Durham E-Theses

The Textures of 'Belief': An interdisciplinary study towards a social scientific epistemology

BAE, BOSCO,BYUNGEUN

THE TEXTURES OF 'BELIEF'
An interdisciplinary study towards a social scientific epistemology

By:

Bosco Byungeun Bae

THESIS

In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Theology and Religion
University of Durham

Durham, United Kingdom
2015

Abstract

The Textures of 'Belief':
An interdisciplinary study towards a social scientific epistemology

Bosco B. Bae

This thesis develops an interdisciplinary dialogue between philosophy and the social sciences through an investigation of 'belief.' Drawing on anthropology, epistemology, and social psychology, the thesis argues that epistemology can assist social science through its analytic utility and capacity for clarification in distinguishing the textures of 'belief' while social science challenges epistemology to develop a more descriptive, interactive, and multidimensional account of 'belief.' The thesis further argues that 'beliefs' bind society and individual together and serve as the units of embodiment and cultural history.

Beginning with the anthropology of religion, the problematization of 'belief' is first addressed through critiques from Ludwig Wittgenstein, Rodney Needham, Talal Asad, and Malcolm Ruel. In continuation, contemporary anthropological proposals are outlined and an initial set of characteristics are presented to launch the interdisciplinary dialogue. The thesis then introduces an epistemological distinction between belief and acceptance as a conversational partner, which not only provides nuance and texture but situates 'belief' within the paradigm of embodiment. Noting the observation of inconsistent 'beliefs,' the thesis engages with the theory of cognitive dissonance to provide additional insight. This exchange between philosophy and the social sciences produces a more sophisticated and dynamic epistemology as well as a sharper focus for discerning 'belief.' This discussion is then brought into methodological focus through the themes of 'crisis' and 'conversion.' After discussing the literature on these themes, the thesis applies the combined treatment of philosophy and social science to three case studies: *When Prophecy Fails* (1956), *Believing Identity: Pentecostalism and the Mediation of Jamaican Ethnicity and Gender in England* (1997), and *Divinity and Experience: Religion of the Dinka* (1961). The thesis concludes with a discussion of the respective contributions epistemology and the social sciences make to each other as well as future possibilities for research.

Table of Contents

<u>Declaration</u>

The material submitted for this Thesis has not been submitted elsewhere or for any other degree. The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published in any format without the author's prior written consent. All information derived from this thesis must be acknowledged appropriately.

<u>Acknowledgments</u>

1
INTRODUCTION

1.0 Aim

'Belief' has been a perennial topic of interest for philosophers and social scientists[1] alike. Within their respective fields, discussions have reached a point of maturity where a constructive conversation is worth pursuing. The following thesis aims to develop such a dialogue. As an interdisciplinary endeavour, the thesis engages a well-known epistemological distinction, belief versus acceptance, in juxtaposition with anthropological critiques and insights from the theory of cognitive dissonance. Not only is this an exercise in compatibility but it is also an active effort to develop a bridge by demonstrating how these disciplines can mutually complement and inform one another.

In the field of epistemology some philosophers have pondered the concept of 'belief' by navigating various texts and sources, others have conducted their investigations through "thought experiments," particular propositional statements, or hypothetical scenarios (a tourist confusing London with Paris or a student confusing Wednesday with Thursday). Drawing on these methods, a long tradition of epistemology has established different types and approaches to the study of 'belief.' In the study of religion, 'belief' has served an integral, and at times dubious, point of focus. Over the years, the questions raised by its "disciplinary ancestors" [2] and their early debates have continued to persist: "Can a coherence of religious systems be achieved with the distinction between belief and ritual? How should beliefs be characterized? Do beliefs have functions? And, is religion an 'inner state' or an 'outer form'?"[3] These perennial questions suggest that 'belief' continues to be of significance for the study of religion[4] and while the topic has been investigated with considerable caution, even avoidance by some, 'belief' has proven much more difficult and resilient than anticipated.[5] As a result, the field is without a consolidated theory[6] or an operative framework

---

[1] By "social science," in this thesis, I am referring particularly to the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, and psychology.

[2] E. B. Tylor and his "intellectualism" in the 19th century emphasized "belief over ritual" which contrasted with William Robertson Smith's position of focusing on ritual. Although the two categories are not mutually exclusive, the study of religion often starts with this binary distinction (Lindquist & Coleman 2008: 2; Cf. Tylor [1871] 1920, Smith 1889). For a richer account and history of epistemological issues in anthropology see Moore & Sanders 2014.

[3] Lindquist & Coleman 2008: 3

[4] Bivins 2012

[5] Boyer 2013

to accommodate the methodological difficulties that are concerned not only with substantiating the claim that someone *believes in* some object or *believes that* some event will occur but also with respect to how values and 'beliefs' relate to individual action.[7] Nevertheless, anthropologists and sociologists have provided a bounty of "relatively isolated ethnographic observations"[8] just as social psychologists have produced a tremendous amount of research on 'belief' through questionnaires (e.g. 'Belief in a Just World') and controlled laboratory studies. In this sense, both epistemology and the social sciences have established traditions in methodology and constructed various frameworks for investigating 'belief.'

However, these frameworks are not without their respective limitations. Methodologically, the use of questionnaires, controlled laboratory settings, or participant-observations and interviews[9] all beg the question whether 'beliefs' are indeed being measured or documented. Some paradigms in psychology have buried 'belief' within the rubric of 'cognition,' which covers a range of various conscious phenomena without further attempts at discernment. In each of these methods, while it is undeniable that some form of cognitive activity is being investigated there is a demand for further specificity and precision in their investigations. By contrast, philosophy is presented with the opposite concern. 'Belief' is defined and abstracted but without the methodological concern of investigating 'belief' within various cultural contexts and dynamic "lived experiences." In this regard, philosophy brackets the untidy and complicated encounter that occupies the social sciences. These fields of inquiry, despite their respective constraints, converge in their concerns with the construction, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge[10] as well as the dynamic nuances contained therein.

Accordingly, the original contribution of this thesis lies in its initiative to develop an interdisciplinary exchange for the study of 'belief.' On the philosophical side, epistemology contributes not in its path to any normative account but rather through its capacity for clarification and analytic utility. Here the notions of 'rational' and 'irrational' are abandoned and the claim that religion warrants its own category of 'belief' is not presumed.[11] Instead,

---

[6] Mair 2012

[7] Moore & Sanders 2014: 9

[8] Mair 2012: 453

[9] Stringer 2013

[10] This also includes the issues that have concerned the sociology of knowledge; for a richer discussion on religion as a generative source of belief and knowledge, as well as other dynamics of religion within the discussion on the sociology of knowledge; see Guest (2012).

[11] "Religious beliefs can simply take their place alongside other forms of belief for these are simply ideas relating to what a particular society may define as religion, politics, the natural environment or whatever. I will

epistemology yields additional textures through its power of discernment. The application of belief and acceptance provides impetus for the social sciences to be more specific and look for characteristic subtleties that can advance the discussion. Conversely, the social scientific literature is equally illuminating for epistemology. The anthropology of religion situates 'belief' within historical and ethnographic contexts which complicates and provides further depth to the epistemological landscape. In conjunction with social psychology, and its theory of cognitive dissonance, anthropology and the social sciences challenge epistemology to develop a more descriptive, interactive, and multidimensional account of 'belief' within the context of embodiment.

Overall, I argue for the utility of epistemology in teasing out the textures of 'belief' within social scientific evidence and the value of social science in developing a more sophisticated epistemological category of 'belief.' The thesis will navigate this interdisciplinary terrain and apply the epistemological distinction to three case studies. More specifically, I focus on episodes of 'crisis' and 'conversion' to demonstrate and further challenge epistemology's analytic utility. In doing so, I contribute to the sub-theses that 'beliefs' are what bind society and individual together and that 'beliefs' serve as the *units of embodiment and cultural history*.

1.1 Methodology and Map

This thesis will be presented in three parts. Part I (chapters 2 – 4) is an overview and integration of theoretical developments and research. Chapter 2 begins with the problematization of 'belief' through critiques from philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein and anthropologists Rodney Needham, Talal Asad, and Malcolm Ruel. Afterwards, the chapter will consider recent proposals and anthropological frameworks for the study of 'belief.' In addition, the chapter engages the various types of propositional 'beliefs' presented by anthropologist Charles Lindholm who argues that most ethnographies document *how* 'beliefs' are justified and maintained rather than the various *types* of 'belief.' The chapter concludes with an initial set of characteristics to begin the interdisciplinary dialogue and bridge-building process.

---

not assume that a belief concerning what a person regards as invisible and supernatural beings or powers is any different from a belief that there are laws governing how history unfolds or how individuals align themselves through marriage, work or play" (Davies 2008: 11).

Chapter 3 introduces the epistemological distinction between belief and acceptance and their respective characteristics: involuntary versus voluntary, context-independent versus context-relative, and aim for truth versus no aim for truth. This set of characteristics will prove to be helpful in providing additional clarity and discernment to the set of characteristics proposed in the previous chapter and further provides a useful heuristic for investigating additional textures of 'belief.' However, this distinction noticeably lacks a sophisticated account of the dynamic relationships between beliefs and acceptances as well as an account of how beliefs are formed. In order to fill this gap, the chapter situates belief and acceptance within the framework of embodiment and Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus*. More specifically, four inter-related dimensions of embodiment are identified: 1) embodied cognition; 2) embodiment as a process; 3) *habitus* as the product of embodiment; and 4) the expressions of *habitus*. The chapter discusses how the epistemological distinction configures within each of these dimensions of embodiment and leads to the position that *beliefs* can be interpreted as *the units of embodiment and cultural history*. In addition to the characteristics of belief and acceptance, both are argued to be behavioural in which non-action is also a form of behaviour. One of the notorious issues for the investigation of 'belief,' observed by both philosophers and anthropologists, is its inconsistency which has presented several methodological concerns. Similarly, both beliefs and acceptances have been noted to be inconsistent. Not only is it possible for them to be incongruent with other beliefs and acceptances but discrepancies can also arise with respect to behaviour.

Appropriately, the theory of cognitive dissonance from social psychology looks specifically at this issue of inconsistency. Chapter 4, first, maps out the theory of cognitive dissonance along with its four complementary research paradigms and considers the theory within the perspective of belief and acceptance. This provides additional specificity to the term 'cognition' which is often used in social psychology literature. Over the past sixty years, social psychologists have debated the motivation for reducing inconsistencies, dissonance, and returning to a *sense* of consistency or consonance. Psychologists have suggested that beliefs about the self – which include any and all beliefs one may consider important – are what generate the greatest motivation to reduce discrepant cognitions and the negative affect that accompanies them. However, there have been concerns whether this phenomenon was particularly "western." The chapter engages with the body of cross-cultural research which suggests that dissonance does indeed occur but that it is culturally specific and contingent on particular constructions of the self. This further supports the sub-thesis that beliefs are the

units of embodiment and cultural history. In this regard, the theory of cognitive dissonance not only challenges the epistemological distinction as independent categories of cognition, but it also further develops the interdependent relationship between the two. More specifically, cognitive dissonance shows that beliefs can structure acceptances to reduce inconsistencies between beliefs, acceptances, and behaviour as well as any negative affect that may occur as a result of the perceived inconsistency.

Part I thereby consists of problematizing 'belief' and integrating the three fields of inquiry towards a more sophisticated and applicable descriptive epistemology. Part II (chapter 5) constitutes a pivot and brings the theoretical reflections from Part I into methodological focus for application through the themes of 'crisis' and 'conversion.' These themes were selected precisely because they represent a dynamic of cognitive change. While crisis presents a scenario in which 'beliefs' are potentially destabilized, conversions imply a shift in cognitive perspective. It is in this sense that these themes can serve as a point of focus for the investigation of 'belief' in ethnographic accounts. This chapter begins with Ernesto de Martino and his concept of a 'crisis of presence.' De Martino discusses how social conditions can lead to the experience of a destabilized self, such that one loses a sense of authorship in one's actions and becomes subject to the will of others. He argues that crises potentially open up a cognitive space for change and subsequent conversion. For de Martino, 'ritual' plays a significant role in this process. The chapter then looks to the psychological and anthropological literature on religious conversion to survey the research on this kind of cognitive change. The literature distinguishes between two types of religious conversion: sudden and gradual. The former is initiated by crises while the latter involves a disposition towards (what I call a *valence of affinity*) a particular group, person, or set of ideas and conversion taking place over a period of time through continuous participation and involvement. In this sense, 'gradual conversions' include a variety of socially motivated ways for conversion to take place and highlights the role of social motives, support, and networks, which is also to say that the lack thereof can have marginalizing effects and prompt deconversion. Furthermore, 'gradual conversions' illustrate how the continuous *acceptance* of ideas and behavioural practice can lead to the development of a *belief* whereas 'sudden' conversions discuss a change in 'belief' – either belief or acceptance – prior to changes in behaviour. However, the dynamics of conversion begs the question of what exactly is being converted. With this in mind, the chapter proceeds to discuss the 'three levels' model of personality and meaning which notes that change most often occurs at the mid and global

level. In other words, conversions are not changes in personality but rather changes in one's sense of overall purpose, identity, and meaning as well as narrower goals, values, and attitudes with respect to how one wishes one's self to be. 'Crisis' and 'conversion' can therefore serve as a litmus test for the epistemological distinction, and consider how beliefs and acceptances may or may not change over time.

Part III (chapters 6 – 8) aims to apply Part I and II to three case studies: *When Prophecy Fails*, *Believing Identity*, and *Divinity and Experience*. The first is about a small apocalyptic group in the U.S., the second involves the religious conversions of Jamaican immigrants in England, and the third is a classic piece of anthropological work documenting a traditional Sudanese context. Each case presents a different socio-cultural setting and modes of being. The three cases were selected, out of the countless available ethnographic works in publication, not only because of their distinct cultural dynamics and perennial issues that relate to a variety of contemporary ethnographies but also because of their distinct discursive styles and genres of presentation: the first by social psychologists, the second by a sociologist, and the third an anthropologist. The selection is to some extent arbitrary and many other combinations could have also been sufficient for this exercise. Nonetheless, the application of belief and acceptance to these case studies will not only illustrate the ways by which the distinction may be applied but the diverse contexts will serve to challenge the distinction's utility.

The three chapters are all structured in a similar format. Each chapter begins with a brief summary of the text followed by appropriate criticisms. This is then followed by a description of the socio-cultural background, which situates the context and perspective of the research. The chapter will then focus on notable instances of 'crises' as well as any possible 'conversions' in terms of belief and acceptance. Each chapter will then conclude with a discussion of how the social sciences and epistemology can complement each other. More specifically, the discussion will revolve around the utility of belief and acceptance in ethnography, the significance of beliefs about the self, and the sub-thesis that beliefs can be interpreted as the units of embodiment and cultural history.

The first case study (chapter 6) engages with *When Prophecy Fails*, which discusses the formation and activities of a group in the United States that anticipated a catastrophic flood and the arrival of a flying saucer. This text was one of the primary studies that launched the theory of cognitive dissonance by Leon Festinger. With his associates, Festinger anticipated

the intensification of identity and an increase in proselytizing activity after the "disconfirmation" of the "prophecy." This interpretation, however, was contested and criticized on theoretical and methodological grounds. Prior to discussing the possible episodes of 'crises' and potential 'conversions,' the chapter provides a chronology of the events that take place and the backgrounds of key persons. The significance of this text lies in the construction of a group and a 'crisis' which was arguably self-generated. The chapter stresses the importance of community and social support in the sustainment of beliefs and acceptances as well as the significance of time for the development of belief. Moreover, the chapter accentuates the resilience of beliefs, as opposed to the malleability of acceptances, in the steadfast guidance of behaviour of group members.

In chapter 7, Nicole Toulis' monograph *Believing Identity* is discussed. By contrast to *When Prophecy Fails*, Toulis discusses a crisis constituted by structural racisms that imposed an identity and superseded a sense of personal authorship to one's actions. She discusses the experiences of immigrant Jamaican women who encounter various social forces in England that imposed stereotypical conceptions of being 'black' 'Jamaican' 'women.' According to Toulis, religion and community provide a vehicle for mediating ethnicity and gender. This chapter highlights three women, their 'religious experience,' and their conversion to Pentecostalism. Particular attention is given to Toulis' discussion of how the social support of a church community, which fosters a certain discourse and practice, allowed them to mediate 'gender' and 'ethnicity' and regain a sense of identity and authorship. In this regard, the chapter will discuss 'conversion' with respect to 'beliefs' about identity and how "believing" in a Christian identity influenced their 'beliefs' about gender and ethnicity. Utilizing the epistemological distinction to draw out the textures of 'belief,' the chapter illustrates how one may have an implicit dispositional belief and with, or without, an acceptance towards an identity but not an explicit belief. *Believing Identity* shows that, for these Jamaican women, a religious experience motivated them to accept, affirm, and work towards an explicit belief in a Christian identity. The chapter further shows that the affirmation of an identity can influence how one talks about other dimensions of identity (e.g. gender and ethnicity).

