In October 2001, the *Salt Lake Tribune*, a major Utah newspaper, conducted a random survey of LDS Church members and non-members in several Utah counties: Salt Lake, Davis, Utah, Weber, Tooele and Summit. Their findings were included in a special

report they called *The Unspoken Divide*. As they explain: “Intolerance, misinformation, insensitivity exist on both sides of a gap that seems to many to separate Utah Mormons and non-Mormons” (p. SR-2). However, this study conducted by the *Salt Lake Tribune* did not specifically, or generally, address issues of religious matters in public schools. These contrasting ideas surrounding what members of the religious minority face in Utah public schools to some extent illustrate the spectrum of opinion this study set out to clarify.

Biases of the Researcher

As the researcher in a qualitative study, my biases are part of the framework surrounding the research. I approached this study with neither animus toward the majority religion nor toward any minority religion. My motivation to conduct such a study was fueled by a deep appreciation for religious freedom, and while I am a devout member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I believe that in our increasingly diverse communities we are only as free as we are respectful of others. I view this study as a type of check-up or mirror on the well being of religious freedom in Utah public schools, conducted by assessing the vital signs of its most at-risk population – the religious minority. Certainly, we should respect the religious beliefs of others as others should respect ours (the Golden Rule). Yet, it is also wise to respect the religious beliefs of one another because in this ever-expanding global community and in our increasingly diverse nation, all are a religious minority somewhere (Durham, 1996).

I readily acknowledge deep differences in belief, and I believe as Robert Peck (1992) that “Few forces operate more powerfully on people’s lives than religion. ...It frequently plays a dominant role in the definition of one’s personal identity (p. 83). I did

not approach this study as an opportunity to win converts or apologize for shortcomings of members of the majority religion. My hope is I have shown deference and respect to all who participate by letting their voices be heard through the research.

I view our nation's public school system as a cauldron where the autonomy of the State with its mandate to avoid establishing religion and the autonomy of individual citizens to religious free exercise overlap and mingle in ways that make this balance intensely challenging. I see this study as a small, but not insignificant, contribution to help meet that challenge. As the *Williamsburg Charter* explains:

Far from being settled by the interpretations of judges and historians, the last word on the *First Amendment* likely rests in a chapter yet to be written, documenting the unfolding drama of America. If religious liberty is neglected, all civil liberties will suffer. If it is guarded and sustained, the American experiment will be the more secure. (p. 4)

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY & METHODS

I agree with Strauss and Corbin (1998) that the “human grasp of reality never can be that of God’s, but hopefully research moves us increasingly toward a greater understanding of how the world works” (p. 4). In the social science realm, there are multiple methodologies¹⁰ and a number of methods¹¹ used to gather knowledge about the social world. Because this study intended to explore the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of the target population, I investigated generally qualitative approaches because of their ability to yield deeper meaning or nature of experience. In addition, qualitative methods help obtain intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more quantitative research methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

With an understanding that a generally qualitative approach would offer the best opportunity to explore the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of religious minorities in Utah public schools, groundwork for this proposal included an extensive review of the following texts: *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach* (Maxwell, 1996); *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Berg, 2001); *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000); *Qualitative Data Analysis: Explorations with NVivo* (Gibbs, 2002); *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (Strauss & Corbin, 1998); *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis* (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). After this

¹⁰ Methodology – the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes (Crotty, 1998) (p. 3)

¹¹ Methods – the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyze data related to some research questions or hypothesis (Crotty, 1998) (p. 3)

review, and based on what this study seeks to discover, the methodology of grounded theory and the general method of interviews (intensive/semi-structured) were selected to achieve the desired comprehension.

Grounded Theory

As mentioned, conflicting theories and minimal research literature exists (i.e., religious minority suffer in Utah public schools (Durham, 2001b), religious minority is treated respectfully – no problems (Marlowe, 2002)) regarding current treatment of the religious minority in Utah public schools. For these reasons, the study utilized the generally qualitative research methodology of grounded theory – theory derived from data that is systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). Strauss and Corbin (1998), in their book *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, explain that grounded theory begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data. They further explain that theory derived from data is more likely to resemble “reality” than is theory derived from putting together a series of concepts based on experience or solely through speculation.

Because they are drawn from data, grounded theories are more likely to offer insight, enhance understanding and provide a meaningful guide to action. Charmaz (2000) specifies that grounded theory involves a series of guidelines for collecting and analyzing data to build theoretical frameworks explaining the collected data. Throughout research using grounded theory, the researcher develops analytic interpretations of his data to focus further data collection, which he uses in turn to inform and refine his developing theoretical analysis. Gibbs (2002) explains that, in general, “the central focus

of grounded theory is on inductively generating novel theoretical ideas or hypotheses from the data as opposed to testing theories specified beforehand. In so far as these new theories arise out of the data and are supported by the data, they are said to be grounded – hence the title of the method” (p. 165).

In the overall context of this study, the value of grounded theory is that it “does more than provide understanding or paint a vivid picture. It enables users to explain and predict events, thereby providing guides to action” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 25).

What follows are the methodological guidelines and methods used in collecting and analyzing the needed data to produce a grounded theory concerning the experience of the religious minority in Utah public schools.

Collecting the Data

Charmaz (2000) explains, and Strauss & Corbin (1998) agree, that the generally qualitative approach of grounded theory specifies analytic strategies, not data collection methods, yet both make clear that every researcher using this methodology should gather extensive amounts of rich data with thick description (Geertz, 1975). Providing more specific guidelines, Maxwell (1996) explains the need for qualitative data collection to address three main components: decisions about sampling (where, when, and who), negotiating a research relationship, and decisions about data collection. He further clarifies that these design decisions surrounding data collection should be considered in the planning stages and throughout the study as well. Based on these three components of qualitative data collection (sampling, research relationship, and data collection), the following methods (means) were employed in collecting the data.

Sampling

In the planning stages, a challenging question dealt with whom to include in the research. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explain: “The more systematic and widespread the theoretical sampling, the more conditions and variations will be discovered and built into the theory and, therefore, the greater its explanatory power” (p. 267). To achieve “greater explanatory power,” decisions regarding which participants to include in the sample employed *purposeful sampling* (Patton, 1990), a non-random sampling strategy in which particular settings and persons are selected deliberately in order to provide important information in answering the research question. Maxwell (1996) further explains that purposeful sampling looks specifically for participants/informants that a) provide variation among settings, b) are representative or typical of a setting, c) are relevant/critical to what the study is examining, and d) establish comparisons to illuminate reasons for differences between individuals.

To achieve this non-random yet purposeful sample, the participants in this study were drawn from seven different minority religions in Utah (five Christian religions and two non-Christian religions). Each religion is represented by at least three participants: a religious leader, a public school student, and the student’s parent. The students involved were all current students except one who graduated from high school a year previous to the interview. All but two of the eighteen students were either in high school or junior high; the other two being elementary students whose interviews were jointly conducted with a parent.

A purposeful selection of which seven religions participated in the study was devised using the *2001 American Religious Identification Survey* (ARIS) (Kosmin et al.,

2001). With the intent that this study be relevant to the largest number of people, representation of religions in this study is generally based on which minority religions have the largest membership in Utah. The highest populations beyond Mormon/LDS (57%) are Catholic (6%), Episcopalian (3%), and Baptist (2%). Beyond the top three, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Muslim/Islamic, and Evangelical, each register on the ARIS with 1% in Utah (Kosmin et al., 2001). Based on these numbers, the study includes the Catholic, Episcopalian, and Baptist religions in Utah. Among the list of religions registering as less than 1% on the ARIS, Methodist and Presbyterian are included for their larger populations within the U.S. (Kosmin et al., 2001). Of the non-Christian religions included in the ARIS, Muslim/Islamic is the only religion to register on the statistics for Utah and is therefore included in the study. Then based on its comparatively large U.S. representation, Judaism is the second non-Christian religion included in the study.

Further purpose for this sample is in the potential replication of this study outside of Utah. Catholic (24.5%), Baptist (16.3%), and Methodist (6.8%) faiths are the largest Christian denominations in the U.S. and statistically most likely to be the majority religion in other public school communities throughout the U.S. (Kosmin et al., 2001). If expansion and replication of this study were desired in other areas of the country, the inclusion of these denominations would appear to facilitate it.

Finding participants from within each of these religions began with an attempt to contact and consult with each denominations highest level of leadership in the state of Utah (e.g., The Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City, The Episcopal Diocese of Utah, Congregation Kol Ami, Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention, Islamic Society of Salt

Lake City). After a brief yet clear explanation of the study's purpose, potential benefits, voluntary participation, and confidentiality, the senior levels of these denominations generously provided religious leaders who:

- Had congregations containing several families with children in public school
- May be willing to participate
- Were observant, thoughtful and likely to clearly convey their experience and perspectives
- They feel would be representative or typical of their religious leaders in Utah

Based on state office responses, these community religious leaders were then approached about willingness to participate in much the same way as those at the state level (using the state leaders' names as references). Over three fourths of the leaders interviewed were identified through this process. After participating in the interview, these religious leaders were then asked to help identify families within their congregation who:

- Had children in (or recently attended) public schools (grades 9-12)
- Were observant, thoughtful and able to convey experience and perspectives
- May be willing to participate
- They feel would be representative or typical of their religious adherents in Utah

The ability to mention a leader's name when requesting family or leaders participation appeared to provide me with a fair amount of credibility to many participants. Most participants were very generous with their time and thoughtful in their responses. The remaining participants were identified through website directories, community religious leaders and fellow members.

As indicated, the study began with the intent of involving three participants (a leader, parent, and student) from each represented religion. However, final determination was to be based on Strauss and Corbin's (1998) suggestion that "sampling is completed when categories are saturated" (p. 214). Saturation generally means that additional participants in a study are no longer yielding new insights and the best evaluation of this happens within the data gathering and data analyzing process (Maxwell, 1996; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Based on this understanding, the study was initiated with 21 participants yet ended up with 48.

The expansion of this study from 21 to 48 participants was done in large measure because multiple participants indicated a difference in the experience of religious minorities living in urban areas verses those living in more rural communities. A more concerted effort was required to accomplish this for a couple of reasons. First, state leaders generally identified their larger congregations, nearly all of which are in the Salt Lake metropolitan area. Second, due to the smaller numbers in rural areas it was a greater challenge to identify relevant participants therein.

My reasoning was that sampling within differing settings (rural and urban), would provide this study a greater degree of explanatory power. Furthermore, including multiple religions and also multiple perspectives within each religion (i.e. student, parent, leader), adds credibility and validity to the entire study through triangulation: collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings (Denzin, 1970). Maxwell (1996) explains that triangulation reduces the risk that the research conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific group, and triangulation allows the researcher to better assess the validity and generality of the grounded theory

being developed. Also, multiple sources give conclusions far more credibility than if limited to one (Maxwell, 1996).

In summary, the sampling matrix looks like this:

UTAH	Catholic	Episcopalian	Baptist	Presbyterian	Methodist	Islam	Jewish	Total
Leader	2	2	3	3	1	1	1	13
Parent	3	4	3	2	3	1	1	17
Student	3	2	3	3	2	2	3	18

Geographically this study drew participants from multiple counties in Utah:

COUNTY	Salt Lake County (56% LDS)	Utah County (88% LDS)	Sevier County (82% LDS)	Tooele County (80% LDS)	Sanpete County (82% LDS)
Leader	7	4	1		1
Parent	11	4	1	1	
Student	13	4	1		

(Percentages come from *American Religion Data Archive*, 2000) 

Participant years living in Utah:

Years in Utah	Range	Mean	Average
Leader	4 to 50	18	22
Parent	1 to 40	16	16
Student	1 to 18	12	12

(Born and raised in Utah: 4 leaders, 1 parent, 9 students)

All participants are religiously active (attend their respective house of worship  weekly). Generally speaking, participants were not angry with the LDS majority. They were cordial and generally proper in their explanations, yet did not avoid criticism. Most participants, with some clear exceptions, appear to enjoy living in Utah, and are confident, know the culture, and have been strong contributors to Utah society. By and large, participants seem supportive of their public schools. For the most part, participants have lived in Utah for several years. On the positive side, with so many years in Utah these participants were able to provide a rather long-term perspective. They knew the issues, and their responses were generally well thought out. Perhaps on the negative side, this group included few newcomers. Furthermore, because so many students have lived in

Utah for most if not all of their lives, they have little or nothing to which they could compare their experiences.

Researcher Relationship

There was some initial concern regarding access to the desired population because of my outsider (Lofland & Lofland, 1995) approach to the research. At least initially, some participants questioned my intent because of my membership in the majority religion and my affiliation with Brigham Young University (owned by the LDS Church). However, my courtesy, clear intentions, brief and direct answers to why they should participate, maintaining a learner role, conveying some degree of competency to do the research, explaining confidentiality and the strictly voluntary nature of the study, and knowing a little about them seemed enough to obtain sufficient trust and cooperation.

Confidentiality

The promise that real names of persons, specific locations, and so forth would not be used in the research report (Lofland & Lofland, 1995) – has been maintained. Furthermore, informed consent – receiving consent by the subject after having carefully and truthfully informed him or her about the research (Fontana & Frey, 2000) – has been obtained from each participant. This was done first verbally (over the phone) and then through a written consent form signed by participants. The written consent form (Appendix C) followed Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures and signatures of participants were voluntarily obtained prior to participation in the study.

Data Collection

As previously noted, this research seeks to better understand the experience, attitudes and perceptions of religious minorities in public schools containing a large one-

majority religion. Lofland and Lofland (1995) suggest that the overall goal in matching qualitative study questions with method “is to collect the richest possible data” (p. 16). Based on the intent of the study, semi-structured interviewing was employed in gathering the data because of its ability to understand complex experiences, attitudes and behavior of members in society without imposing any priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Lofland & Lofland (1995) further explain:

Intensive interviewing, also known as ‘unstructured interviewing,’ is a guided conversation whose goal is to elicit from the interviewee (usually referred to as the “informant”) rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis. In contrast to “structured interviewing” (such as opinion polling), where the goal is to elicit choices between alternative answers to preformed questions on a topic or situation, the intensive interview seeks to *discover* the informant’s *experience* of a particular topic or situation. Among other contrast, the structured interview seeks to determine the frequency of preconceived kinds of things, while the unstructured interview seeks to find out what kinds of things exist in the first place. (p. 18)

Charmaz (2000) warns that the qualitative researcher should be leery of trying to force data into preconceived categories through the imposition of artificial questions. Yet she also asserts that data collection may demand that researchers ask questions and follow hunches. Because this study by design wanted thick descriptive data related closely to the treatment of religious minority expression and belief in Utah public schools, open semi-structured interviewing was used to initiate, guide and focus informants’ responses toward areas germane to the purposes of the study. At the same time, semi-structured interviewing helped the researcher avoid the pitfall of forcing data into narrowly preconceived categories that could have hindered the emergence of a clear grounded theory.

With the aim of exploring and better understanding participants’ attitudes, perceptions and experience as the religious minority in their public school community, an

interview questionnaire was developed (Appendix D). The questions were pre-tested with a number of people familiar with the study (i.e. colleagues, committee members, friends) to facilitate the identification of poorly worded questions, questions with offensive or emotion-laden wording, or questions revealing too bluntly the researchers' own biases, personal values, or blind spots (Berg, 2001). Based on this feedback, adjustments were made as needed.

As mentioned, Charmaz (2000) suggests that too many questions may force the data into narrowly preconceived categories and not allow the participants perspective to clearly emerge. For this reason the number of guiding questions used in this study was fewer than fifteen yet these questions were general enough to provide opportunity for participants to verbally explain their experience, perspectives, etc regarding the general research question this study desires to explore. Yet these questions were not the only questions involved in the interview process.

Referring to unstructured interviewing yet related to semi-structured interviews used in this study, Berg (2001) explains that "interviewers are allowed freedom to digress; that is, the interviewers are permitted (in fact expected) to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared . . . questions" (p. 70). Further, these predetermined questions were provisional in the data collection process. As previously stated, throughout research using grounded theory, the researcher develops analytic interpretations of his data to focus further data collection, which he in turn uses to inform and refine his developing theoretical analysis (Charmaz, 2000). This initial set of questions was malleable and responsive to the emerging data.

All interviews were audio taped and each recording transcribed for data analysis. Data storage and retrieval was managed through the qualitative software program NVivo. A backup copy of all electronic transcripts has been kept.

Analyzing the Data

With grounded theory as the prevailing methodology, the analysis design employed creativity, coding, theoretical validity, and computer assisted qualitative software NVivo. Each of these procedures was incorporated into the analysis of the data to help instill a respectable level of qualitative validity in the study's findings.

Creativity

Although grounding research findings in data is the main feature of grounded theory, researcher creativity is essential in the analysis process. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explain that:

Analysis is the interplay between researchers and data. It is both science and art. It is science in the sense of maintaining a certain degree of rigor and by grounding analysis in the data. Creativity manifests itself in the ability of the researchers to aptly name categories, ask stimulating questions, make comparisons, and extract an innovative, integrated, realistic scheme from masses of unorganized raw data. It is a balance between science and creativity that we strive for in doing [grounded theory] research. (p. 13)

Planning creativity into the analysis may seem paradoxical yet during the analysis process I endeavored to incorporate behaviors that Patton (1990) deems helpful in promoting the type of creative thinking important to qualitative research. These include: being open to multiple possibilities; generating a list of options; exploring various possibilities before choosing any one, using nonlinear forms of thinking such as going back and forth and circumventing a subject to get a fresh perspective, diverging from

one's usual ways of thinking and working, again to get a fresh perspective, not taking shortcuts but rather putting energy and effort into the work.

Coding

Coding, “the analytic processes through which data are fractured, conceptualized, and integrated to form theory” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 3), was the primary means of analysis. Charmaz (2000) indicates that analysis in grounded theory research begins early by coding emerging data as it is collected. She explains, “through coding, we start to define and categorize our data . . . Coding helps us to gain a new perspective on our material and to focus further data collection, and may lead us in unforeseen directions. [...] [The] researcher's interpretations of data shape his or her emergent codes in grounded theory” (p. 515). As previously indicated, this study analyzed data as it was collected and used the ideas derived from early analysis to shape the direction of the data gathering process. Two good examples of emerging ideas that shaped the direction of the data gathering process were participant comments regarding differences between an urban and rural experience and a few leader assertions that things do not appear as difficult as formerly for minority religions in Utah public schools. These topics emerged early in the data gathering process and allowed me to further investigate in later interviews. Yet analysis during the data gathering process was only a start. The data ultimately passed through three rigorous stages of analysis that Strauss & Corbin (1998) use to produce grounded theory: open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

While the coding process is clearly a dynamic and fluid process, Strauss and Corbin (1998) break the coding process down into a series of activities, each of which this study uses. First, I applied open coding, the analytical process through which

concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data. Open coding is the process of grouping similar items according to some defined properties and giving the items a name that stands for that common link (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Line-by-line analysis revealed the open coding structure. Through creativity (mentioned above) and conceptualizing in the open coding process, large amounts of data were reduced to smaller, more manageable pieces, thus providing the foundation and beginning structure for theory building (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This was first done within the context of participant responses to individual questions, then for each individual interview transcript. The initial coding process yielded over fifty random categories.

The categories identified in open coding were run through axial coding, “the process of relating categories to their subcategories, termed ‘axial’ because coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 123). Here, I explored the relationship of categories, making connections between them (e.g., *the true church* and proselytizing). At this point, I began the process of reassembling data that were fractured during open coding by relating categories to their subcategories to form more precise and complete explanations of phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this stage, categories were refined, developed and related or interconnected (Gibbs, 2002). Although axial coding may differ in purpose from open coding, these approaches were not necessarily sequential. Axial coding did require that I have some categories, but often a sense of how categories relate begins to emerge during open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In selective coding, “the process of integrating and refining the theory” (Strauss & Corbin,

1998, p. 143), the major categories were integrated to form a larger theoretical scheme, which then took the form of *theory*. These theories are mainly identified in chapters four and five of this study as *themes*. At this stage, core categories, or central categories that tie other categories together were identified and related to other categories (Gibbs, 2002). Once a commitment was made to a few central themes, I then refined the theories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), which included: reviewing the scheme for internal consistency and logic, filling in poorly developed categories, and trimming the theory (removing excess data).

Validity

In an effort to further validate the theoretical themes identified, I occasionally paused to compare how well the theory fit with the raw data, performing a type of comparative analysis. This analysis observed whether anything salient was omitted from the theoretical scheme or included that did not have relevance.

N-Vivo

This study used the computer program NVivo to facilitate the data integration process. Gibbs (2002) explains that “The design of NVivo was strongly influenced by grounded theory and therefore the program gives good support for the method” (p 165). NVivo assisted with coding, tracking ideas, searching for text, and developing an analytic scheme (Gibbs, 2002). Additionally, this program was enormously helpful in managing the vast quantity of data collected (Charmaz, 2000). However, as Weitzman (2000) explains, “Software can provide tools to help you analyze qualitative data, but it cannot do the analysis for you” (p.805). It was quickly recognized that the software was not a panacea, but nevertheless a valuable tool in the analysis process.

Conclusion

The intent of the analysis is to accurately portray participants' voices clearly and accurately (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As is clear in this section, the population involved in this study was not randomly selected and therefore findings will not be generalized to the entire population. Yet these findings seek to provide theory/themes – common issues grounded in the data – concerning the religious treatment of Utah's religious minority in their public schools. These theories, however incomplete, can provide a common language (set of concepts and issues) through which Utah school communities can come together to discuss ideas and find solutions to problems (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

As stated in Chapter One, this study seeks to better understand the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of religious minority students, their parents and religious leaders regarding treatment of their religion in Utah public schools. The results that follow are divided into two sections, *questions* and *themes*. The questions section examines participant responses to specific questions asked during the interview. Similar responses are added up (represented as: L = leader, P = parent, S = student), and examples are given. Note two things: first, this section only deals with responses immediately following the question, not the entire interview. And second, some participants respond in more than one way. For example, when asked in question #4 how they felt treated in comparison with other religions, several responded that they saw “no real problems” but in continued response to the same question several mentioned that they “feel ignored” – both are recorded. The most common responses are noted and examples are given. Less common responses either receive brief mention or are left out if deemed of little consequence.

Throughout the analysis of the questions, recurring themes were noted and subsequently investigated. The *themes* section comprises the compiled results from many of those investigations. The themes included in this section were generally determined based on frequency of participant response. Others were included for relevance to the general discussion developed in the subsequent chapter.

Although my influence as the researcher cannot be denied in the arrangement, categorizations, selection of quotes, etc, effort was made to let the participants’ voices

predominate. By and large participant quotes have been used to illustrate and amplify the explanation of categorized responses. The quotes, particularly those in the themes section, were chosen to give a feel for the variety of responses and issues raised within that particular response category. I intended that the quotes not only identify issues within a category but also provide a feel for participant tone, attitudes, and manner of expression. My assertions are generally saved for the summary and discussion in Chapter Five.

Before reading these results it is important to understand that the participants in this study ranged from those who seldom if ever felt concern, challenges or offense to some who conveyed experiencing frequent concern, challenges and discrimination in school due to their religion. One religious leader who grew up in Utah and attended public schools explains: "...[I] t depends on who you talk to. Like I've never felt discriminated against...in a predominantly LDS area. But I know other people have told me, 'O, yeah, I feel discriminated against all the time'" (L-j). Because participants' degrees of discomfort covered such a wide spectrum, it was expected that the issues raised would differ widely as well. Interestingly, however, similar issues were raised across the spectrum of participants' responses. The difference was the amount of concern, challenge, or offense individual participants perceived in these common issues. Herein lies the caution. Because several respondents raised the same issue, it should not be assumed that all felt equal amounts of concern, challenge, or offense. For example, several participants similarly indicated that in their school communities most people assume they are LDS. To some participants such an assumption seemed humorous and of little or no consequence, to others such assumptions were uncomfortable, and others

indicated that it was degrading and hurtful. The questions (Appendix D) used in the interviews seemed to make even the least concerned participants consider the issue and examine it closely. It appears that the questions may have pried the issues out of some participants who at first glance may not have readily felt any concern or noticed any problems. For example, as previously illustrated, in response to question #4, several participants initially responded that they saw no real problems. However, following continued consideration of the same question and without further prompting, several then mentioned that they feel ignored. The questions seemed to have caused participants to pick up the issue whether it appeared a proverbial pebble, stone, or boulder in their path and examine it.

One further caution: generally, more participants in this study appeared to express moderate to little concern about the overall treatment of their religion in school; yet, as noted, some participants clearly felt it was a major issue. Although the participants' discomfort level as a whole in this study appears moderate to small, it is important to remember that this study did not incorporate a random sample. Therefore, any inferences of a similar ratio to the general population should employ considerable caution. As explained in Chapter Three, this study seeks to raise the issues that persons in such a population may face, and can say little of the prevalence of such issues in the general population.

Finally, to maintain participant confidentiality a simple coding system is employed. An L, P, or S identifies a Leader, Parent, or Student. A small case letter then identifies the specific leader, parent, or student in each category. For example, L-g represents a leader identified to the reader simply as "g." Specific religious identification

has been purposely left out. This was done to avoid any negative association engendered by a particular quote. The researcher can systematically locate each quote in its entirety within *question* and *theme nodes* created in the *N-Vivo* computer program employed in the study.

Questions

1. Based on your understanding of law and school policy, what can or can't students do religiously in public school?

Thirty-two respondents (11L, 16P, 5S) convey a basic understanding that public schools are not to promote nor favor any particular religion – a general separation of church and state.