Shifting to another context, Chapter 8 delves into Godfrey Lienhardt's classic text *Divinity and Experience* which documents the "religion of the Dinka" in south Sudan. The text is heavily descriptive and aims to depict an overarching system of 'belief' and Dinka cosmology. Moreover, Lienhardt writes in a style that was conventional among Oxford

anthropologists conducting fieldwork post-WWII. Due to issues of generalization, the chapter focuses on a particular series of possessions which were motivated by the death of a parent. In this regard, conversion is discussed in terms of overcoming grief and alleviating dissonance associated with this particular death through ritual. In addition, the chapter pronounces the difficulties of discussing group beliefs and argues that cultural representations are expressive vehicles of collective acceptances.

These case studies illustrate how the epistemological distinction may be applied to various ethnographic contexts. Not only does epistemology assist in producing a more nuanced and textured account of 'belief' but it also notes the insufficiency of isolated observations of language or behaviour as evidence to discern 'belief.' In this sense, epistemology stresses the importance of longitudinal approaches and highlights particular instances when additional evidence could have facilitated the discernment of 'belief.' In converse, the case studies provide a much richer context for epistemic inquiry than conventional avenues of philosophical investigation. Navigating various cultural dynamics presented challenges to epistemology and exposed areas where the relationship between belief and acceptance could be further developed. In particular, along with the reviewed anthropological and psychological literature, the case studies note the influence of social support and community in strengthening or weakening an 'aim for truth' and raises additional questions regarding the relationship between the emotions, 'truth,' and morality. In this regard, the case studies place additional pressure on epistemology to consider a more fluid and dynamic account of the relationship between beliefs and acceptances within the paradigm of embodiment.

The thesis concludes with a summary of epistemology's contribution to the social sciences and the value of the social sciences to epistemology. Moreover, the study of 'belief' can be situated within the paradigm of embodiment and the notion of "structuring structures" that comprise bodily practices as captured, for example, in Mauss's notion of "techniques of the body" and habits of thought. The thesis demonstrates the additional textures of 'belief' and distinguishes further between implicit and explicit beliefs that negotiate the relationship between behaviour and cognition. More specifically, implicit beliefs influence the dynamic of explicit conscious processes that include both beliefs and acceptances. The social scientific literature also prompts epistemology to consider the self in relation to belief and acceptance. Situating epistemology within the framework of 'believing selves' and the paradigm of embodiment, in conjunction with cognitive dissonance, allows for 'beliefs' to be interpreted

as the units of embodiment and cultural history. The thesis thereby argues that epistemology and the social sciences can effectively engage in complementary dialogue and interdisciplinary exchange and concludes with a comment on the potential for future research on 'belief' in the study of religion.

2
FROM ANTHROPOLOGY: PROBLEMATIZING 'BELIEF'

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The analytic utility of 'belief,' as a category of investigation, has been critiqued from several angles in the anthropology of religion. With an impetus to avoid cultural impositions and the application of implicitly Christian frameworks, which may compromise or misrepresent non-Christian religions, scholars have approached the concept with caution. This chapter will not attempt to map out a genealogical account of anthropological work on 'belief,'[1] nor will it seek to provide a thorough historical account of how anthropology has framed the study of religion for the investigation of 'belief.' Instead, it aims to provide a focused overview of how 'belief' has been deconstructed and critiqued from historical and linguistic perspectives through specific works as well as present a few frameworks which provide a glimpse into how 'belief' is currently being investigated. In conclusion, the chapter derives a set of potential characteristics and argues that 'belief' is best considered in relation to embodiment and the 'self.'

The chapter begins with Ludwig Wittgenstein's essay, 'Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough,' which calls for a focus on language and foreshadows two primary points of caution for the investigation of 'belief.' In tandem, Rodney Needham takes up Wittgenstein's call and reaches an eliminativist position for the term's abandonment. The chapter then engages Talal Asad's discussion on the practice of description, explanation, and the exercise of defining 'religion.' Asad argues for a 'non-essentialist' position and highlights the significance of discursive practices and the dynamics of power throughout the history of 'belief.' Similarly, Malcolm Ruel notes particular shifts throughout the history of Christianity that have saturated the semantic content of 'belief.' The chapter then proceeds to discuss the relative impact of these seminal essays on the discussion of 'belief' and the recent proposals for considering the topic. More specifically, contemporary scholars have proposed to discuss 'belief' in relation to sacred artefacts or material, cosmology, various modes of belief,[2] and "believing selves." The chapter ends with a discussion of advancing the study of 'belief' through embodiment and the 'self.'

---

[1] See Kirsch (2004), Lindquist & Coleman (2008), Carlisle & Simon (2012), and Dein (2013) for a more genealogical overview of the theoretical discussions on 'belief.'

[2] 'Mode' has been selected to represent various proposals that present a 'Cultures of belief' framework, types of 'belief', or 'belief as cultural performance.'

2.1 TWO POINTS OF CAUTION; LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

Wittgenstein's 'Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough'[3] is both critique and caution about the ethnographic practice of description and explanation. His comments are particularly helpful and can be summarized by two points. The first is the claim that descriptions and explanations of culture and ritual are only made plausible by the audience for which the description and explanation is directed. In other words, the audience legitimates the description. The second claim is that ethnographic descriptions and explanations are susceptible to (ethnocentric) presuppositions about behaviour as well as normative true or false judgments about the ways in which various cultures characterize causation. These presuppositions can be misleading. Not only do they potentially misconstrue and misrepresent but they presume that there is *indeed* a 'belief' in the reality of a particular source of causation.

The work of any ethnographer is built upon various observations and dependent on particular informants willing to explain and divulge information to the ethnographer. In addition, ethnography is informed by the explanations, interpretations, and descriptions from past scholars who have conducted fieldwork in the same or similar region, culture, tradition, or school of thought. Ethnographic work is further supplemented by the debates and discussions of those descriptions as well as theories that have propelled its discourse. Some of the more notable and controversial discussions and debates, for example, have to do with anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon[4] and his work on the Yanomamo, who occupy the Amazon rainforest between Venezuela and Brazil. Another example is anthropologist Margaret Mead[5] with her work on Samoa. Both scholars and their work have been at the centre of some heated and contested discussions within the field of anthropology. This is not to dismiss or degrade ethnographic work but rather to note that the published work of past

---

[3] According to Needham, Wittgenstein's remarks "falls into two sets: the first were notes that he made over a period of a few weeks in 1931; the second set of remarks dates from not earlier than 1936 and probably after 1948 (Rush Rhees, in Wittgenstein 1979: v, vi)" (Needham 1985: 151).

[4] Chagnon's book, *Yanomamo: The Fierce People* (1968), has sparked tremendous debate about ethics and his representation of the Yanomami. As a result, many have published and contributed to the debate: Harris (1984), Lizot (1985), Good and Chanoff (1991), Ramos (1995), Ferguson (1995), Tierney (2000), Cruz et al. (2002), Borofsky (2005); and many others have written on the Yanomami. Most of these scholars have written more than one piece of scholarship on this subject. In revealing and shocking fashion Jose Padilha has produced a documentary, *The Secrets of the Tribe* (2010), interviewing most of the figures involved in the controversy and their stances regarding fieldwork in this area.

[5] Mead's book, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), is an ethnographic work primarily on adolescent girls in Samoa. This work was later challenged by Derek Freeman's research published in 1983 and again in 1998, which commented on Mead's Samoa fieldwork. Both scholars have since been the subject of discussion and debate within anthropological circles.

scholars contributes to the descriptive and theoretical background. While this does not entail that every ethnographer believes or accepts such background scholarship, it does contribute to the body of knowledge for a particular region and/or group as well as the theoretical discussions in a framework, or interpretive lens, with which ethnographers go into the field. Over time an ethnographer will acquire pieces of culturally-specific and context-specific information by living with a community and engaging particular informants, which ultimately combine for a particular understanding and interpretation of that culture. The resulting scholarship is then presented and aimed at contributing to a discussion with the academic community. According to Wittgenstein, "All that Frazer does is to make this practice plausible to people who think as he does"[6] and argues against explanation as a practice of only putting together "in the right way the things we *know*."[7] Wittgenstein then makes a pivotal move about explanation and 'belief' with the example of "Burning in effigy" and "Kissing the picture of a loved one."[8] He states, "[kissing the picture of a loved one] is obviously *not* based on a belief that it will have a definite effect on the object which the picture represents. It aims at some satisfaction and it achieves it. Or rather, it does not *aim* at anything; we act in this way and then feel satisfied."[9] Setting aside Wittgenstein's speculation about the relationship between grief-motivated-behaviour and "satisfaction," his first claim notes the potential rift between narratives, descriptions, explanations aimed at 'our' audiences, and the actual reasons, aims, or 'beliefs' for action. In this regard, instead of explanation and interpretation, Wittgenstein claims that "[w]e can only *describe* and say, human life is like that."[10]

Wittgenstein's second point is a caution against ethnocentric projections and judgments about value, morality, and systems for explaining causality in cultures foreign to the ethnographer. In Frazer's description of 'The King of the Wood at Nemi,' Wittgenstein interprets Frazer's tone of discourse to be asking an underlying question: "why is this [terrible] thing happening?"[11] This connotes an underlying value judgment about a practice and any explanation becomes a "hypothesis" for why such a "terrible thing"[12] occurs. However, Wittgenstein notes that no thing is particularly mysterious in itself although it may be

---

[6] Wittgenstein 2002 [1931]: 86
[7] Ibid. (emphasis original)
[8] Ibid.: 87
[9] Ibid. (emphasis original)
[10] Ibid.: 86
[11] Ibid. (original insertion of "terrible")
[12] Wittgenstein inserts several adjectives here: terrible, horrible, impressive, tragic.

perceived that way. The "awakening human spirit," a human characteristic, can potentially attribute meaning to any phenomenon. Wittgenstein suggests that man is "almost a ceremonious animal"; apart from our "animal activities," we are ritualistic. So it is absurd, "nonsense," to claim that the characteristic feature of particular actions is that they spring from wrong ideas about the physics of things. Wittgenstein states that this is what Frazer does in his claims of magic as "false physics, or as case may be, false medicine, technology, etc." Simply because our understanding of physics is not the same as their understanding of physics, does not entail that the structure(s) of their culture, religion, or tradition is any less meaningful or less significant for them. "What makes the character of ritual action is not any view or opinion, either right or wrong, although an opinion – a belief – itself can be ritualistic, or belong to a rite" but rather the complex and dynamic imagination, a "complicated structure of heterogeneous elements: words and pictures"[13] gives the ritual its character. Instead of engaging in the practice of description and explanation, Wittgenstein proposes that we "plough over the whole language."[14] For him, the key to understanding another culture is a holistic consideration of its language.

These two points of caution and emphasis on language foreshadow the coming critiques of 'belief' in the field of anthropology. Wittgenstein's first claim about explanation and interpretation are concerns of translation in language and psychology, i.e. how do we know the mental state of another?[15] This task is taken up by Rodney Needham who focuses on the problem of translation. Needham's investigation, which will be discussed in much more depth below, leads him to consider the possibility of a distinct mental state called 'belief' and its cross-cultural correlates or "natural resemblances." By extension, Wittgenstein's second claim has also been applied to the investigation of 'belief' in the study of religion. The significance of a concept for one person, group, or culture, does not entail that it holds the same significance for another. That is, it cannot be presumed that the western understanding and use of 'belief' are necessarily the same or even comparable to the understanding and use of 'belief' in another culture or religion. Talal Asad and Malcom Ruel extend this argument by highlighting the changing nature of religion and the concept of 'belief' as a result of historical discursive practices. In this regard, both Asad and Ruel refer to the Christian

---

[13] Ibid.: 89; all prior quotations also have the same reference.

[14] Ibid.

[15] In psychology, this question motivates the research done on 'attribution theory' and the ways in which we attribute mental states to other persons and ourselves for behaviour. This question also touches on research and theoretical considerations in Theory of Mind (ToM).

history that has saturated the semantic field of 'belief.' The following section discusses Needham's endeavour in searching for a mental state called 'belief' and why Needham considers cross-cultural research into 'belief' problematic. This provides a background into Asad and Ruel's critique, which will follow thereafter.

2.2 THE PROBLEM OF 'BELIEF' AND LANGUAGE; RODNEY NEEDHAM

Motivated by Wittgenstein's call to focus on language, Needham takes up the challenge in *Belief, Language and Experience*.[16] Needham begins his investigation by wondering whether it is possible for a person of another culture, which lacks a comparable term for 'belief,' to say: "I believe in God." This raises two epistemological concerns: does the absence of an appropriately corresponding concept entail the absence of a mental state[17] and is there a distinct "interior state" called 'belief'? Many ethnographies and comparative studies have taken formal responses, explanations, and collective statements to infer, and represent them as, 'beliefs.'[18] By contrast, Needham attempts to go beyond language and the issue of translation. One of the more apparent concerns with 'belief' in supernatural agents, for Needham, is the invisibility of the object; the cognitive ontic presence of invisible forces and/or objects. How do scholars and ethnographers empirically investigate the object and the reality of intangible things as "interior states"? As his point of departure, Needham intuitively looks to language as his source of evidence and conducts a cross-cultural etymological analysis. In other words, Needham's investigation formally begins with the search for a propositional attitude and whether this attitude is captured in various terminologies to warrant a cross-cultural universal. Needham states: "it is through language in the main that we must seek to identify such an interior state, and it may be that a linguistic comparison will help locate the problem in a more revealing perspective."[19]

---

[16] Needham 1972

[17] In this regard, Needham implies that it *should* be possible to determine belief from linguistic evidence in the field. This presupposes the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that language either determines or influences thought and the propositional attitudes by which we understand reality and therefore if we investigate language we are able to investigate 'belief.' However, Needham does not engage with this hypothesis or the psychology of emotions and acknowledges that he could have inquired further into these fields (1972: 12).

[18] Needham 1972: 15; Ruel (2002 [1982]) makes this point as well, which is discussed later on. Lindquist & Coleman (2008: 15) also note that Robbins (2007b) states this again that "much ethnographic description has relied on a conversion of propositional accounts of belief into the third person: the 'X' are said to 'believe' this or that, and such beliefs not only distinguish 'them' from 'us' but also somehow constitute the core of 'their' culture."

[19] Needham 1972: 31

Drawing on the work by Evans-Pritchard, Needham examines the Nuer vocabulary and the terms for 'belief' missionaries have used for gospel translations. He finds several variations and discrepancies that make the translation problematic and suggests that the Nuer may not "discriminate enough" to have a sufficient term for 'belief.'[20] In comparative fashion, Needham conducts a survey and looks at the terms for 'belief' among the Navajo in the U.S., Hindi in India, the Kikchi in Guatemala, the Cuicatec, Tzeltal, and Huichol in Mexico, various dialects in the Philippines, the Uduk of Ethiopia, the Shipibo and the Piro of Peru, and terms in Indonesia as well as China. This is certainly an impressive range of terms that *could* be, and have been, translated as 'belief' or the act of believing. According to Needham, many of the terms vary and express concepts like 'trust,' 'commitment,' 'obedience,' 'faithfulness,' 'integrity,' or 'singularity.' However, these translations are not without issue. Needham finds that there have been careless translations without sensitivity to the textures of the English term 'believe.' Some of the interpretations, according to Needham, are quite disparate and in some of the languages, like the Nuer, have no direct linguistic term for 'believe.' Needham speculates that in the English language "it is as though the faculty of belief, and perhaps even the necessity to believe were thought to be given in human experience and to be adequately recognized in Greek, Latin, and modern European languages."[21] So why is it that some languages lack or vary in their verbal equivalents for 'belief' and other "psychological vocabularies"? Needham posits that "the concept of belief is not simple but covers a very wide range of meanings. The definitions indicate no central or essential meaning, and it is obvious why the English word must be hard to translate into other languages."[22] By contrast, without examining each particular term Needham includes in his survey, one cannot help but wonder whether he gives due justice to each term and the linguistic nuances contained in each of them as opposed to noting the complexities contained in the English language. Nonetheless, Needham goes on to investigate the historical context of the English term 'belief' and notes "two convergent lines in the development of our notion of belief: one manifesting itself in a series of related lexical forms in the Indo-European family of languages, and the other in a religious history that combines Jewish, Greek, and Christian concepts."[23] These points are discussed further by Asad and Ruel in the following sections.

---

[20] Ibid.: 25
[21] Ibid.: 38
[22] Ibid.: 40
[23] Ibid.: 50

After being dismayed by his cross-cultural etymological survey for a common propositional attitude called 'belief,' Needham looks to philosophers in hopes they have "reordered the varieties of the concept, or at least to have reduced these to a more explicit economy of meaning."[24] Looking at David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Stuart Hampshire, Phillips A. Griffiths, and Bernard Mayo[25] Needham concludes, as it may be suspected, that a "divergent set of opinions"[26] is apparent and that the philosophers contribute little to the practical question: "what are we going to advise the ethnographer to look for or to ask about?"[27] In this regard Needham conjoins two outstanding issues: is there a universal mental state called 'belief' and how can we identify it in ethnographic practice? Needham proposes that a "renewed search"[28] for 'belief' criteria is necessary.

Needham's investigation for a consistent criterion, however, falls short and reaches the conclusion that there is no criterion of 'belief' and calls for its elimination. Yet, during Needham's process of deduction, he utilizes certain characteristics for discernment which indicate his own views of 'belief.' His first claim is about the object of belief, which ranges from what he considers to be empirically possible to impossible. For many ethnographers, the object of 'belief' is not always tangible or perceivable within the culture they are investigating and the ethnographer is uncertain whether it exists. 'Belief,' in this sense, does not depend on the possibility of the object's existence. In other words, it is possible to believe in things that are indifferent to the constraints of plausibility: "belief is independent of canons of reality."[29] Just as Wittgenstein cautions about the physics of other cultures, Needham proclaims that all "perfectly intelligible belief-statements are equally valid"[30] and draws on Hume to further the point: given a work of literature, there are various interpretations and methods of reading the text. Some may regard it as a romance and others may consider it as historical fact. Similarly, dreams have the same vivacity as reality, and it is not until one wakes does one realise it was a dream. In other words, one can derive 'beliefs' from these sources irrespective of conceived "canons of reality." Citing Georg Lichtenberg, Needham

---

[24] Ibid.: 51
[25] *A Treatise of Human Nature: Being an Attempt to introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects* by Hume (1739), *Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels* by Kant (1797), *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief* by Wittgenstein (1966), *Thought and Action* by Hampshire (1959), 'On Belief' by Griffiths (1963) in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 'Belief and Constraint' by Mayo (1964) in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*.
[26] Needham 1972: 61
[27] Ibid.: 62
[28] Ibid.: 63
[29] Ibid.: 71
[30] Ibid.: 66

further states that "for most people, disbelief in one matter is based on blind belief in another."[31] The standards of evidence for 'belief' will differ and can lead to the possibility of holding contradictory beliefs: "to hold together opinions so contrary that if one is true the other cannot be"[32] (this foreshadows the theory of cognitive dissonance which will be discussed in more depth in chapter 4). For Needham, this capacity for contradictory 'beliefs' suggests that 'belief' and logic are independent of each other; that "men commonly believe without reason" or supporting evidence.[33] Moreover, conversions do not necessarily occur by logical proofs. In this regard, Needham points to the variability with which 'belief' and logic may be related in different "logical correspondences" in the mind.[34] As Wittgenstein mentions, such peculiarity leads to the appreciation of the various "ways of thinking and acting."[35]

Thus far, Needham's view of 'belief' consists of the following characteristics:

a) The object of 'belief' may or may not exist such that 'belief' is not constricted by what are possible or not possible existences.
b) 'Beliefs' can be inconsistent with each other.
c) 'Beliefs' can be held without reason or evidence.

Points a) and c) are related in such a way that they can lead to the possible outcome of b). However, these points do not assist the ethnographer in discerning whether a person *believes in* some thing or *believes that* some thing exists. Rather, it validates the ethnographers' willingness to consider a range of possibilities and "ways of thinking and acting"[36] with or without evidence for an object of belief. Moreover, while a) and c) may be relevant for thinking about 'belief' with regard to epistemology and whether a belief is normatively justified or not, they do not contribute to a methodology for ethnographic investigation. Point b) does contribute in some ways, however it does not further Needham's project of searching for a distinctive criteria of 'belief' that can be useful in ethnographic contexts. In addition to the points above, Needham goes on to discuss and ultimately dismiss a few more suggested criteria on the grounds of methodological pragmatism. Needham deduces that an attachment to truth, voluntariness, certitude, 'belief' as feeling and disposition, and 'belief' as behavioural are all insufficient and therefore negates them as plausible characteristics. It is

---

[31] Ibid.: 71; Lichtenberg 1958
[32] Ibid.: 75
[33] Ibid.:: 71-72
[34] Ibid.: 74
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.

worth noting that each of these characteristics have been discussed by contemporary philosophers engaged in the debate about belief and acceptance and will be discussed further in the next chapter.

With regard to the association of belief and an attachment to truth, Needham states: "Every assertion of belief is a claim on credence; a man who says that he believes something asserts that it is true."[37] While Needham considers truth to be a necessary condition "for the employment of the verbal concept of belief," the relationship between an assertion of truth and 'belief' are insufficient to explain and discern an interior state from verbal statements.[38] Declaring the truth of a statement does not infer to the ethnographer that the statement is indeed a 'belief' neither does it entail that one is necessarily committed to that statement. Conversely, it is not always possible to discern whether a 'belief' is stated with the tone of conviction. Moreover, there may be discrepancies between statements that indicate a 'belief' and the behaviour of that person. This produces additional uncertainty about the extent to which truth is involved or employed in a statement and the corresponding discrepant behaviour. In this regard, language and behaviour are problematic sources of evidence to discern 'belief' and any commitment to its truth. For Needham, the attachment to truth may be a characteristic of 'belief' but it is methodologically insufficient to discern 'belief' and therefore not a plausible criterion. In this regard, Needham does not outright dismiss a subjective commitment to truth but rather notes its insufficiency in observation and discerning 'belief.'

The next characteristic addressed by Needham is the claim that 'belief' is voluntary or "an act of will."[39] Voluntariness, for him, becomes problematic for two particular reasons. The first is the observance that while one may voluntarily commit to a "style of life,"[40] it is not equivalent to a voluntary intellectual assent to a set of propositions. Moreover, the formation of a 'belief' from deliberation and inquiry is a different act than the claim that a 'belief' is formed by a voluntary act of will: "If, after saying that I cannot believe, I suddenly assert 'Yes, I can', I do not thereby switch from disbelief to belief, and I cannot by any firm intention alone bring myself to do so."[41] While it is certainly possible to reserve judgment,

---

[37] Ibid.: 80
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.: 81; this characteristic has been long debated in western philosophy.
[40] Ibid.: 88
[41] Ibid.: 83

and entertain various propositions by suspending 'truth,' Needham states that "we cannot suspend disbelief any more than we can procure belief within ourselves."[42] In this regard, 'belief' cannot be based on a voluntary act of will. Secondly, Needham notes the conflation between faith and 'belief.' The former includes an active attitude of will, or acceptance, towards a set of propositions which follows from the latter as practice and a "*mode of existence*" rather than a primary attitude of truth. That is the "*mode of existence* … point to and safeguard the former."[43] Here, Needham directs our attention to embodiment and its affective element. He notes that "the act of belief entails a special mode of personal existence. This is far more even than the complete acceptance of a body of doctrine: it is a style of life, and … enduring personal engagement is held to be the expression of belief."[44] Moreover, it would seem to serve two functions:

> On the one hand they are a form of code among the faithful, signalling mutually a common adherence, against the world, to a way and purpose of life. On the other, their very impenetrability conveys to outsiders that what they speak of is significant in that it is ultimately ineffable, and in this way they hint at a supremely desirable mode of existence.[45]

This creates further difficulty in assessing 'belief' as a distinct psychological state and, for Needham, this entails that "belief as a wilful act of complete commitment" is ruled out due to a "combination of psychological obscurity with unanalysable propositions."[46] The issue of embodiment and practice will be discussed further in the following chapter on belief and acceptance, which will facilitate in clarifying the "psychological obscurity" that Needham points out.

In tandem, Needham addresses the claim that 'conviction' is a characteristic of 'belief.' He states that a degree of conviction may be "the most commonly agreed criterion of belief" but there is "no agreement at all on the extent and kind of connection" that delineates the relationship between 'belief' and 'certainty' or 'conviction.'[47] For Needham, 'conviction' consists of a feeling of certainty associated with a subjective commitment to truth.[48] In this regard, he claims that conviction does not necessarily prevent "hesitation and uncertainty"

---

[42] Ibid.: 84
[43] Ibid.: 87
[44] Ibid.; this position has been previously advocated by Georg Simmel in his essay 'Contributions to Epistemology of Religion' (1997 [1902]).
[45] Needham 1972: 88
[46] Ibid.:89
[47] Ibid.
[48] Theologian John Henry Newman also discusses 'certainty' in terms of an intellectual feeling of satisfaction in his monograph *An Essay in Aid of Grammars of Assent* (2002 [1979, 1870])

and "always contains a recognized element of uncertainty."[49] Due to such variable degrees of conviction and its inconsistency for different persons in different contexts, 'conviction' may be a "component" but it is not a "distinctive feature" or a reliable "practical criterion" for any "objective investigation of belief."[50] Similarly 'feeling' is equally a "component of belief," but it is unclear as a distinctive feature that could distinguish 'belief' from other interior states. This is also the case for 'belief' as a disposition. These characteristics, however, will be discussed further in the next chapter with the epistemological distinction between belief and acceptance. Lastly, Needham addresses the relationship between 'belief' and behaviour but states that "not all actions can usefully be regarded as based on belief" and therefore behaviour is also not a clear criterion for belief, or the inner processes of 'belief,' for an ethnographer.[51]

At the end of his analysis, Needham concluded that there are no consistent criteria for 'belief' and proposed that it should be abandoned for ethnographic and comparative accounts. However, such a dismissive position need not be taken. Many of the characteristics were considered to be components of 'belief' but insufficient as individual criteria. Moreover, in the process of negation, Needham affirmed another set of characteristics. In addition to (a) – (c), Needham contributes the following:

  d) Belief is associated with a subjective commitment to truth.
  e) Belief is not voluntary.
  f) There is always a degree of uncertainty in belief.
  g) Belief may be dispositional or feeling-based.
  h) Belief is not necessarily behavioural.

These characteristics, however, are preliminary and incomplete in assisting the ethnographer and warrant interdisciplinary discussion in later chapters. Thus far, the problematization of 'belief' has focused on the issues of language, behaviour, and translation. This work has been advanced by Talal Asad and Malcolm Ruel. Stepping outside etymological and translational concerns, Asad and Ruel focus on the relationship between 'belief,' power, and history. This further problematizes 'belief' with regard to its semantic content and raises additional concerns of how to go beyond the confines of language.

---

[49] Needham 1972: 90
[50] Ibid.: 92
[51] Ibid.: 102

The work of Asad and Ruel aligns with Wittgenstein's second point regarding frameworks and ethnocentrism. Asad examines 'belief' as part of a broader critique against the practice of finding a transhistorical essence, or definition of 'religion.' Ruel further contributes to this discussion by noting four critical periods of Christian history that have impacted the semantic content of 'belief.' Both scholars make a non-essentialist argument for 'religion.' Asad states: "What the Christian believes today about God, life after death, the universe is not what he believed a millennium ago – nor is the way he responds to ignorance, pain, and injustice the same now as it was then."[52] For Asad, there can be no universal definition of 'religion' because of the diversity and variations included in the category and its changing nature; changes that are a product of historically specific processes and discursive practices that have framed what it is that is being investigated. The study of 'religion,' according to Asad, has been an endeavour "in the context of Christian attempts to achieve a form of coherence in doctrines and practices, rules and regulations, even if that was a state never fully attained."[53] In other words, a definition of 'religion' is not plausible as it would emphasize certain features that may be prominent in Christianity but absent, or not emphasized, in other religions. Within this criticism, Asad discusses 'belief.'

2.3 THE CONSTRUCTION OF 'BELIEF'; TALAL ASAD

'The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category,' from Talal Asad's book *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*,[54] has been an important argument for the study of religion. Asad argues that the search for a "transhistorical essence" is an invitation "to separate [religion] conceptually from the domain of power"[55] and its historical context. To explicate this further, Asad makes a distinction between "discourse involved in practice" and "discourse about practice." While theology is admittedly important and serves an essential function, "theological discourse does not necessarily induce religious dispositions" nor is it the case that a religious disposition is dependent "on a clear-cut conception of the cosmic framework on the part of a religious actor." Asad states, "it is a modern idea that a practitioner cannot know how to live religiously without being able to articulate that knowledge."[56] And yet, the authoritative

---

[52] Asad 2002 [1982]: 125
[53] Ibid.: 116
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.: 120

discourses about practice "systematically redefined religious spaces."[57] For example, during the Middle Ages, the medieval Church was concerned with the "subjection of all practice to a unified authority" differentiating truth from falsehood, which empowered the practice of specifying "differences, gradations, and exceptions."[58] Subsequently such authoritative discourses would frame the study and definition of religion.

Through discursive practices of the past, the boundaries of what is 'religious' and 'secular' have been drawn and re-drawn, and even more so with the rise of modern science, production, and notions of the state. At some point, 'religion' began to shift toward the "moods and motivations of the individual believer."[59] In the seventeenth century, with the idea of 'Natural Religion,' an emphasis on 'belief' allowed 'religion' to be "conceived as a set of propositions to which believers gave assent" and thereby a point of comparison to other religions. As the boundaries and designations of what 'religion' is, and is not, have shifted what became evident to anthropologists[60] was the designation of 'religion' into a framework of thought with a "specific Christian history."[61]

As an example, Asad critiques Clifford Geertz's definition of religion[62] and argues that it emphasizes 'belief' as a state of mind and places primacy on meaning "without taking into account the processes of meaning making" and the historical background noted above.[63] Asad claims that this kind of conceptualization of 'belief' is not an inherent aspect of all religious traditions as they tend to reflect 'belief' in terms of their own relations of power produced from a particular perspective of knowledge and discipline.[64] In Christianity, 'belief' was "derived from embodied knowledge inculcated by habit and monkish discipline."[65] Geertz places 'belief' within this historically developed discourse – "a culturally constituted

---

[57] Ibid.: 121
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] "[N]amely that religion is essentially a matter of symbolic meanings linked to ideas of general order (expressed through either or both rite and doctrine), that it has generic functions/features, and that it must not be confused with any of its particular historical or cultural forms" (Asad, 2002 [1982]: 122).
[61] Ibid.
[62] According to Geertz, religion is: "(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (Geertz 2002[1966]: 63).
[63] Lindquist & Coleman 2008: 3
[64] Carlisle & Simon 2012: 228
[65] Asad draws on examples from the medieval period.

framework of rationality, agency, and the search for meaning."[66] This background, in conjunction with the changing nature of 'beliefs' and practices within any religion over time, prompts Asad to problematize "the idea of an anthropological definition of religion by assigning that endeavour to a particular history of knowledge and power (including a particular understanding of our legitimate past and future) out of which the modern world has been constructed."[67] For Asad, the study of religion should consider the broader social conditions that produced these trends of thought about what 'belief' and 'religion' is[68] as well as the dynamics of power within those conditions. It is important to note that Asad's use of 'belief' is specifically in reference to 'religious belief' rather than 'belief' in general, although 'religious belief' has influenced the use of the term 'belief.'

Asad's point about historical discursive practices is further complemented by the work of Malcolm Ruel who specifies four critical periods of Christian history that represent four particular shifts in the meaning of 'belief.' According to Ruel, because of such semantic shifts, 'belief' is loaded with several connotations and implications which question the validity of transposing particular cultural and theoretical concepts, or frameworks, as a method of understanding, interpreting, and explaining other cultures and religions.

2.4 SEMANTIC SHIFTS OF 'BELIEF'; MALCOLM RUEL

In 'Christians as Believers,'[69] Ruel focuses on particular periods of western history that have impacted the meaning of 'belief.'[70] According to Ruel, 'belief' goes from a verb denoting 'obedience' and 'confidence' to a noun that discriminates a particular group of early Christians and then shifts once more in terms of 'authenticity' and orthodoxy. The concept experiences a final shift as a noun when it is associated with a "body of doctrine" and 'faith' and becomes an object of acquisition. Ruel highlights the importance of being aware of the term's Christian use and history. Taking note of such changes, Ruel then provides four common mistakes in the discussion of 'belief' which he calls "shadow fallacies." This section will provide the details of Ruel's argument and discuss its implications for the broader discussion on 'belief.'

---

[66] Lindholm 2012: 342
[67] Asad 2002 (1982): 129
[68] Carlisle & Simon 2012: 228
[69] Ruel 2002 (1982)
[70] Ruel states that Needham became a victim of these shifts in his analysis and hindered his efforts to find an appropriate criterion.

For Ruel, 'belief' is "a word that relates and defines: it relates to people, situations, and ideas; but in its turn … it is also in very important ways defined by the context of its use."[71] Because 'belief' is from the English language, the historical context of the western world and Christianity is significant. For Ruel, four periods in the history of the Church are noteworthy:

> (1) the critical, initial phase in which Christians, the Nazarene sect, emerged as a distinctive religious movement, a community of believers; (2) the immediately succeeding period leading to the Council of Nicea that witnessed both the developing formal organization of the Church and the establishment of orthodox creeds, sanctioned by the Church councils; (3) the Reformation and in particular Luther's reformulation of what it means to believe (i.e. to have faith); and finally, since we cannot leave ourselves out, (4) the present period, which might be characterized in both Christian and secular contexts as belief diffused.[72]

Prior to discussing Ruel's arguments, it is worth noting that the theological and historical accuracies of the noted shifts are beyond the competency of this thesis and much better suited for theologians and Church historians. I could not possibly comment on the extent to which these periods of history accurately represent whether these shifts occurred or comment on their theological implications. This section merely points out the emphasis Ruel has placed on these periods as significant in the shift in meaning and connotation of the term 'belief.'