Well, as I understand it, there are no formal prayers that are to be conducted on behalf of the school. You know, that would assumingly violate anyone's personal preferences. No mandatory activities of that nature so I sense that there can be no one doctrinal approach to any religion that's being advanced in any way. (L-b)

...in the United States the state and religion is separate so schools should not be involved in religious things and I believe that the strength of the United States is based on this fabric of different religions. (P-a)

It's basically appropriate for any students to talk together about religion, but not really the teachers and the administration and stuff like that. I know we have used like classrooms to hold, like Bible studies and stuff, but the teachers can't be involved. (S-k)

Twenty-one (6L, 6P, 9S) indicate that students can do religious things in school or mention specific religious things students can do (i.e., talk about religion, personal prayer, wear religious clothing, etc).

...it is my understanding that a student organized and led prayer meetings and study groups are allowable, regardless of separation of church and state. But it is also my understanding that they have to be pretty clearly student organized and led not [school directed]... (L-k)

Nobody can stop you from praying; the question is whether you do it out loud or not. I bet there isn't a kid in this state that hasn't prayed before a Math test. School condoned prayer I think is not. (P-q)

They cannot teach us [religion] but they can't discourage us so if I felt like coming out and being open with my religion I'd definitely be shunned by the students but the teacher's couldn't get mad at me...we're under protection of our religious rights. (S-p)

Nine (3L, 6P) assume that schools can teach *about* religion (i.e., history, social studies, tolerance education, etc).

I would think religion could be taught in terms of, as it's been a part in history context of, world civilization kind of stuff. But again not advancing any particular way. (L-b)

[Public schools] could have some kind of program, like interfaith types so the children learn respect for each other. (P-a)

While most responses are basic, three leaders demonstrate a fairly detailed understanding of the law, three participants (2P, 1S) mistakenly express that students are forbidden to pray under any circumstances in public schools.

2. What is your opinion of public school law and policy surrounding religious beliefs and expression?

Thirty (9L, 12P, 9S) generally agree with school religious law/policy as it is.

It seems to me, where it's at is okay. I mean, we've got people on both sides trying to push it further in the other direction. As a religious leader, I am a little concerned about no religion in school in form. But...the difficulty is we are such a diverse country and a diverse people. How do you bring religion into school in a formal way without...leaving some of them out. (L-k)

I haven't had any problems with that. It doesn't bother me all that much that there isn't prayer in schools. I don't know if I'd be against it if there was, but I haven't any extreme.... (P-b)

I like the system as it is but there will still be, it's just students. (S-p)

However, six (4L, 2P) of these thirty participants added concern about individual teacher/administrator implementation of religious law and policy.

Well, I think that if the laws were applied like they really are written that they would be fair. But...I think sometimes it's too much at the interpretation of a local official. (L-g)

Five (1L, 4P) want more freedom (expressing that there is too much separation of church and state in schools).

...I would like to see those freedoms...expanded to a point where we would not be afraid in which to give religious expression or to be able to pray and do that in schools. (L-c)

Yet three of the five who want more freedom had reservations of how this would work in Utah.

I'm going to be very candid...here in Utah we are very afraid of [expanding religion in schools] because it would be ...[the] LDS point of view being given exclusively to the exclusion of all others, but nationally I would like to see it because I think that we have lost the idea that God is an integral part of who we are. (L-c)

Three (1L, 2S) want to see less religion in schools.

Well, that's a hard question. You know, there should be less as far as the attempt to promote a particular religion. (L-e)

I'd like to see less. (S-f)

Note: by the end of question #2, at least 11 participants (5L, 5P, 1S) had raised the issue of LDS released-time seminary as something they view as marginal or in violation of the law (more on this later).

3. If you could decide, what religious things, if any, would you like students to be able to do in their public school?

Four (2L, 2S) think schools should teach about religion in either a world religions class or in the context of history, world civilizations or social studies.

[S-c] I wouldn't mind having classes about different religions. [S-d] Yeah, that'd be cool. (S-c, S-d)

Three (3L) indicate their desire for schools to back away from religion all together.

I grew up in Utah. I really don't think that the schools should be in the business of sponsoring religious activities in the school itself. The LDS faith is [already] so overwhelmingly present that it would make those non-LDS kids feel like even more of a minority. (L-j)

Two (1P, 1S) want a seminary class offered for their religion and a parent requests that LDS seminary be outlawed. Two leaders indicate that the laws are fine but shared stories indicating its implementation is not. There are single requests for a number of things such as: exemption from PE during Ramadan, a program to teach diversity, teachers that do not push LDS standards, a Muslim Student Association, etc.

4. Compared with other religions in your community, how do you feel your religion is treated in Utah public schools?

Twenty four (4L, 12P, 8S) respond that they have experienced few significant problems or that most of the time they have been treated okay.

Most of the time I feel like it's treated ok. Sometimes I feel like it's, I don't know that I would necessarily say that it's discriminated against or anything. There are times when...[I think] "Well wait a minute..." (P-d)

...our young people today don't seem to be like there's any real prejudice that goes on against them because of their religion. (L-c)

Most of the time it's pretty good and then every now and then you'll see things like...those try outs for performance and the only kids that made the cut...went to the same ward house. But it's not consistent. It just happens sporadically. (P-q)

I don't know. No one has ever given me a hard time about it, like no one's ever been like, "Are you Jewish?" No one's ever acted as if it was a problem; except for maybe if you miss for a Jewish holiday sometimes your teachers get mad. (S-o)

However, twenty three (6L, 10P, 7S) said that they generally feel ignored (e.g., assumed LDS, lumped together as non-LDS, simply not acknowledged).

Ignored, by and large. I think many people here have no idea what Episcopalians are. Never heard of it, don't know anything about it. And certainly...my kids have never told me when they come home, "Dad, we talked about Episcopalians today at school. (L-b)

That's a hard question. ...the LDS faith being the majority religion here, sometimes people just take it for granted that you're LDS...and when they find out that you're not it's like oh, and then it's hard to keep the conversation going. You know, things like that. (P-i)

...it's pretty much the same throughout [school]. Either you're LDS or you're not. They just fall together so it's not really [distinguished by] religion with the minorities. (S-r)

At least three (1L, 2P) make careful distinction between the school and student treatment.

Well, you're a minority...there are things that other children have said to my kids that are mean. It's...not necessarily part of the actual school setting, but it's somewhat of an environment that allows that to happen and I wish that weren't the case. (P-e)

Four (2L, 1P, 1S) plainly indicate that they are looked down on.

...you're not LDS, so you're something else. You're second-class...you're not status quo. (P-f)

Inferior. (S-f)

Most participants begin with general statements that things are not generally negative; however, as their responses continue, several give examples or instances of problems they or others have faced as part of the religious minority in Utah schools. Problems include preferential treatment of LDS, teaching LDS doctrine, misconceptions about their religion, feeling ignored or avoided, etc. As a leader described, "The majority...culture being what it is, the majority culture gets what it wants.... So every once in a while we find our people wounded by that" (L-f). Furthermore, a leader reminds us:

...it depends on who you talk to. Like I've never felt discriminated against...in a predominantly LDS area. But I know other people have told me, "O, yeah, I feel discriminated against all the time. (L-j)

5. *Do you think it makes any difference if a schoolteacher or administrator knows your child's religious affiliation? (if yes) How so?*

Eighteen (4L, 5P, 9S) respond that it seems to make no difference.

I don't think it matters. ...by the time somebody becomes an administrator [or teacher] in the school my hope is that this is a person who is educated and understands the whole importance of diversity in schools...and has dealt with those biases in their own life.... (L-m)

...the teachers know [my kids] aren't LDS...and they respect them...I don't think they've really had any problems being put down by any teachers.... When they walk with the Lord I think they've been accepted by their teachers, and admired. (P-o)

I don't think it does. (S-k)

Thirteen (4L, 5P, 4S) say it could be detrimental to the student.

I can only report based on what I've heard...in some cases it does. It's been a vehicle for exclusion. Somehow those kids don't ascend to whatever it is, sports, extracurricular, no preferential treatment. (L-b)

Yes I think in some cases it has. Kayla had a teacher that found out that some kids were not LDS and she really gave them a hard time...[Kayla] just laid low and didn't say anything, I mean that's definitely not fair to the kids. I have also heard other families say their kids didn't get into a certain organization or get to partake in something extra because they found out their kids weren't LDS. (P-j)

Sometimes. I've noticed some teachers will grade you a little harder if you're not the dominant religion. They'll say, 'Oh, well she must be cheating on this.' ...it really depends on the teacher. (S-r)

Nine (2L, 4P, 3S) mention some positive effects from teacher/administrator knowledge of a student's religious affiliation.

Oh absolutely. It enables the teacher to respond to specific [religious] needs...for example; a student comes in and says I need to take off school for [a religious holiday]...the teacher knows. Sometimes a [religious minority] student is able to enrich the curriculum by [sharing] insights. (L-l)

It is important to tell teachers [your religion] and most of the teachers are really honoring and completely respectful. (P-a)

I think it does. In a positive way...I was taking European History last year and sometimes during September, they'd be like, "Are you okay? Are you being treated fine?" I think that was a positive account and the feeling is mutual. (S-a)

Seven (2L, 2P, 3S) indicate that it could be either positive, detrimental or make no difference – it depends on the teacher/administrator.

It cuts both ways. I think that there can be discrimination. A new volleyball coach comes in, she goes to the local ward because she's LDS. They tell her who the good volleyball players are and some student who is not LDS...doesn't even get looked at. A sensitive administrator, a sensitive teacher could also recognize the problems and the pressures of being different. Sensitive teachers can deal with that...so it can cut both ways. (L-h)

It depends. I had a teacher my 10th grade year...and someone...yelled out, "He's not LDS," and I was labeled. Then there's other teachers who couldn't have cared less. I had an English teacher my 8th grade year and he knew it and treated me just the same way as everybody else. (S-f)

6. (Leaders/Parents) Suppose I am around when members of your congregation are privately discussing the treatment of their religion in their public schools, what would I observe?

Thirteen (8L, 5P) indicate I would hear stories or accounts of being socially mistreated.

It's not a topic that comes up a lot. The thing I hear most about, isn't...schools, but it's about the social relationships that occur in schools. And I've experienced this with my own children. 'Your [son] can come over to our house, but our son can't come to yours.' Also...kids talk about religion a lot...some kids pressure and push...evangelical activities in school. (L-b)

...there probably is a lot of animosity with some people. Probably, it's about divided. I hear people say that their kids do have problems...some people really do think that not being LDS has been a major drawback in their life in this community. (P-o)

Ten (4L, 6P) indicate that religion/public school conversations seldom if ever occur.

Quite honestly...I don't know that I've heard...kids that go to public school saying that they feel discriminated against.... We get more discrimination against...the Hispanic ethnic background or the Samoans for similar reasons, but not so much on the religious. (L-m)

...it's really not so much religion, it's more concern over how...some things in the schools and the state are not very good; the low teacher salaries, the low number of counselors, the large classroom size. Those are more predominant than the religion issue. (P-c)

6. (Students) Suppose I am around when the topic of religion is brought up around you at school, what would I observe?

Six students share an uncomfortable or negative situation in their response.

...last year, in 7th grade, we were talking about different religions in Utah History. Like they'd come to me asking about Protestant religion and it was just starting to bug me. Like they thought I was the only person in the world who was not Mormon. (S-g)

Five students include a generally positive situation in their response.

...the topic of religion has never been a problem...my Mormon friends have always been very happy to listen about what I believe in and I'm very happy to listen about what they believe in. (S-e)

Five students mention that it would depend on the situation and whom they were talking to.

For me, it comes up...in two categories. ...in casual conversation...it's more like, "How was your weekend?"... "Oh, my brother left on his mission." Everyone's curious where they're going, etc. Then there's an education type...people questioning and trying to learn more. That I experience a lot like. (S-a)

Five students say they hear LDS student conversations about church things (i.e., young men's/women's activities, youth camp, attending a mission farewell, etc).

Well, in my group of [LDS] friend they talk about stuff they do at church. ...they don't really know a lot about anybody else's [religion]...it doesn't really come up a lot. (S-d)

Four students mention conversations about sharing beliefs.

[I] have had discussions with my friends...and usually when it comes up it is just this is what I believe, this is what you believe, this is what we have in common, I respect that you believe that but it's still different from what I believe. (S-r)

7. Do you think it makes a difference if fellow students know your students/your religious membership? How so?

Sixteen (13L, 3P) share a variety of concerns or challenges such student knowledge could produce or has caused.

Ten (9L, 1P) express potential peer group exclusion (i.e., not invited to party, not part of a group of friends, sports, etc).

I have heard of cases of social deferential treatment because they're not LDS. ...most of them simply get by no matter what, but every once in while you get this push-back because they are. (L-k)

Seven (5L, 1P) mention students becoming targets of LDS student proselytizing or pressure to participate in LDS activities.

...when [my daughter] does stuff with her friends at the ward house. It's like we have to set that ground rule every time. No, you don't get to try to baptize her while she's gone. She's already been baptized thank you. (P-q)

Five leaders specifically address dating concerns/challenges students may face.

In LDS theology [dating] would be a big issue. If you were dating with a purpose of finding an appropriate partner...then of course it would make a difference. (L-j)

Four leaders explain that some students don't say anything about their religion and keep a low profile because it's easier to cope. Three leaders mention that their students are sometimes perceived as less religious because they are not LDS.

Thirteen (4P, 9S) indicate that they observe or experience no significant problems.

I haven't seen [any problems]. [Our girls] haven't said anything like that to us. (P-j)

[S-k] Most...just accept it...some don't really talk to you as much once they find out that you're not LDS. [What percentage?] [S-j] Well, it's pretty rare that you'll find a person [that won't accept it]. (S-k, S-j)

Nope. (S-q)

At least four (1L, 3P) emphasize that the experience really varies among students. Three students explain that they are treated with greater sensitivity when fellow students know their religious affiliation. One student says that some assume they are less religious or "bad" because they are not LDS. A student clarifies that the parents, more than students, seem to have a problem. And another student thinks that the more active LDS people seem to have the biggest problems.

8. In your opinion, how concerned do you feel your community public schools are about respecting your religious beliefs, and expression? What leads you to that conclusion?

Thirteen (2L, 6P, 5S) indicate no problems – the school community is generally concerned.

...it doesn't seem to be that big of a problem for us. In the Salt Lake area, along the Wasatch front, I think there's probably more effort to be a little more sensitive to it, than in a rural area. (L-m)

[Mother] They really keep religion out of everything. I mean they just don't bring it up. (Father) Yeah, I think that they...make sure that they're not doing things that might offend people. (P-j, P-i)

This isn't a real problem. I mean, teachers, I've never had a problem. Students, especially in high school...they're pretty respectful.... (S-c)

Nine (3L, 2P, 4S) have mixed responses, but appear to generally observe more concern than not.

Well, it's a mixed bag. Some places are very concerned. They work really hard at it. Sometimes they just don't get it. ...people don't know that they have created...[an] atmosphere [that] is not caring or sensitive. (L-h)

Well, as far as in public schools...there are a lot of people who care and there are some that don't at all. (P-k)

Moderately concerned. There are some people who just really don't care at all about respecting religion and then there are others who do care and are considerate. I think it would be pretty much fifty-fifty. (S-l)

Nine (5L, 3P, 1S) see little or no concern, often describing LDS majority as ignorantly insensitive.

I don't think they're concerned at all. ...there's some sense of favoritism that exists. I mean I don't think it's intentional. ...but I think in some of those ways it's perhaps subtle. There's an acceptance of the ways and practices of one religion in those extended times. (L-b)

I don't think they're very concerned, no...not the majority of them. [Why?] ...ignorance is a good one. I don't think they feel like they have the responsibility to go out of the way to respect that one of a different faith. But we live in a small town too. (P-o)

I'd say not really that much.... It's more you respect their LDS standards rather than them trying to understand other people's points of view and stuff... (S-r)

9. (Leaders/Parents) How do you feel about your students attending public schools that have such a high percentage of Mormon/LDS students?

Nineteen (9L, 10P) share some concerns they have for their students.

Eight (3L, 5P) of the nineteen express concern about social acceptance: will they fit in?; will they be shunned?; will they have close likeminded friends?; etc.

Concerns we had were, "Would he be able to integrate? Would he be able to make friends?" You know, would he be able to function...being an outsider in so many ways? But those are big concerns.... How will he fit in with the other students? (L-k)

Seven (3L, 4P) voice some concern over abandonment of religious identity under the pressure of LDS proselytizing efforts.

One thing I'm worried about is that because of the culture out there they might be inclined to abandon their Catholic identity...if a person wants to become LDS and they've studied it and they've decided that it's the right

religion I think they have to follow their conscience, but I wouldn't want to see a person converting because it was socially advantageous. (L-j)

Five parents indicate that their initial concerns were high but decreased over time.

Four parents express concern about dating and marriage. Two leaders express concern the school system may be unfair.

Eight parents mention that they are comfortable or have no problem with their students attending schools with such a high percentage of LDS students – yet several of the eight in continued response then shared some concerns.

Six (3L, 3P) mention some benefit students may derive in this situation.

Four (2L, 2P) said they learn to get along with and understand those who are different than you.

Well, it's not that I would take them out of school and put them in private school... I want to teach my children respect...for other people...especially in this culture. (P-e)

Two parents indicate that their minority status makes them stronger because they have to stand up for that in which they believe. Two leaders mention that they share many values with the LDS faith, and therefore, attending schools with an LDS majority can make it easier for their students to live those shared values.

9. (Students) How do you feel about attending a school with such a high percentage of Mormon/LDS students?

Seven students simply explain that it is no problem

It really was never an issue. I mean I have been going to school here since I left first grade so it's really kind of all I've ever known. (S-k)

Six mention varying degrees of feeling "left out."

It's kind of awkward at times because you feel kind of left out at times. You're not part of the big majority, so you're often defined as the minority. They're not

in the popular groups...because they're not Mormon, but they kind of get by. A lot of us clump together I've noticed. (S-r)

Three acknowledge that this situation is "all they have ever known." One shares his displeasure with LDS students trying to get him to do religious things, and along the same lines another student says he feels uncomfortable around really active LDS students. Another feels attending a school with a large majority of LDS students is a positive situation because he and the LDS kids share similar values. And another student states: "I try not to pick on many people because in turn I know how it feels because of being the minority" (S-r).

10. If you could say anything to the religious majority (Mormons/LDS) regarding the treatment of other religions in your school community, what would it be?

Fifteen (L5, P6, S4) similarly suggest that the LDS majority should be more open and willing to learn about others beliefs and obtain greater understanding and awareness of other religions.

I would say; gain a broader perspective on things. (L-j)

I sometimes wish they would be more open to learning about other religions so that they did understand. I think it gives you a more open mind to accept things. (P-j)

[S-k] ...be more willing to learn about other religions. I've run into a lot of ignorance about our beliefs and stuff. Like I've had people think I was LDS because I don't swear. [S-j] I think openness...willing to learn cause a lot of LDS people, they don't know a lot about different religions and stuff and they're just kind of sheltered in that area. (S-k, S-j)

Seven (4L, 2P, 1S) request that LDS be more sensitive and respectful of others' religious beliefs.

...the only thing that I would say is to respect, try to understand the differences. Respect the differences in such a way that you don't...infringe on what other families...are trying to teach their own children. (L-m)

I would appreciate people being respectful of other faiths and not...refer to people as brother and sister...in a school setting...or “Did you do that at Family Home Evening last night or something?” (P-e)

I would just ask that they respect my beliefs as I think I do theirs...I like having discussions with them, about religion and other topics and so I would just hope that they would respect my beliefs. (S-e)

Ten (L4, P3, S3) call for less arrogance or “better than you” sentiments that they sense coming from the LDS majority. Some suggest this arrogance in part comes from the “one true church” doctrine held by the LDS Church.

...if I have a complaint about the LDS religion, it is that sense that there is only one true church. I understand how quote “tenet” that is to the LDS Church, but on the other hand, it unfortunately almost always bears out in a certain sense of arrogance and superiority. (L-k)

If a fundamental tenet of the faith, whether it’s LDS or Southern Baptist or something else, is that this is the only...true church, then inherent in that is that everybody else who’s not part of that is wrong. And that just inherently sends the message that your church is not good. (P-d)

I’d probably say, you can believe what you believe in just don’t try to put anyone down for believing what they believe in. (S-q)

Four (3L, 1P) request that LDS not assume things about them or judge them based solely on their religion, but wish that they would get to know them personally.

...just respect people for who they are and like them or dislike based upon how they treat you rather than on their religious belief. (L-c)

Don’t judge me by my faith. Get to know me and look at me as a person and not a religion, don’t make assumptions about me just because I say I’m Baptist or whatever. (P-j)

Three (1L, 2S) request they live by the golden rule in their treatment of those not of the LDS faith.

I would tell them that I respect your religion and I expect you to respect mine also. (S-b)

Three students request that they stop trying to convert us.

[No more] students coming up to me and saying, “Hey, why aren’t you LDS? Why don’t you convert?” (S-l)

Three (1L, 2P) request the LDS majority not assume that everyone believes as they do.

...be more aware of how...your assumptions about who I might be, need to be held in check so that you get to know me, and that you monitor your language which so as not to offend just by assuming, oh, what ward do you go to. It just is a subtle way of being put down. (L-h)

Don’t assume that they are the same faith that you are. That’s the biggest thing for me. It always seems that they just take it for granted. (P-i)

Two leaders explain that they wish the LDS majority in Utah would quit acting like the “victim.”

It is easier to be seen among your followers as a persecuted minority.... Many [LDS] have not made that transition in their lives, anything that happens they see as [being] persecuted, there are 70% of you in the state how can we be persecuting you? (L-i)

11. If your religion were the majority in your school community, how (if at all) would it be different?

Sixteen (7L, 4P, 5S) indicate that the topic of religion would be less of an issue.

I grew up in a Dutch-reform ghetto. I went to...Christian schools. We didn’t check...“Are you Christian or are you not?” I suppose I learned, but I never asked...it wasn’t an issue. [Proselytizing] was not a preoccupation. I don’t think we walked around with sub-consciousness or even a consciousness about being the “One True Church, and ya’ll need to come onboard” which we’d get here. (L-f)

[In our church] they say ours is ‘a way,’ as is yours, as is someone else’s. To me, I think that’s where we can see the biggest [difference]. That willingness to let people be the way they want to be. (P-q)

I just couldn’t see as much focus on religion altogether. It’s definitely a part of our lives, but I just couldn’t see it being the topic of conversation all the time or as much debate over whose side is right. (S-c)

Note: Several of these participants (4L, 3P, 4S) contrasted the LDS doctrine of “the” true church with the comparatively less doctrinaire approach advocated in their religion to support their assertion that there would be less proselytizing, less religious debate, less put down based on religion, etc.

Twelve (3L, 8P, 1S) say it would generally be no different.

I don't know if it would be different. I think we would be talking up the same problems. You would have over zealous teachers sometimes introducing things that are inappropriate, and in fact illegal in some cases. But I think that is going to happen...whoever is in the majority. (L-m)

Because people are so much the same, even from different backgrounds, I see a lot of the same problems. I wish I could say differently but I think that you would have problems of some kind because people make those judgments before they really think about it...maybe not the same problems but something would be there. (P-i)

It wouldn't. (S-m)

Nine (3L, 5P, 1S) suggest there would be more awareness, acceptance, openness, and/or sensitivity of others.

I think that there would be more sensitivity. We really recognize the value and the validity of widely diverse beliefs. So I think that there would be...more openness to diversity. (L-h)

It is hard to imagine, but I think people might be more open to differences. It [religion] wouldn't be that important.... If more of the population were our same faith, I think it would be less of an issue and I would like to think that people wouldn't feel put down if they were different. (P-e)

Like I said, we're more tolerant of other people and more willing to be open and learn about other people because we believe it's just a way, it's not “the way” (S-r)

One student (S-o ys that her teachers wouldn't know her as well, indicating that her minority status made them more aware of her. One leader (L-d) mentions that schools would be run differently such as separation of genders, religious study, etc. One parent

says there would be fewer overcrowded schools because “Mormons have such large families and we don’t” (P-c).

12. (Leaders/Parents) If a new family/student, unfamiliar with Mormons (the LDS Church), moves into your congregation and plans to enroll (their students) in community public schools, what advice would you give them?

Five (5P) would encourage the new family not to be offended but instead be tolerant, patient, flexible – implying or stating that some offense is probable. Five (2L, 3P) would encourage parents to choose good academic schools. Four (4P) would suggest they be open-minded and avoid preconceived notions – give it a chance. Four (3L, 1P) would try to explain some of the cultural differences they might expect (two leaders mentioned offering a class). Three (3L) would encourage parents to ensure their children are educated in their own faith. Three (3L) generally recommend that parents be attentive to their child’s education. Two (2P) would recommend they be open about their faith. Two (2L) mentioned that they would encourage them to be part of the community. Individual leaders mentioned such things as: don’t take seminary; parents should be a religious example; parents should not assume the schools are run by the LDS faith; students should be proud of their religion; go with a positive attitude, LDS are by and large good people; public education is good - endorsement. One parent would suggest they get their children connected with their church because religion is such a big part of Utah culture.

12. (Students) *If another student of your same religion just moved into your school, what advice would you give them?*

Five students do not see a need to offer any advice. Four would encourage them to have a positive outlook. Four say they would tell them to know their beliefs and be willing to share them. Two would tell them to be respectful of others. Two said they would tell them of certain intolerant people to avoid. One says she would explain how conservative things are and another student indicates she would recommend they not tell anyone their religion because they may be shunned or fussed over.

13. (Leaders) *Would you describe the funniest/best/worst/etc experience regarding the treatment of your religion in your public schools?*

Six leaders share stories of students who felt ostracized because of their non-LDS affiliation.

I can remember one time my niece coming home and she said some of the kids were asking her, 'Krista, we heard that you're not Mormon. And we heard that you're another religion.' And my niece had been taught to say, 'You know it doesn't matter what religion you are. What's important is that you live a good life.' But then she added, 'and beside that, I am Mormon,' because she didn't want to feel excluded. Here's this little girl making this strong profession of faith but only so far you know. "When it comes to reality I still don't want people to know. (L-m)

Five leaders share stories illustrating LDS or school ignorance toward other religions.

[During Ramadan] Two of the girls, I think they were on the track team, and they were fasting. After they ran I think the gym teacher...said, why don't you guys go get a drink of water, you know, he didn't understand that they couldn't get a drink of water. (L-d)

Two share positive stories of bridge building.

I'll tell you my best...Murray High School had world religions days. That was my best surprise that that kind of thing was occurring because I think it begins to take the blinders off. I was glad I was approached to do it. (L-b)

Two mention stories indicating a mingling church and state.

13. (Parents) Would you describe the funniest/best/worst/etc experience regarding the treatment of your religion in your public schools?

No themes develop, but some examples include:

It took being here for a while, [but] some of the programs in the grade school level around the pioneers that came to Utah.... You have to learn...the history of what really happened and because of the faith that the majority of these pioneers were, you cannot keep religion out... (P-i)

One of the teachers commended my kids on the way they act and their loving spirit towards others. I just thought that made them feel really special coming from someone that is LDS to pick them out of the crowd and say that they go over and above and you can see their Christian spirit and what not. That was special... (P-o)

We moved into our house just before school started, so we went to Back to School Night and we're outside in the courtyard and the president of the PTA...ended her little talk with an obviously religious ending and she was like, 'Oh, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have done that.' I thought, 'Oh my God. Oh my God.' And then after that...we became very good friends and she was just the sweetest person, but that introduction was sort of like, 'Oh, this could be scary.' (P-b)

13. (Students) Would you describe the funniest/best/worst/etc experience regarding the treatment of your religion in your public schools?

Four students share stories of LDS surprise/shock when they find out you're not LDS.

I still think one of the funniest things is the way the teachers look at you and they say, 'You're not LDS? You're so nice and polite and have such high standards. How can you not be LDS?' It always makes me laugh because, it makes me think, what, just because I have standards, I'm polite. (S-r)

Three share stories of being mistaken as LDS.

I think some of the funniest things that I've heard [are] people's reasons for mistaking me for an LDS person. Someone thought I was LDS because I didn't swear. I had some people think I was LDS because I was nice and because of the way I dressed and stuff like that. It was just kind of funny. (S-k)

Three stories address the LDS doctrine of “the” only true church.

[S-c] In fourth grade...I told a kid that I wasn't Mormon and he was like, “You're going to hell,” or something. [S-d] That happened to me, too, in second grade...yeah, I was confused. [S-c] Another kid I told him I wasn't Mormon and there was this look of shock. I just thought you were Mormon because you're a nice kid. I was just like, I can't believe it and it was kind of awkward.” (S-c, S-d)

One student shares a positive story of talking to friends about her religion. Another shares a positive story of being interviewed by Channel 2 News during Ramadan. Two negative stories address students being treated as “bad” simply because they were not LDS. One student shares her bewilderment to hear her friend say she was going to be “baptized for the dead” (S-j).

14. If you could change anything about the treatment of your religion in Utah public schools, what would it be? (“King for a day”)

Fifteen (4L, 5P, 6S) would like the LDS majority to have more awareness, understanding, tolerance, and sensitivity toward other religions.

A greater awareness, a greater tolerance, I don't know whether respect is the word or not. Respect isn't something that you can tell someone they've got to do and they do it. I think you can say that there are these boundaries and you must abide by them. (L-e)

I think the community and the family atmosphere and lifestyle far outweighs the negatives...so there isn't anything specific that I'd change other than just a little more open-mindedness and a little broader information and education [about other religions]. (P-m)

Maybe be more aware. [My LDS friends] talk about things that can be offensive, but I know they don't mean it to be. They kind of forget I'm in the car. Stuff like, they'll talk about seminary class and how they're trying to be missionaries. And if you're not Mormon you don't get to go to heaven, or just little things. I once had a friend that she was saying how a boy told her that he likes Mormon girls better because they don't smoke and drink. I was just like, ‘Well, I don't either.’ And that kind of bugs me. Maybe just more aware and understanding. (S-d)

Eleven (1L, 3P, 7S) bring up concerns or agitations about the LDS seminary program.

I would think one of the overt things in Public schools in Utah is that [LDS seminary is] somehow connected to the school. I just think seminary [should be] completely and totally disconnected. Students are under the impression that it is a regular class. I believe there is some underlying idea that they try to get our kids to sign up. (L-c)

[P-p] I've never understood seminary...[it's not on school grounds] but it's a very minor technicality. It's silly...having to deal with balancing the number of classes because all LDS kids take one more class than the other kids. [P-q] Our kids are done with all of their credits by the end of their junior year.... But they won't give them a study hall... [S-r] I have to have a class every single period.... And my senior year I have to take eight classes when I only need to take one. [P-p] That whole thing makes absolutely no sense. It's just one other thing that kind of throws a barrier between [LDS and non-LDS]. It emphasizes the difference. [S-r] It's as if you're in seminary or you're not, and if you you're not in seminary you're not LDS and you must be bad. People would be like, "What did you do in seminary today?" "I don't know, I'm not in seminary." "Oh," then they walk off. (P-p, P-q, S-r)

I'd rather that they wouldn't just provide time for students to go and worship for just one religion. If I decided that I wanted to go and worship, they'd make me go to their seminary building and they'd make me take their seminary classes. That's not something I want to do. Yeah, that's one thing I'd probably change the most. (S-l)

Five (2P, 3S) say there is nothing they would change.

Five (3L, 2P, 1S) wish there were not divisions based on religion (i.e., preferential treatment, only one true church, etc.).

I just wish that...the line wasn't so clear between my way and your way. Jesus said, "Where two or more are gathered in my name is the Church." I wish it were that way, but it's not. We've brought in all these doctrines and limitations and restrictions. We made it much more complicated. (L-a)

I don't know if it's much I would change. It would be just that [our children] would be accepted for who they are by everybody, no matter... if I said I have youth group tonight and not have everybody go, "What?" I mean put them down for that or, 'What do you mean you have that?' to have one day where they weren't self-conscious or feel like they had to hold back. (P-j)

I know that some of my friends that are of a different minority group definitely get picked on because they're that religion and so.... I think more toleration of everyone from everyone to everyone else. It would just make it easier. (S-r)

Three leaders wish the LDS majority would discontinue some, if not all, its proselytizing efforts.

If [students] have integrated religion as a substantial part of their identity and you tell them, “No, that’s wrong.” Now that’s hurtful. [It would be good for] the LDS society to be able to respect and value identity, including even the bad person, while still challenging [them] to think about what they believe. So often I think that the approach we take is pretty point-blank. (L-k)

Two students request that schools refrain from drawing attention to them (i.e. Hanukah, LDS seminary). One leader wishes LDS would share their seminary buildings with them.

One mother wishes schools would quit teaching about the Mormon pioneers, and one student requests that LDS students listen to her because she always has to listen to them, etc.

15. Is there anything else you care to add?

Eleven (1L, 5P, 5S) generally comment that their experience as a religious minority in Utah really isn’t that bad.

Everybody told me, ‘It’s gonna be a horrible experience.’ ...it hasn’t been, the people here are friendly – not that it hasn’t been challenging. It’s a good environment. People come here and they find out that yeah, there are some issues of isolation, but by in large it is a good place to be, very adequate. I think sometimes our fears are much more than the reality. (L-k)

I think that we have not had a really bad experience, we hear a lot of horror stories from some of our friends and we’ve really been very lucky I think.... It’s more a case of it makes us shrug or roll our eyes kind of things at that level of annoyance, but we really never had anything that we were like, I’m going to pull my kid out of public school. (P-q)

Religion itself hasn’t really been brought up that much. I tend to find the differences in more the class discussions about abortion or politics or that stuff...not necessarily religion itself. Obviously the majority of the students and probably the majority of the teachers aren’t my religion, but that hasn’t really changed stuff. (S-e)

I'd say that religion and school, it's not a problem. It's kind of weird in Elementary school, when they first learn that there are other religions besides theirs. But like right now, I haven't found it hard. (S-c)

Ten (1L, 4P, 5S) generally mention that they wish the LDS majority were more sensitive/tolerant and more open to discussing religion.

I wish there was a little more respect for the fact that there are people that aren't LDS in the school setting... I would like to see more respect and more giving of the knowledge that there are people that are different. (P-e)

Generally the biggest thing that I see is when, in discussions I've had with people, it seems almost rude, if you're going to have a discussion, with them it's one side. (S-c)

Some of the things that bug me a little are people who think their religion is so much better than people and they just talk and talk and they become jerks about it. That's always bothered me. (S-g)

Other responses cover a broad spectrum. One leader comments on the depression engendered by Utah politics; while another desires more options for education (vouchers, home school, etc.). Two parents talk about how feeling secure in their religion and who they are has helped them cope. Another parent expresses her wish for more religious expression in public schools. Two students explain that living in Utah has made them stronger. Two other students say they wish the LDS majority would stop proselytizing.

Themes

As previously mentioned, throughout analysis of the questions, recurring themes were noted and subsequently investigated. What follows are the results of some of those investigations. My decision regarding which investigated themes to include here was determined by their respective frequency within participant responses. A few were included for discussion purposes.

Social Concerns/Challenges

All but one participant (13L, 17P, 17S) mention some kind of social concern or challenge related to their religious identity in Utah public schools. By and large these social challenges are not the result of illegal acts, nor are they school directed. A leader, after sharing an instance wherein peers shunned his daughter because of her religion, explains: “That’s...not coming from the school system, but it’s a dynamic of school” (L-b). A parent notes peer mistreatment of her sons in school then states: “It’s...not necessarily part of the actual school, but it’s somewhat of an environment that allows that to happen and I wish that weren’t the case” (P-e). A student succinctly explains: “I like the [school] system as it is...its just students” (S-p). Presumably most school age children experience social challenges; however, participants in this study identify several challenges they either attributed to, or see as enhanced by, the large LDS presence in their public school communities.

With so many participants commenting on religion-related social concerns/challenges in Utah public schools, it is not surprising that several themes identified, and subsequently investigated, are related to this topic. To avoid a degree of redundancy, only brief notation (with examples) of the multiple social concerns/challenges that participants mention will appear under this topic. Some of the more noted themes herein are later reported as individual topics with greater detail.

For the most part the social concerns/challenges that participants mention relate in varying degrees to peer exclusion, mistreatment or not “fitting in” due to their religious affiliation/beliefs. What follows are several school-related areas of social

concern/challenge that participants identify, along with a summary of reasons participants gave for being excluded or mistreated by the LDS majority.

General concern/challenge of being left out, not included, shunned

Sometimes...kids are excluded from certain activities. Not from school activities, but from [social] activities with classmates because they don't belong to that [religious] group. (L-m)

I asked my girls...if they would want to raise their children here and they said no. And I said...“Why do you feel that way?” And they said, “Because it's been hard.” They've felt left out and things throughout the years. (P-j)

Most [students] will just accept [that you're not LDS]...but there are some that don't really talk to you as much and stuff like that. (S-k)

I'm not willing to express my religion and my feelings on it with them. Some of them will just be like, Okay, bye. (Paragraph 185) ...I hide it because I...fear that I wouldn't have been accepted. My fear was I don't like being shunned... (S-p)

It's kind of a challenge in one area and in another area it's good...because [we share]...their common beliefs.... In another sense it's not as good because you feel...underrepresented. You do feel you're a minority at sometimes. You're just excluded. You're not trying to be excluded, but you do get excluded. (S-a)

Out of the loop – uninformed

It would be...that subtle feeling that I'm not really aware with what's going on. Or...people talking to you about...“What ward are you in?”...then that sort of semi-stunned look...that “Oh, you're so nice. How can you not be Mormon? You seem like you would be.” You know, this doesn't quite compute.... But...again, nothing overt that we've met with. (P-b)

I think from a small town you find out things maybe through announcements at Church that we miss out on. Boy Scouts is a major LDS controlled activity which my boy is involved in but a lot of times he feels uncomfortable or left out because maybe we don't get the announcements or their doing...a Church activity and it's just different. (P-o)

Cliques based on LDS association/interaction

It's kind of awkward at times because you feel kind of left out.... They're not in the popular groups...because they're not Mormon, but they kind of get by. A lot of us clump together I've noticed. But they also kind of get along with the LDS kids. ...At school you definitely have your cliques in the different wards you can

see, like oh we have this activity, everyone goes to that. Then there's everyone else just kind of left behind going, ok. But it's not really that big of a thing. (S-r)

My son] had problems...native to the culture...because a lot of these boys grew up in the same ward together, and they played basketball together from the time they're six years old. And so they're used to each other. You have to penetrate that. You become an outsider.... [LDS] have a natural peer group that's built into it. And once again, that's another one of the factors that happens. It happens in sports, over and over again kids begin to feel like I'm not a part of that ward ball, and I don't fit in. And you have to be that much better to get into that circle. It's sometimes by default. (L-g)

...there's a group of people who've been going to ward activities for so long that they've known each other for so long that it's harder to get into that group, but I haven't really noticed it being a problem. (S-e)

LDS Seminary

...it would seem to me that...there were a host of social opportunities that I missed because I was not part of that [LDS seminary] system. You know, they would have early-morning things or dances associated with it. Or just the common experience of being in a class together. You know that creates a bond that I was not a part of. (L-j)

It's hard for us in Utah...with the predominance of the seminary class in there. It's pretty obvious which kids are LDS and which kids aren't. (P-g)

Dating

Dating is an issue...there's always the situations where a girl or boy is not allowed to date anybody but an LDS girl or boy. Or, again like I said the outside pressure, somebody begins to go with somebody who is LDS the pressure to try to get them to join the church. (L-m)

My running partner['s]...son was starting to be interested in a young lady in high school, they were starting to talk about dating...and suddenly her mother said no you can't date him, he is not...worthy because he was Methodist and not Mormon she told her daughter...that she can't go out with him. The implication was not simply...religious...but somehow or other he was an inferior person because he was not Mormon...he was deeply hurt by that because he is a fine young man. (L-i)

Assumed LDS

Sometimes [its difficult to]...go to school and interact cause everything is really based around one religion. Pretty much everyone...just assumes that everyone's

of the same religion and they can say...and do certain [religious] things...and not even think [that other] people may not want to although they...participate in it [to avoid unwanted attention]. (S-l)

...be more aware of how your language and your assumptions about who I might be, need to be held in check so that you get to know me, and that you monitor your language so as not to offend just by assuming, oh, what ward do you go to. It just is a subtle way of being put down...even when you mean it in the best way. (L-h)

For some reason it's human nature that that assumption is when you're the majority, everybody just thinks in the same manner. Unfortunately that doesn't bode well for understanding everybody else. (P-p)

Conversation – LDS centered

...it's kind of hard to talk to your friends and stuff that are different religions because they don't understand what you're talking about and you don't understand what they're talking about. So it's an issue with like, friendship and that area. (S-j)

[S-k] ...we listen to them talking about their religious stuff all the time. They'll get out of seminary and they're all talking about [it]...and there's never really an area for us to talk about what we're doing in our church... [S-j] Yeah, like today [at school], one of my friends...[and I] were talking about [our youth group activity] and the [LDS] girls were just like all staring at us like, "What in the world are you guys saying?" (S-k, S-j)

It's like, I don't go to seminary, I don't go to your church, I don't go to your activities...[and] when we go to a pep rally, the Church always comes up. "What'd you do at the ward?" or "what'd your do at the stake?" or "where are you going on your mission?" (P-f)

Looked down on – only one true church

...try and be more understanding...[rather] than trying to be, we're better than you, go away. I can understand that's how they've been raised and taught, theirs is the one true Church, nothing else is right, so I just think that if they were more open...well if that's not what you believe, what do you believe? (S-r)

...one of the girls had gotten a confirmation cross and she wore it to school and was really quite besieged by others making fun of her.... The hard thing is when you hear "we are right and you are wrong". (L-i)

Generally the biggest thing that I see is when, in discussions...whatever you say they won't even think of taking it. I'll have discussions with open-minded LDS

people...but it gets on my nerves. That kid I was telling you about, he says stuff like, “Oh, I feel sorry for you.” It’s just like, “Shut up.” I don’t like to talk to him at all. It’s not even a discussion. (S-c)

Negative assumptions about character, moral standards – stereotyped, labeled, etc.

...if you’re not Mormon, you get the nasty glares of, “Oh, you must do drugs and all this bad stuff because you’re not LDS.” Or...they come up to people like me and they’re like, “Oh, you’re nice, you have to be Mormon.” And I’m like, “No.” And so it’s either usually shock or they just kind of avoid you after that. They don’t know what to do or they’re really snotty to you after that like they’re better than you. (S-r)

If you aren’t doing something that [LDS] think is part of how you ought to behave as a moral or decent person, or they read their own stuff into what you’re doing, there’s a tendency to go tell. And all they need...are those little triggers. The brakes failed on...my truck...[I] got a little scrape on somebody’s bumper and...the first question was, “Have you been drinking?” That kind of stuff is offensive.... The assumption being if you’re not one of us...then you must be engaged in these kinds of things. (L-f)

Targets of proselytizing – social pressure to change religions

...don’t proselytize or infringe on...the religion and values other families are trying to teach their own children. Don’t make it so difficult that a teenager has to choose between peer pressure on one side and loyalty to the family on the other. (L-m)

I would tell the kids...make sure that you’re proud that you’re Catholic. Don’t just assume because you’re the minority...that there’s something defective about you or you have to change in order to fit in. I’ve seen that happen all too often, where because of this sense that, “I don’t fit in. I’ve got to change.” (L-j)

Well, I think the hard part from a clergyman’s point of view is that you know that the LDS culture is gonna rub off and so ultimately one’s concern about their own children acculturating so well to the predominant faith that it’s not hard for them ultimately to [join].... I just can’t imagine, but it happens all the time. It makes the heart of a good preacher, who is convinced of the truth of scripture, just sick. (L-f)

Unkindness – ridicule, disrespect, meanness, contempt

It’s not a good situation for a number of reasons. The discrimination that is carried on against non-Mormon students, the making light of the religion. Those kind of things. It doesn’t help the kids’ self-esteem or anything. (L-e)

The cross...remains a symbol of division between us and the LDS. A child...or a grown up will wear a cross...while the LDS won't display a cross. They looked down upon the folks that wear the cross. (L-c)

[S-l] A lot of people...actually care.... Some don't, though... [P-k] There's just a few that don't, that make it a big difference because they say things that's hurtful and mean sometimes.... (S-l, P-k)

[What religion I am] doesn't really matter to most of [my friends]. There are some people who treat me like a second or third-class citizen because I am [not LDS]. About 25%. (S-f)

Ignorant Insensitivity

[Friends occasionally] talk about things that can be offensive, but I know they don't mean it to be. They kind of forget I'm in the car. Stuff like, they'll talk about seminary class and how they're trying to be missionaries. And if you're not Mormon you don't get to go to heaven, or just little things. I once had a friend that was saying how a boy told her that he likes Mormon girls better because they don't smoke and drink. I was just like, "Well, I don't either." And that kind of bugs me. It's never intentional. They do forget sometimes. (S-d)

Just a lack of sensitivity to the so-called gentiles and...while [LDS kids] don't mean it in a harmful manner more often than not, the kids understand where that goes and what's underlying there. And...you ought to be one of us. Maybe... the attitude... "You don't belong here and I'm gonna treat you that way." You know, "We were here first" and there's that kind of stuff that goes on. Fortunately, it doesn't happen everyday. Those things influence our lives. (L-f)

Feel uncomfortable

Sometimes it can be kind of frustrating because all of my close friends are LDS. It's just little things like if they just convert someone, they have a huge celebration. It...kind of makes me feel weird. A girl once kept asking me if I would ever marry a returned missionary...she wouldn't let it go and I thought it was kind of weird. So now that I've known them for a while and they know about me it's not really a problem. Just every once in a while... (S-d)

Viewed as different – stick out when wanting to blend in

...some people want to blend in, they don't want to be different.... There's no place...in our society where the LDS is not the majority, the predominant. Sometimes they assume that we all [non-LDS] think and do things the same. Which...doesn't bother me. But some people it does. They don't like to be different. (L-c)

I have had reports of some of our students being told that they're not really Christians. And I have heard of cases of social, deferential treatment because they're not LDS. But...by and large...most of them simply get by no matter what.... I suspect that it depends somewhat on how forward they are in expressing their faith contrary to the LDS faith. You know, those who seem to keep a low profile do very, very, very well and those who are aggressive in both expressing their own faith, in challenging the LDS faith [struggle]. (L-k)

Few to relate with religiously – sense of isolation

A lot of times you feel kind of alone.... I don't really have any Catholic friends in my school. So it's really kind of difficult. You have like no one...who really can fully understand where you're coming from... (S-l)

Whenever they had these non-school activities, the major focus was their LDS activities. [My son] was always the third man out.... It's like, I don't go to seminary, I don't go to your church, I don't go to your activities, but when we're talking [or] when we go to a pep rally, the Church always comes up. "What'd you do at the ward?" or "what'd you do at the stake?" or "where are you going on your mission?" And those things are a part of Utah. (P-f)

Judged by LDS standards – held to LDS standards

[S-r] I think [my sister] had the worst time. [P-q] They judged her based on, her looks...religion...she's really smart but the teachers wouldn't believe it because she didn't dress conservative and she didn't do this or that. She's a good kid, but she's just has this battle...superficially. (S-r, P-q)

With my [LDS] friends, I don't think [someone] would get very far if they were...like, I don't care what you think, I'm just going to swear all the time and make fun of your religion. They wouldn't be friends with my friends. (S-d)

Sense of LDS favoritism

...there's some sense of favoritism that exists. There's an acceptance of the ways and practices of one religion in those extended times.... ...when everything's equal the Mormon kid will get preference because they're in the ward.... I don't observe it in terms of...grades...but it's in those other dimensions...where you've got people from a community that's tight but not just tight, closed at some level, you know, and it makes for kind of unusual friendships and relationship opportunities. (L-b)

[Preferential treatment of LDS?] You know, my reaction is, I don't think that it's avoided. (L-k)

Some general reasons participants mention for being socially excluded or mistreated by the LDS majority include:

Many LDS ignore, disregard, overlook, fail to notice, etc. those of other religions

...many of them [LDS] honestly don't know there's anything other than the LDS Church and so [my daughter's] had several times during the last school year where kids have shunned her or have said things purely out of lack of education. They have not been taught that there are other religions out there and even the basics about what they may believe so when she says she's not LDS... "That make you a nobody"... it really is difficult but she copes well. (P-n)

Now I have been in a school setting where... There was a lot of [LDS] religious conversation that basically I wasn't participating in. Socially, like I say, you're very much in the minority and sort of left out, but no one really notices that you're being left out. (P-b)

Many LDS are ignorant/lack knowledge of other religions

When you are practicing a faith that people don't understand or don't know anything about, it confuses them and it might lead to...shunning...[or] people not wanting to be involved with you... (P-n)

Sometimes kids, it seems like they think the world is Salt Lake. If there was an effort...where they can be exposed to the different ideals of every, not just religion, but just culture. I'm not saying teach them the religion, just teach them about the world and how other cultures go about their lives. (S-a)

...at first they didn't really know anything about our religion, they were kind of confused...why we weren't their religion. But they just didn't really know anything and I guess there was some treatment with a little less respect...but now that they know.... It's easier now. (S-d)

Religion is a big deal in Utah

...in other states, in other places, the question of religion never comes up. You move in next to somebody, you might go for weeks, months, or years and never know what religion is. It's not an issue. But here the first question is...what religion are you? And what ward do you go to? So I think that's where it's different. (L-m)

LDS are so busy being LDS

People [in my congregation] have a hard time finding opportunities for social interaction and making connections sometimes...because the LDS people are so

busy being LDS people.... when [LDS] identify yourself so different from somebody else, it makes it hard. (L-k)

LDS Ignorance of Other Religions – Minority Religions Overlooked

At least 36 participants (13L, 12P, 11S) attribute some of the challenges they face as a minority religion in Utah school communities to some form of LDS majority ignorance/lack of knowledge about other religions/beliefs. For example:

...there is an ignorance of what the non-LDS are about. ...I've never found a callous ugliness in any of the situations, but I've found an ignorance that is not understanding of what we're doing. (L-g)

I think that they do a lot of things that they don't even realize are detrimental to other kids. ... I mean, there's just no concept of, you know, that people would object to their children being told that all of the churches are false. (L-e)

...many of them honestly don't know there's anything other than the LDS Church and so [my 4th grade daughter] had several times during the last school year where kids have shunned her or have said things purely out of lack of education. They have not been taught that there are other religions out there and even the basics about what they may believe... (P-n)

...people are more naïve about [my religion]... If I was in their position I would probably do the same thing... ...the biggest thing is people don't know. They aren't educated and so that sometimes could leave them confused and they have some stereotypes. (S-a)

Some participants explain *why* they think the LDS majority is ignorant/not understanding of different religions in Utah school communities.