Like Needham, Ruel traces 'belief' back to its Greek and Hebrew origins. Early on, by examining classical Greek literature, 'belief' acquired a religious use and came to express "confidence" in the gods or an oracle – the "veracity or ability to promote welfare" – and in another way, 'belief' referred to "obedience" to the gods; "an acknowledgement of their power to determine human fate."[73] In the New Testament, Ruel states that the Greek use of the term 'belief,' *pistis*, acquires a "technical use" and was "often used in the sense to be converted to become a Christian"[74] and represented a "common conviction, a shared confidence that both distinguished and united them as a community."[75] This shift from a verb to a noun, according to Ruel, marked a social identity and represented the first shift in 'belief.' The second shift is associated with the declaration of "confessing Christ" and places 'belief' in the realm of semiotics: "a symbol, something that is explicitly affirmed where the act of affirmation has its own functional value."[76] It establishes a sociological relationship between

---

[71] Ibid.: 100; all prior quotations also have the same reference.
[72] Ibid.: 101
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.: 102; "'[T]hey heard the message and believed' is a formulate that repeatedly occurs in the narrative of the expanding church in the Acts of the Apostles; Paul writes of 'when we were first believed' (Romans 13:11) in the sense of 'when we were first converted'" (102).
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.: 103

Christ and the "church as the community who believe in his resurrection."[77] 'Belief' functioned to distinguish Christians from non-Christians. Later on, 'belief' served to distinguish between the "true Christian from the false," which represents the third shift.[78] Here, Ruel notes the influence of organized authority and power. He mentions "two important circumstances associated with the Council of Nicea," which include the "patronage of Constantine" and the "teachings of Arius who, in emphasizing the absolute perfection of the Godhead, was led to accord a lower, unequal place to Christ."[79] These exercises in authority and power, which utilized the term 'belief' to distinguish true from false Christians, also delegated the term to indicate a body of doctrine that became "embedded in the authority-structure of the church."[80]

With the reformation, 'faith' becomes significant. Ruel discusses 'faith' in two senses of the word. The "Catholic faith" as the "received teaching of the church" and secondly a personal faith, which Ruel notes is a difference between "belief as declaration and belief as commitment."[81] Martin Luther and his theology of "the inward totality of Christian belief, the faith of the believer"[82] facilitated the shift of 'belief' to connote an object of acquisition. Ruel states that Luther represented

> ... a paradigm of the person who achieves a fully realized belief only after an intense inward struggle, who possesses belief by being possessed by it: such is the 'faith' that comes from without but signifies a subjective transition from disorganized doubt to clarity, conviction and a certain kind of freedom.[83]

The acquisition of 'belief' after an inward struggle is identified as 'faith' and shifts 'belief' to be an object of possession. Ruel connects this with psychologist Erik Erikson and playwright John Osborne to say that we now seem to "believe in belief" or believe in "unbelief," which is the "lack of trust, non-confidence in its general sense and specifically lack of trust in God or non-belief in Christ in a religious context."[84] 'Belief' thereby becomes a cognitive act towards a body of doctrine, effectively taking on another connotation in meaning.

---

[77] Ibid.: 104
[78] Ibid.: 105
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.: 106
[82] Ibid.: 107
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.: 108; Erikson 1959; Osborne 1961

In summary, the concept of 'belief' undergoes four shifts representing certain critical periods of Christian history: From a verb denoting 'confidence' and 'obedience' in gods or an oracle 'belief' shifts to 1) a noun of early Christian identity associated with conversion distinguishing Christians from non-Christians; to 2) a symbol that affirmed the relationship between Christ and the church as a community of believers; to 3) a distinction between true and false Christians through the exercise of religious authority and power by which 'belief' became associated with a body of doctrine that would become part of the "authority-structure of the church"; and lastly 4) 'belief' takes on the character of being an object of acquisition wherein the concept of 'faith' plays a critical role in creating the distinction between "belief as declaration and belief as commitment."

These developments throughout the course of western history contribute to the complexity for using 'belief' in non-Christian contexts and have led Ruel to state that there is little evidence to suggest "anything equivalent to Christian belief in other world religions although there are other comparable organizing or nodal concepts."[85] According to Ruel, 'belief' in Islam has come to focus on "the duties of relationship: the practice of ritual, the following of Islamic custom, [and] the observation of Islamic law."[86] In Buddhism, citing Richard Gombrich,[87] the closest term is *dharma* and the concept for 'belief' is "even more indirect and fragmented."[88] Similarly, as Asad noted, these terms may have their own semantic history associated with power and respective social structures. Due to such difficulties in translation, Ruel questions whether it is possible to organize and even "attempt to distinguish" the world religions from Christianity in terms of 'belief.' Like Asad, Ruel is thinking in terms of 'religious belief' and presents his "shadow fallacies" in this vein.

Because 'belief' is from the English language, it cannot escape the influences of the Christian religion. In other words, "it is impossible not to draw on connotations from its Christian use." Consequently, "these connotations, contextually transposed, create false assumptions that then lead to fallacies."[89] Ruel makes note of four such assumptions, which he calls "shadow fallacies," and discusses their possible implications for non-Christian contexts. The first fallacy is the notion that 'belief' is central to all religions in the same way as it is to

---

[85] Ibid.: 109
[86] Ibid.: 109-110
[87] Gombrich 1971
[88] Ruel 2002 (1982): 110
[89] Ibid.

Christianity. This was also a significant point made by Asad in the previous section. Due to the semantic shifts, scholars are liable to "slip from talking about religion to talking about Christianity."[90] The second fallacy is to establish 'belief' as behavioural and thereby sufficient explanatory grounds for that behaviour. Ruel gives the example of Zande witchcraft and raises the question, to his students, about the continued 'belief' in witchcraft although there must be times when Zande oracles provide false or incorrect answers. Quite often, Ruel's students will appeal to the "unalterable firmness of conviction" or they will rehearse "Evans-Pritchard's situational analysis of Zande reasoning" while ignoring the degree of individual variation and scepticism. According to Ruel, the emphasis on 'belief' relativizes the influence other persons have on behaviour. In addition, a focus on 'belief' is a "way of setting people into cultural compartments."[91]

Ruel's third "shadow fallacy" is the view that 'belief' is fundamentally an interior and psychological state. Much like the fallacies described above, the fallacy here is "to transpose what some have emphasized as the inwardness of Christian belief (faith) to the non-Christian context and use of the word."[92] As Ruel noted, the multiple connotations of 'belief' in the English language does not always translate in a satisfactory manner to non-English contexts. Ruel agrees with Alan Ryan[93] and states that the insistence on "what goes on in people's minds distracts from the primary task of construing the sense of reality of what it is they believe."[94] Moreover it is the task and skill of anthropologists to construe this sense of reality by "contextual explication."[95] The notion of 'belief' has gained significance primarily because of Christianity and the use of the first person "I believe…" which anthropologists tend to carry over to the third person: "the Azande believe…."[96] The mistake is "to assume *our* presentation of their belief carries the same force as though *they* said 'We believe…'" which misunderstands the "semantic conjugation of the verb" and transposes "Christian assumptions unwarrantably."[97] Needham, according to Ruel, makes this mistake of transposing Christian assumptions in his search for a cross-cultural conception of 'belief.'

---

[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.: 111
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ryan 1973
[94] Ruel 2002 (1982): 111
[95] Ibid.
[96] This form of generalizing 'belief' for an entire group of people or culture is noted by Sperber (1997) and still discussed in contemporary contexts (Boyer, 2013).
[97] Ruel 2002 [1982]: 111-112

The last fallacy, Ruel presents, concerns the emphasis of determining what 'belief' is over the "status of what it is that is the object of belief."[98] Rather the focus should be on determining the object of 'belief.' As Ruel noted above, to be a believer in Christianity is to have an allegiance and declaration of identity; "the person does not always have to be clear about the full content of his belief."[99] Applying this expectation – being clear about the full content of their 'belief' – to non-Christian religions is unwarranted. By designating 'belief' to a commitment in this or that abstraction – witchcraft, spirits, ancestors, or humanism – brackets off "ideas that they hold about the world from the world itself, treating their 'beliefs' as peculiar to them, a badge of their distinctiveness."[100] The "Christian respect-for-belief obscures what really it is that people see or think they see."[101] In other words, an emphasis of 'belief' in propositional statements about the supernatural may overlook the actual beliefs people have about the world.

The shadow fallacies advanced by Ruel expand on Wittgenstein's second claim about ethnocentrism. Both Ruel and Asad make poignant and levelling criticisms against the way in which anthropologists have used the term 'belief' in their ethnographies and the emphasis on configuring what 'belief' is as opposed to considering the contexts and textures of how reality is constructed in other cultures and religions. The four points that Ruel makes in his shadow fallacies can be stated as follows:

A) Belief as it is conveyed in Christianity is not the same in other religions.
B) Belief is not behavioural.
C) Belief is not a distinct interior psychological state.
D) Focusing on what 'belief' is misdirects the focus from conveying the experience of reality in other cultures and religions.

Needham, Asad, and Ruel have all pointed out (A) and have mentioned that 'belief' may not hold the same degree of significance across cultures and religions. Asad's discussion on historical discursive practices of defining what 'religion' is and how definitions can enforce the primacy of one aspect (e.g. 'belief') over other dimensions of 'religion' emphasizes (D). Ruel's point about (B), however, also falls under a particular notion of 'belief.' That is, the conception of 'belief' as propositional statements explicitly made within various religions. Roy Rappaport discusses these statements in terms of 'Ultimate Sacred Postulates' and

---

[98] Ibid.: 112
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.

'cosmological axioms,' which he argues are generated by, and are attributes of, ritual.[102] Rappaport will be discussed further later on, but for now the concept of 'belief' is given a particular notion by Ruel to note that it is not behavioural. The relationship between 'belief' and behaviour will be a topic of further discussion within the philosophical and psychological literature in the ensuing chapters. Point (C) will also be discussed further in the next chapter and prove to be related to the discussion on behaviour. This thesis will explore the possibility of 'belief' as an embodied dimension of cognition and show that the relationship between 'belief' and behaviour is much more complex. Moreover, detaching 'belief' from any specific religious connotation will show that indeed (C) belief is not a distinct psychological interior state. In order to develop this argument, what 'belief' entails requires further clarification and explanation of its characteristics.

2.5 "KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON"

The points about 'belief' made by Needham, Asad, and Ruel can be summarized as follows:

1) The object of belief may or may not exist.[103]
2) Beliefs can be inconsistent.[104]
3) Beliefs can be held without reason or evidence.
4) Belief is associated with a subjective commitment to truth.[105]
5) Belief is not voluntary.
6) There is always a degree of uncertainty in belief.
7) Belief may be dispositional or feeling-based.
8) Belief as it is conveyed in Christianity is not the same for other religions.
9) Belief is not behavioural.
10) Belief is not a distinct interior psychological state.
11) Focusing on what 'belief' is misdirects the focus from conveying the experience of reality in other cultures and religions.

Points (2), (4), (5), (6), (7), and (9) will be discussed further in the next chapter in relation to the philosophical literature distinguishing between belief and acceptance as different textures

---

[102] Rappaport 1999: 263

[103] More specifically, this point connotes that the empirical truth claim is irrelevant insofar as it functions as "real" for the one holding the belief. Jean Pouillon (1982) expands on this point in his analysis of English, French, and German. He states that in these languages the use of 'belief' conjoins three uses (noted below in footnote 105).

[104] Stringer advances the discussion on 'inconsistency' and proposes a 'situational theory of belief': "that belief statements are used only in relation to specific situations, as and when they are needed, and are otherwise forgotten or dismissed" (1996: 229).

[105] Point (4), according to Pouillon (1982), is the second usage of 'belief' and is considered as the internalization of the object of belief as "true." Although Pouillon discusses this in terms of an 'internalization' of statements, it is consistent with the attitude of holding an 'aim for truth.' For Pouillon, this second usage of belief is conjoined with the first usage (a belief in the existence of someone or something; "acceptance of a fact") and the third usage (which designates a "qualification of a bond" that conveys a sense of confidence of placing trust, faith, in the object of 'belief' Lindquist & Coleman 2008:5).

of 'belief.' The last point in (11) is aimed at a particular conception of 'belief.' In the philosophical literature, the concept of 'belief' includes culturally variable conceptions of reality and how they are embodied. In this regard, (11) will be an area of further discussion in terms of what 'belief' is and how it does relate to the experience of reality. The next chapter will also note the irrelevance of (1) and find agreement with (10). These eleven points, an aggregate of Needham, Asad, and Ruel, need not be taken as the final set of characteristics for an operational criterion of 'belief.' However they do provide a basis upon which 'belief' can be considered in more depth and further develop an interdisciplinary dialogue. Prior to engaging the epistemological and psychological literature, it is worth noting the impact of Needham, Asad, and Ruel as well as contemporary anthropological perspectives on the discussion of 'belief.'

A brief search in the Wiley and EBSCO databases of particular anthropology journals for articles mentioning 'belief' in the entire text yielded the following numbers. From the EBSCO database, the *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* from 1991 to 2013 had published 466 articles with 'belief' as a search word in 'All Text.' From the Wiley database, a search in the journal *Ethos* – a journal for the society for psychological anthropology – had yielded 391 articles mentioning 'belief' in the entire text from Spring 1973 to June 2014. In *Cultural Anthropology*, there were 121 articles published from February 1986 to February 2014. From March 1990 to Spring 2014, 250 articles were published in the *Anthropology of Consciousness* and *Social Anthropology* published 552 articles from August 1992 to May 2014. For the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, there were 716 articles were published from March 2000 to June 2014. The *American Anthropologist* published 1621 articles from March 2000 to June 2014 and the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* published 1091 articles from June 2000 to June 2014. While journal publications are not the only index for considering the impact of the above mentioned scholars as book publications and conference discussions are also a significant measure. The number and rate of publications mentioning 'belief' would seem to suggest that the term is not going to be abandoned as Needham would like to have seen.

According to Charles Lindholm, if anthropology adhered to Needham's criteria "almost all anthropological terms would be eliminated" and despite Needham's efforts most anthropologists have proceeded "without worrying too much about the precise meaning of the

indigenous word for *belief*.'[106] Parallels can be drawn to equally vague and ambiguous, yet useful and ineradicable, terms such as 'culture.' Wilfred Cantwell Smith called for the abandonment of 'religion' and suggested that it be replaced with 'faith' and 'religious tradition.'[107] And yet, it is impractical to make such a radical move for the entirety of a discipline, let alone harmonize consensus to consciously avoid using such terms. Nonetheless, these critiques have been significant in advancing the discussion and the study of religion.

In recent years, there have been special issues in journals dedicated to the discussion of 'belief.' The journal *Social Analysis* put together an issue based on a workshop from the 2005 meeting for the Society for the Anthropology of Religion.[108] In 2012, *Ethos*, the journal for the Society for Psychological Anthropology also produced a special issue on 'Believing Selves'[109] and the *Journal of Contemporary Religion* produced a special issue the following year (2013) on 'Belief as Cultural Performance.'[110] Each of these issues provides a contemporary context for how 'belief' has been employed as an analytical tool and how scholars today are representing 'belief.' However, one of the observations that emerged was the occurrence of interviewees reflecting on what it meant to "believe" as they themselves problematize what 'belief' is and what constitutes a commitment to truth.[111] In other words, many are conscientious about the multiple connotations 'belief' can have. This problematizes 'belief' for ethnographers as the subjects themselves are working through and determining what the term means, which then becomes presented to, and re-presented by, ethnographers. 'Belief' is then represented in terms of how various persons have reflected about 'belief' as opposed to what is 'believed.'[112]

---

[106] Lindholm 2012: 342

[107] Smith 1991 (1962)

[108] This issue contains an introduction by Galina Lindquist and Simon Coleman, eight ethnographic accounts, and an afterword by Don Handelman as well as one by David Hicks. The eight ethnographic accounts are from Mira Z. Amiras, Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer, Andrew Buckser, Omri Elisha, Stephen D. Glazier, Galina Lindquist, Jon P. Mitchell & Hildi J. Mitchell, and Koen Stroeken.

[109] This issue contains an introductory essay by Steven Carlisle & Gregory M. Simon, five ethnographic accounts, and a final essay from Charles Lindholm. The five ethnographies are from Gregory Simon, James Bielo, Douglas Kline, Julia Cassaniti, and Steven Carlisle.

[110] This issue contains an introduction by Abby Day & Gordon Lynch, five ethnographic accounts, and a reflective essay by Abby Day (2013a). The accounts are provided by Matthew Guest et al. (2013), Anna Strhan, Gregorz Brzozowski, Slawomir Mandes & Maria Rogaczewska, and Daniel Nilsson Dehanas.