...every once in a while we have another story to tell about how we're not treated so well. ...mostly it's...going to do with ignorance. The majority...culture gets what it wants, or it presumes everybody else ought to be colored with the same brush and hues. So every once in a while we find our people are wounded by that. (L-f)

Maybe not so much a discrimination, but a lack of [LDS] awareness that other religions are out there.... The minority religions tend to get shuffled aside because everybody else is thinking the same way and it's just a lack of awareness. (L-j)

I think the LDS Church doesn't see [our church] as a threat and so they're not going to make an effort, I mean they can be courteous, if you will, to other religious organizations and...just ignore them literally. (P-f)

It's not like any dominant culture or religion ever says, "Well, let's stop and find out what everybody else believes." I think they're wrapped up in their world and they're very satisfied with their world. ...I think it's just, once again, comes back to ignorance. (L-g)

...they're comfortable where they are so why would they change? They're happy. (L-h)

Several participants share examples of *what* makes them feel ignored or not understood.

For example:

...they'll talk about seminary class and how they're trying to be missionaries. And if you're not Mormon you don't get to go to heaven, or just little things. I once had a friend that she was saying how a boy told her that he likes Mormon girls better because they don't smoke and drink. I was just like, "Well, I don't either." And that kind of bugs me. ... It's never intentional. They do forget sometimes. (S-d)

I've run into a lot of ignorance about our beliefs and stuff. Like I've had people think I was LDS because I don't swear. (S-k)

[PTA conference scheduled on Ash Wednesday] ...was not an issue so much that I couldn't attend my church services; it was more just not an awareness of it on the part of the school board when they made the calendar. Not that it was...a big deal, but little things like that every so often would come up.... Not meant at all to be demeaning.... (P-g)

It has everything to do with ignorance...[LDS] kids don't know what Baptists [Methodists, Catholics] are. ... Their principals, I'm not sure they do either. I think that we [non-LDS] probably all get lumped together... (L-g)

I think [school] policy...is extremely clear about respecting the differences of other people. How it works out is not always quite so clear. For instance a high school principal...[conveyed] something tragic and I guess the football team was all together and the immediate response was, well let's have a prayer and the coach did not do it and one of the kids jumped up and began to have this prayer which was fine in one sense but the principal could not understand the fact that the understanding of God or the divinity is held differently with different groups and so the God that this young man was praying to was not necessarily the same expression of God that our people, Catholics, Jews, and Islamic students would be praying to and he just did not understand and he was very proud of his kids had

taken leadership. The policy is very clear his coach wasn't in it and that was fine but he did not understand the theological perceptions of divinity and I'm doubt if he ever will. (L-i)

Some participants suggest *how* the LDS majority might become more aware and understanding of other religions in their school communities:

So I think there's more kids that could take those [world religion] classes and somehow be educated more. That could help. They're just a bit naïve about other religions, not just [my] religion, but better to educate us about each other. (S-a)

Most people don't even know what Presbyterianism is, so I would say just what they could know more about it. Ask me if they don't know, something like that. (S-e)

...perhaps the LDS Church could give them some limited education on the other families [religions] that live here because we are neighbors and we're all together here in the community so I think that would be really good. ...perhaps that's something that the parents could do. (P-n)

I sometime feel like the LDS church is scared to let people learn about another religion. I wish they would be more open to learning and then maybe they'd be more accepting. (P-g)

Don't judge me until you get to know me. Don't judge me by my faith. Get to know me and look at me as a person and not a religion... (P-j)

...I know that the LDS people are taught to respect the religious faith of other people, but I think I would say to...be more aware of how your language and your assumptions about who I might be, need to be held in check so that you get to know me, and that you monitor your language which so as not to offend just by assuming, oh, what ward do you go to. It just is a subtle way of being put down...even when you mean it in the best way. It would be monitoring their language to be sensitive as to how they ask a question affects me. And then it's making assumptions about who I am because the Christian community is not monolithic either. You have fundamentalists, evangelicals, midstream liberals and extreme liberals and you don't know who I am as a Presbyterian or as a Christian until you get to know me. And quite frankly, I may surprise you. (L-h)

Concluding thoughts:

It really does make a great difference when my friends know [about my religion]. A lot of my friends are a lot more considerate about what they do or what they say when they know.... They're really a lot more considerate in that aspect once they know. (S-l)

Well the fact that the person has an open heart and an open mind doesn't always mean that they get it. That's certainly true. ...you just have to keep working at it and some will and some won't. I'm certain that from the point of view of the LDS community that they would say in big ways and the little ways, our gentile neighbors don't get it. So getting it is a matter of sort of, and I think that over the course of years, given the leadership from the top, from the 1st Presidency, from the Governor of the state, etc. that there will be more of getting it as the years go on. ... There will be frictions. But I guess that's a part of growing. (L-1)

Proselytizing

Thirty-four participants (11L, 8P, 15S) voice unease or displeasure with LDS proselytizing efforts in their school communities. For example:

...my children were raised in a setting where the elementary and the Junior high and high school were predominantly LDS. It's not a bad thing. The hardest part is the constant pressure for proselytizing, inclusion and you feel that. (L-h)

Just back off [proselytizing] a little bit. School is for education. (P-q)

It's something kind of mean to say, but I'd probably tell them to stop trying to convert me in the schools. That's kind of annoying. (S-o)

[non-LDS teenagers] ...can become targets for proselytizing by very well-intentioned kids who want to share their faith. And that means they're being invited to a lot of the LDS activities and I think that probably creates more problems... (L-m)

Reasons given for displeasure or concern with LDS proselytizing efforts:

Overly persistent

Like there was a [LDS] kid...who said I want you to go to EFY camp...he hounded me for months. [I said] "Well, that's not for me, but thanks for asking" and tried to end it and sometimes you can't end it. Some people just can't give it a rest, but there are a lot of good people. (S-f)

...the [LDS] kids talk about religion a lot. And there is some pressure, some kids pressure and push...evangelical activities in school. (L-b)

Friendship subordinate to proselytizing

...[non-LDS] people move into the state and they want to be a good neighbor...and they respond to [LDS] invitations...to accommodate and be a

friend and then they find out that there's really a push on to get them into the Church, and by then many of them have found out that the LDS doctrine is so foreign to [their] doctrine that they don't want to be involved and so then barriers begin to develop because the Mormons, they don't understand what has gone wrong. They were making good progress there for a while and all of a sudden the people quit responding to their invitations and so a barrier of feelings develop that really aren't good. (L-e)

...it seems to be more blatant proselytizing and trying to get somebody into the church rather than just being friendly. ...I don't see the problem unless that happens. ...there's always the sense of, ya know, always the suspicion that if people are being nice to you, are they doing this because they are trying to get you to be members of the Church. (L-m)

Peer pressure

Don't make it so difficult that [by proselytizing] a teenager has to choose between peer pressure on one side and loyalty to the family on the other. (L-m)

I don't have any disagreement [with my kids attending LDS majority schools] as long as they [LDS] don't pressure or compel... (P-a)

One-way proselytizing

There are some [LDS] who would take great offense if a Methodist were to say to them "Hey our youth group is doing such and such, come on over and join us"...but conversely they would expect clearly that a Methodist would want to join them at their place and so there is that disparity... (L-i)

A person who trains with me in debate, he's Mormon and he was always pushing me to go to Church. I'd say, you go to Church with me and I'll go to Church with you. He'd say "No way."...he wouldn't go to Church with me to save his soul. (S-f)

Social outsider

You take a [non-LDS] twelve or thirteen-year-old boy or girl, that's going to school...and then somebody representing the majority class says, "No, this is wrong. You are not part of the true church." ... I believe the evangelical stuff, so I understand the need to spread the good news and bring people salvation. At that age they are so tender and identity is so important. If they have integrated religion as a substantial part of their identity and you tell them, "No, that's wrong." Now that's hurtful. I'm not sure it's good evangelism to do that. ...the impression that our kids tend to get that there's something wrong with them because they're not part of the majority. (L-k)

Absolutism

A lot of people who I talk to who are LDS, we can talk about each other's religions...but this particular person, he's so certain that everything he's saying is right and everything I'm saying is wrong, and that kind of gets me. (S-c)

Seven participants (2L, 1P, 4S) indicate that proselytizing was infrequent. For example:

I don't really think I've seen that much. ... I probably find myself trying to convert them more than they try to convert me. (S-k)

... I do not think that is as frequent as it used to be but there are some cases. (L-i)

[A large LDS population] doesn't bother me as long as they don't try to get me into their religious thing. [Do they try that very often?] Nope. [Do they invite you to a lot of things?] Only once in a while. (S-q)

Some explain what they deem acceptable proselytizing:

I had one guy that's an engineer and LDS and he was a man of integrity. ...he said, "I understand. It [LDS doctrine of only true church] is really an offensive teaching." And he said, "I still believe it, but I know now that it is." And that's integrity to me. Then I've had two guys say, "Truth hurts, tough." That kind of arrogance... (L-g)

You know, if a person wants to become LDS and they've studied it and they've decided that it's the right religion I think they have to follow their conscience, but I wouldn't want to see a person converting because it was socially advantageous. I wouldn't want a person being Catholic for that reason either. And that doesn't respect their dignity and I'd assume that most religions wouldn't want people coming in for defective reasons. (L-j)

...in a group of friends, usually when it [religion] comes up it is just this is what I believe, this is what you believe, this is what we have in common, I respect that you believe that but it's still different from what I believe. So it really depends on the person, the individual. It's usually pretty open with my school friends. I'm pretty lucky about that. (S-r)

At least two participants (2L) connect LDS proselytizing efforts with the LDS doctrine of *only true church*.

I don't think it's just LDS, there's Protestant Churches and others who feel like what they've got to offer is the right way which means the other things that are out there are not the right way and so you operate differently [proselyte] because your concern is different. (L-b)

This is the “only true church...[others are] an abomination” ...once you say [to non-LDS] that you’re wrong, then you have to tell them the right. And proselytizing is the natural outworking of that. (L-g)

Additional participant thoughts:

[Legally]...you have things you can do and can’t do [religiously in public schools]. But...teachers and the administrators of those schools [most of whom are LDS], no matter...how much they try to not proselyte, who you are comes across in your role modeling. So that’s still going to be there. So I think that if it’s really an issue, which it is to some people, the same impact can be made in more subtle ways. If a school...says absolutely no prayers or no this or that, I still think you can accomplish the same thing just by your role modeling. (L-a)

[Commenting on living in school communities with LDS majority] ...you know that the LDS culture is gonna rub off and so ultimately one’s concern about their own children acculturating so well to the predominant faith that it’s not hard for them [to join]... [for example]...all her girlfriends were LDS bishops’ daughters and she ultimately felt comfortable in the environment and finally married a returned missionary and became LDS. That’s one in a hundred that can be repeated over and over again. It makes the heart of a good preacher, who is convinced of the truth of scripture, just sick. (L-f)

*LDS Released-time Seminary*¹²

Twenty-four participants (7L, 10P, 7S) voice some opposition or concern about the LDS released-time seminary program. Reasons participants give for their opposition and concern about LDS released-time seminary include:

Singles out students not of the LDS faith, makes them feel different (3L, 4P, 4S)

...sometimes our children are made to feel like they ought to go, and some of them even do because they don’t want to be different or made to feel different because of the number who go. (L-c)

I’m not against released-time, but [it]...seems to exclude the non-LDS kids from a portion of school life that most of the other students have. ...it would seem to me that there were a host of social opportunities that I missed because I was not

¹² *LDS Released-time Seminary* is a LDS Church sponsored program that asks LDS public high school students to register for one period of “released time” so they can walk to a nearby LDS building (often adjacent to the public school), receive LDS instruction, then return and resume their public education. This program is conducted in areas where the LDS church deems there are a sufficient number of LDS students. No public school funds are used or public school credit given.

part of [LDS seminary]. You know, they would have early-morning things or dances associated with it, or just the common experience of being in a class together. (L-j)

The kids go to seminary and get hyped up and come back and want to know why...our kids, don't belong to the real church. And I have heard of cases of social, disrespectful treatment because they're not LDS. (L-k)

[P-p] It's just one other thing that kind of throws a barrier between [LDS and non-LDS]... It emphasizes the difference. [S-r] It's as if you're in seminary or you're not, and if you you're not in seminary you're not LDS.... People would be like, "What did you do in seminary today?" "I don't know I'm not in seminary." "Oh," then they walk off. (P-p, S-r)

Mixing of church and state (5L, 5P, 1S)

I find it really interesting and unusual that seminaries are near schools... ..it seems there's some kind of connection. And how could any kind of one doctrinal approach to religion be advanced in a way that's connected to public school, where people are let out of class to do it? That seems really crossing the border of church and state. (L-b)

In a sense you really can't divorce [LDS seminary from schools] because the school makes accommodations in its schedule for release time, therefore there is some interaction... (L-j)

[S-f] ...one thing my school does is...they write seminary on your schedule if you have it or not. [P-e] Yeah, we do get called and asked if we would like to sign up our children for seminary. And I say, "Well, no, unless you have if for Presbyterians. (S-f, P-e)

Perceived favoritism of LDS students (1L, 4P, 4S)

...if they're offering it to one [religion] they should offer it to all [religions], but they don't. (S-l)

I had to take seven classes. Everybody else only had to take six, they were worried about. But I had seven grades I needed to tend to. (L-j)

[P-q] But they won't give [non-LDS] a study hall...you don't get released time for anything else. [S-r] ...I have to have a class every single period. I can't say, like I'm only going to take six classes next year instead of eight. No, I have to take a full eight classes even though I'm done with all of my credits. [P-p] That whole thing just makes absolutely no sense. (P-q, S-r, P-p)

I think it's kind of unfair because...it kind of takes a long time to get there. So they can have an excuse for being tardy and stuff... (S-j)

Five participant (1L, 3P, 1S) responses convey significant misunderstanding of LDS released-time seminary. Two general misconceptions are:

LDS students get credit (1L, 2P)

It is, to me, very surprising that in Utah that somehow the LDS Church manages to get kids out of school for, actually it's not even out of school, they actually get credit, I understand, for their seminary classes. (L-k)

Only LDS are allowed released-time privileges (1L, 1P, 1S)

I mean, if they're going to let one religion do it [released time seminary] and count it as a class with credit they should let everybody do that. I don't see that equally throughout the district. (P-j)

Two (1L, 1P) request use of LDS seminary buildings as means of providing their own students a released-time experience in their faith:

One thing that I would like see, if the LDS Church said, "You know what, we built seminaries in all these places. We purchased the land. We're going to give you a classroom during the day. You can rent it from us." You know, charge us, I don't care. And say that to all the Protestant, Catholics, whatever, that, "You can run your religious education program here and we'll seek to support you in that because it's important that you're children receive an opportunity like ours, to be educated in their faith." (L-j)

"The" True Church & Sense of Superiority

Twenty participants (8L, 5P, 7S) mention the LDS assertion of being "The" true church as a cause of some challenges they face in Utah school communities. Examples:

...whenever kids get together, they talk. ...while on a school band trip...[my kids] would be quoting verses and arguing scripture and having great fun, but you know, there was always this air of superiority by the [LDS kids] who were a part of "The" Church. And the result has always been a sense of being intimidated or put down. (L-h)

If a fundamental tenet of the faith, whether it's LDS or Southern Baptist or something else, is that this is the only, this is the true church. Then inherent in that is that everybody else who's not part of that is on the wrong track. And that

just inherently sends the message that your church is not good. And while I don't think most kids' do that, every once in a while that does come out. (P-d)

...one thing that just kind of makes me mad is when my friends are like, "Well, I'm happy I go to the only true church" and like all that stuff. That kind of sets me off a little, but I just bite my tongue and deal with it. (S-j)

...if you're trained all your life to say you're the only true church, and all these other churches can't get along and their beliefs are an abomination. ...I think that that's really part of that exclusive mind set that sometimes you see in a principal or a teacher, and not on purpose necessarily, but it happens out there. I think that most people, almost all people would say, "I don't want to do that. I'm not going to discriminate because I'm Mormon and you're not." I don't think there's any ill intent there. I just think there's some areas of confusion...ignorance. (L-g)

...if I have a complaint about the LDS religion, it is that sense that there is only one true church. I understand how quote "tenet" that is to the LDS Church, but on the other hand, it unfortunately almost always bears out in a certain sense of arrogance and superiority. It almost can't help [it].... (L-k)

Participants mention several ways LDS members in Utah convey a feeling of superiority often associated with the LDS Church being "The" church:

Comparisons

...after being in 5th period in Utah History, everyone just wanted to keep asking me what my religion is... I didn't really like that. I think they wanted to compare my religion to theirs and say it was better or something. That's kind of how I felt with some people. (S-g)

Disassociation

...some [LDS] kids always feel that they should not lower themselves to play with Methodists and that is a great sadness.... What is seen as something you are right, you are wrong, kids don't stop to think about the psychosocial understandings of belief patterns of all that, all they know is that suddenly I am not good enough to play with Suzie down the street. (L-i)

Unkind treatment

...she drew one of the shields with a cross, which is a very historical part of the crusades, and she was cussed out [by her LDS peers]. She drew a true historical concept and the kids just over responded to it. She was just devastated. (L-g)

“Oh, you’re nice, you have to be Mormon.” And I’m like, “No.” And...they don’t know what to do or they’re really snotty to you after that like they’re better than you. (S-r)

Just want to tell me about their religion – won’t listen to others

...with [some LDS] it’s one side. It’s like whatever you say they won’t even think of taking it. I’m open to plenty, I try to listen to people. I’ll have discussions with open-minded LDS people...but it gets on my nerves. That kid I was telling you about, he says stuff like, “Oh, I feel sorry for you.” It’s just like, “Shut up.” (S-c)

But most people in my school, they really don’t want to hear about my religion. They just want to tell me about theirs. (S-f)

“You’re going to hell”

[S-c] I think once in fourth grade or something like that, I told a kid that I wasn’t Mormon and he was like, “You’re going to hell,” or something. [S-d] That happened to me, too, in second grade. Yeah, I was confused. (S-c, S-d)

Won’t date non-LDS

... [Parishioner’s] son was starting to be interested in a young lady in high school, they were starting to talk about dating...and suddenly her mother said no you can’t date him...because he was Methodist and not Mormon.... And the implication was not simply...religious but somehow or other he was an inferior person because he was not Mormon so that was a real slap in his face and he was deeply hurt by that.... (L-i)

Assumed “bad”

...you get the nasty glares of, “Oh, you must do drugs and all this bad stuff because you’re not LDS.” (S-r)

...one day the brakes failed on my truck. I couldn’t stop, I swerved...too late and got a little scrape on somebody’s bumper and...the first question was, “Have you been drinking?” That kind of stuff is offensive... The assumption being if you’re not one of us...then you must be engaged in these kinds of things... (L-f)

Proselytizing

...some of the things that bug me a little are people who think their religion is so much better than people and they just talk and talk and they become jerks about it. That’s always bothered me. (S-g)

And when they send the missionaries.... That's insensitive, besides maybe being rude. I understand that the whole idea is that "we've got the corner on the truth and we really want you to join us in the little corner." (L-f)

Concluding thoughts:

...we have no regrets about raising our children in Utah and it's been a good home for us. But it always is this subtle message that you're different and not quite as good. (L-g)

...try...taking the time to listen and try to understand their point of view on something rather than...we're better than you, go away. I can understand that's how they've been raised and taught, theirs is the one true Church, nothing else is right, so I just think that if they were more open to asking questions...if that's not what you believe, what do you believe? (S-r)

...well I'll say it this way...for a non-LDS person to be a spiritual leader in Utah, especially in rural Utah, is much more of a mission challenge than going to Africa or Asia. Much more because the LDS people are "that's the way it is." We have the "truth" (L-a)

Assumed LDS & Lumped Together as "Non-LDS"

Fourteen participants (4L, 6P, 4S) indicate that in their school communities' most people assume they are LDS. For example:

...with the LDS faith being the majority religion here, sometimes people just take it for granted that your LDS and so when they find out that you're not it's like oh, and then it's hard to keep the conversation going then. You know, things like that. They...sometimes are just not prepared for it. (P-i)

...there's no place that I can think of...in our society where the LDS is not the majority, the predominant. And some assumptions are made on that basis too. Sometimes they assume that we all think and do things the same. Which again, doesn't bother me. But some people it does. (L-c)

Basically, pretty much everyone students, teachers everyone will just assume that everyone's of just the same religion [LDS] and they can say certain things and do certain things...and not even think [others] may not want to... (S-l)

Several participants mention reasons LDS persons gave for assuming they were LDS.

Such as:

You're so nice (1L, 2P, 3S):

Another kid I told him I wasn't Mormon and there was this look of shock. I just thought you were Mormon because you're a nice kid. I was just like, I can't believe it and it was kind of awkward. (S-c)

You're polite and have such high standards (1P, 1S):

[S-r] I still think one of the funniest things is the way the teachers look at you and they say, "You're not LDS? You're so nice and polite and have such high standards. How can you not be LDS?" It always makes me laugh because, it makes me think, what, just because I have standards, I'm polite. [P-q] And that's not a fluke, it happens every year. (S-r, P-q)

You don't swear:

...someone thought I was LDS because I didn't swear. (S-k)

You dress modestly:

I had some people think I was LDS because I was nice and because of the way I dressed and stuff like that. It was just kind of funny. (S-k)

You hang out with Mormon kids:

I'm sure there are people that still think I'm Mormon because I hang out with more Mormon people than not. (S-e)

While three participants (1P, 2S) indicate that they view such assumptions and reasoning as humorous, at least eleven participants (4L, 5P, 2S) viewed such assumptions and comments as uncomfortable, even degrading. For example:

...I've heard the comment, "Well you're nice enough that you could be LDS." Which assumes that most [non-LDS] people aren't very nice or not as nice as the Mormons are. So it's meant to be a compliment but it hurts. (L-f)

...your language and your assumptions about who I might be, need to be held in check so that you get to know me, and that you monitor your language so as not to offend just by assuming, oh, what ward do you go to. ... That in itself is a put down, even when you mean it in the best way. (L-h)

Five participants (2P, 3S) mention others reaction of "shock" upon finding out they are not LDS.

...a lot of people just don't expect that one of their students is of a different religion. They don't really see it coming...cause people really aren't all that different. You can't tell by looking at someone that they're a different religion than you. ...when some people find out about this they're kind of a little bit shocked, really caught off-guard. (S-l)

[Reaction when people find out you're Baptist?] Sometimes, they're just like, "Oh, my gosh!" (S-q)

Six participants (3L, 3P, 2S) explain that minority religions get lumped together in their school communities. For instance:

They [LDS] don't know the difference between the Baptists and the Methodists, Presbyterian.... Most of the kids don't. Their principals, I'm not sure they do either. I think that we probably all get lumped together...(L-g)

It's interesting because I think part of what happens in Utah is the non-LDS faiths...come together more.... So fortunately, or unfortunately, I think more unfortunately, things get defined as we are "not-Mormon" we are not this, we are not that. (P-d)

Four of these six participants (1L, 2P, 2S) indicate that those not of the LDS faith are commonly viewed by some in the LDS majority as bad.

...if you're not Mormon, you get the nasty glares of, "Oh, you must do drugs and all this bad stuff because you're not LDS." Or...they come up to people like me and they're like, "Oh, you're nice, you have to be Mormon." And I'm like, "No." And so it's either usually shock or they just kind of avoid you after that. They don't know what to do or they're really snotty to you after that like they're better than you. (S-r)

I think the non-LDS religions are dealt with as just that, you're not LDS, so you're something else. You're second-class, you don't, you're not status quo. (P-f)

Concluding Thoughts:

I wish there was a little more respect for the fact that there are people that aren't LDS in the school setting.... I would like to see more respect and more giving of the knowledge that there are people that are different. (P-e)

Don't assume that they are the same faith that you are. That's the biggest thing for me. It always seems that they just take it for granted. (P-i)

LDS Cohesiveness & Bond Between Those Who Are Not LDS

Thirteen participants (6L, 6P, 1S) explain that because the LDS church is such a social part of its members lives, those who are not LDS in Utah communities feel excluded.

...one of the things the LDS Church does well is really integrate itself into the lives of its people. So there are always lots and lots and lots of things that LDS people do in the church. I have people in my congregation say, "Well, the LDS are just so stand-offish." I don't think it's that at all. I've found the LDS people to be very, very friendly.... But what it means is that people in their neighborhood that they might otherwise be with socially are involved in other social things particularly built around the [LDS] church. So there gets to be a little sense among the people in our congregation that they are being left out or ignored. ...it's really important to this congregation that we have social activities because people have a hard time finding opportunities for social interaction and making connections sometimes. (L-k)

...a lot of these boys grew up in the same ward together, and they played basketball together from the time they're six years old...what do you have when you have an area [ward]? Well, you have a natural peer group that's built into it. It happens in sports, over and over again kids begin to feel like I'm not a part of that ward ball, and I don't fit in. But not by choice, necessarily. It's sometimes by default. (L-g)

...the LDS religion, especially in Utah, is such a social organization where...the members are very involved all the time; and that itself, not purposefully, becomes exclusionary of those around them. So in a [LDS] community, you could have someone who's not LDS, and not by any intention...they feel excluded. (P-g)

[Our] Church functions differently here than any place I've ever seen in terms of social nature. People have their friends at church and that's because the LDS people have their friends at church. That sets a table for the culture. It's not that people aren't nice but they are oriented differently... (L-b)

I have no desire to stay here. I feel like I don't really belong. On the other hand, individually you know, I like the people here, but I don't feel close to most people. ...there's always that outward friend, but there's never a real connection. ...unless you become part of the [LDS] church there's no time for anyone else. (P-b)

There's something that happens in Utah that doesn't just automatically happen somewhere else. That sense of, maybe, cohesiveness that allows one to be

perfectly oblivious to others because it's all going your way anyway in the culture. (L-f)

It was noted that fourteen participants (5L, 5P, 4S) describe a kind of *bond* between those who are not LDS in their school communities. For example:

(Parent/high school teacher) I happened to have a crucifix hanging from the [car] mirror...and took eight kids to a competition. ...it was interesting the change in relationship I had with some of those students...there was more common ground we had. And it wasn't, I don't believe even that they knew I was [a specific religion], but that I was not LDS." (P-h)

Sometimes if you find a teacher who's non-LDS and she finds out that a child is not LDS, there's kind of a bond that's created. I've never seen it in terms of favoritism, but I think there's just sort of a bond..." (P-d)

A lot of us clump together I've noticed. They all kind of get along together. (S-r)

The reasons given for this "bond" vary:

Five students indicated that those in the religious minority seem more open to different ideas and that they feel more comfortable discussing beliefs.