[111] Carlisle & Simon (2012); Mair (2012); Stringer (2013)

[112] This further problematizes the methodology for investigating 'belief' and motivates alternative and innovative methods for inquiry. Stringer (2013) discusses three different ways by which persons understand and discuss 'religion' and how persons may combine different forms of discourse. Carlisle and Simon also note that ethnographic subjects have been working through the problems of 'belief': "Through their practices, discourses, meditations, our subjects find ways to believe particular truths amid many possible truths, determine what it means to believe, conceive of the relationship between belief and practice, and assess the significance of belief

From these issues, several frameworks have emerged. David Hicks proposes that 'belief' can be investigated as an index of attitudes to sacred artefacts. He identifies four categories of 'believer' and 'non-believer' by drawing on his fieldwork in East Timor. For Hicks, the artefact in question is a sacred house called *uma lulik*, which serves as an index to 'belief' in the existence of ghosts. While some take for granted and presume the existence of ghosts in their everyday lives, others place an emphasis on the importance of social activities and customs with regard to the ghosts as opposed to a 'belief' in their existence. There are also those who disparage these sacred houses, their construction, and do not "believe" in the reality of ghosts at all.[113] In this sense, Hicks proposes that 'belief' can be investigated through attitudes to sacred material, artefacts, or objects. This proposal, while it can be limiting in some instances, could yield insight into a person's 'beliefs' in relation to sacred objects, names, and symbols. In other words, attitudes to sacred buildings with theological and historical significance could be an index for 'belief' in a particular religion – although the particulars about the object of 'belief' would need to be investigated further. Moreover, in East Timor, Hicks states that there is a correlation between the categories of 'believer' and socio-economic demographics such as education, literacy, and class.[114] This implies, for Hicks, that there is a relationship between these social variables and attitudes towards the existence of ghosts. While Hicks' proposal may be reflected in communities of East Timor, it cannot be said that the attitude one has to an existing church, the construction, or demolition of a church,[115] in Europe is an index for one's 'belief' in Jesus Christ. One may be indifferent to churches as institutions but hold the propositional 'belief' that 'Jesus is the son of God.' Similarly, the attitudes one has to a Buddhist temple may not necessarily be an index for 'belief' in *karma* or any other Buddhist concept. While such attitudes may provide insight into various religious postulates, they are not a direct measure for 'belief' in the supernatural.

---

for our understanding the nature and moral status of human beings" (2012: 222). Similarly, Mair (2012) proposed that we compare different 'Cultures of belief.'

[113] Hicks 2008: 177-178

[114] Socio-economic class is invoked as Hicks (2008) mentions "peasant communities," "villagers," "educated elite" and so on to describe the social circumstances that categorize these persons.

[115] Needham has noted the possibility of measuring 'belief' through its provocation, contradiction, or violation, as he discussed the relationship between 'belief' and feelings (1972: 96). This would extend into the violation of sacred objects such as the desecration of a temple, sacred symbol, image, name, or religious taboo. In this sense the investigation of sacred objects and their violations could potentially be a useful measure but whether it is related 'belief' will be particular to the object that is deemed sacred. Such violations, and its relation to 'belief,' anticipate the theory of cognitive dissonance (chapter 4) and the notion of a 'magnitude of dissonance.'

By contrast to Hicks' materialist approach, David Handelman proposes a "return to cosmology" and defines ontology as "the fundamental principles of being in the world and the orientation of such a being toward the horizons of its experience."[116] More specifically, Handelman proposes to consider 'belief' in terms of the "logic or logics of connectedness and separation" of the cosmos as an ontological concept that reflects how one's being is oriented in the world and reality.[117] In some ways, Handelman is proposing a meaning-making model of 'belief' under the broader auspice of monotheism through the Hebrew Bible. That is, 'belief' is the method by which meaning is made and a coherence about the 'cosmos' is discovered. In this regard, Handelman takes a very Judeo-Christian lens to considering, or positioning, 'belief' in terms of cosmology, which borders on the line of theology and philosophy of religion. He states, "I came to see belief as an outcome of monotheistic cosmic logic, as the outcome of cosmos organized in terms of absolute hierarchy through the grasping, impassable rupture between finite and infinite, the finite encompassed from its exterior."[118] Handelman's emphasis on the "logics of cosmos" and its dependency on the exterior is an argument that 'belief' emerges from the experience of inter-connectivity in "nature" and its "rupture," which Handelman frames in terms of monotheism and God. In this way, 'belief' as a proposition may or may not have any considerable role in non-Judeo-Christian religions. Handelman's position, however, is problematic. Framing the experience, thoughts, and 'beliefs' of non-Judeo-Christian religions in this manner is susceptible to the criticisms of imposition noted above by Asad and Ruel. Not only does it re-appropriate local frameworks into a particular position of truth, it also lends to the issue of misappropriating local considerations of ontology. In this sense, Handelman's argument may be more appropriate for theological or philosophical discussions of 'belief' and 'inclusivity' or 'exclusivity' and metaphysical dialogues about the 'absolute' and experience.

The positions of Hicks and Handelman above are from the 2008 issue of *Social Analysis*. In the *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Abby Day and Gordon Lynch point to three modes of 'belief' that emerged from their issue on 'belief' among "young people." The first mode was "belief *as a marker of cultural identity*."[119] That is, 'belief' was a mode by which they could distinguish themselves from other cultural groups. Day and Lynch state that this was particularly significant for "those who identified as being part of a minority group within a

---

[116] Handelman 2008: 182
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.: 188
[119] Day & Lynch 2013: 201

wider dominant religious/non-religious milieu or who wished to distinguish themselves from another minority group."[120] They state that this mode of 'belief' is "learned and cultivated as a visible marker of difference in the context of establishing a distinct cultural identity."[121] The second mode of 'belief' was delineated as *an expression of significant social relationships and networks of belonging*." In this mode, expressions of 'belief' reflect a "sense of belonging" and "express a sense of a bond with others who are taken to be important sources of guidance, and affiliation."[122] The third mode is stated as *an organising centre for an individual's or a group's life*" and involves a "sustained attempt to shape thought, emotion, body, and practice in accordance with an explicitly stated set of beliefs derived from experiential, textual or institutional sources of religious and spiritual authority."[123] The three modes of 'belief' are categories for delineating the various expressions of 'belief.' However, this framework proposed by Day and Lynch is without a working definition, or set of characteristics, for 'belief' to consider how 'belief' is a "marker of cultural identity," an "expression of significant social relationships," or "an organising centre." This does not distinguish statements of 'belief' from other kinds of statements. Furthermore, these categories are formulated in terms of their expressive functions and derived from the perspective of the ethnographer. That is, the expressions of 'belief' were perceived and interpreted by the social scientists to be a marker of cultural identity, an expression of social relations, or an organising centre of individual and social life. It is also not clear how these modes are different enough from each other to warrant a distinct category. How is the expression of 'belief' as a marker of cultural identity different from 'belief' as expressions of one's social relations? A cultural identity implies social relations and should not be considered as something particular for minority groups. Contingent on one's life style, 'belief' as a marker of cultural identity can also be an organising centre or not. And while they are different modalities of 'belief' expression, it is uncertain to what extent they warrant particular categories.

In *Ethos*, 'belief' is framed in terms of 'believing selves,' which focuses on how the 'self' is implicated when discussing 'belief.' Steven Carlisle and Gregory Simon define 'belief' as "subjective commitments to truth," which is to say that 'beliefs' are "subjective commitments

---

[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.: 202, all emphases above are original

to truths as being true."[124] This definition, they state, is meant to be a broader notion that extends a commitment to the truth of a variety of things, relationships, and/or occurrences as true.[125] This relates to point (4) from the earlier discussion on Needham, Asad, and Ruel and further extends into the philosophical literature, in the next chapter, in terms of an 'aim for truth.' Carlisle and Simon note that what one regards as true may not be articulated nor is it necessarily the case that one would be consciously aware of one's own truth commitments[126] (which may relate to point (5) and (7) regarding the voluntariness or involuntariness and belief's dispositional character). This indicates that there is a cognitive space for inconsistent commitments to various truths, which is also to say that 'beliefs' are not necessarily consistent with each other (noted in point (2) above). Nonetheless, these commitments partially constitute one's engagement with the world.[127] Carlisle and Simon also note that any investigation and exploration of subjectivity must attend to "the interactions between individuals as [centres] of experience and agency, and the sociocultural structures within which those individuals live."[128] In this sense, cultural and psychological processes are critical to the extent which individuals integrate "experiences and socially learned doctrines and discourses – including those concerning what it means to believe – into truths to live through." The ethnographic studies discussed in this issue of the journal "show that the work of believing is motivated by efforts to achieve an internally consistent and emotionally satisfying sense of the self's relationship to particular truths."[129] The notion of internally consistent 'beliefs' has been raised in the philosophical and psychological literature, which will be addressed in chapters 3 and 4.

The ethnographic accounts in the special issue of *Ethos* focus on the subject and their 'beliefs' in relation to their particular contexts. However, Charles Lindholm notes that these accounts

---

[124] Carlisle & Simon 2012: 222

[125] According to Carlisle and Simon, James Bielo notes that 'belief' in the anthropology of Christianity has moved to this broader notion of commitment (Howell 2007; Robbins 2007b; Ruel 1982). Roy Rappaport also states that belief "at least suggests a mental state concerning, or arising out of, the relationship between the cognitive processes of individuals and representations presented to them as possible candidates for the status of true. As such, 'belief' is a second-order process, that is, one concerned with the relationship between a first-order process and external reality" (1999: 119-120).

[126] Carlisle & Simon 2012: 223

[127] "a subjective commitment may be made to the truth of something's existence, the truth of some proposition about the world or the nature of the self, the truth of someone's or something's abilities or the quality of relationship to oneself (and, thus, "trust" in those abilities or that relationship), or the moral truth of an orientation for living one's life. These truths are not necessarily articulated as propositions agreed to by an individual, and may not even be consciously recognized as beliefs, but they nevertheless form part of an individual's subjective engagement with the world" (Ibid.)

[128] Ibid.; Cf. Biehl et al. 2007; Luhrmann 2006; Ortner 2005; Simon 2009

[129] Ibid.

are not focused on *what* 'belief' is, but rather the "use of discourse analysis to reveal *how* believers convince themselves that their beliefs are true."[130] One dimension of this, as noted above, is when the subjects themselves problematize what 'belief' is and what constitutes a commitment to its truth. Lindholm frames an 'Anthropology of Belief' across a Durkheim-Weber continuum of *how* 'beliefs' are maintained. Lindholm states that the Durkheimian camp is based on "affirmations of identity, emotional commitment, belonging, and authenticity within a sacred community" while the Weberian camp discusses the "effort to construct types of legitimated meaning systems that can confirm belief."[131]

In building up to his discussion on religious 'beliefs,' Lindholm provides a few examples of different 'belief' types and concerns himself with distinguishing "types of verification and degrees of commitment" with each 'belief' type. The first two examples are straightforward propositional attitudes. 'I believe that fire is hot' is an indisputable 'belief' proven from immediate experience and 'I believe that an axe is a tool for chopping' can be learned after a "demonstration – or even intuited without instruction."[132] Both are 'beliefs' that can be expressed through different propositional statements and can be committed to and verified directly from experience. The next two examples of 'belief' rely on "expert evidence and collective consensus that can explain mundane reality: 'I believe in gravity' and 'I believe that the earth rotates around the sun.' These 'beliefs' rely on the "prestige of science" and "general consensus," which are "ratified by authority" and "verified by experiment."[133] However, Lindholm notes that these two examples of 'belief' do not make any real difference to his life. That is, whether one believes in heliocentrism or not, the day to day life will continue to proceed. Other cultures may "believe" in another understanding of the solar system, which also does not affect the practical decisions of living.[134]

The next two examples of 'belief' effectively translate to "in my opinion": 'I believe that the bird I saw was a raven' and 'I believe you left the light on.' These examples are contestable and hold more relevance in daily life than 'belief' in gravity or heliocentrism. These 'beliefs' are subject to external sources of verification and/or reliance on personal memory and experiential truth. However, unlike the universal characteristics of fire, the subjective truth of

---

[130] Lindholm 2012: 341
[131] Ibid.: 348
[132] Ibid.: 345
[133] Ibid.: 346
[134] Lindholm provides examples from his fieldwork in Pakistan, where some had a geocentric understanding of the universe. Ibid.

a memory can be denied or contested by the memory of others. Lindholm notes that it is in this area of 'belief' where "an acute epistemological chasm" opens. The reliance on inner certainty has the potential to recede away from methods of legitimation by reference to collectively accepted facts[135] and shift toward a space of idiosyncrasy and unverifiability, which is also to say that they may be far from the "norms of agreed-on-reality." This is also the case with 'beliefs' where internal experiences of truth and certainty conflict with external reality, which is subject to various forms of legitimation and verifiability. Lindholm gives the example, 'I am convinced that there is a universal conspiracy against me' – a case where personal certainties can conflict with "external reality,"[136] which foreshadows the applicability of cognitive dissonance discussed in chapter 4. The last type of 'belief' is an example of what Lindholm calls "strong belief" or religious faith by which persons may, for example, state: 'I believe God speaks to me and that I am his messenger.' Cases of religious faith or "strong belief" also include instances when others may recognize and accept such a statement from a charismatic leader as revelation and potentially accumulate fellow believers, acceptors, and followers. Such examples exist not only in Christianity and Islam but also Buddhism and small groups. An example of a smaller group led by one with "strong belief" will be provided as a case study in chapter 6.[137] It should be noted that this type of 'belief' is not restricted to religion and can be seen in many other contexts as well. One common example from the philosophy literature is the "jealous husband," which describes the example of a husband who suspects that his wife is having an affair without any supporting evidence. Shakespeare's Othello is a similar case, manipulated by the antagonist Iago, he suspect his wife of infidelity and ultimately kills the faithful Desdemona. Others have pointed to paranoid schizophrenics and their "delusions" of persecution as another similar example.[138] This is not to suggest that "religious beliefs" are restricted to "strong beliefs." It is certainly not the case that all "religious beliefs" are "strong beliefs," nor would it be plausible to suggest that all "religious beliefs" are akin to "delusions." Nonetheless, Lindholm is merely pointing out that such instances of "strong belief" exist within various religious traditions.

---

[135] "[W]hether universally felt or intuitively grasped, or ratified by authority, proven by scientific experiment, affirmed by general consensus, or confirmed by eyewitnesses" (Ibid.: 347)

[136] Ibid.: 345-348; Lindholm glosses over the notion of "external reality." His use of the term is substantiated by the methods of validation and legitimation by which science is the purveyor of epistemic authority. This view dismisses the phenomenological perspective and subjective standards of evidence that make personal experience and emotions evidence what is true and create certainty. This is not to dismiss the vehicle of science as a method of validation and verification but rather to point out the distinction Lindholm is making when using the term "external reality" and validation as "our" standard of evidence in contrast to "their" standards of evidence.

[137] Other examples include Jim Jones, the creator of Jonestown and leader of the People's Temple, or the Order of the Solar Temple, Heaven's Gate, and other apocalyptic groups.

[138] Bortolotti 2010

According to Lindholm, "strong belief" in the religious sense can be considered across the Durkheim-Weber continuum mentioned above. However, the two camps should not be understood as mutually exclusive or independent of each other. Rather, they are complementary and necessarily dependent on one another without lending primacy to one. Constructed types of legitimated meaning systems that confirm a 'belief' as true require recipients who affirm and commit to those meaning systems for their efficacy and function as legitimizing and confirming systems. Conversely the formation of identity, and the embodiment of meaning, presupposes various social structures which support various constructed systems of meaning independent of one's existence or choice to abide by them or not. The relationship between identity and society entails a fluid dynamic of relational exchange rather than a singular format of 'belief' maintenance. Lindholm acknowledges that the two camps for "inculcating belief" are limited and that a focus on one camp is necessarily supplemented by the other.[139] The meaning-centred and externally verified model is supported by the emotional and internally substantiated model and vice versa. Similarly, Douglas Davies discusses how Weberian forms of 'belief' become associated with Durkheimian forms of 'belief' through embodied feelings which are experienced as powerful yet fleeting emotions or lasting moods.[140] Tanya Luhrmann discussed how informants gradually committed to forms of witchcraft in contemporary England.[141] Luhrmann continues this discussion in *When God Talks Back* and notes the role of imagination.[142] Similarly, Jonathan Mair discusses the dimension of learnt and cultivated 'belief' among Mongolian Buddhists.[143] Thomas Kirsch describes the negotiation of 'beliefs' among Gwembe Tonga of southern Zambia[144] who "move between the many Christian denominations of the area in search of healing by the Holy Spirit."[145] The emphasis here is not on dogma or creed but "practical and experiential efficacy of individual practitioners and episodes of practice"[146] demonstrating the "interdependence of beliefs as elements of thought and as social

---

[139] Lindholm 2012: 353
[140] Davies 2011: 2
[141] Luhrmann 1989; "Suspension of disbelief may come first, followed by a long and ambiguous process of 'interpretive drift' that does not rely on any specific threshold of conversion but rather involves a largely unacknowledged shift in the interpretation of events" (Lindquist & Coleman 2008: 9)
[142] Luhrmann 2012
[143] Mair 2012
[144] Lindquist & Coleman 2008; Cf. Kirsch 2004
[145] Lindquist & Coleman 2008: 10
[146] Ibid.: 11

processes."[147] The paradigm of embodiment provides a framework for practice and 'belief' that engages the dynamic between the two camps discussed above.[148] Measuring 'belief' indirectly through sacred material, positioning 'belief' through monotheistic cosmology, and the "modes of belief" can all be incorporated and appropriated through a discussion of embodiment as each of the proposals also discuss the relationship between the two camps and their relation to the body. Embodiment then insinuates an "existential condition" as well as the processes by which externally legitimated forms of meaning and practice are learned and *become* part of our socially informed bodies.[149] In this regard, embodiment is an appropriate framework by which the discussion on 'belief' could be advanced.

2.6 CONCLUSION

At this juncture of the thesis, the category of 'belief' has been deconstructed and problematized through several representative critiques. However, the negation and critique of 'belief' – through the work of Wittgenstein, Needham, Asad, and Ruel – has affirmed the following set of characteristics:

1) The object of belief may or may not exist.
2) Beliefs can be inconsistent.
3) Beliefs can be held without reason or evidence.
4) Belief is associated with a subjective commitment to truth.
5) Belief is not voluntary.
6) There is always a degree of uncertainty in belief.
7) Belief may be dispositional or feeling-based.
8) Belief as it is conveyed in Christianity is not the same for other religions.
9) Belief is not behavioural.
10) Belief is not a distinct interior psychological state.
11) Focusing on what 'belief' is misdirects the focus from conveying the experience of reality in other cultures and religions.

Moreover, Needham's analysis showed that singular episodes of observing language or behaviour are insufficient to determine 'belief.' In addition, Asad and Ruel have further indicated the significance of history, power, and social structures in the semantics of 'belief,' which also implies that comparable terms for 'belief' in non-English languages may equally have a complicated history. Within contemporary proposals of 'belief,' the paradigm of

---

[147] Carlisle & Simon 2012: 229

[148] Thomas Csordas (1990) develops a paradigm of embodiment through a discussion of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Pierre Bourdieu (1977) in his account of ritual healing by charismatic Christians. Embodiment theory is also developed by Peter Stromberg (1993) and attempts to collapse "belief into forms of embodied or at least non-linguistic practice" (Lindquist & Coleman 2008: 10). Stromberg also argues, as Roy Rappaport (1999) does later on that beliefs are created during rituals as they "tie individual experience to communal doctrines and conceptions" (Carlisle & Simon 2012: 230).

[149] Csordas 1994

embodiment has consistently been discussed in terms of practice and behaviour but without investigating the relationship between 'belief' and behaviour. In order to investigate this relationship further, a more detailed and nuanced investigation into 'belief' is necessary. For the next chapter, the thesis will discuss the epistemological distinction between belief and acceptance which brings out the textures of 'belief' and provides a path towards the relationship between 'belief' and embodiment. The characteristic points of 'belief' noted above will continue to be in dialogue with the epistemological literature and engage the question between belief and embodiment in the next chapter.

3
FROM PHILOSOPHY: BELIEF AND ACCEPTANCE

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter navigated the anthropological literature and provided an initial set of potential characteristics to begin developing an interdisciplinary dialogue on 'belief.' The significance of embodiment was also noted however its relationship to 'belief' is unclear. Moreover, the ethnographer continues to be without a coherent framework of how to investigate 'belief.' This chapter introduces an epistemological distinction between belief and acceptance to converse with the proposed set of characteristics and provide a sharper focus for discerning 'belief.' In addition, the chapter will situate 'belief' further within the paradigm of embodiment by drawing on discussions of *habitus* as well as contemporary cognitive science and psychology and argue that belief can be interpreted as the units of embodiment and cultural history.

The chapter begins by mapping out the distinctive characteristics between belief and acceptance and notes their relationship to the proposed characteristics of 'belief' from the previous chapter. This begins the dialogue between anthropology and epistemology. The chapter then situates belief and acceptance within the paradigm of embodiment and the "structuring structures" of *habitus*. Noting the difficulties discerning 'belief' from behaviour as well as the issues of 'inconsistency,' this chapter leads into developing a bridge with social psychology and the theory of cognitive dissonance. In this regard the interdisciplinary dialogue, which began with anthropology, is extended from epistemology to psychology. This exchange of research contributes to a more dynamic account of 'belief' for methodological focus and application.

3.1 BELIEF AND ACCEPTANCE

The distinction between belief and acceptance is differentiated by a set of characteristics that engage the points about 'belief' mentioned in the previous chapter. The distinction provides texture and nuance to 'belief,' which serves as a general and broader category inclusive of belief and acceptance. Generally, the two types are considered along the following: involuntary *versus* voluntary, context-independent *versus* context-relative, aim for truth *versus* no aim for truth. Furthermore both can, but not necessarily, have behavioural expressions and both have been noted to be inconsistent. This section will discuss these

characteristics according to the literature and how they relate to the points from the previous chapter. It is important to note that both belief and acceptance are propositional attitudes.[1] A proposition is generally defined as the content a sentence or expression conveys – although the definition of 'proposition,' as it will be discussed momentarily, should also be extended to perceptual and experiential content (that which we know tacitly[2]) prior to its linguistic expression. If two sentences or expressions convey the same meaning, they are the same proposition and when they express different content they are different propositions. In other words, a proposition is not restricted to a particular grammar or utterance but can vary in its expression. A propositional attitude then is generally considered to be the attitude, stance, or opinion, towards a particular proposition. In this sense, a propositional attitude is not necessarily limited to cognition but can be a bodily reaction or a feeling to the experience of some thing. In other words, belief and acceptance extends into the paradigm of embodiment.

3.1.1 Voluntary versus Involuntary

The first point of comparison between belief and acceptance has been the difference in cognitive activity. This pertains to point (5) in the previous chapter that 'belief' is not voluntary. And indeed, the epistemology literature designates acceptance as "voluntary cognitive act(s)"[3] which are directly under one's control while belief is involuntary and dispositional.[4] This point was considered as a component of 'belief' and a possibility by Needham (mentioned as (7) in the previous chapter) but dismissed on the grounds that it was difficult to discern from other cognitive states in ethnographic contexts. However, the epistemology literature compares belief and acceptance on the character of voluntariness and discusses this point in much more detail.

According to Robert Stalnaker, acceptance can be an active or passive cognitive activity. With regard to the latter, passive forms of acceptance are "taken for granted or presupposed" because the veracity of the proposition is never in question.[5] For Stalnaker, passive acceptance presumes that the proposition is true. This includes instances when one is listening to those one considers to be credible and trustworthy sources. The development of such attitudes of trust and the social transference of information begins with one's parents or

---

[1] Stalnaker 1984: 79; while most social scientists avoid this position, much qualitative and quantitative research relies on propositional data and linguistic expressions.
[2] This invokes Michael Polanyi's work on tacit knowledge (2009[1966])
[3] Stalnaker 1984; Cohen 1992; Alston 1996
[4] Ibid.
[5] Stalnaker 1984: 79

guardians. Psychologist Erik Erikson in his 'eight stages of development' marks the first stage (from birth to two years of age) in development as the period of developing a sense of 'basic trust v. basic mistrust,' with the formation of the parent-child bond.[6]

In cases of passive acceptance, as Stalnaker conceives it, the possibility of a proposition being not true is not considered until one discovers that the proposition is indeed not true. That is, one passively accepts the proposition as true without question and in the event of discovering some thing to be not true one can easily adjust the presupposed consideration of the proposition from true to not true. Take for example the case of being lost in an unknown city. In such a scenario, it is common to ask a stranger for directions and accept the given directions as true then proceed according to those directions. The presumption is that the given directions are true and one acts in accordance with those directions. But in the event that the directions are not true, the truth claim can easily be adjusted. When the sought after location is not there after following the directions, one may infer that either the directions were not true or one took a wrong turn somewhere. In either case, it is possible to change the passively accepted directions from true to not true.

By contrast, active acceptances are instances when the notion of truth is suspended or bracketed. Take, for example, the case of a courtroom judge who, technically, must listen to both the plaintiff and the defendant in the advocacy of their respective case and reasoning of law. The judge does not immediately decide whether one is true or not but suspends judgment until both sides are heard. This would also be the case for a neutral third party who listens to both sides of a story. The stated propositions are accepted as a particular perspective without assessing the truth claim. Upon exposure to more evidence, or other propositions, one deliberates further whether the claim in question is true and decides whether it should be accepted as true. The claim is then actively accepted as true, or not, "after reflection or investigation"[7] and is the "product of methodological decision rather than subjective commitment."[8] In this regard, active acceptance is a process of initially accepting a proposition without attaching a truth value to it and actively deliberating whether it is indeed true or not. However, there are many variations of how active acceptance is operative in

---

[6] Erikson 1956; Erikson's theory relates back to Freudian theories of development and the psychoanalytic tradition, which gives rise to theories of attachment later on.
[7] Stalnaker 1984: 80
[8] Stalnaker 1984: 81; John Henry Newman qualifies this kind of acceptance as complex, or reflex, assent which is an assent after reflection (1979: 157).

reasoning processes. For example, there are times when it is "reasonable to *accept* something that one knows or believes is false."[9] If one was playing a game with the premise that $2 + 2 = 5$, one can accept this premise and proceed with the game despite one's prior conventional knowledge that $2 + 2 = 4$. In other words, there are instances when we accept false propositions as true for a particular context. This may be the case in the experience of illusions or magic. As mentioned earlier, in such instances, the definition of 'proposition' extends to perception and experiential content prior to its linguistic expression. This kind of acceptance has also been called 'holding as true,' which pertains to cases where one holds a proposition *as if* it was true.[10] That is, it is possible to actively hold a proposition as if it was true irrespective of whether it is indeed true. Another example is the instance in which one accepts a proposition without understanding the contents of the proposition.[11] If someone stated that "multifunctional doxorubicin loaded superparamagnetic iron oxide nanoparticles are effective for chemotherapy," one may accept, or not accept, this statement without understanding what it is that is effective for chemotherapy. In each of these cases, acceptance involves an active and voluntary cognitive component.

Passive acceptances, in Stalnaker's view, are then habitual propositional attitudes presuming truth while active acceptances are reflexive propositional attitudes which begin with the suspension of truth. However, this distinction is not without concern and the use of "passive" can be contested. In the example of the lost traveller, while one may passively accept the directions as true there is still an active cognitive element of retaining that information. The passivity that Stalnaker points to in such examples is a dispositional attitude to trust the directions of that particular stranger based on whatever impression one formulates. In this sense, the act of presuming truth may be a default position formulated out of habit and a history of receiving correct information from strangers. As will be discussed later on, this kind of dispositional attitude is a belief as an involuntary cognitive phenomenon – albeit one that is culturally developed over time. In other words, underlying Stalnaker's passive acceptance is a dispositional belief and the active acceptance of "holding as true." The distinction between active and passive acceptance is not a clear distinction as the experience of passivity is an underlying disposition to believe the directions of a stranger as true.

---

[9] Stalnaker 1984: 91
[10] Ullman-Margalit & Margalit 1992
[11] Ibid.

The dispositional attitude of belief, as mentioned in the analysis of passive acceptance, is considered to be involuntary within the epistemology literature. It is a disposition to feel a certain way towards the veracity of a thing, experience, or proposition, even if the thing itself is not necessarily true. For L. Jonathan Cohen, beliefs are dispositions to feel that a proposition is true and its negation false.[12] As a disposition, belief becomes an experiential phenomenon possessing a kind of immediacy rather than a thought process.[13] These feelings are triggered[14] when faced with a proposition, item, or stimulus, and stem from a disposition to consider things in a certain way. The activation of such a feeling is pronounced during the reflection about a proposition or experience. Cohen states that this occurs when one is thinking whether it is the case that the proposition is true, when thinking of something referred to by the proposition, or when thinking of a connected issue to the proposition or a related experience,[15] and any other entailments from reflection. This pronouncement of interpretation of one's feelings leads Cohen to describe it as "mental feelings."[16] The disposition for belief is then represented by a feeling or emotion interpreted through some cognitive activity, which could be an initial reaction to the proposition (comprehended or otherwise) or after reflection. In this sense, beliefs are considered to be involuntary.[17] It is because of this reactive involuntary character that beliefs, for Cohen, are considered to be "items we *find* ourselves with, not items we *choose* to have."[18] That is, beliefs are not "under our control"[19] and cannot be planted in ourselves. Cohen states that "beliefs are said to come over you, arise in you, or grow on you, like anger or affection does. You cannot don, raise, or grow them yourself."[20]

Similarly, William P. Alston asserts that we cannot decide to believe that 'Sam is trustworthy,' that our favourite team will win, or that 'murder is always wrong,' but rather we believe them as dispositional inclinations.[21] This alludes to an experiential component in the face of uncertain events. Cohen describes the involuntary character in terms of consequential beliefs that arise from one belief to another such that "the outcome is conceived of as being

---

[12] Cohen 1992: 4
[13] Alston 1996: 5
[14] Ibid.: 7
[15] Ibid.
[16] Cohen 1992: 12
[17] Stalnaker 1984; Cohen 1992; Ullman-Margalit & Margalit 1992: 179; Alston 1996: 7
[18] Alston 1996: 7
[19] Ullman-Margalit & Margalit 1992: 179
[20] Cohen 1992: 21; For John Henry Newman, this kind of involuntary character of belief has been called an unconscious or simple assent – an initial reaction of whether a proposition is true or not true (1979 [1870]: 157).
[21] Alston 1996: 7

involuntary rather than a manifestation of obedience to principle."[22] For example, "once you come to believe that the driver ahead has lost control, you can't help yourself believing that his car will crash."[23] In this sense, "beliefs are predicted or explained as resulting from the operations of relevant causal factors, such as sensory stimuli or the transmission of information."[24] The disposition to believe something is then involuntary as a product of causal inferences.

The voluntariness and involuntariness distinction is about internal cognitive and affective processes when presented with propositions or observances. In other words, belief's involuntary character includes the underlying implicit cognitive processes that are associated with emotions and feelings about certain things as well as the explicit inferences one may make about the world. Beliefs can be implicit and/or explicit, which carries implications for the paradigm of embodiment. This distinction then addresses point (5), which is designated to acceptance, and (7) as belief, from the previous chapter. The next distinction is about the external counterpart to those processes. That is, the relevance of context in which they occur: the 'when,' 'where,' 'who,' and 'what.' Not the specific content of 'when,' 'where,' and 'what' but rather the extent to which those factors of context are relevant in whether one accepts or believes some thing or some proposition (perceptual and experiential content as well as linguistic expression). This distinction is discussed in terms of 'context-relative' or 'context-independent' properties.

3.1.2 Context-Relative versus Context-Independent

The distinction between belief and acceptance on the character of voluntariness can be extended to their differences in their respective characteristics regarding context. Acceptance is considered to be 'context-relative' and belief is 'context-independent.' A cognitive act that is contingent and flexible from context to context is noted to be 'context-relative' or 'context-specific.' If one is voluntarily able to accept or not accept a proposition, one is also able to actively choose when or where to accept, or not accept, a proposition. Like the $2 + 2 = 5$ game, some propositions may be relevant only to particular contexts.[25] Another example would be household customs: in some households it is customary to take off one's shoes, while in others it is not. On a similar note, one's immediate context is also relevant and may

---

[22] Cohen 1992: 23
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Bratman 1992: 5; Stalnaker 1984: 80-81

influence the decision to accept a proposition. One may accept a proposition in a pub setting over a few pints of beer but deny the same proposition in the setting of a serious seminar room. The importance of context points not only to 'when' and 'where' but also to who is in that context as well. In other words, there is a social dimension to acceptance. Peer-pressure is a similar but slightly different scenario. If all of Joe's friends thought that musician X was a bad musician and Joe did not have an opinion of the musician, Joe can easily accept, in that context, the proposition that X was a bad musician. In another setting, Joe could just as easily accept, amongst a different group of friends, that X was a good musician as well. In other words, Joe can easily accept one proposition in one context and its opposite in another. This is also to say that certain propositions may be accepted "without the expectation that [s]he will continue to accept it for very long."[26] This would also be the case for a Judge who will ultimately have to make a decision after accepting the arguments for both plaintiff and defendant. In this regard, acceptance is context-relative and allows the temporary acceptance of a proposition. As alluded to in the examples, this kind of context-relativity implies that there are various influences and practical demands[27] that can affect whether one accepts a proposition in a given context.[28]

By contrast, context-independence is not meant to be something that is independent of context but rather irrespective or regardless of context. One does not believe that God exists in one context and not in another. If one believes that God exists, not only does one think that 'God exists' is true but will believe that 'God exists' regardless of any context. It is in this sense, the literature indicates, that belief is context-independent. In this regard, the involuntary character of belief is inherently attached to a character of context-independence as well as a notion of 'truth.' One of the noted characteristics from the previous chapter, point (4), was that belief is associated with a subjective commitment to truth. This is the last distinction that differentiates belief from acceptance.