I find the ones that more are in the group, the more they are active in the different churches; the more they're a bit harder to talk to about these things. (S-p)

I think the not Mormon kids are a lot more tolerant than the Mormon kids are with trying to understand other religions. (S-r)

Four (1L, 2P, 1S) point out that they share a common experience – a common understanding of what its like to be "non-LDS"

So fortunately, or unfortunately, I think more unfortunately, things get defined as we are "not-Mormon" we are not this, we are not that. (P-d)

(Parent/high school teacher) ...students who were very much defensive about not being LDS, or not being accepted by the LDS students. ...saw me as someone they could commiserate with each other about how awful [they think] it is not to be LDS in this place. (P-g)

One leader explained an "us against them" bond.

That sense of isolation creates what I call a “fortress mentality” and that is a need almost to find some way to identify themselves as separate and okay in comparison to the social matrix.... There’s that sense of “us against them.” (Ray Wake, Paragraphs 62-64)

Utah History & History

Eight participants (4L, 3P, 1S) describe reservations/concerns about how public schools teach Utah History.

...Utah history is Mormon history, primarily. So even teaching Mormon history, which is state history, which is legitimate...you’re going to teach Mormonism to a certain extent. It’s not wrong, it’s Mormon history, it’s Utah History, but how you do that can make a lot of difference. (L-g)

They teach Mormon history, but it’s more of a religious history than a historical account of Utah. For instance, in the school in St. George they had pictures of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young hanging on the wall. You know, it’s just subtle. (L-e)

They were doing a thing on Utah history and this was a song that the Mormon’s sang and it was a religious song, but it was based on the historical record of them coming to Utah. So, was that overt or covert trying to get their message out? I don’t know. (P-f)

There are times when...attention to the LDS religion is focused on more than attention to anything else. [My daughter]...in fourth grade...brought home a unit on Mormon pioneers. And we thought, “Well wait a minute, there were Presbyterian missionaries here...” There were all kinds of other groups here as well, and that doesn’t get any attention. (P-d)

Three participants (2L, 1P) suggest schools could teach about various religions in context of history.

I think, even handed across the board exposure to, certainly the history of the world civilization elements would be okay. I don’t know if you can’t get through, certainly western civilization without understanding religious traditions and the impact they’ve had on the cultures. (L-b)

World Religions

Twelve participants weigh in on public schools teaching about various religions (i.e., World Religions Day, World Religions courses, etc). Nine of these participants (4L, 2P, 3S) endorse such an effort and three (2L, 1P) oppose. Examples:

Endorse

I did participate in the World Religions Day at Murray High School. I was the Episcopal representative on a panel of six other people of various denominations. ...we were there for six periods...[students] submitted the questions to the teacher who read them aloud to the panel and then we all took turns answering their questions. I thought that was helpful because it was a broad exposure. It wasn't like somebody is trying to be persuasive with their religion, it was more of an open session of general exposure. So I thought that was quite good. ...I think it begins to take the blinders off. I was glad I was approached to do it. (L-b)

...in ninth grade they teach you about world religions.... After that it's primarily on an optional basis... ..like there's Cultural World Issues and AP Government and stuff where they go over religions. Those kind of classes...help people understand [religions]. So I think there's more kids that could take those classes and somehow be educated before. That could help. (S-a)

Oppose

...quite honestly I think that public schools should back away from religion all together because I think that it's very hard to keep bias out of the instruction...even in terms of comparative religion classes, your bias is always going to come through and also, you're going to have maybe a jaded view of the other religions. I would not feel comfortable, honestly teaching about the LDS church although I was born and raised here because I come at it with a bias that's been instilled in me from the time I was young. So I think we have to recognize that and say we'd better not ever approach the religion topic then to try to have a balance. (L-m)

Progress Over Time

Thirteen participants (10L, 3P) indicate that being a minority religion in their school communities is becoming less of a challenge. For example:

I do believe and have seen...where what we believe held some children back, but it seems to be less and less. (L-c)

It's shifted over the years, I hear stories and I think that that kind of in your face [treatment of non-LDS] is not tolerated in schools anymore, and I think that they're doing a much better job these days... ..but improvement is a relative term. I think there's still a lot of subtle pressures that are there. (L-h)

Well, I think the LDS Church is moving in the right direction (L-f)

Reasons given for this movement in the right direction include:

Efforts by LDS Church Leadership (5L, 1P)

I like to listen to some of the [LDS] Conference...and it's pretty obvious that the LDS leadership has said, "You know, be friends, don't just do it to proselyte." It has opened a lot of doors...it has helped. (L-g)

...some of that [change] comes from a...very quite religious leadership on the part of...the LDS Church and the first presidency that says that we have to be more welcome, open, inclusiveness. I think that President Hinckley's words it as being good neighbors. How well that translates down of course depends from case to case. (L-l)

President Hinckley when he became the president of the church took some amazingly gigantic strides saying to people "there are other folk out there besides us who you need to get to know and they are good people and they believe differently than we do but that does not make them bad and why don't you become friends". That has opened doors for us that were not open previously. (L-i)

Legal awareness and pressure (3L)

I think that more and more people are learning what the laws and equal access laws involve. ...some of the laws have been...better defined and so as soon as school leadership or whatever finds out and understands it better, they have to become a little more tolerant. (L-g)

I think that some of that [change] stems from the stick of having been bruised in a few cases ... (L-l)

Increased religious diversity in Utah (1L, 1P)

I think with the influx of [non-LDS] people into the state...they [LDS] are more aware that there are other people of other faiths. ...so I think they're becoming more aware, trying to be sensitive. (P-i)

...as more [non-LDS] people come and remain and stay, LDS youth are being exposed to different thought patterns as well and I think it's a new experience.... So we've just seen this change take place. (L-c)

One leader identified the change as part of a national trend to be more inclusive, and another leader qualified the change as getting better in urban areas while lagging in rural areas.

Four participants (2L, 2P) mention they observed *no* change over time in the treatment of their religion in their school community.

...as far as the Mormons becoming loving and tolerant, they're not. They claim they are and I think they genuinely think they are, but still Mormon parents don't want their kids best buddies with kids of other religions. (L-e)

I never really noticed a particular difference. Like I said, it didn't seem to be a big problem (P-c)

Some of the folks at the top [LDS leadership], I think in their hearts really genuinely wish to see that [more tolerant, more accepting] become a reality. It takes a while for that to catch hold with the folks in the churches. And so we weren't altogether surprised to have to deal with reality, which is not that. (L-f)

Concluding thought:

...you just have to keep working at it and some will and some won't [get it]. ...I think that over the course of years, given the leadership from the top, from the 1st Presidency, from the Governor of the state, etc. that there will be more of "getting it" as the years go on. Whether or not that will be without friction, of course there will be friction connected with it. (L-l)

Rural vs. Urban

Perhaps more accurately depicted as areas of higher concentration LDS (rural) vs. areas of lower concentration LDS (urban), sixteen participants (8L, 6P, 2S) indicate that those who are not LDS generally face more challenges in rural Utah school communities than those in the more urban areas.

In the Salt Lake area, along the Wasatch front, I think there's probably more effort to be a little more sensitive to it, than in a rural area. ...I was in Price for 3

years.... And that experience was a little different than it is up here [Salt Lake City]. Here it's so cosmopolitan. And then I was in American Fork for two years...that was very difficult for those kids going to American Fork High school. There was more of a sense of feeling, real beat up because you were Catholic and being the minority. So it was a whole different experience than Catholics in school here in the Salt Lake area. (L-m)

I think it depends on where you live. As I said Utah's not just one monolithic culture. There's a tremendous difference between an experience in the Salt Lake school district versus what you would find in West Jordan or Midvale, versus what you would find in Duschene or Roosevelt. ...it depends on the dominance of...the Mormon faith.... I think [the more dominance] the more brittle becomes the relationships. So the corollary would be that in...the Salt Lake School district where you have a much higher diversity, ethnicity, religious orientation as well as socioeconomic status. You're going to find a very different experience. It's going to be much more open. (L-h)

[When informed that Utah County, in which they live, has the highest county percentage of LDS, two participants responded...] [P-e] We know! [S-f] Trust us, we know! (P-e, S-f)

Some reasons given for the added challenge in rural community schools include:

LDS presence is all pervasive – lack of diversity

I will be honest with you; my spiritual life is enhanced when I go somewhere else [previously mentioned Salt Lake City or out of state]. There's something stifling in a way about the LDS culture, religion community.... I think it's because it's too all pervasive. I think there's a healthiness in having diversity... (L-a)

Left out of the loop

...it's hard. I think from a small town you find out things maybe through announcements at Church that we miss out on. Boy Scouts is a major LDS controlled activity which my boy is involved in but a lot of times he feels uncomfortable or left out because maybe we don't get the announcements...it's just different. (P-o)

Most, if not all, community/school leaders are LDS – make decisions accordingly

...I think it would be more overt in North Sanpete because of the rural area and the major parts in the community are run by the LDS. Major things in the community are still run by LDS...and so I think in the school... (L-c)

Little or no community/school acknowledgment of the religious minority

The non-LDS population...it's maybe 3% at the most. It has such a low minority...you don't have to cater to them. They assume you are LDS? Or if not, "what are you going to do about it." ...we've been told, "you're the only non LDS I've ever met in my life." (L-c)

Social stigma

I think the non-LDS religions are dealt with as just that, you're not LDS, so you're something else. You're second-class...you're not status quo. ...because they're so small, and so disconnected, especially here in Tooele... (P-f)

Concluding observation: five of the eighteen student participants attended school communities with an LDS population above 80%. It was noted that four students consistently related significantly higher amounts of frustration being members of a minority religion in their school community. All four were among the five student participants who lived in school communities with an LDS population above 80%.

LDS Pervasive Presence in Utah's School Communities

This is a very general category, much of which has already been illustrated above. However, portions are included here to underline how encompassing several participants feel the LDS presence is. Also, the analysis of this broadly coded category reaffirms, from a slightly different angle, several factors previously noted as well as presents some not previously mentioned.

Though all participants acknowledge the presence of the LDS majority (generally a given), twenty-seven participants (9L, 9P, 9S) in direct and some indirect ways described a strong, even pervasive, LDS presence in their school communities and the larger community. For example:

[LDS presence]...it's all over. I mean I grew up in Utah schools and, you know, it just really was part of the program. (L-e)

...the LDS being so predominant, [school] sponsorship may not be an official endorsement, but it would give the appearance of an endorsement because it's so overwhelmingly present. ...But you know...if you get that many people lumped together with the same religious background they're going to think alike so it's not a conspiracy. It's more of a cultural phenomenon, in my opinion, having observed it for thirty-seven years. (L-j)

The dominant faith is LDS here so the school is dominated by that religion also. It's not like there's any rules or anything, but just that majority, when you're in public school and stuff...you feel the presence...(S-a)

One of the things about the LDS religion is that it encompasses larger elements of the culture...it's all-pervasive. Consequently, young people, when they grow up in an LDS community, that's all they know. I'm not critical of that at all, I'm just saying that that's what they know.... ...that pervasiveness affects us even though we're not LDS. Most of it I will say, and I'm happy to say is in a positive way. (L-a)

So there is that sort of LDS presence, but I don't see it in any of the teaching or any of the administrative decisions that I can tell. It's there, it's certainly a presence of feeling, but I don't see it as a problem...you can't just totally never mention the church when you're in school. (P-b)

[Religion] It's so much more important to [school children in Utah County] and more part of their life than in other places in the country. ...in Las Vegas, [our daughter] would have openly admitted...she was Episcopalian and somebody would have [possibly] said something...and then forgotten about it and here that's not the case because it's part of their life every day. (P-n)

...there's always...a religious element that flows within Utah.... (L-c)

In conjunction with participants' assertions of a strong LDS presence, several illustrate manners in which this pervasiveness is manifested in their schools and the larger community. *Cliques, LDS Assumptions of non-LDS, being Ignored, Judgments, LDS Seminary, and Favoritism* were among the examples and explanations given. Since examples of these are previously mentioned, none are given here to avoid redundancy. However, other examples include:

Politics/policy

It seems [in Utah] to be almost like two governments. There's the secular government and the religious government. It's almost like the religious government has more power or as much certainly as the secular does. (L-c)

Well, yeah there is [separation], but if you look at the majority of the folks that sit in the Capital Hill in Utah, I would say almost 90 percent are the predominant religion group, and so how can you separate church and state. ...if you believe that someone can separate themselves, being a strong religious person, and then vote totally against what they believe, you're kidding yourself. (P-f)

I think that the state legislature needs to take a lead in funding education appropriately and quit groping for easy quick solutions. And some of that grows out of, I think, just the fact that this is an LDS state and the legislature is controlled by that.... (L-h)

Teaching/administration

[History] Well, you know, it's ingrained in the teaching. ...take any facet of it. They teach Mormon history, but it's more of a religious history than a historical account of Utah. I mean, you know, it's all Mormon oriented. ...they had pictures of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young hanging on the wall. You know, it's just subtle. An introduction of Mormonism almost at any level you want to talk about. (L-e)

[Music] [P-p] ...even with as much separation as there is supposed to be, there is still quite a bit [of religion in schools]. I mean you go to a music concert and things like that. [P-q] Somebody always slips a blessing in. [P-p] ...and half of the songs or more will be religious songs, which is fine, but they're already...walking a fine line. [P-q] It seems to be a lot more individual than policy wide things. You'll find certain teachers are very much...religion, religion, religion, and other teachers are more open and tolerant. (P-p, P-q)

[Standards] [S-r] [Teachers] don't really push religion. They just push the standards of the dominant religion a lot harder than other teachers would. [P-q] Well, and a lot of it is like, clothing, you know. [S-r] Ya, a lot of the clothing policy, that kind of thing. [P-p] The way you dress, the way your hair is... (S-r, P-q, P-p)

[Grading] [S-r] I've noticed *some* teachers actually will grade you a little harder if you're not the dominant religion. They'll say, "Oh, well she must be cheating on this.... [P-q] They automatically assume that you're cheating if you do well. [S-r] ...it really depends on the teacher. (S-r, P-q)

[Tryouts] I think that there can be discrimination. A new volleyball coach comes in, so she goes to the local ward because she's LDS. They tell her who the good volleyball players are and some student who is not LDS and is not known by that group of people doesn't even get looked at. So it can work negatively. (L-h)

[Holidays] ...be very sensitive around Christmas. ... a certain segment of your population would just as soon forget it's going on. So for example, even cultural stuff. A third grader comes in and said, "Ah, school today sucked, it was awful." "Really? But you love Math, how was your math class?" "That was the worst, we did long division with Christmas Trees." (L-l)

[Role modeling] ...the teachers and the administrators of those schools are, no matter what they believe personally or how much they try to not proselyte, who you are comes across in your role modeling. ... you will show what you are. ... If a school comes across and says absolutely no prayers or no this or that, I still think you can accomplish the same thing just by your role modeling. (L-a)

[Assemblies] Well, I was in an assembly once and I had a principal who called up and he said "brother" and then the teacher's name. I believe that that was pushing it a little far, he probably didn't even mean to do it, but it kind of struck a nail. (S-f)

PTA

Well I have to tell you, PTA decisions are all decided at the ward house before they ever get together. I'm serious. You come into the school and they've already decided who's going to be all the officers and whose going to be on what committees and what's going to happen and they just make an announcement at the beginning of the year to everyone else. That's never been any question...that's just a given. (P-q)

School associations/activities

Well, I went to Lowell [Elementary].... It's like partners with the LDS [Hospital].... We go on a lot of field trips to the Madeline Church. (S-m)

Not a Big Deal

As noted in responses to questions 4, 5, 8, 9, and 15, several participants in many instances do not view their religious affiliation as a significant problem in public schools.

Although all participants mention some religion related challenge faced in their school

communities, at least seventeen (4L, 5P, 8S) generally indicate (some multiple times) that religion in school is not a major issue to them. For example:

Everybody told me, “It’s gonna be a horrible experience.” ...it hasn’t been, the people here are friendly – not that it hasn’t been challenging. It’s a good environment. People come here and they find out that yeah, there are some issues of isolation, but by in large it is a good place to be, very adequate. I think sometimes our fears are much more than the reality. (L-k)

You know I think that we have not had a really bad experience, you know, we hear a lot of horror stories from some of our friends and we’ve really been very lucky I think in that we really have never had anything horrible. It’s more a case of it makes us shrug or roll our eyes kind of things at that level of annoyance, but we really never had anything that we were like, I’m going to pull my kid out of public school. And I know people who have those kind of experiences. (P-q)

Religion itself hasn’t really been brought up that much. I would say, I tend to find the differences in more the class discussions about abortion or politics or that stuff...not necessarily religion itself. Obviously the majority of the students and probably the majority of the teachers aren’t my religion, but that hasn’t really changed stuff. (S-e)

You know, it’s interesting. [Religion in schools] It’s not a topic that comes up a lot. (L-b)

Benefits of Living in Utah

Fifteen participants (6L, 3P, 6S) mention beneficial elements to participating in Utah public schools communities.

Eight (2L, 2P, 5S) explain that being a minority religion in their public school community has made them stronger in their faith.

We know our Bible a lot more because we have to. ...it’s like you’re kind of forced to know you’re stuff when you live here...it’s like your one line of defense. (S-k)

As kids would ask us different questions sometimes I didn’t know the answer so it helped us to educate ourselves, not only ask our parents, but to read about it in books and stuff to get the right idea [in case] they ever ask again. (S-a)

Six (3L, 1P, 2S) identify sharing similar values with the majority religion a benefit.

I believe in some of the same morals they do. Primarily, it's a positive...the moral ethics and I think they go by almost the exact same thing that I go by in my life. (S-a)

...there are a lot of commonalities in LDS and [our religion] like respect for families and other things, [not] drinking alcohol, smoking.... So those things are good. (P-a)

[Speaking of LDS values] I think as well, the parental support for public schools here is much different than you find in other states. And I think that makes it a more beneficial place to go to school. (L-m)

Five (1L, 1P, 3S) identify the empathy they learned as part of a minority to be beneficial.

For me it's an advantage over the LDS kids [and kids of my religion in other states] in my opinion because...I try not to pick on many people because in turn I know how it feels because of being the minority. (S-r)

Three (2L, 1S) give *some* credit for safer school communities in Utah to the presence of the large religious majority. Two (1L, 1S) view their minority status in Utah school communities as providing them with greater opportunities to share what they believe and influence others. One student describes a benefit this way, "I think that if I were in the majority religion in my school, I hate to say this, but I bet my teachers wouldn't know me as much" (S-o).

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This final chapter begins with a brief review of the research problem and the major methods used in the study. The major section of this chapter will summarize and discuss the results. Suggestions for practice and some recommendations for further study will follow.

Review of the Problem

While our nation is becoming more and more religiously diverse (Finke & Stark, 1992), across the country there remain numerous school communities that contain a majority religion. Such communities face the continual challenge of avoiding the generally unintended disregard for the religious minority. Additionally, religious persons across the country may face the challenge of a public school system that honors the secular to the point of unjustly excluding religion from the curriculum and squelching rightful religious expression in public schools. Thus, the religious minority in school communities that contain a religious majority potentially faces two threats: de facto establishment of the majority religion and de facto establishment of secularism.

Utah, a state with 72% (Avant, 2002) of its population recorded as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS, Mormons) has multiple school communities that contain an LDS religious majority. Under the double threat of de facto establishment of the majority religion and de facto establishment of secularism, how does the religious minority in Utah view the treatment of their religious expression and beliefs in Utah public schools? This study set out to:

- Better understand the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of religious minority students, their parents, and religious leaders regarding treatment of their religion in Utah public schools.
- Identify how the treatment of religious expression and belief in Utah public schools as described by the religious minority corresponds with the legal guidelines outlined in *Religious Expression in Public Schools* (Appendix B).
- Develop *grounded theory* (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) based on the gathered data that can help explain in greater detail the conditions faced by the religious minority in Utah public school communities.

Review of the Methodology

As explained in Chapter Three, this study is generally qualitative and involves 48 participants (13 Leaders, 17 Parents, 18 Students) from seven different minority religions in Utah. Semi-structured interviews, designed to elicit rich, detailed material used in qualitative analysis, were used to better understand participants' complex experiences, attitudes, and behavior without imposing priori categorization that would limit the field of inquiry (Fontana & Frey, 2000). These semi-structured interviews utilized a series of general questions (Appendix C) to initiate participant response and provide some direction to the interview conversations. Simultaneously, participants were encouraged to talk about whatever they could and share details of their experience.

The tape-recorded interviews were transcribed and entered into the computer assisted qualitative analysis program N-Vivo. Each transcript then passed through rigorous stages of analysis (i.e., open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss

& Corbin, 1998) to identify conditions, attitudes, perceptions, and experiences that participants face, as well as to assist in producing grounded theory.

Summary and Discussion

The intentions of this study are to raise the issues confronting religious minorities participating in Utah school communities by providing a snapshot of a small, meaningful group. As stated in Chapter Three, this study did not utilize a random sample, and therefore considerable caution should be used when associating its findings with the general population. As a reminder, all research participants were linked with public schools and were active members of their faith (attended church weekly). Most participants were identified through their religious institutions and have lived in Utah for a considerable amount of time (average years: leaders 22, parents 16, students 12). Generally speaking, participants were not angry with the LDS majority. They were cordial and generally proper in their explanations, yet did not avoid criticism. Most participants, with some clear exceptions, appear to enjoy living in Utah, and are confident, know the culture, and have been strong contributors to Utah society. By and large, participants seem supportive of their public schools, though all voice varying degrees of concern related to the treatment of their religion and beliefs therein.

Observing participant extremes, the general voice emerging in these findings appears moderate, perhaps tilting to the positive side. Yet as stated in Chapter Four, participants in this study range from those who seldom, if ever, felt concern, challenges or offense, to those who convey experiencing frequent concern, challenges and discrimination in school due to their religion. Because the degree of discomfort among participants covers such a wide spectrum, I initially expected that the issues raised would

differ widely as well. Interestingly, however, participants on either side of the spectrum raise similar issues. The difference appears in the amount of concern felt, challenges encountered, or offense individual participants perceived in these common issues. Herein lies the caution. Because several respondents raise the same issue, one should not assume that the amounts of concern, challenge, or offense expressed are necessarily equal. The questions (Appendix C) used in the interviews, by virtue of their intent and focus, constrained even the least concerned participants to consider the subject matter. The questions seemed to have caused participants to return to the issue whether it appeared a proverbial pebble, stone, or boulder in their path and examine it closely.

This summary and discussion section begins with an explanation of participants' remarks regarding their schools' *institutional treatment* of their religion and beliefs. Institutional treatment includes the headings: Public School Secularization; Administration/Teacher Treatment of Religion; LDS Released-time Seminary; Treatment in Comparison with *Religious Expression in Public Schools*, and a brief Summary. I will then turn to the *social treatment* of participants' religion and beliefs in their public schools. Social treatment includes the headings: Peer Exclusion; Uncomfortable Peer Interaction; LDS Ignorance; The True Church; and LDS Cohesiveness, and also a brief Summary. I then discuss four topics: Pervasive LDS Presence, Rural v. Urban, Type of Religion, and Progress over Time, followed by some closing thoughts.

Institutional Treatment

A reasonable overview of participants' observation of their schools institutional treatment (laws, policy, administration, teachers, etc.) appears to be reflected in their responses to question four. When asked to compare the treatment of their religion in

public schools to the treatment of other religions, half the participants (4L, 12P, 8S) indicated that they experienced few if any significant problems. Most of the time, they were treated satisfactorily. However, an almost equal number (6L, 10P, 7S), several of whom also indicate few if any problems, explain that they generally feel ignored. Furthermore, while most participants indicate their school institutions treat them adequately, over a third are able to share sporadic examples or instances of institutional mistreatment of the religious minority in Utah schools (e.g., preferential treatment of LDS, misconceptions about their religion, being overlooked, etc.). Generally, most participants conveyed only modest concerns or challenges related to institutional treatment of their religion in Utah schools.

Public school secularization. Asked their opinion of school law/policy regarding religion, almost two thirds of the participants (9L, 12P, 9S) generally agree with religious law and policy as it stands. *Secularization*, the general exclusion of religion in public schools and its replacement with a secular understanding, does not appear a significant concern to most participants. A leader participant explains: “It seems to me, where it’s at is okay. I am a little concerned about no religion in school in form. But...the difficulty is we are such a...diverse people. How do you bring religion into school in a formal way without...leaving some of them out?” (L-k). However, five out of the forty-eight participants express a desire to see the presence of religion expanded in public schools, and three of those five expressed reservations of how this would work in Utah. As one leader explains: “I’m going to be very candid...here in Utah we are very afraid of [expanding religion in schools] because it would be ...[the] LDS point of view being given exclusively to the exclusion of all others, but nationally I would like to see it

because I think that we have lost the idea that God is an integral part of who we are” (L-c). On the other end, three leaders directly express a desire for schools to back away from religion altogether: “I grew up in Utah. I really don’t think that the schools should be in the business of [religion].... The LDS faith is so overwhelmingly present that it would make those non-LDS kids feel like even more of a minority” (L-j).