3.1.3 No aim for truth versus aim for truth

An aim or concern for truth implies a subjective commitment to a truth as true. The notion of 'aim' or 'concern' entails a valence, or direction, towards what one considers to be true

---

[26] Stalnaker 1984: 80; Stalnaker also mentions that acceptance can be compartmentalized in such a way that belief cannot. The issue of consistency will be discussed later on.

[27] Bratman 1992: 10

[28] Stalnaker 1984: 80

which does not necessarily entail that the belief is indeed true.[29] Although an 'aim' may raise issues of standards of evidence for determining truth and metaphorical truths, this is an epistemological and cross-cultural concern that will be discussed briefly below but is, by and large, beyond the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, irrespective of variable standards, belief in its involuntariness and context-independence, according to the epistemological literature, is associated with such an aim for truth. By contrast, acceptance – as a voluntary and context-relative cognitive act – is not necessarily concerned with an aim for truth. As noted above, the active acceptance of a proposition initially brackets or suspends its truth claim. One can accept the directions of a stranger without committing to the truth of those directions but act *as if* they are true. Similarly a Judge, or a neutral third party, may actively accept two contradictory claims without subscribing to the truth claim of either one. Moreover, it is also possible to deliberately accept a knowingly false premise as if it was true for a particular context. In other instances, one may accept a claim without knowing the contents of the claim. After such an acceptance, it is possible to deliberate and engage in reflective practices.

The relationship between belief and truth is qualified by an aim or concern for truth.[30] That is, belief *functions* in a manner that aims at truth and may or may not enable reflexivity whether the object of belief is true. Here, it is useful to consider Lindholm's types of 'belief' from the previous chapter as examples. The first type is derived from immediate experience: I believe that fire is hot. This type of 'belief' is considered to be true based on one's sensory experiences. The next type is learned from demonstration or one's intuitions: I believe that an axe is a tool for chopping. Unlike an 'aim for truth' based on one's sensory capacities, this type of 'belief' obtains its 'aim for truth' by virtue of being part of a society. Learning that an 'axe is used for chopping' by demonstration is a truth learned from observing somebody use an axe or one intuits its function based on prior intuitions informed through living in society. These types of 'belief' correspond with the character of 'involuntariness' in that they are the involuntary product of causal inferences. In this regard, intuitions are also 'involuntary.'

Lindholm's next type of 'belief' consists of claims "ratified by authority" and "verified by experiment." In other words, sources with epistemic authority establish 'an aim for truth' and legitimate its methodology. However, as Lindholm notes, 'beliefs' based on the authority of

---

[29] "[W]hether Dracula exists or not is less important … than the fact that Rachel believes and hopes that he will pay her a visit tonight" (Frijda, Manstead & Bem 2000: 4).
[30] Bratman 1992: 3; Cohen 1992: 11

others and their methods do not necessarily have an impact on one's day to day activities. Having a 'belief' in helio-centrism or geo-centrism of the solar system, or Pluto's planetary status, has no direct bearing on one's daily life. Nonetheless, these 'beliefs' maintain an 'aim for truth.' The next type of 'belief' translates into opinions that have a more direct effect on everyday experience. Lindholm gave the example, 'I believe that the bird I saw was a raven' and 'I believe you left the light on.' This type of 'belief' includes Alston's examples of 'Sam is trustworthy,' our favourite team will win, and 'murder is always wrong' as dispositional inclinations. However, these examples include an element of uncertainty – point (6) from the previous chapter – and do not necessarily have the same degree of commitment to truth as the previous types of 'belief' with experiential immediacy because they contain a degree of abstraction and reflective thought. While it may be a 'belief' in that the 'bird I saw was a raven' is an involuntary inference stated in multiple contexts, they are subject to correction without necessarily being committed to its truth claim. One may discover that it was not a raven or that Sam is not trustworthy. Similarly, one may find exceptions to the absolutist moral claim that 'murder is always wrong' and justify those exceptions. This raises the possibility that such statements are not beliefs but rather acceptances held for a period of time until they are corrected. By contrast, one may continue to hold a claim as a belief and deny others' attempt to correct it or point out one's inconsistencies – an issue which will be discussed further later on.

The last two types of 'belief' are instances of personal certainty and in some respects independent of externally legitimated norms. In other words, the 'aim for truth' becomes independent of conventional forms of verifying truth claims. The first example, 'I believe that there is a universal conspiracy against me,' contains an 'aim for truth' that entails a much stronger subjective commitment than the previous types of 'belief.' While this type of 'belief' can include immediate sensory experiences, its development is based on the inferences and connections one makes to create an underlying meaning that 'there is a universal conspiracy against me.' This type of 'belief' can include a personal conviction without supporting evidence or reason, point (3), and can also create a 'belief' in an object that may or may not exist, point (1), both of which are represented in the previous chapter. For the last type of

'belief,' 'strong belief,' the 'aim for truth' is legitimated by experiences interpreted as 'religious'[31] which are suggestive to the individual of some form of 'truth.'

The 'aim for truth' that constitutes a subjective commitment accounts for the variability across cultural forms and differing standards of evidence one may accept and/or believe. However, Stalnaker distinguishes 'correct beliefs' as 'beliefs' whose contents are true[32] and 'beliefs' held contrary to evidence are labelled as irrational or abnormal 'beliefs.' Pascal Engel states that one "whose beliefs are not shaped by a concern for their truth, but by what she wants to be the case, is more or less a wishful thinker or a self-deceiver."[33] An example is a wife believing "that her husband is faithful to her, in spite of all the lipstick she regularly finds on his collars" or a "Pascalian who does not believe in God decides to believe in God when he is shown the immense advantages of eternal bliss provided by that belief."[34] This kind of labelling of rational or irrational, correct and incorrect, with regard to 'beliefs' becomes a discussion of epistemic norms. The concept of 'correct beliefs' are then subject to cross-cultural variance of what constitutes 'evidence,'[35] which implies a variability of what is legitimated or acknowledged as 'evidence.' In other words, the qualification of 'evidence' and its interpretation makes normativity problematic. This also extends to the notion of 'wishful thinker' or 'self-deceiver' as the 'concern for truth' is also subject to variability. What one culture legitimates as evidence or an 'aim for truth' may not be considered to be valid in another.[36] Not only does this pertain to differences across different countries but also to cultural variations within a country.

Furthermore, an aim or concern for truth can easily be convoluted by conceptions of proper and improper, right and wrong, correct and incorrect. Notions of morality and various sets of ethics are not equivocal to notions of truth. This blends epistemic norms with moral norms. The 'sky is blue' is not the same kind of proposition as 'killing is wrong.' The former is a declarative statement of perception pertaining to 'the way things are' while the latter is a

---

[31] This invokes discussions of 'religious experiences,' which range from the experience of prayer and meditative activities to experiences of hearing the voice of a deity or similar kind of experience. This will be discussed further later on and for more in depth discussion Cf. Taves 2009.

[32] Stalnaker 1984: 80

[33] Engel 2000: 3

[34] Ibid.: 4

[35] Additional nuance is given to 'evidence' due to the concerns that surround basic perception and how eyewitness accounts have been problematized in the legal arena. That is, what one person witnesses is not always the same thing that another person witnesses even if both perceive the same event. This is exemplified by optical illusions and the relative unreliability of our visual system.

[36] Wittgenstein noted this with regard to various notions of causality.

normative statement about actions and justice relevant to 'the way things should or ought to be.' In this regard, an 'aim for truth' should exclude normative claims of justified 'belief' and the subtle blending of epistemic norms with moral norms from one culture as the default point of comparison in the study of religion and culture. Doing so perpetuates the dichotomy between 'us' and 'them' and leads to attitudinal positions of moral or epistemic superiority and righteousness.[37] The discussion of 'an aim for truth' and 'evidence' entails variability in the ways by which the involuntariness of belief is an expression of embodiment and its diversity.

3.2 BELIEF, ACCEPTANCE, AND THE PARADIGM OF EMBODIMENT

The characteristics above assist in distinguishing belief from acceptance and enable their recognition in various contexts. However, this distinction does not account for how beliefs are formed or develops their characteristics nor does it account for how beliefs and acceptances relate to the body. This section configures the epistemological distinction within the paradigm of embodiment and further addresses point (10) from the previous chapter that 'belief' is not a singular psychological state. Instead, belief's dispositional character is constitutive of an interactive holistic structure that comprises one's *habitus*.

The paradigm of embodiment can be viewed in at least four different, yet interrelated, ways. The first views embodiment in terms of "embodied cognition," which is to consider how one's physical body plays a "significant causal role, or a physically constitutive role," in one's cognitive processing.[38] For example, the loss of a limb will create the sensation of 'phantom limb' and influence one's cognitive processing.[39] There may be effects of how left-handedness or right-handedness influence associations of thought[40] or the way posture[41] can impact cognitions of self-evaluation. Each of these examples point to the various ways the body influences cognition. By contrast, the inverse is also evident. One's personal convictions can also impact the body. Examples include documented instances of stigmata or

---

[37] Further discussion extends into the area of moral psychology, religion, and politics (Haidt 2012).
[38] Wilson 2002; Shapiro 2007; Wilson & Foglia 2011; there are still many variations of how 'embodied cognition' is considered within the philosophy of mind and cognitive science literature.
[39] The phenomenon of 'phantom limb' is best explained in terms of the neural structures of the brain. That is, the brain has yet to re-structure its neural networks from the absence of a limb. When a limb is immediately severed, the brain still has the neural connections associated with that limb which creates the sensation of a 'phantom limb.' In order for the phenomenon to cease, the brain undergoes a process of restructuring the neural networks such that it is congruent with the absence of that particular limb.
[40] Casasanto 2009
[41] Briñol, Petty & Wagner 2009

cases of 'phantom pregnancy' (*pseudocyesis*)[42] – the most famous of which being Queen Mary Tudor. Not only does this indicate that the body influences 'beliefs' but 'beliefs' can also influence the body in dramatic ways. In many respects, this problematizes the distinction between cognitive and non-cognitive, mind and body, or brain and body. This distinction is a derivation of a phenomenological approach to the body as opposed to a physiological approach to the body. By contrast to how we may experience our bodies, the neural associations of the body are necessarily part of one's cognitive processing. Biologically, one cannot separate the brain from the nervous system; they are necessarily connected. This first way of considering embodiment engages with the particulars of cognitive science and the philosophy of mind and further includes the various ways emotions influence beliefs.[43] The second view of embodiment is considered in terms of the *processes* of social learning or the overall "process in which meaning is taken into or upon the body."[44] By contrast to the first view, this dimension of embodiment includes the various ways socio-cultural processes inform the construction and interpretation of our emotions; the many ways 'beliefs' influence the experience and interpretation of our emotions,[45] body, self, and understanding of reality. The third is to consider embodiment as the product of the second. That is, the process of socialization or enculturation – our embodiment – produces our *habitus*, our "socially informed body"[46] with "structuring structures."[47] According to Pierre Bourdieu, *habitus* represents the person as a composition of a

> … systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor. [48]

And lastly, embodiment includes the various expressions of *habitus*; that is, the "ways in which from society to society" persons "know how to use their bodies."[49] This includes both

---

[42] Phantom or false pregnancies refer to the phenomena of women and occasionally men – cases of "sympathetic pregnancies" (*couvade*) – who experiences all the symptoms of being pregnant but without carrying child. The duration of these symptoms may last for any period of time from several weeks to months to years.

[43] Frijda, Manstead & Bem 2000

[44] Csordas 1994: 20

[45] Frijda, Manstead & Bem (2000:1) note that "according to appraisal theory, emotions result from how the individual believes the world to be, how events are believed to come about, and what implications events are believed to have." This view is also discussed in an essay by Catherine Lutz (1986), 'The Anthropology of Emotions.'

[46] Bourdieu 1977: 124

[47] Ibid.: 72

[48] Ibid. (emphasis original)

[49] Mauss 1973: 70

implicit and explicit behaviour as well as the myriad of ways the body is one representative aspect of identity. All four dimensions of embodiment begin with the methodological premise of accounting for the role of the body in relation to cognition and simultaneously as the subject, or "existential grounds," of culture.[50] For purposes of clarity, hereinafter, the thesis will refer to the first view of embodiment as 'embodied cognition,' the second as 'embodiment,' the third as '*habitus*' and the fourth as the 'expressions of *habitus*.'

3.2.1 Belief and *Habitus*

The dispositional and involuntary character of belief configures into each of these four dimensions of the embodiment paradigm. The concept of *habitus*, as presented by Marcel Mauss, points primarily to the expressions of the body – 'expressions of *habitus*.' That is, the different ways people walk, swim, and have various cultural mannerisms and postures. Thomas Csordas summarizes it as the "sum total of culturally patterned uses" of the body in a given society.[51] However, pointing out the cultural patterns of practice and bodily movements does not capture the entirety of what *habitus* entails. According to Sam Whimster, Max Weber used the term as a "disposition to behave and view the world in a particular and distinctive manner."[52] In this sense, Weber adds the dispositions and habits of thought to the cultural nuances of behaviour and practice. Similarities can be found in Pierre Bourdieu's employment of the concept noted above. The "structured structures" that function as "structuring structures" accounts for both implicit and explicit processes, which are the product of social environmental influences as well as active engagements with one's social environment.

The structures mentioned by Bourdieu relate not only to the dispositional character of belief but it also finds resonance with the composite infrastructure constructed by those beliefs. Phillip Petit states that folk psychology is a "network of practical principles that govern reasoning"[53] constituted by practical beliefs "postulating networked connections."[54] He argues that "our beliefs are essentially built on an infrastructure of spontaneous dispositions and practice," an infrastructure of 'ethos' and 'habit.'[55] This emphasizes the socio-cultural influences on the structures that govern reasoning and practice. Given a belief derived from

---

[50] Csordas 1990: 5
[51] Ibid.: 11
[52] Swedberg 2005: 109
[53] Petit 1998: 31
[54] Ibid.: 30
[55] Ibid.: 28

socially legitimated systems of meaning, in the Weberian sense, one "who believes that p in the practical sense acts appropriately and is disposed to reason on an appropriate pattern."[56] That is, a belief in p locates one's self in a p-world: "thought can live only on grounds which we adopt in the service of a reality to which we submit."[57] Petit's proposed 'infrastructure' is analogous to Stalnaker's claim that belief and acceptance share a common structure. Stalnaker states that "the cluster of propositional attitudes which were grouped together under the label *acceptance* share a common structure with belief."[58] Similarly, Bratman calls this underlying structure, consisting of dispositional beliefs, a *default cognitive background* which engages and directs one's thinking and actions.[59] In this regard, beliefs can be argued to comprise a cognitive structure that make up one's *habitus* and influence what one may or may not accept. They are "structuring structures." Taken further, the philosophy literature discusses the relationship between beliefs and acceptances that lead to the 'expressions of *habitus*' mentioned above.