Public school secularization, which is generally a result of court efforts to protect minority beliefs, appears to be acceptable to most participants, despite their strong religious convictions. As members of the religious minority, some participants seem to recognize the general protection such secularization provides them against the majority. However, it appears most agree with current law/policy surrounding religion in public schools simply because they have not encountered significant problems.

Administration/teacher treatment of religion. When asked if having a teacher or administrator know the students’ religious affiliation makes any difference, eighteen participants (4L, 5P, 9S) indicate it makes no difference. Nine (2L, 4P, 3S) mention some positive effects, such as accommodation and understanding. Yet seven participants (2L, 2P, 3S) indicate that it could be either positive, detrimental or make no difference – depending on the individual teacher/administrator involved. Furthermore, thirteen participants (4L, 5P, 4S) say teacher/administrator knowledge of a student’s religion could be detrimental. As noted above, when comparing their schools treatment of their religion to other religions, half the participants (4L, 12P, 8S) indicated few if any significant problems or satisfactory treatment. However, an almost equal number (6L, 10P, 7S), several of whom also indicate few if any problems, explain that they generally feel ignored.

In their dealings with school personnel, for the most part, participants share few, if any, significant personal experiences that they perceive as problematic. As one mother explains: “Most of the time it’s pretty good and then every now and then you’ll see things like...those try outs for performance and the only kids that made the cut...went to the same ward house. But it’s not consistent. It just happens sporadically” (P-q). However, as previously noted, amidst this moderate satisfaction about half of the participants (6L, 10P, 7S) explain that in comparison with the LDS religion, they feel their religion is somewhat ignored or disregarded in their public schools. A leader with two children participating in Utah public schools responded to the treatment of his religion this way: “Ignored, by and large. I think many people here have no idea what Episcopalians are. Never heard of it, don’t know anything about it (L-b).

While few participants expressed significant concern regarding treatment of religion by school personnel, a variety of examples of LDS favoritism and/or disregard of those not of the LDS faith by school personnel were shared. Eight participants (4L, 3P, 1S) voice reservations, concerns and/or objections about how Utah history is taught. A leader explains: “...teaching Mormon history, which is state history, which is legitimate...you’re going to teach Mormonism to a certain extent. It’s not wrong...it’s Utah History, but how you do that can make a lot of difference” (L-g). Two participants view Utah History as an LDS proselytizing ploy, and another explains that the amount of attention to LDS history seems disproportionate: “There were all kinds of other groups here as well, and that doesn’t get any attention” (P-d). Five participants (3L, 2P, 1S)

report occasional LDS favoritism and neglect of non-LDS students in school tryouts such as plays, teams, etc.

When asked if teacher/administrator knowledge of their students' religious affiliation made any difference, a leader explains: "...in some cases it does. It's been a vehicle for exclusion. Somehow [our] kids don't ascend to whatever it is, sports, extracurricular, no preferential treatment" (L-b). Another leader explains how such favoritism of LDS and disregard of students not of the LDS faith might occur in subtle ways – below the legal radar: "A new volleyball coach comes in, so she goes to the local ward because she's LDS. They tell her who the good volleyball players are and some student who is not LDS and is not known by that group of people doesn't even get looked at" (L-h).

In addition to Utah history and tryouts, participants mention several other individual examples or instances of LDS favoritism and/or disregard of students not of the LDS faith. A few explain that they felt LDS are favored in their public school system by the Utah legislature and local school boards. A parent explains:

[I]f you look at the majority of the folks that sit in the Capital Hill in Utah, I would say almost 90 percent are the predominant religion group, and so how can you separate church and state. ...if you believe that someone can separate themselves, being a strong religious person, and then vote totally against what they believe, you're kidding yourself (P-f).

A couple participants explain that occasionally a teacher may look down on a student or may assume they have lower standards (e.g. assume they are cheating) because they are not LDS. Others suggested LDS favoritism in: selection of school choir music, decisions regarding schools dress standards, choosing PTA officers, and scheduling school events.

This accumulated list of participant grievances may appear an indictment of school personnel; yet, in the context of all forty-eight participants, none of these issues by itself seems a widespread concern. For example, Utah history, with eight participant comments, is one of the more frequent citations of LDS favoritism by school personnel. Yet those eight participants account for less than seventeen percent of those involved in the study. Clearly, participants convey that some adverse treatment by teachers and administrators can or has happened. However, such adverse treatment by teachers and administrators appears infrequent, sporadic and often occurs in subtle ways. Overall, few participants have major complaints about their schools treatment of their religion, yet few appear to laud their school administrators' and teachers' efforts to respect their religion. It appears most participants satisfactorily approve of school personnel, while still noting room for improvement.

LDS Released-time Seminary. The most commonly perceived LDS favoritism is public school accommodation of LDS Released-Time Seminary. Although most participants appear to suppose the legality of LDS seminary, over one third of the participants express either a questionable connection between public schools and the LDS Church or cited direct LDS favoritism in their schools accommodation of it. A leader explains,

I find it...unusual that seminaries are near schools.... How could any kind of one doctrinal approach to religion be advanced in a way that's connected to public school, where people are let out of class to do it? That seems really crossing the border of church and state. (L-b)

A student rather bluntly added, "...if they're offering it to one [religion] they should offer it to all, but they don't" (S-1). As further reasoning why some feel LDS Seminary is unfair, a family adamantly explains,

[P-q] ...they won't give [non-LDS] a study hall...you don't get released time for anything else. [S-r] I have to have a class every single period. I can't say, like I'm only going to take six classes next year instead of eight. No, I have to take a full eight classes even though I'm done with all of my credits. [P-p] That whole [seminary] thing just makes absolutely no sense. (P-q, S-r, P-p)

Five participants – incorrectly – either state that LDS students get high school credit for seminary or that *only* LDS are allowed religious release time privileges. Yet most of those who object, supposing seminary's legality, appear to object based on observations that such school accommodation is basically favoring the LDS religion.

Treatment in comparison to Religious Expression in Public Schools.

Consistent with few current complaints of teacher and administrator treatment of their religion and beliefs, few participants (1L, 2P, 1S) share personal/recent (within past 10 years) experiences that appeared in violation of their religious rights, as outlined in *Religious Expression in Public Schools*.¹³ Some of the more egregious occurrences follow. A student explains:

We have this thing; it's called "See You at The Pole." We gather around the pole, we pray and stuff. This year a whole group of us got together and we were going to do it and one of the janitors told us that we weren't allowed to pray in school so...it kind of discouraged [us] and stuff. But then we went on line and proved...we could. We went to the principal with it and we didn't get to see the janitor's reaction, but he was like, "She shouldn't have told you not to" and "Yeah, you guys can." But it was already too late... (S-j).

A parent participant who teaches high school in Salt Lake City explains:

[A school organization] was collecting food and clothing to go overseas.... I happened to get in my mailbox...[a note intended] for [LDS] seminary teachers...[the school organization] was asking for family LDS magazines, and the thing that bothered me about the whole situation was that this was a national program, and yet they were using this to not only get goods and clothing to these individuals, but also LDS literature was going over. I went and talked to the principal. (P-h)

¹³ As discussed in chapter 2, *Religious Expression in Public Schools* are widely sanctioned, legally based, guidelines addressing what students and schools can and cannot do religiously therein

As previously mentioned, a mother and daughter share an experience at performance tryouts where “the only kids that made the cut were the kids that went to the same ward house” (P-q). Although apparently infrequent, these examples should raise a cautionary flag to school personnel. However, while certainly disturbing to those involved, relative to the number of participants in this study and the amount of time they’ve spent in Utah, these incidents appear few, and lack suggestion of systematic abuse of the law.

Note that my previous assertion of few incidents is based on participants’ personal and recent occurrences. During the interviews, several examples of violation were shared; however, most were second hand and/or older (10 years plus). For example, participants more frequently share stories such as the following: “Not my teacher, but another teacher, actually had to take a question off of her test because it was a question from the Book of Mormon” (S-r), or, “We had cases where they would take our kids [now in their late 30s early 40s] to the [LDS] Temple Visitor’s Center and show them movies and tell them all of their religions were false. Stuff like that they did on a school field trip” (L-e). These second hand and/or older instances often illustrated participant concerns/fears of what *could* happen to them presently, but are not used here to assess participants’ current treatment.

Using *Religious Expression in Public Schools* as a template, participant understanding of the legal parameters surrounding religious expression in schools generally seems basic, and often, uncertain. When asked what they could and could not do religiously in schools, thirty-two participants (11L, 16P, 5S) convey some understanding that public schools should not promote or favor any particular religion; in other words, there should be separation of church and state. Twenty-one (6L, 6P, 9S),

either by general statement or in an example, indicate that students could do some religious things in school (i.e., talk about religion, personal prayer, wear religious clothing, etc.). Nine (3L, 6P) assume schools can teach *about* religion (i.e., context of history, social studies, tolerance education, etc.). While three leaders demonstrate a rather savvy understanding of the law, and a couple of other participants demonstrate a perceptive application of their basic understanding, most appear unsure of their religious rights in public schools.

Although most appear uncertain, surprisingly few seem eager to learn more about the laws in an effort to maximize their religious expression in public schools. Perhaps this disinterest or lack of concern is due to the general sense that religion in schools is not a big problem for them, or perhaps this is due to social concerns that may arise if they did try to maximize their religious rights (social concerns discussed later), or possibly it's a feeling of futility that nothing will change by simply knowing the legal guidelines. However, most participants appear ready to challenge school personnel if they feel their religion and beliefs are being unfairly treated.

Summary. Although few participants express consistent or major concerns with their schools institutional treatment of their religion, it is important to note that most express at least some sense of LDS favoritism, or a general sentiment of feeling ignored in their school community. It therefore appears that a good number of participants perceive at least some degree of de facto (existing without legal sanction) establishment of the LDS religion in their public schools. Though not in intolerable amounts for most participants in this study, the large LDS majority seems to give way to some degree of

LDS favoritism and/or disregard of the religious minority. As one leader who has lived in Utah his entire life explains,

...the LDS being so predominant, [school] sponsorship may not be an official endorsement, but it would give the appearance of an endorsement because it's so overwhelmingly present.

But you know...if you get that many people lumped together with the same religious background they're going to think alike so it's not a conspiracy. It's more of a cultural phenomenon, in my opinion, having observed it for thirty-seven years. (L-j)

Another leader explains: "There's something that happens in Utah that doesn't just automatically happen somewhere else. That sense of, maybe, cohesiveness that allows [LDS] to be perfectly oblivious to others because it's all going your way..." (L-f).

Although not without real challenges for some participants and sporadic agitation for many, secularization, administrative/teacher treatment, and legal treatment, generally do not appear to be significant issues to most participants. The exception may be one third of participants questioning the appropriateness of LDS Seminary. However, looking at participants as a whole, do they feel their religious expression is threatened by secularism? Not really. How are teachers/administrators treating minority religions? Moderately well, yet there appears some sense of LDS favoritism and disregard of student who are not. Several participants convey some room for improvement. Are participants being treated contrary to the legal guidelines? Very few recent violations can be noted. Although participant understanding of their legal rights appears rather basic and uncertain, most indicate they would confront the school if they were to ever feel as though their religion was being mistreated.

Social Treatment

While participants' concerns regarding their school's organizational treatment of their religion are worth reporting, it appears the foremost concerns and challenges that participants explain fall below the legal radar and outside institutional treatment. The overriding concerns and challenges appear to reside in treatment of religious minority students by peers in the school setting. As previously noted, all but one participant mention some kind of social concern and/or challenge related to their religious identity or beliefs in Utah public schools. A leader, after sharing an instance wherein school peers shunned his daughter because of her religion, explains: "That's...not coming from the school system, but it's a dynamic of school" (L-b). A parent, noting peer mistreatment of her sons in school due to their religion states: "It's...not necessarily part of the actual school, but it's somewhat of an environment that allows that to happen and I wish that weren't the case" (P-e). A student succinctly explains: "I like the [school] system as it is...it's just students" (S-p). Presumably most school-age children experience social challenges; however, participants in this study identify several challenges they either attributed to, or see as enhanced by, the large LDS presence in their public school communities.

For the most part the school-related social concerns and challenges that participants mention concern varying degrees of peer exclusion and/or uncomfortable peer interaction due to their religious affiliation and beliefs. The general reasons participants give for these social concerns and challenges are LDS ignorance of other religions, LDS doctrine of *the* true church, and LDS cohesiveness.

Peer exclusion. A number of participants express a general concern or the general challenge of feeling left out or shunned socially due to their religion. As a leader explains: “Sometimes...kids are excluded from certain activities. Not from school activities, but from activities with classmates because they don’t belong to that [religious] group” (L-m). More specifically, several mention cliques based on LDS associations that are tough to break through. A student explains: “...there’s a group of people who’ve been going to ward activities for so long that they’ve known each other for so long that it’s harder to get into that group, but I haven’t really noticed it being a [big] problem” (S-e). A leader commenting on his son ‘s attempt to make the school team said:

[My son] had problems...because a lot of these boys grew up in the same ward together, and they played [ward] basketball together...so they’re used to each other. You have to penetrate that. You become an outsider.... [LDS] have a natural peer group that’s built into it. It happens in sports, over and over again kids begin to feel like I’m not a part of that ward ball, and I don’t fit in. (L-g)

Eleven participants mention that LDS Seminary socially separates students. A participant raised in Utah explains,

...it would seem to me that...there were a host of social opportunities that I missed because I was not part of that [LDS seminary] system. You know, they would have early-morning things or dances associated with it. Or just the common experience of being in a class together. You know that creates a bond that I was not a part of. (L-j)

Others perceive LDS Seminary as a differentiating factor, something that highlights them as different. A parent participant who is also a high school teacher explains: “It’s hard for us in Utah...with the predominance of the seminary class in there. It’s pretty obvious which kids are LDS and which kids aren’t” (P-g). Interestingly, when participants are asked what they would change (question 14), the second most common response is LDS

seminary. Perhaps even more telling is that the majority of these respondents are students (1L, 3P, 7S).

Participants also explain that peer exclusion occasionally occurs in school-related conversations, dating, and general association. Regarding student peer conversations, a student explains: "...we listen to them [LDS] talking about their religious stuff all the time. They'll get out of seminary and they're all talking about [it]...and there's never really an area for us to talk about what we're doing..." (S-k). Dating, often tied to school social circles, is also identified as an area of exclusion. A leader shares this example:

My running partner[‘s]...son was starting to be interested in a young lady in high school...and suddenly her mother said no you can't date him, he is not...Mormon.... The implication was not simply...religious...but somehow or other he was an inferior person because he was not Mormon...he was deeply hurt... (L-i).

Furthermore, some participants share the occasional story, usually dealing with younger grades, of some students not associating or playing with certain individuals because they are not LDS. A leader describes:

...some [LDS] kids always feel that they should not lower themselves to play with Methodists and that is a great sadness.... [our] kids don't stop to think about...belief patterns of all that, all they know is that suddenly I am not good enough to play with Suzie down the street (L-i).

Other areas of exclusion that participants mention include feeling out of the loop at times due to dispersal of community information through LDS organizations (i.e., Scouting events, civic projects, neighborhood gatherings, etc). Some parents and leaders express concern that their student's religion would hinder them from having really "close" friends with whom they could relate.

Related to peer exclusion is the social awkwardness that some participants feel in school due to their religion. For example, though not excluded from LDS centered conversation, the student may still feel out of place and uncomfortable. A student's different religious experience and beliefs can make participation in such conversation unlikely or awkward at best. Interestingly this awkwardness can appear on both sides. Several participants explain that when LDS became aware of their religious affiliation, perhaps due to LDS ignorance of participants' beliefs, LDS occasionally appeared to be uneasy, uncomfortable, or seemed awkward around them. Several participants explain that this unease had occasionally led some LDS to avoid or shun them. As a student explains: "Most of them will just accept it...but there are some that don't really talk to you as much and stuff like that once they find out that you're not LDS" (S-k). Perhaps this in part explains some participant's description of feeling somewhat alone in their school communities – feeling like few, if any, really understand them (e.g., P-d, S-l, S-j, P-b).

Uncomfortable peer interaction. Though participants exhibited a wide range in the amount and degree of concern and discomfort felt in their public schools, participants mention a number of unpleasant interactions that religious minority students can face in Utah public schools. While few participants entirely object to LDS peer proselytizing (some perhaps avoiding full objection due to their own evangelistic effort), over two thirds express at least some discomfort with the amount of LDS proselytizing and/or methods used.

Discomfort due to LDS proselytizing can be attributed either to an individual who has been deemed overly persistent, or to the collective barrage experienced in the school

community as a whole. As a leader explains: "...my children were raised in a setting where the elementary and the Junior high and high school were predominantly LDS. It's not a bad thing. The hardest part is the constant pressure for proselytizing...." (L-h). Moreover, a number of participants, particularly leaders and parents, express annoyance at the conscious or unconscious social pressure often involved in LDS peer-proselytizing efforts at school. One leader explains: "Don't make it so difficult that [by proselytizing] a teenager has to choose between peer pressure on one side and loyalty to the family on the other" (L-m). Another proselytizing mannerism some participants deem irritating is the one-way dialogue. A student commenting on such dialogue said: "I'll have discussions with open-minded LDS people...but [a particular student] gets on my nerves. ...he says stuff like, 'Oh, I feel sorry for you.' It's just like, 'Shut up.' I don't like to talk to him at all. It's not even a discussion" (S-c). A leader further explains:

There are some [LDS] who would take great offense if a Methodist were to say to them 'Hey our youth group is doing such and such, come on over and join us'...but conversely they would expect clearly that a Methodist would want to join them at their place and so there is that disparity.... (L-i)

Interestingly, three participants (2L, 1P) noted a difference between proselytism and evangelism. Proselytism, the commonly used word in LDS circles for sharing of faith, appears to have a negative connotation to some while evangelism does not. In two cases (L-g, L-k), evangelism appeared associated with faith sharing efforts deemed appropriate while proselytism appeared associated with faith sharing practices deemed inappropriate.

In addition to proselytizing, over forty percent of participants (8L, 5P, 7S) mention the LDS doctrine as *the* true church as a cause of some LDS arrogance and superiority that they face in Utah schools. A leader explains:

...if I have a complaint about the LDS religion, it is that sense that there is only one true church. I understand how quote “tenet” that is to the LDS Church, but on the other hand, it unfortunately almost always bears out in a certain sense of arrogance and superiority. It almost can’t help [it].... (L-k)

A student adds,

...one thing that just kind of makes me mad is when my friends are like, ‘Well, I’m happy I go to the only true church’ and like all that stuff. That kind of sets me off a little, but I just bite my tongue and deal with it. (S-j)

Another discomfoting peer interaction that participants identify is the general assumption that they are LDS (4L, 6P, 4S): “Basically, pretty much everyone students, teachers everyone will just assume that everyone’s of just the same religion [LDS] and they can say certain things and do certain things...and not even think [others] may not want to...” (S-l). When identified as non-LDS, reasons participants give for why they were assumed LDS include responses such as: “you’re so nice;” “you don’t swear;” “you dress modestly;” etc. As one participant explains: “...I’ve heard the comment, ‘Well you’re nice enough that you could be LDS.’ Which assumes that most people aren’t very nice or not as nice as the Mormons are. So it’s meant to be a compliment but it hurts” (L-f). Furthermore, when understood to be another religion, some participants (3L, 3P, 2S) indicate that they get lumped into a general “non-LDS” category. A participant describes: “[LDS] don’t know the difference between the Baptists and the Methodists, Presbyterian.... Most of the kids don’t. Their principals, I’m not sure they do either. I think that we probably all get lumped together...” (L-g). Perhaps a mother of two high school students summarizes the feelings of many when she said: “I wish there was a little more respect for the fact that there are people that aren’t LDS in the school setting...more giving of the knowledge that there are people that are different” (P-e).

Another discomfort some participants identify is the occasional negative assumptions and stereotypes about their character and moral standards that arise due to not being LDS. A leader explains: “The assumption being if you’re not one of us...then you must be engaged in [bad] kinds of things” (L-f). Other discomforts a few participants mention includes possible religion-related ridicule, being socially judged by, and held to, LDS standards, and concern that their religion will cause unwanted social attention.

When presented closely together as they are here, the multiple examples of peer exclusion and unpleasant peer interactions may appear overwhelming to participants. However, it is important to remember that the only issues raised by more than half the participants are LDS proselytizing and LDS seminary. Moreover, less than one fourth of the participants raise most of the issues included here. That said, the level of concern or irritation individual participants associated with these issues varies widely. Generally speaking, most participants appear to express only moderate concern and irritation to these social issues. It appears this moderate concern is more a result of infrequency than it is the level of concern such issues may cause. For example, a father (P-d) repeatedly indicated that he observed no significant instances wherein his daughter was maligned socially in school because of her religion. However, he did express years of unrealized “deep concern” that his daughter did not have “close friends” due to her religious beliefs and affiliation. It appears the feelings surrounding these social issues can run deep, yet the relative infrequency or lack of severity appears to keep such issues from a level deemed significant for most participants.

I will now address the general reasons participants gave for these social concerns and challenges: LDS ignorance of other religions, LDS doctrine of *the* true church, and LDS cohesiveness.

LDS ignorance. By far the most proffered explanation participants give for both institutional and social challenges that they have faced regarding their religion in Utah schools is the LDS majority's ignorant disregard of and lack of understanding about other religions and their beliefs (36 [13L, 12P, 11S]). A leader describes it this way: "I've never found a callous ugliness in any of the situations, but I've found an ignorance that is not understanding of what we're doing" (L-g). Participants explain that because many in the LDS majority are either unaware of or do not understand other religions, they at times unknowingly do things that are detrimental to students of other religions. Most examples participants use to illustrate the challenges that arise from this ignorance have already been noted (i.e., assumed LDS and treated as such, lumped together as "non-LDS," negative assumptions of moral character, judged by and held to LDS standards, etc).

It follows that when participants are asked what they would most like to say or change (see results to questions 10, 14, 15), the most common responses are that the majority be more open and willing to learn about others beliefs, obtain greater understanding and awareness of other religions, and be more sensitive and respectful of others' religious beliefs. The apparent participant assumption is that if the majority knew about and understood other religions, they would be more careful, sensitive, and respectful. There would be fewer misconceptions leading to misunderstandings, misjudgments, etc. There seems to be a general belief that such understanding would invoke the golden rule. Such awareness would enable the majority to treat the minority in

a manner reciprocal to that by which they would prefer to be treated. On the flip side, several participants suggest that if the religious majority remains ignorant they would continue to struggle to treat the religious minority with the proper dignity and respect.

On the surface, a number of participants wanting greater LDS majority awareness/understanding of their religion appear to contradict themselves by also desiring religious anonymity, or to blend in and not be noticed. A leader explains the contradiction this way:

I can remember one time my niece...coming home and she said...some of the kids were asking her, "Krista, we heard that you're not Mormon. And we heard that you're another religion." And my niece had been taught to say, "You know it doesn't matter what religion you are. What's important is that you live a good life." But then she added, "and beside that, I am Mormon," because she didn't want to feel excluded. So, she had been taught that that was how you were supposed to be treated.... But she still didn't want to be on the outside. (L-m)

Wanting to be recognized, but not ostracized, appears to clarify the contradicting desire for awareness and anonymity. As noted, social concerns at school due to religious affiliation is the most common concern that participants share. Greater LDS awareness, seen by many participants as requisite to respectful treatment of their religion, would naturally lead to a higher profile that could open the back door to unwanted social challenges as well (i.e., peer shunning, ridicule, negative assumptions, targeted for proselytizing, etc). As a student sadly explains: "I'm not willing to express my religion and my feelings on it with them. ...I hide it because I...fear that I wouldn't have been accepted. My fear was I don't like being shunned...." (S-p). Yet the general sentiment of participants appears that accurate awareness and understanding would do more good, and more than offset any detriment that might accompany participants increased recognition as a member of another faith.

Some participants attribute this enduring ignorance to the LDS tendency to think the same way and assume others should be judged and treated by their standards. Others see it as a result of the LDS majority generally getting what they want. Another suggests the LDS majority is comfortable and feels no threat from other religious organizations, precluding change. A number of participants suggest that the LDS majority might become more aware and knowledgeable by asking others what they believe or taking world-religion classes. Others propose the LDS Church or parents teach a basic understanding of other religions. A number of participants suggest that members of the majority refrain from judging a person by his religion and get to know him. However, as one leader indicates, even this may not be enough:

The fact that the person has an open heart and an open mind doesn't always mean that they get it. ...you just have to keep working at it and some will and some won't. I'm certain that from the point of view of the LDS community that they would say in big ways and the little ways, our gentile neighbors don't get it. So getting it is a matter of [degree], and I think that over the course of years, given the leadership from the top, from the 1st Presidency, from the Governor of the state, etc. that there will be more of getting it as the years go on. ... There will be frictions. But I guess that's a part of growing. (L-1)

The true church. As previously mentioned, just over forty-five percent of the participants (8L, 5P, 7S) connect the LDS doctrine of *the true church* with some form of LDS arrogance and superiority that they can face in Utah schools. Since so little if any mention was made of other LDS doctrines, it is interesting to observe the amount of talk, and the linking of behavior surrounding this one. A parent expresses the general sentiment this way:

If a fundamental tenet of the faith...is that this is the only true church. Then inherent in that is that everybody else who's not part of that is on the wrong track. And that just inherently sends the message that your church is not good. And while I don't think most kids' do that, every once in a while that does come out. (P-d)

Another participant explains,

...while on a school band trip...[my kids] would be quoting verses and arguing scripture and having great fun, but you know, there was always this air of superiority by the [LDS kids] who were a part of “The” Church. And the result has always been a sense of being...put down. (L-h)

Participants link the LDS doctrine of *the* true church to a number of potentially challenging situations that can arise in school. Two leaders draw the connection of this doctrine with LDS proselytizing. As one leader explains: “...once you say that you’re wrong, then you have to tell them the right. And proselytizing is the natural outworking of that” (L-g). Perhaps this doctrine factors into the one-way religious conversations some find irritating. As a student said, “...most people in my school, they really don’t want to hear about my religion. They just want to tell me about theirs” (S-f). Some participants indicate that this doctrine might lead some LDS not to date those of other religions, assume they lack moral conditioning, to disassociation, and unkind treatment.

A leader explains it this way,

You take a [non-LDS] twelve or thirteen-year-old boy or girl, that’s going to school...and then somebody representing the majority class says, ‘No, this is wrong. You are not part of the true church.’ ... At that age they are so tender and identity is so important. ...the impression that our kids tend to get that there’s something wrong with them because they’re not part of the majority. (L-k)

Furthermore, a leader referring to *the* true church doctrine explains: “...I think that that’s really part of that exclusive mind set that sometimes you see in a principal or a teacher [or student], and not on purpose necessarily, but it happens out there” (L-g). As well, this same leader explains a confusion he sees associated with the LDS doctrine of the true church that he feels extends into Utah schools:

I have a presentation...called, “choose a hand.” It’s basically...that the LDS Church and community presents two hands and says choose one. Choose the right hand they say, “Well, we’re Christians, you’re Christians, we’re all Christians, we

believe in Jesus, we believe in God, we believe in family and we believe in good values so won't you accept us?" And you say, "Okay, well what's in the other hand?" And they say, we're the only true Church, all the churches are wrong.... Then you say, "What was in the other hand?" "Well, we're Christians, you're Christians, we're all Christians, so won't you accept us?" And the issue is, which hand do we deal with? That is confusing to us... (L-g)

Noticeably, participants whose religion does not advocate a doctrine of *the* true church make up the bulk of those raising this issue. It appears to be less of an issue to those who similarly hold such a doctrine. As noticed in the criticism of LDS proselytizing, participants who advocate similar practices or doctrines in their religion generally appear to avoid its criticism in another, or at least bite their tongues. For participants raising this issue, the most irritating factor seems to be the sense of superiority conveyed by those holding it.

LDS cohesiveness. Another source of social challenges participants mention is the cohesiveness of the LDS community. Thirteen participants (6L, 6P, 1S) explain that because the LDS church is such a social part of its members lives, those of other faiths in Utah communities often feel excluded. As a parent, also a high school teacher, explains:

...the LDS religion...is such a social organization where...the members are very involved all the time; and that itself, not purposefully, becomes exclusionary of those around them. So in a [LDS] community, you could have someone who's not LDS, and not by any intention...they feel excluded. (P-g)

Friendships and associations formed around church by LDS students can carry over into school. As a leader explains,

I have people in my congregation say, 'Well, the LDS are just so stand-offish.' I don't think it's that at all. I've found the LDS people to be very, very friendly.... But what it means is that people in their neighborhood [or school] that they might otherwise be with socially are involved in other social things particularly built around the [LDS] church. So there gets to be a little sense among the people in our congregation that they are being left out or ignored. (L-k)

For some participants LDS Released-Time Seminary seems to extend the LDS cohesiveness into the schools. Not only can students not of the LDS faith be left out of a LDS church dance or basketball game in the evening, but as previously explained, they are also not a part of one class each day, which in some cases, over ninety percent of their peer are involved in.

Due to such a cohesive majority, a leader explains,

[Our] Church functions differently here than any place I've ever seen in terms of social nature. People have their friends at church and that's because the LDS people have their friends at church. That sets a table for the culture. It's not that people aren't nice but they are oriented differently... (L-b)

Another leader adds, "...it's really important to this congregation that we have social activities because people have a hard time finding opportunities for social interaction and making connections sometimes" (L-k).

Furthermore, several participants (5L, 5P, 4S) describe a kind of bond between those not of the LDS faith in their school communities. A parent and high school teacher shares this example:

I happened to have a crucifix hanging from the [car] mirror...and took eight kids to a competition. ...it was interesting the change in relationship I had with some of those [non-LDS] students...there was more common ground we had. And it wasn't, I don't believe even that they knew I was [a specific religion], but that I was not LDS. (P-h)

A student adds that "a lot of us [non-LDS] clump together I've noticed. [We] all kind of get along together" (S-r). The reasons given for this bond include: first, such students appear more open to different ideas and they feel more comfortable discussing beliefs; and second, they share a common understanding of what its like to live in Utah and not be LDS. Another parent who also teaches high school explains that some students who

are not LDS "...saw me as someone they could commiserate with...about how awful [they think] it is not to be LDS in this place" (P-g).

In addition to LDS ignorance, the LDS doctrine of the true church, and LDS cohesiveness as reasons for peer exclusion and uncomfortable peer interaction, a couple of participants add that such things can also happen because some children are cruel. A mother explains: "Even my granddaughter, if she wears her little cross earrings to kindergarten or something remarks will be made but kids are just brats and they're just mean. Not just LDS kids" (P-o). Yet clearly, participants identify a general LDS majority ignorance, and not "meanness," as the prevailing culprit.

Summary. As mentioned, it appears that participants' overriding concerns and challenges in the school fall below the legal radar and outside institutional treatment. In general, the more significant issues appear in the social treatment of religious minority students by their peers. There could be several reasons for this. Perhaps participants feel they have recourse with teachers/administrators, whereas they may feel they have little if any with peers; or possibly, peer treatment and acceptance requires more than teacher treatment and acceptance. Perhaps there is more concern regarding social treatment because social issues extend beyond the school, or it may be accounted for in teacher maturity and professional training. Most likely, it is a combination of these (and possibly other) factors. However, regardless of the reasons, the school-related social concerns and challenges largely relate to varying degrees of peer exclusion and/or uncomfortable peer interaction. As explained, the general reasons participants gave for these social concerns and challenges are LDS ignorance of other religions, LDS doctrine of *the* true church, and LDS cohesiveness.

While school institutional treatment did not appear a major issue to most participants, similar efforts to estimate the degree of concern participants attribute to their social treatment at school are not as easy. The main reason for this difficulty is the context of school-related social concerns within broader Utah society. It is difficult to determine the point at which participants' school-related social issues ended and where unrelated issues begin. Many participants did not make the distinction. For example, a participant shares an instance of LDS students trying to proselytize to her at school, as well as at a LDS activity she attended. Perhaps in her mind, these were the same peers, and therefore, the instances were related. Although the study questions focus on treatment at school, the occasional lack of distinction in response is easily understood since school is such a large part of students' social lives. Not only do they spend approximately eight hours a day, five days a week there, but when extracurricular school-related activities such as clubs, teams, games, dances, etc. are considered, it becomes clear that a large part of a student's life is associated with school. Furthermore, school associations often carry over into other aspect of students' lives (i.e., party invitations, dating, friendships, etc). Having noted this challenge to the analysis, the findings clearly suggest that social treatment at school is a greater concern and challenge to participants than institutional treatment.

Interestingly, when comparing social concerns and challenges that participants face in school to those they describe as occurring outside of the school realm, few if any differences are noted. With the exception of LDS Seminary and a few other context specific matters, the social challenges participants experienced in school and those experienced outside of school were quite similar.

Another noteworthy comparison is between parent and leader concerns and those of students. Looking at questions five, seven, and nine, the frequency of responses differs noticeably. In general, students seem to identify or express less concern about the treatment of their religion in school than do their parents or leaders. For example, question seven asks if it makes any difference if fellow students know their student's religious membership. Sixteen participants, thirteen leaders and three parents, share concerns or challenges, either directly or indirectly raised, by such knowledge. On the other hand, thirteen participants, four parents, and nine students, indicate that they have not observed nor experienced any significant problems. While this trend can be identified among respondents, the reason is unclear. Perhaps more concern among leaders and parents is a case of over-worrying parents/leaders, or unrealized leader/parent concerns. Perhaps the challenges faced by students today are not as bad as those faced by parents or leaders in the past. It is possible that several students, having lived in Utah most or all of their lives, simply have nothing to which they may compare their experiences. The disparity, again, is probably due to a combination of issues.

Pervasive LDS Presence in Utah's School Communities

Although all participants acknowledge an LDS majority in their school, over fifty-five percent of participants (9L, 9P, 9S), in both direct and indirect ways, describe a strong, even pervasive, LDS presence in their school communities and the larger Utah community. A student explains, "the dominant faith is LDS here so the school is dominated by that religion also. It's not like there's any rules or anything, but just that majority when you're in public school and stuff...you feel the presence..." (S-a). A mother describes,

It's so much more important and more part of their life than in other places....
...in Las Vegas...somebody would have [possibly] said something [about
religion]...and then forgotten about it, and here that's not the case because it's
part of their life every day. (P-n)

A leader adds "...there's always...a religious element that flows within Utah...." (L-c).

Although a couple of the participants clearly struggle with the pervasive LDS
presence, and a few see it as a cause of occasional fatigue, it appears understandable and
at least tolerable to most. A parent described it this way,

So there is that sort of LDS presence, but I don't see it in any of the teaching or
any of the administrative decisions that I can tell. It's there, it's certainly a
presence of feeling, but I don't see it as a problem...you can't just totally never
mention the church when you're in school. (P-b)

Manifestations of this LDS presence are similar to the challenges discussed under
institutional treatment and social treatment (i.e., LDS Seminary, school dress standards,
scheduling of events, social cliques built around LDS association, etc). This sense of LDS
pervasive presence in schools supports the idea that several participants perceive at least
some degree of de facto establishment of the LDS religion in Utah public schools.

Rural v. Urban

One third of the participants (8L, 6P, 2S) suggest that those not of the LDS faith
generally face an added challenge in more rural Utah school communities, which contain
higher percentages of LDS. These challenges are not necessarily different so much as
more pronounced. A leader with experience in rural and urban Utah described:

In the Salt Lake area, along the Wasatch front, I think there's probably more
effort to be a little more sensitive to it, than in a rural area. Here it's so
cosmopolitan. ...I was in American Fork for two years...that was very difficult
for those kids going to American Fork High School. There was more of a sense
of feeling, real beat up because you were Catholic and being the minority. So it
was a whole different experience than...in the Salt Lake area. (L-m)

Another leader recounted a friend describing the LDS presence in a rural Utah community in which he lived prior to moving to Salt Lake City as “a cloud that covers everything and never goes away” (L-h).

Some reasons participants give for the possible added challenges include that the LDS presence is more pervasive, and most, if not all, school and community leaders are LDS and make decisions accordingly. Other reasons include a lack of community awareness because many community events are announced and planned through church organizations, and there is little or no community or school acknowledgment of minority religions. Also mentioned as reasons for the added challenge in rural communities are that religious differences appear more pronounced, and due to high concentration of LDS there is no way to escape the LDS presence.

Additional support for the assertions that persons not of the LDS faith may face greater challenges in rural Utah school communities was found in a general overview of students. Five of the eighteen student participants attend school communities with an LDS population above 80%. In comparison, it is observed that the four students who consistently related significantly high amounts of frustration lived in school communities with an LDS population above 80%. Furthermore, when two students in Salt Lake (56% LDS) were asked to put a percentage on the number of students who tend to mistreat them because of their religion, both laugh, and one simply says, “Easily avoided” (S-k). However, when two students in American Fork, which is 89% LDS, are asked what percentage of students mistreated them because of their religion, one responds 25% the other says 50%. When told they lived in the county with the highest percentage of LDS, the mother and student respond: “We know! Believe me, we know!” (P-e, S-f).

Type of Religion

Perhaps the *type* of majority religion contributes to the social challenges that the religious minority in Utah public schools face. As previously noted by participants, several issues present certain concerns and challenges: LDS member cohesiveness, doctrine of *the* true church, a zeal for proselytizing and released-time seminary. Though none of these practices are exclusive to the LDS Church, all are practiced in comparatively high amounts, thus providing multiple areas of concern for the minority.

When participants were asked how it might be different if their religion were the majority in their school community, one third (7L, 4P, 5S) indicate that if they were to be considered the majority, religion would be less of an issue. Nine (3L, 5P, 1S) suggest that more awareness, acceptance, openness, or sensitivity of others would be present. In support of their assertions, several of these participants (4L, 3P, 4S) contrast the LDS doctrine of *the* true church with the comparatively less doctrinaire approach advocated in their religion. Others indicate that there would be less proselytizing and less religious debate, etc. It appears that many participants see challenges in the presence of a large religious majority and in the type of religion the LDS Church is as well. On this point, one leader shared his experience:

I moved here from New Mexico. Catholicism is almost as dominant as Mormonism here. And yet, it never was an issue there. You never asked the question which ward you go to. You never ask the question, it never was in school an issue of being Catholic or Protestant or Mormon. And yet in Salt Lake and Utah it is. And that's good because...I believe your faith ought to impact everything you do. And yet at the same time I think the problem is right there.
(L-g)

Progress Over Time

Thirteen participants (10L, 3P) indicate that the treatment of their religion and beliefs within their schools, and in Utah in general, is improving. Referring to his nearly twenty years in a rural Utah community, a leader explains: “I do believe and have seen...where what we believe held some children back, but it seems to be less and less”

(L-c). Another comments,

It’s shifted over the years...I think that that kind of in your face [treatment of non-LDS] is not tolerated in schools anymore, and I think that they’re doing a much better job... ..but improvement is a relative term. I think there are still a lot of subtle pressures that are there. (L-h)

The most common reason given (5L, 1P) for movement in the right direction are efforts of LDS Church leadership. A leader said, “...it’s pretty obvious that the LDS leadership has said, ‘You know, be friends, don’t just do it to proselyte.’ It has opened a lot of doors...it has helped” (L-g). Others mention legal awareness and pressure, increasing religious diversity, and following a national trend, as reasons for the improvement. One leader qualified the improvement as more pronounced in urban areas while lagging in rural ones. Four participants (2L, 2P) mention that they have observed no change over time in the treatment of their religion in the school community.

Participant assertions that treatment of their religion in school is improving may be supported by and/or help explain the noticeable difference between leader/parent responses and students responses to questions five, seven, and nine. These questions ask about teacher/administrator treatment, peer treatment, and general feeling of living among an LDS majority. Students expressed noticeably fewer concerns about the treatment of their religion in school than did their parents or leaders.

Closing Thoughts

It would be careless to suppose that a person not of the LDS faith in Utah public schools would experience all the issues raised in this study. These issues, gathered from a variety of participants, are intended to show a spectrum of possibilities, rather than suggest probability. These findings are only a snapshot of a small group that does not necessarily correspond to the entire population. Furthermore, the summarization of responses inevitably excludes some detail. However, this study appears to raise most issues potentially faced by persons of the religious minority in Utah public schools, and suggests which issues may be of greater concern.

It is important to keep in mind that this study is looking for the concerns and challenges of the participants. It puts a magnifying glass to the treatment of the religious minority in Utah schools. If not careful, the picture may appear distorted. In context with other school issues, treatment of religion generally did not appear a primary concern to these participants. Quality of education, general peer influences, etc., appear as school concerns well ahead of religious treatment for most. This should not suggest that religion is unimportant to these participants or that these concerns are superficial (participant concerns often run deep), but rather that mistreatment of their religion was sporadic and most instances that did occur, though irksome, appeared bearable. Although apparently not a consuming issue for most participants, all identify things that bother them, and together raise a spectrum of numerous shared issues. Furthermore, the generally modest concern they portray in this study may be, in part, a reflection of the type of participants. All participants were religiously active and perhaps more understanding of another faith

due to their own strong faith. It is possible, even probable, that had the study included several former Mormons, atheists, etc, the degree of discontent may have appeared more pronounced. As before mentioned, observing participant extremes, the general voice emerging in these findings appears moderate, perhaps tilting to the positive side.

Finally, this study is about the golden rule – treating others the way we wish to be treated. These findings are intended to provide insight for conscientious educators and members of the LDS majority into how they might better treat those of minority religions in their school communities.

Suggestions for Practice

Educators

This study appears to reinforce many educational practices already in place, as well as raise some cautions:

- Legal training (pre-service and in-service)
 - Educator boundaries regarding religion in school.
 - Students' religious rights.
- Multi-cultural Education training (pre-service and in-service)
 - Include a religious component about understanding and regard for students of various faiths.
- World Civilizations, World Religions courses
 - Train teachers how to correctly teach *about* religion (First Amendment Center, 1995).
 - Caution, it is difficult to please everyone. A few participants warn that teacher bias can never totally be set aside, and therefore, it will always be

difficult to treat another religion with the dignity and respect that would be expected.

- Sensitivity to religious holidays and practices
 - Reasonably accommodate when possible (e.g., a fasting student during Ramadan, providing make-up work for a student observing Yom Kippur, or Ash Wednesday, etc.) (First Amendment Center, 1995).
- Be aware of unintended favoritism
 - In efforts to oblige as many students as possible, be careful that these efforts aren't distinguished along religious lines.
 - Be careful that a shared religious understanding, and its accompanying familiarity, does not produce preferential treatment.
- Scheduling of events
 - Sensitivity to multiple religious events

Furthermore, in their interaction with students it could be helpful for educators to:

- Be aware of the potential social challenges students of minority religions may face.
 - Awareness of the issues raised in this study may provide the cognizance needed to help avoid situations that may present challenges to religious minority students.
 - Notice the social dynamic surrounding religion – *when appropriate* be ready and willing to do what you can to alleviate a difficult situation.
- Avoid drawing unwanted attention to their religion

- It appears most religious minority students do not want to be singled out based on their religion – most would rather blend in. What may seem a great way to highlight that student’s religion and show respect may cause resentment – use good judgment.

The intent of this study is not to cause educators to constantly worry that they may offend a member of the religious minority. Paranoia about offending a student can lead to paralysis, yet reckless disregard can lead to serious offence. The proper balance can be elusive; however, most participants do not convey the expectation that schools accommodate everything relating to their religion. It appears that small, and often subtle, acknowledgments and considerations of their religion and beliefs go a long way in their experience with, and perceptions of, the school and its personnel. Most participants appear forgiving if they understand an educator is trying.

Students

A word to LDS students:

- Be aware. Although students of other religions may be few, they do exist and deserve to be treated the way you would prefer to be treated in a similar circumstance. There appears little expectation that LDS students know everything about others religion, but putting forth some effort or willingness to understand something about others religion would be a positive gesture.
- Avoid stereotyping. Labeling another as *Non- Mormon* or clumping others together as non-LDS can be offensive to some. See an individual.

- Most often students of other religions are people of conviction as well; they hold strong moral values (as do you). It is likely many of these values are common to yours.
- Despite religious differences, do not be afraid to make friends with or at least be cordial with students of other faiths. Respectful treatment of another's religion does not require that one give up their beliefs. Furthermore, respectful treatment is most often reciprocated.
- In your efforts to share your faith, be careful of unwanted social pressure that you may be placing on another.

Recommendations for Further Study

Further research may include:

- Comparison Study – Conduct the same study with minority religions in different school communities that contain a large religious majority (e.g. Baptist community in Texas, Catholic community in New England, etc). Identify similarities and differences. Does the *type* of religion make a difference as several participants in this study suggest? Are there commonalities experienced by the religious minority in each?
- LDS View – Look at how LDS view the treatment of their religion in the same school communities. How do they see their regard of minority religions?
- Random Sample – Use the issues raised in this study to conduct a random sample survey aimed at discovering the prevalence of these issues and possibly the degree of concern they engender in the general population.

- Veracity of Mistreatment – Several stories of mistreatment that could be in violation of school law and policies have been shared in the study. Most are second hand and/or appeared ten or more years old. Further investigation might verify the occurrence of such cases and better assess their rate of incidence currently and over time.

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- Murray v. Curlett*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963)
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Marbury v. Madison, 5 U.S. 137 (1803)

APPENDIX

A – *The Williamsburg Charter* – summary of principles and list of signatures

B – *Religious Expression in Public Schools* – U.S. Department of Education

C – Consent Forms

D – Questionnaires

The Williamsburg Charter

Summary of Principles

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...

The Religious Liberty clauses of the First Amendment to the Constitution are a momentous decision, the most important political decision for religious liberty and public justice in history. Two hundred years after their enactment they stand out boldly in a century made dark by state repression and sectarian conflict. Yet the ignorance and contention now surrounding the clauses are a reminder that their advocacy and defense is a task for each succeeding generation.

We acknowledge our deep and continuing differences over religious beliefs, political policies and constitutional interpretations. But together we celebrate the genius of the Religious Liberty clauses, and affirm the following truths to be among the first principles that are in the shared interest of all Americans:

1. Religious liberty, freedom of conscience, is a precious and inalienable right. A society is only as just and free as it is respectful of this right for its smallest minorities and least popular communities.
2. Religious liberty is founded on the inviolable dignity of the person. It is not based on science or social usefulness and is not dependent on the shifting moods of majorities and governments.
3. Religious liberty is our nation's "first liberty," which undergirds all other rights and freedoms secured by the Bill of Rights.
4. The two Religious Liberty clauses address distinct concerns, but together they serve the same end -- religious liberty or freedom of conscience, for citizens of all faiths or none.
5. The No Establishment clause separates Church from State but not religion from politics or public life. It prevents the confusion of religion and government which has been a leading source of repression and coercion throughout history.
6. The Free Exercise clause guarantees the right to reach, hold, exercise or change beliefs freely. It allows all citizens who so desire to shape their lives, whether private or public, on the basis of personal and communal beliefs.
7. The Religious Liberty clauses are both a protection of individual liberty and a provision for ordering the relationship of religion and public life. They allow us to live with our deepest differences and enable diversity to be a source of national strength.
8. Conflict and debate are vital to democracy. Yet if controversies about religion and politics are to reflect the highest wisdom of the First Amendment and advance the best interests of the disputants and the nation, then *how* we debate, and not only *what* we debate, is critical.

9. One of America's continuing needs is to develop, out of our differences a common vision for the common good. Today that common vision must embrace a shared understanding of the place of religion in public life and of the guiding principles by which people with deep religious differences can contend robustly but civilly with each other.
10. Central to the notion of the common good, and of greater importance each day because of the increase of pluralism, is the recognition that religious liberty is a universal right. Rights are best guarded and responsibilities best exercised when each person and group guards for all others those rights they wish guarded for themselves.

We are firmly persuaded that these principles require a fresh consideration, and that the reaffirmation of religious liberty is crucial to sustain a free people that would remain free. We therefore commit ourselves to speak, write and act according to this vision and these principles. We urge our fellow citizens to do the same, now and in generations to come.

SIGNERS OF THE WILLIAMSBURG CHARTER

Representing Government:

President Jimmy Carter

President Gerald R. Ford

Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist

Chief justice Warren E. Burger, retired

Secretary of Education William J. Bennett

Senator Dennis DeConcini, D-Arizona; Trustee; Bicentennial Commissioner

Senator Robert Dole, R-Kansas, Minority Leader, U.S. Senate

Senator Mark O. Hatfield, R-Oregon; Trustee

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, D-New York; Trustee

Senator Ted Stevens, R-Alaska; Trustee; Bicentennial Commissioner

Representative James Wright, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives

Representative Representative Robert Michel, R-Illinois, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives

Representative Don Bonker, D-Washington; Trustee

Representative James Slattery, D-Kansas; Trustee

Governor Michael S. Dukakis, Chairman, Democratic Governors Association

Mr. Charles Z. Wick, Director, United States Information Agency

Ms. Pamela Plumb, President, National League of Cities

Members of the Drafting Committee

Mr. William Bentley Ball, Attorney, Ball, Skelly, Murren & Connell

Dr. Os Guinness, Executive Director, The Williamsburg Charter Foundation

Mr. Nat Hentoff, Columnist, The Washington Post and Village Voice, and Staff Writer, The New Yorker

Dean Kelley, Director, Religious and Civil Liberties Division of the National Council of Churches

Pastor Richard Neuhaus, Director, Center for Religion and Society

Mr. George S. Weigel, Jr., President, The James Madison Foundation

Academic Consultants:

Professor Robert N. Bellah, University of California at Berkeley
Professor Peter L. Berger, Boston University
Professor Robert A. Destro, U.S. Civil Rights Commission
Professor Edward Gaffney, Jr., Loyola Law School
Dr. William A. Galston, The Roosevelt Center
Professor James Davison Hunter, University of Virginia
Professor George M. Marsden, Duke University
Professor David Martin, The London School of Economics
Professor William Lee Miller, University of Virginia
Mr. A. James Reichley, The Brookings Institution
Professor William Van Alstyne, Duke University School of Law
Professor Robert Wuthnow, Princeton University

Representing Political Parties:

Mr. Frank Fahrenkopf, Jr., Chairman, Republican National Committee
Mr. Paul Kirk, Jr., Chairman, Democratic National Committee

Representing the Commission on the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution:

Mr. Frederick K. Biebel
Representative Lindy Boggs, D-Louisiana
Dr. Mark W. Cannon, Executive Director
The Honorable Lynne V. Cheney
Representative Philip Crane, R-Illinois
Mr. William J. Green
Reverend Edward Victor Hill
Senator Edward M. Kennedy, D-Massachusetts
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Dr. Thomas H. O'Connor
Mrs. Phyllis Schlafly
Mr. Obert C. Tanner
Senator Strom Thurmond, R-South Carolina
Mr. Ronald H. Walker
Judge Charles E. Wiggins

Representing the Commonwealth of Virginia:

Governor Gerald Baliles
Senator Paul Trible
Senator John Warner
Representative Herbert H. Bateman
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Representative Rick C. Boucher
Representative Stan Parris
Representative Owen Bradford Pickett
Representative Norman Sisisky
Representative D. French Slaughter, Jr.

Representative Frank R. Wolf
Mayor John Hodges, Williamsburg
Professor A.E. Dick Howard, Chairman, Virginia Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution
Mr. Charles R. Longworth, President, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
Dr. Paul Verkuil, President, College of William and Mary

Representing American Communities of Faith:

Mr. Edward L. Ericson, Former President, American Ethical Union
Bishop Charles H. Foggie, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church of North and South America; Trustee
Very Reverend Leonid Kishkovsky, President-elect, National Council of Churches
Rabbi Gilbert Klapperman, President, Synagogue Council of America
Archbishop John L. May, President, U.S. Catholic Conference; Trustee
Reverend Patricia A. McClurg, Past President, National Council of Churches
Imam Warith Deen Muhammad, Muslim American Community Assistance Fund
Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Apostle, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
Dr. Adrian Rogers, President, Southern Baptist Convention
Mr. John Lewis Selover, Chairman, Christian Science Board of Directors
Bishop Rembert Stokes, President, Council of Bishops, African Methodist Episcopal Church
Rev. Leon H. Sullivan, Pastor, Zion Baptist Church, Philadelphia; Trustee
Metropolitan Theodosius, Orthodox Church of America
Dr. John H. White, President, National Association of Evangelicals
Professor Elie Wiesel, Nobel Laureate
Mr. Neil Wilson, World President, Seventh-day Adventists
Bishop Seigen H. Yamaoka, Buddhist Church of America

Representing Organizations Concerned with Religion and Public Life:

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Reverend John Buchanan, Chairman, People for the American Way
Dr. James C. Dobson, President, Focus on the Family
Dr. Robert P. Dugan, Jr., Director of Public Affairs, National Association of Evangelicals; Trustee
Mr. James Dunn, Executive Director, Baptist Joint Committee
Mr. Samuel Ericsson, Executive Director, Christian Legal Society
Reverend Thomas Gallagher, Secretary for Education, U.S. Catholic Conference
Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman, President, Foundation for Jewish Studies
The Honorable Philip M. Klutznick, Honorary President, B'nai B'rith; Trustee
Mr. Norman Lear, Founding Chairman, People for the American Way
Dr. Robert Maddox, Executive Director, Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Mr. Tom Neumann, Executive Vice-President, B'nai B'rith International
Mr. Michael A. Pelavin, Chairman, National Jewish Community Relations Council
Mr. Samuel Rabinove, Legal Director, American Jewish Committee

Mr. Jerry P. Regier, President, Family Research Council
Ms. Jacqueline Wexler, President, National Conference of Christians and Jews

Representing Business:

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Mr. Andrew Athens, President, Metron Steel Corporation; Trustee
Mr. Richard T. Baker, Former Chairman, Ernst & Whinney; Trustee
Mr. Dennis W. Bakke, President, Applied Energy Services; Trustee
Mr. Robert J. Brown, President, B&C Associates; Trustee
Mr. Philip B. Chenok, President, American Institute of Certified Public Accountants
Mr. Donald K. Clifford, Jr.
Ambassador Holland Hanson Coors, President's Special Representative for the National Year of the Americas; Trustee
Mr. T. J. Dermot Dunphy, President, Sealed Air Corporation
Mr. William J. Flynn, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Mutual of America; Chairman, "First Liberty" Summit Committee; Trustee
Ms. Mary Falvey Fuller, Chairman and President, Falvey Motors, Troy, Michigan; Trustee
Dr. Thomas S. Haggai, Chairman and President, IGA, Inc.; Trustee
General David C. Jones, Former Chairman, joint Chiefs of Staff; Trustee
Mr. William S. Kanaga, Chairman, U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Trustee
Mr. George S. Kovats, The Stewardship Foundation
Mr. Henry Luce III, President, The Henry Luce Foundation; Trustee
Mr. William E. MacDonald, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (Retired), Ohio Bell; Trustee
Mr. J. Willard Marriott, Jr., Chairman, Marriott Corporation; Trustee
Mrs. Forrest E. Mars, Jr.; Trustee
The Honorable Alonzo L. McDonald, Chairman, The Avenir Group, Inc. and Chairman, The Williamsburg Charter Foundation
Mr. Luis G. Nogales, President, ECO, Inc.; Trustee
The Honorable Charles H. Percy, Charles Percy & Associates; Trustee
Mr. Dudley Porter, Trustee, Maclellan Foundation
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Mr. Frank D. Stella, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, ED. Stella Products Co.; Trustee
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Mr. C. Davis Weyerhaeuser; Founder and Trustee, the Stewardship Schule; Trustee
Mr. Edward Lee White, Jr., President, Cecil B. Day Foundation

Representing Education and Public Policy:

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Dr. Derek Bok, President, Harvard University
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Mr. Albert Shanker, President, American Federation of Teachers
Dr. Thomas A. Shannon, Director, National School Boards Association
Mrs. Manya Ungar, President, National Congress of Parents and Teachers

Representing Labor Unions:

Mr. Lane Kirkland, President, AFL-CIO
Mr. Howard D. Samuel, President, Trade and Industrial Department, AFL-CIO

Representing Law:

The Honorable Mark A. Constantino, U.S. District Judge
Mr. Robert MacCrate, President, American Bar Association
Mr. Walter L. Sutton, President, National Bar Association
The Honorable Robert H. Wahl, President, American Judges Association

Representing the Media:

Mr. Ben Armstrong, Executive Director, National Religious Broadcasters
Mr. Robert Brunner, Chairman, Radio-Television News Directors Association
Mr. Walter Cronkite
Ms. Patricia Diaz Dennis, Federal Communications Commissioner
Mr. Edward O. Fritts, President and Chief Executive Officer, Natinal Association of Broadcasters; Trustee
Mr. David R. Gergen, Editor, U.S. News & World Report; Trustee
Mr. Wallace Jorgenson, Chairmen of the joint Boards, National Association of Broadcasters
Mr. John Seigenthaler, President, American Society of Newspaper Editors

Representing Medicine:

Dr. William S. Hotchkiss, President, American Medical Association
Dr. C. Everett Koop, U.S. Surgeon General

Representing Minorities and Ethnic Groups:

Madame Nien Cheng, Author
Ms. Suzanne Shown Harjo, Executive Director, National Congress of American Indians
Dr. Benjamin Hooks, Executive Director, NAACP
Dr. John E. Jacob, President and Chief Executive Officer, National Urban League
Dr. Kyo Jhin, Chairman, Asian-American Voter's Coalition
Dr. Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., Former President, Urban League
Mrs. Coretta Scott King, President, Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Non-Violent Social Change; Trustee
Ms. Beverly LaHaye, President, Concerned Women for America
Mr. Pluria W. Marshall, Chairman, National Black Media Coalition
Mr. Oscar Moran, President, League of United Latin American Citizens
Mr. Raul Yzaguirre, President, National Council of La Raza

Representing Senior Citizens:

Mr. Horace B. Deets, Executive Director, American Association of Retired Persons

Representing Voluntary Organizations:

Mr. William Aramony, President, United Way of America; Trustee
Mr. Andrew S. Miller, National Commander, Salvation Army
Mr. Richard F. Schubert, President, American Red Cross
Mr. Carmi Schwartz, Executive Vice President, Council of Jewish Federations

Representing Youth:

Mr. David W. BahImann, National Director, Camp Fire, Inc.
Mrs. Frances Hesselbein, National Executive Director, Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.
Mr. Fritz Kidd, Student Chairman, National Association of Student Councils
Mr. Ben H. Love, Chief Scout Executive, Boy Scouts of America
Mr. Tony Ortiz, National Honor Society, Century III Leaders
Mr. Grant Shrum, President, 4-H National Council

Other Organizations and Individuals:

Mrs. Susan Garrett Baker, founding member of the Committee for Food and Shelter; Trustee
The Honorable Stuart E. Eizenstat, Partner, Powell, Goldstein, Frazer & Murphy; Trustee
Mr. Joe Gibbs, Head Coach, Washington Redskins; Trustee
The Honorable Robert S. McNamara, Former President, World Bank; Trustee
The Honorable Robert S. Strauss, Partner, Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld; Trustee
Ms. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Chairman, Maryland Special Initiative for Community Service; Trustee

RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Student prayer and religious discussion: The Establishment Clause of the First Amendment does not prohibit purely private religious speech by students. Students therefore have the same right to engage in individual or group prayer and religious discussion during the school day as they do to engage in other comparable activity. For example, students may read their Bibles or other scriptures, say grace before meals, and pray before tests to the same extent they may engage in comparable nondisruptive activities. Local school authorities possess substantial discretion to impose rules of order and other pedagogical restrictions on student activities, but they may not structure or administer such rules to discriminate against religious activity or speech.

Generally, students may pray in a nondisruptive manner when not engaged in school activities or instruction, and subject to the rules that normally pertain in the applicable setting. Specifically, students in informal settings, such as cafeterias and hallways, may pray and discuss their religious views with each other, subject to the same rules of order as apply to other student activities and speech. Students may also speak to, and attempt to persuade, their peers about religious topics just as they do with regard to political topics. School officials, however, should intercede to stop student speech that constitutes harassment aimed at a student or a group of students.

Students may also participate in before or after school events with religious content, such as "see you at the flag pole" gatherings, on the same terms as they may participate in other noncurriculum activities on school premises. School officials may neither discourage nor encourage participation in such an event.

The right to engage in voluntary prayer or religious discussion free from discrimination does not include the right to have a captive audience listen, or to compel other students to participate. Teachers and school administrators should ensure that no student is in any way coerced to participate in religious activity.

Graduation prayer and baccalaureates: Under current Supreme Court decisions, school officials may not mandate or organize prayer at graduation, nor organize religious baccalaureate ceremonies. If a school generally opens its facilities to private groups, it must make its facilities available on the same terms to organizers of privately sponsored religious baccalaureate services. A school may not extend preferential treatment to baccalaureate ceremonies and may in some instances be obliged to disclaim official endorsement of such ceremonies.

Official neutrality regarding religious activity: Teachers and school administrators, when acting in those capacities, are representatives of the state and are prohibited by the establishment clause from soliciting or encouraging religious activity, and from participating in such activity with students. Teachers and

administrators also are prohibited from discouraging activity because of its religious content, and from soliciting or encouraging antireligious activity.

Teaching about religion: Public schools may not provide religious instruction, but they may teach about religion, including the Bible or other scripture: the history of religion, comparative religion, the Bible (or other scripture)-as-literature, and the role of religion in the history of the United States and other countries all are permissible public school subjects. Similarly, it is permissible to consider religious influences on art, music, literature, and social studies. Although public schools may teach about religious holidays, including their religious aspects, and may celebrate the secular aspects of holidays, schools may not observe holidays as religious events or promote such observance by students.

Student assignments: Students may express their beliefs about religion in the form of homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free of discrimination based on the religious content of their submissions. Such home and classroom work should be judged by ordinary academic standards of substance and relevance, and against other legitimate pedagogical concerns identified by the school.

Religious literature: Students have a right to distribute religious literature to their schoolmates on the same terms as they are permitted to distribute other literature that is unrelated to school curriculum or activities. Schools may impose the same reasonable time, place, and manner or other constitutional restrictions on distribution of religious literature as they do on nonschool literature generally, but they may not single out religious literature for special regulation.

Religious excusals: Subject to applicable State laws, schools enjoy substantial discretion to excuse individual students from lessons that are objectionable to the student or the students' parents on religious or other conscientious grounds. However, students generally do not have a Federal right to be excused from lessons that may be inconsistent with their religious beliefs or practices. School officials may neither encourage nor discourage students from availing themselves of an excusal option.

Released time: Subject to applicable State laws, schools have the discretion to dismiss students to off-premises religious instruction, provided that schools do not encourage or discourage participation or penalize those who do not attend. Schools may not allow religious instruction by outsiders on school premises during the school day.

Teaching values: Though schools must be neutral with respect to religion, they may play an active role with respect to teaching civic values and virtue, and the moral code that holds us together as a community. The fact that some of these values are held also by religions does not make it unlawful to teach them in school.

Student garb: Schools enjoy substantial discretion in adopting policies relating to student dress and school uniforms. Students generally have no Federal right to be exempted from religiously-neutral and generally applicable school dress rules based on their religious beliefs or practices; however, schools may not single out religious attire in general, or attire of a particular religion, for prohibition or regulation. Students may display religious messages on items of clothing to the same extent that they are permitted to display other comparable messages. Religious messages may not be singled out for suppression, but rather are subject to the same rules as generally apply to comparable messages.

THE EQUAL ACCESS ACT

The Equal Access Act is designed to ensure that, consistent with the First Amendment, student religious activities are accorded the same access to public school facilities as are student secular activities. Based on decisions of the Federal courts, as well as its interpretations of the Act, the Department of Justice has advised that the Act should be interpreted as providing, among other things, that:

General provisions: Student religious groups at public secondary schools have the same right of access to school facilities as is enjoyed by other comparable student groups. Under the Equal Access Act, a school receiving Federal funds that allows one or more student noncurriculum-related clubs to meet on its premises during noninstructional time may not refuse access to student religious groups.

Prayer services and worship exercises covered: A meeting, as defined and protected by the Equal Access Act, may include a prayer service, Bible reading, or other worship exercise.

Equal access to means of publicizing meetings: A school receiving Federal funds must allow student groups meeting under the Act to use the school media -- including the public address system, the school newspaper, and the school bulletin board -- to announce their meetings on the same terms as other noncurriculum-related student groups are allowed to use the school media. Any policy concerning the use of school media must be applied to all noncurriculum-related student groups in a nondiscriminatory matter. Schools, however, may inform students that certain groups are not school sponsored.

Lunch-time and recess covered: A school creates a limited open forum under the Equal Access Act, triggering equal access rights for religious groups, when it allows students to meet during their lunch periods or other noninstructional time during the school day, as well as when it allows students to meet before and after the school day. (Revised May 1998)

Consent to be a Research Subject

(Parent & Religious Leader form)

Purpose:

The purpose of this research study is to explore the treatment of religious expression and belief in Utah public schools. Eric Marlowe, a graduate student in Educational Leadership at Brigham Young University, is conducting this study. You were selected to participate because of your participation in Utah public schools and religious affiliation.

Procedures:

Through an interview process, you will be asked to candidly share your experience, perspectives, and feelings about the treatment of religion in your public school. To aid in obtaining a clear understanding, the investigator will ask you to respond to various open-ended questions related to the treatment of religion in your public school. While duration of the interviews may vary among participants, the length will not exceed 60 minutes unless you wish to contribute more. *Participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from this research at any time.*

Benefits:

This study intends to provide Utah public school communities a clearer understanding of how their public school participants view the treatment their religion therein.

Confidentiality:

Strict confidentiality will be maintained. No individual identifying information will be disclosed. All identifying references will be removed and replaced by control numbers. All data collected in this research study will be stored in a secure area and access will only be given to personnel associated with the study.

Potential Risks:

Due to efforts of insuring participant confidentiality, there appears to be minimal risk to research subjects.

Researcher Information:

If you have any questions regarding this research, you may contact Eric Marlowe at:
Brigham Young University, 210K JSB, Provo, UT 84602
(801) 422-2190

You're Rights as a Research Participant:

If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research project, you may contact Dr. Shane S. Schulthies, Chair of the Institutional Review Board, 120B RB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602; phone, (801) 422-5490.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent form, and desire of my own free will and volition, to participate in this study.

Research Subject _____ **Date** _____

Assent to be a Research Subject (Student Form)

Purpose:

The purpose of this research study is to explore the treatment of religious expression and belief in Utah public schools. Eric Marlowe, a graduate student in Educational Leadership at Brigham Young University, is conducting this study. You were selected to participate because of your participation in Utah public schools and religious affiliation.

Procedures:

Through an interview process, you will be asked to candidly share your experience, perspectives, and feelings about the treatment of religion in your public school. To aid in obtaining a clear understanding, the investigator will ask you to respond to various open-ended questions related to the treatment of religion in your public school. While duration of the interviews may vary among participants, the length will not exceed 60 minutes unless you wish to contribute more. *Participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from this research at any time.*

Benefits:

This study intends to provide Utah public school communities a clearer understanding of how their public school participants view the treatment their religion therein.

Confidentiality:

Strict confidentiality will be maintained. No individual identifying information will be disclosed. All identifying references will be removed and replaced by control numbers. All data collected in this research study will be stored in a secure area and access will only be given to personnel associated with the study.

Potential Risks:

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Researcher Information:

If you have any questions regarding this research, you may contact Eric Marlowe at:
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(801) 422-2190

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If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research project, you may contact Dr. Shane S. Schulthies, Chair of the Institutional Review Board, 120B RB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602; phone, (801) 422-5490.

I have read, understood and received a copy of the above assent form, and of my own free will and volition, give my child _____ permission to participate in this study.

Parental Assent _____ **Date** _____

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above form, and desire of my own free will and volition, to participate in this study.

Research Subject _____ **Date** _____

RELIGIOUS LEADER QUESTIONS

(Confidential Information)

Participant Name(s): _____ Date of interview: _____

Religious Affiliation:

Geographical area of congregation:

Number of families in congregation that participate in public schools:

Years of service/living in Utah: ____ If relevant, where did you serve/live prior to Utah:

Involvement in community, civic groups, etc.:

Explanation: The purpose of this study is to understand ***your*** experience, perspectives, and feelings about the treatment of religion in your community public schools. The best responses will be those that candidly convey what ***you*** observe and discern.

***Request to Begin Audiotape Recording:**

1. Based on your understanding of law and school policy, what *can't* students do religiously in school? What *can* they do religiously in school?
2. What is your opinion of public school law and policy surrounding religious beliefs and expression? What leads you to that conclusion?
3. If you could decide, what religious things (if any) would you like students to be able to do in their public school?
4. Compared with other religions in you're community, how do you feel *your* religion is treated in Utah public schools? (if needed) Would you elaborate on that?
5. Regarding those in your congregation who participate in public schools, do you think it makes any difference if a *teacher or administrator* knows their religious affiliation? (if yes) How so?
6. Suppose I am around when members of your congregation are privately discussing the treatment of *their* religion in their public schools, what would I observe?
7. Do you think it makes any difference if *fellow students* know students from your congregation's religious membership? (if yes) How so?
 - Caution: to some it may be offensive to even imply that there may not be any difference ('it is a given') – may want to directly ask about social implications?
8. In your opinion, how concerned do you feel your community public schools are about respecting the religious beliefs, and expression of those in your congregation? What leads you to that conclusion?
9. How do you feel about those in your congregation attending public schools that have such a high percentage of Mormon/LDS students?
10. If you could say anything to the religious majority (Mormons/LDS) regarding the treatment of other religions in your school community, what would it be?

11. If your religion were the majority in your school community, how (if at all) would it be different?
12. If a new family, unfamiliar with Mormons (the LDS Church), moves into your congregation and plans to enroll their students in community public schools, what advice would you give them?
13. Would you describe the funniest experience you have heard from members of your congregation regarding religion in their public schools? Most tragic? Best experience?
14. If you could change *anything* about the treatment of your congregation's religion in Utah public schools, what would it be? ("King for a day")
15. That covers what I wanted to ask, is there anything you care to add? (or) What should I have asked you that I didn't think to ask?

Examples of Probes and Follow-up Questions:

Would you elaborate on that?

Could you say more about that?

That's helpful. I'd appreciate a bit more detail.

I'm beginning to get the picture.

When did that happen?

Who was involved?

How did that come about?

What was your involvement in the situation?

Where did that happen?

You said you felt "uneasy." What do you mean by uneasy?

I'm not sure I understood what you meant by that – would you elaborate?

I want to make sure I understand what you're saying, would you say some more about that?

PARENT QUESTIONS
(Confidential Information)

Participant Name(s): _____ Date of interview: _____

Religious Affiliation:

Number of children in public schools: _____ Grade level(s):

Name of public school(s) children attend:

Years living in Utah: ____ If relevant, where they lived/children attended school prior to living in Utah:

Involvement in community, church, etc.:

Explanation: The purpose of this study is to understand ***your*** experience, perspectives, and feelings about the treatment of religion in your child's public school. The best responses will be those that candidly convey what ***you*** observe and discern.

***Request to Begin Audiotape Recording:**

1. Based on your understanding of law and school policy, what *can't* your children do religiously in school? What *can* they do religiously in school?
2. What is your opinion of public school law and policy surrounding religious beliefs and expression? What leads you to that conclusion?
3. If you could decide. What religious things (if any) would you like students to be able to do in their public school?
4. Compared with other religions in you're community, how do you feel *your* religion is treated in schools? (if needed) Would you elaborate on that?
5. Do you think it makes any difference if a *teacher or administrator* knows your child's religious membership? If they know your religious membership? (if yes) How so?
6. Suppose I am around when the topic of religion is brought when you are participating in a school setting (i.e., parent teacher conference, PTA, conversation with school administrator, etc), what would I observe?
7. Do you think it makes any difference if *fellow students* know your child's religious membership? (if yes) How so?
 - . Caution: to some it may be offensive to even imply that there may not be any difference ('it is a given') – may want to directly ask about social implications?
8. In your opinion, how concerned do you feel your school is about respecting *your* family's religious beliefs and expression? What leads you to that conclusion?
9. How do you feel about your child attending a school that has such a high percentage of Mormon/LDS students?
10. If you could say anything to the religious majority (Mormons/LDS) regarding the treatment of other religions in your school community, what would it be?
11. If your religion were the majority in your school community, how (if at all) would it be different?

12. If another family of your same religion just moved into your school community, what advice would you give them?
13. Would you describe the funniest experience you have had regarding religion in your public school? Best experience? Worst experience?
14. If you could change *anything* about the treatment of your child's religion in your public school, what would it be? ("King for a day")
15. That covers what I wanted to ask, is there anything you care to add? (or) What should I have asked you that I didn't think to ask?

Probes and Follow-up Questions:

Examples:

Would you elaborate on that?

Could you say more about that?

That's helpful. I'd appreciate a bit more detail.

I'm beginning to get the picture.

When did that happen?

Who was involved?

How did that come about?

What was your involvement in the situation?

Where did that happen?

You said you felt "uneasy." What do you mean by uneasy?

I'm not sure I understood what you meant by that – would you elaborate?

I want to make sure I understand what you're saying, would you say some more about that?

STUDENT QUESTIONS
(Confidential Information)

Participant Name(s): _____ Date of interview: _____

Religious Affiliation:

Gender:

Name of public school attending: _____ Grade level in school: _____

Years living in Utah: ____ If relevant, where they lived/attended school prior to living in Utah:

Involvement in extracurricular activities, community, church, etc.:

Explanation: The purpose of this study is to understand ***your*** experience, perspectives, and feelings about the treatment of religion in your public school. The best responses will be those that candidly convey what ***you*** observe and understand.

***Request to Begin Audiotape Recording:**

1. Based on your understanding of law and school rules, what *can't* you do religiously in school? What *can* you do religiously in school?
2. What is your opinion of school laws and rules surrounding your religious beliefs and expression? What leads you to that conclusion?
3. If you could decide. What religious things (if any) would you like to be able to do in your public school? How do you think such religious things would be accepted by students in your school?
4. Compared with other religions in your school, how do you feel *your* religion is treated? (if needed) Would you elaborate on that?
5. Do you think it makes any difference if a *teacher or administrator* knows your religious membership? (if yes) How so?
6. Suppose I am around when the topic of religion is brought up around you at school, what would I observe?
7. Do you think it makes any difference if *fellow students* know your religious membership? (if yes) How so?
 - . Caution: to some it may be offensive to even imply that there may not be any difference ('it is a given') – may want to directly ask about social implications?
8. In your opinion, how concerned do you feel your school is about respecting *your* religious beliefs and expression? What leads you to that conclusion?
9. How do you feel about attending a school with such a high percentage of Mormon/LDS students? (if needed) Could you say more about that?
10. If you could say anything to the religious majority (Mormons/LDS) regarding the treatment of other religions in your school, what would it be?
11. If your religion were the majority in your school, how (if at all) would it be different?

12. If another student of your same religion just moved into your school, what advice would you give them?
13. Would you describe the funniest experience you have had regarding religion in your public school? Best experience? Worst experience?
14. If you could change *anything* about the treatment of your religion in your public school, what would it be? (“King for a day”)
15. That covers what I wanted to ask, is there anything you care to add? (or) What should I have asked you that I didn’t think to ask?

Examples of Probes and Follow-up Questions:

Would you elaborate on that?

Could you say more about that?

That’s helpful. I’d appreciate a bit more detail.

I’m beginning to get the picture.

When did that happen?

Who was involved?

How did that come about?

What was your involvement in the situation?

Where did that happen?

You said you felt “uneasy.” What do you mean by uneasy?

I’m not sure I understood what you meant by that – would you elaborate?

I want to make sure I understand what you’re saying, would you say some more about that?