As social circumstances change, the things one previously assumed can also change and prompt one's default cognitive background to adjust accordingly.[60] That is, one's *habitus* functions as "the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations."[61] Bratman states that adjustments occur primarily in two ways: positing and bracketing.[62] Here, he refers to the context-relative character of acceptance. Accepting a premise in a particular context and positing a proposition can adjust how beliefs are managed in reasoning and behaviour. For example, one may not believe in 'the existence of God' but accept 'the existence of God' for the sake of argument in a particular context. In this sense, one's default cognitive background will remain the same but after positing the proposition one operates with an "adjusted default cognitive background."[63] Similarly, acceptances can have a 'bracketing' function. One may believe in 'God' but bracket the 'existence of God' for a particular context. Accepted propositions are "taken on board" and "included in one's

---

[56] Ibid.
[57] Polanyi 2009 [1966]: xix
[58] Stalnaker 1984: 99; Stalnaker further states that "a state of belief is most perspicuously represented, not by a set of sentences or propositions believed, but by the set of possibilities recognized as the ways the world may be" (Ibid.: 92).
[59] Bratman 1992: 10
[60] Ibid.
[61] Bourdieu 1977: 78
[62] Bratman 1992: 11
[63] Ibid.

repertoire of facts," then drawn upon in reasoning and behaviour.[64] In this regard, through bracketing or positing, one can make the proper adjustments to one's default cognitive background. One may believe p but not accept p or one may accept p but not believe p. [65] The acceptance of a proposition can influence how one's beliefs translate or play a role in one's reasoning processes. In other cases, one's beliefs can also place constraints on what is, or is not, accepted. Stalnaker states that "our current conception of the way the world is constrains our dispositions to change our beliefs in response to new evidence, and those dispositions may contribute to the formation of concepts in terms of which we describe the world."[66] Similarly, Cohen states that "in deciding on what to accept we often need to presume that our subconscious belief-inducing mechanisms – and especially those of perception and memory – have operated veridically, as they normally have done in similar situations in the past."[67]

The distinction between belief and acceptance also finds support in the cognitive sciences and 'dual-system' or 'dual-process' theories of cognition.[68] In general, System 1 or Type 1 involves intuitive processes and "operates automatically and quickly, with little or no effort and no sense of voluntary control."[69] They are "fast, automatic, and non-conscious"[70] which invokes the involuntary character of belief. System 2, or Type 2 processes, are explicit and

---

[64] Alston 1996: 9

[65] Bratman 1992: 9; Stalnaker 1984: 93; Alston 1996; Cohen 1992, 2000; Ullman-Margalit & Margalit 1992; van Fraasen 1980. David Clarke (2000) is in opposition and holds that acceptance is not possible without belief. The problem of whether acceptance is possible without belief is a variation of 'Moore's Paradox' – a term coined by Wittgenstein. The paradox represents an issue of absurdity in analytical philosophy and is exemplified by the statement: "it is raining but I don't believe that it is raining" or "it is raining but I believe that it is not raining." The paradox has been addressed by Wittgenstein (1958 [1953]) in his *Philosophical Investigations* and discussed in much more depth than the scope and ability of this dissertation by prominent philosophers such as: Jaako Hintikka (1962) *Knowledge and Belief: An Introduction to the Logic of the Two Notions*, Roy Sorenson (1988) *Blindspots*, David Rosenthal (1995) 'Moore's Paradox and Consciousness,' Sydney Shoemaker (1995) 'Moore's Paradox and Self-Knowledge.' The discussion is taken further and given more analytical nuance in *Believing and Accepting* edited by Pascal Engel (2000).

[66] Stalnaker 1984: 98; this is also echoed by Ullman-Margalit & Margalit (1992).

[67] Cohen 1992: 17

[68] Frankish 2010; Evans (2008) provides a review of the literature and states that there are multiple Type 1 processes, which can make a coherent framework difficult for Type 1 and System 1 models. Kahneman (2011) develops this model in terms of System 1 and System 2, which are fictitious characters to reflect cognitive processes in reasoning. Sperber (1997) makes a similar distinction between intuitive and reflective beliefs. Baumard and Boyer (2013) develop this model for reasoning processes in the cognitive science of religion.

[69] Kahneman 2011: 20; System 1 or Type 1 processes – as innate unconscious capacities – include what Daryl Bem (1970) called "zero-order beliefs" that involve the beliefs informed by our senses, i.e. 'this apple is green' is true. Moreover, Type 1 processes include what is referred to as "intuitive processes" or "intuitive beliefs," which are the "outputs of specialized cognitive systems" (Baumard & Boyer 2013). These processes include 'implicit biases' about race and sex, among other things, as well as much of what has been discussed in the cognitive science of religion (Baumard & Boyer 2013; Willard & Norenzayan 2013) and developmental psychology (Kinzler & Spelke 2007). Philosophically, innate dispositional capacities have led some philosophers to argue that non-human animals have beliefs (Cohen 1992).

[70] Frankish 2010: 914

reflective processes which allocate "attention to the effortful mental activities"[71] and "activated when an event is detected that violates the model of the world that System 1 maintains."[72] Generally these processes are considered to be "slow, controlled, and conscious" and often "rule-based, analytic or reflective."[73] System 2, or Type 2 processes, hold the characteristics of acceptance. Daniel Kahneman states that:

> … the main function of System 1 is to maintain and update a model of your personal world, which represents what is normal in it. The model is constructed by associations that link ideas of circumstances, events, actions, and outcomes that co-occur with some regularity, either at the same time or within a relatively short interval. As these links are formed and strengthened, the pattern of associated ideas comes to represent the pattern of events in your life, and it determines your interpretation of the present as well as your expectations of the future.[74]

In this regard, the dual-process or dual-system theories discuss the "structuring structures" composed of beliefs in terms of maintaining and updating a "model of your personal world, which represents what is normal in it." This is not to state that there is an actual representative model of the world inside one's head but rather that one's *habitus* is well adapted to navigate one's appropriated world in thought and practice.

3.2.2 Embodiment: from acceptance to belief

Thus far, the interdisciplinary dialogue towards a richer understanding of 'belief' has mapped the characteristics of belief and acceptance in relation to the points from the anthropological literature and how the distinction pertains to embodiment. Furthermore, the belief and acceptance distinction corresponds with dual-process or dual-system theories of reasoning and make up the "structured structures" that function as the "structuring structures" of *habitus*. This mitigates any particular Christian influence on the term and grounds the discussion with contemporary perspectives in cognitive science. However, it is not clear how belief acquires its involuntary and dispositional character. The process of embodiment enables this discussion and translates how Weberian modes of externally legitimated systems of meaning become Durkheimian modes of belief and identity. Bourdieu states that *habitus* is "history turned into nature" and the unconscious structures are "never anything other than the forgetting of history."[75] In this sense, beliefs can be viewed simultaneously as the units of

---

71 Kahneman 2011: 21
72 Ibid.: 24
73 Frankish 2010: 914
74 Kahneman 2011: 71
75 Bourdieu 1977: 78-79

cultural history and the *units of embodiment* that compose the generative and improvisational structures that makeup one's socially informed body.

As mentioned earlier, beliefs about the world can constrain what is, or is not, accepted. Conversely, what is accepted as evidence – propositions, items, stimuli – can influence the development of beliefs. In this sense, beliefs and acceptances construct an affective-effective symbiotic relationship. There is a degree of manipulability in one's beliefs, either directly or indirectly, through voluntary actions and decisions. The "form of life one chooses may lead one to acquire certain beliefs that one may have actually set out to acquire."[76] Beliefs may "up to a point 'grow in' one or 'come over' one" and may be "subject to our indirect manipulation."[77] This is the case of "passive acceptance" noted by Stalnaker above. A "form of life" that includes a disposition to trust unknown persons, due to a history of receiving correct information from strangers, can lead to a habit of accepting information as true from unknown sources. However, such underlying dispositions of trust, or others, are not explicit but implicit beliefs. As a result, Cohen notes, there are times when the feelings which "would have exemplified the belief" do not occur because of a "difficulty in remembering" or a "need or want to concentrate on other relevant matters."[78] Due to the network of beliefs, there may be "too many relevant beliefs for them all to be activated within the same span of consideration."[79] By contrast to passive developments, embodiment can occur by actively learning a behaviour or skill. For example, one may actively and voluntarily begin learning how to play the guitar. Over time, with persistence and practice, one's movements become involuntary and the skill of playing the guitar is acquired. In this sense, the ability to play the guitar, or any other similar practice, becomes a dispositional and involuntary belief. Similarly, continuously repeating a narrative or idea can also become dispositional and involuntary. The socially informed body, *habitus*, is then an indirect and passive product of one's active and direct engagement with the world. The formation of involuntary beliefs is paradoxically both an active and non-active endeavour.[80]

---

[76] Ullman-Margalit & Margalit 1992: 179
[77] Ibid.
[78] Cohen 1992: 7
[79] Ibid.: 8
[80] For Ullman-Margalit and Margalit (1992), taking propositions based on trust is a "combination of involuntaristic and decisional elements" (180).

In this regard, belief acquisition is contingent upon the actions and decisions within the scope of life one leads and the drive or 'aim for truth' – one of the characteristics of belief – that motivates embodiment.[81] The evidence one accepts *as true* can shape what one believes *to be true*. One factor within this dynamic is the influence of other persons. For example when visiting, or living in, another country the local people become an important source of information for local conventions and what is to be expected.[82] In this sense, we rely on other persons, in varying degrees, as a means of determining 'reality' and 'truth.'[83] When things become increasingly uncertain, "people tend to rely more and more on 'social reality' – that is, they are more likely to conform to what other people are doing." [84] The group's collective behaviour and expressions become standards of measure and a source of valuable information in the face of uncertainties. Elliot Aronson, a social psychologist, states that "the more faith an individual has in the expertise and trust-worthiness of the other person, the greater the tendency to follow his or her lead and conform to his or her behaviour."[85] Research has also suggested that the appearance of authority – symbolized by a uniform – lends "legitimacy to a demand, thereby generating a high rate of compliance."[86] In other words, the underlying belief of trust in certain persons – friends, family, experts, or authority figures – can influence what is or is not accepted (the influence of persons will be portrayed further in the ensuing chapters on the three case studies). Similarly, instead of an underlying belief of trust, it may be an attraction or appeal to *habitus* that leads one to accept certain propositions. That is, "if we find a person or group attractive or appealing in some way, we will be inclined to accept influence from the person or group and adopt similar values and attitudes – not to obtain a reward or avoid punishment, but simply to be like the person or group."[87] Such appeals, or various attractions, to one's socially informed body are *valences of affinity*[88] that account for

---

[81] Social psychologist Elliot Aronson discusses this in terms of 'internalization,' which is when a value or belief becomes permanent and is "the most deeply rooted response to social influence. The motivation to internalize a particular belief is the desire to be right" (2008: 37).

[82] Aronson 2008: 28

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.; Festinger 1954

[85] Ibid.; Mullen, Cooper & Driskell 1990

[86] Ibid.: 27; Bushman 1988; Gladwell 2000

[87] Ibid.: 36; Cohen & Prinstein 2006

[88] According to Richard H. Howe, there is not a clear definition of what Weber meant by 'elective affinities.' Howe's systematic analysis of the term situates the phrase in terms of value and notes the "degree" of an elective affinity is dictated by the "number of positive inner affinities between two elements" (1978: 381). My use of the term 'valences of affinity' is not so complex. It merely denotes personal inclinations of aesthetics and leanings which may or may not contain a certain value and aims to capture a sense of directionality and intentionality in our actions and thoughts. In this regard, 'valences of affinity' situates and aims to negotiate a nature via nurture position in that our actions are individual and socially learned.

one's dispositional inclinations,[89] personal taste, style of aesthetic, or anything else that one may be drawn towards. This dynamic of cognitive change and valences of affinity will be discussed further in the next chapter on cognitive dissonance, which draws on everyday circumstances of decision-making and behaviour.

Having mentioned the role of other persons in the process of embodiment, the participation in collective actions can also have a significant influence on the development of a socially informed body. Here, the discussion of 'ritual' is relevant. A number of anthropologists have argued for its critical role in belief-formation.[90] Rappaport, noted above, defines ritual as "*the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers*"[91] and considers ritual to be the "*social act basic to humanity.*"[92] It is through ritual that "religion's major conceptual and experiential constituents, the sacred, the numinous, the occult and the divine, and their integration into the Holy" are created. The "constituents are *entailments* of the *form*"[93] such that the participation in ritual functions as the "*establishment of convention, the sealing of social contract*."[94] In this regard Rappaport argues that certain religious 'beliefs,' what he calls 'Ultimate Sacred Postulates' and 'cosmological axioms' obtain their legitimacy through ritual. 'Ultimate Sacred Postulates' are "postulates concerning the existence and power of spirits" that are "implicit in the highly stylized addresses to those spirits occurring in all major rituals."[95] They include statements like "Christ is the son of God," "Mohammad is the Prophet of Allah,"[96] or the Jewish declaration of faith, 'Shema': "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one."[97] 'Cosmological axioms' are associated with the above but are "*principles* stipulating enduring features of the 'cosmos' general structure and values (e.g., reciprocity and wholeness)."[98]

---

[89] Noting that dispositional inclinations may have a genetic component, valences of affinity can also denote various manifestations of personality (the 'Big Five' and its genetic possibilities are noted in chapter 5 with regard to levels of meaning and personality).
[90] Harding 1987; Rappaport 1999; McCauley 2001; Atran & Norenzayan 2004
[91] Rappaport 1999: 24 (emphasis original)
[92] Ibid. (emphasis original)
[93] Ibid.: 3 (emphasis original)
[94] Ibid.: 27 (emphasis original)
[95] Ibid. : 263
[96] Ibid.: 290
[97] Ibid.: 263
[98] Ibid.: 273

One of the major characteristics of 'Ultimate Sacred Postulates,' is that "they are generally devoid, or close to devoid of material significata."[99] This invokes point (1) from the previous chapter, mentioned by Needham, that the object of 'belief' may or may not exist and leads to point (3) about evidence and point (4) about subjective commitment to truth. That is, 'Ultimate Sacred Postulates' are "invulnerable to falsification by reference to evidence naturally available in this world" although they can be "invalidated by being ignored or rejected, they cannot be falsified."[100] Anthropologist Scott Atran and psychologist Ara Norenzayan further state that this type of religious 'belief,' 'Ultimate Sacred Postulates,' does not necessarily have a fixed propositional content but are propositional attitudes towards the implied object of religious 'beliefs.' Because of this characteristic, as Rappaport notes, they cannot be validated inductively or deductively, instead they are affirmed by the emotions that motivate the religion and addressed in ritual.[101] In other words, rituals provide 'Ultimate Sacred Postulates,' 'cosmological axioms' and similar religious beliefs, with immunity to further scrutiny[102] and "can be secured by means that do not conform to the requirements of scientific validation."[103] For Rappaport, rituals enable this quality because "the Ultimate Sacred Postulate never wholly escapes from its performative grounding … the persistence of its validity as a social fact is contingent upon its continual enunciation."[104] That is, the emotions evoked during ritual and elsewhere can motivate the perpetuation, management, and development of 'beliefs.'

However, merely pointing to this relationship between 'belief,' emotion, and ritual does not establish the formation of a dispositional belief. For Rappaport, the participation in ritual is an act of 'acceptance.' But he uses 'acceptance' in a slightly different, yet nonetheless related, way to the concept of acceptance in this chapter. Rappaport designates 'acceptance' as a "*public act*, visible both to witnesses and to performers themselves."[105] Much like the distinction between belief and acceptance made above, Rappaport also contends that 'acceptance' does not imply 'belief' although it may or may not be motivated by 'belief.'[106] Either with or without 'belief,' the participation in ritual is a public declarative act of

---

[99] Ibid.: 264
[100] Ibid.: 280
[101] Atran & Norenzayan 2004: 713
[102] Atran & Heinrich 2010
[103] Rappaport 1999: 281
[104] Ibid.: 280; Kahneman (2011) also states something similar: "A reliable way to make people believe in falsehoods is frequent repetition, because familiarity is not easily distinguished from truth" (62).
[105] Rappaport 1999: 120
[106] Ibid.

'acceptance.' And while the participation in ritual does not necessitate the formation of 'belief' or "transform the private state of the performer" from acceptance to belief, the "ambiguity, ambivalence and volatility of the private processes are subordinated to a simple and unambiguous public act, sensible both to the performers themselves and to witnesses as well."[107] The participation in ritual is then a form of social contract and establishes "conventional understandings, rules and norms in accordance with which everyday behaviour is *supposed* to proceed." For example, the "participation in a ritual in which a prohibition against adultery is enunciated by, among others, himself has both enlivened and accepted. *Whether or not he abides by that rule, he has obliged himself to do so*. If he does not, he has violated an obligation that he himself has avowed."[108] In other words, rituals publicize collective acceptances.[109] Within this framework of ritual, Rappaport proposes that 'Ultimate Sacred Postulates,' 'cosmological axioms,' and certain customs of morality are perpetuated.[110] In this sense there is a relationship between ritual and 'belief' in terms of embodiment. The question is then how does a public act of acceptance, that is not a subjective commitment to truth as true, become a dispositional belief?

Rappaport's point raises questions about the frequency and form of ritual performance. This has led to contemporary debates regarding which plays a bigger factor in the processes of transmission and belief formation. Philosopher and cognitive scientist Robert McCauley maps the two camps. The *ritual frequency hypothesis*, as advocated by anthropologist Harvey Whitehouse, argues:

> … the *frequency* of ritual performance is the critical variable that determines how much emotional stimulation any ritual involves. Rituals often performed need not incorporate means for arousing much emotion. The sheer frequency of their performance insures their retention. In contrast, rarely performed rituals stir participants' emotions, as their infrequent performance cannot insure their retention.[111]

The distinction, then, is between high frequency and low arousal as opposed to low frequency and high arousal rituals. By contrast, McCauley advances the *ritual form hypothesis*, which holds that "it is participants' mostly tacit knowledge of *ritual form* – rather than ritual

---

[107] Ibid.: 122-123

[108] Ibid.: 123

[109] In terms of the belief and acceptance distinction, this is a shift from the notion of "collective beliefs" to "collective acceptances," which has also been argued in the philosophical literature (Wray 2001).

[110] Douglas Davies (2008) notes the significance of the anthropological notion by Chapple and Coon (1947) of 'rites of intensification,' "ritual moments in which a group gathered to re-engage with their basic values, an approach clearly echoing Durkheimian notions of society generating the very categories of thought and fostering the emotional experiences bringing them to practical life" (9).

[111] McCauley 2001: 116

frequency – that is the critical variable determining how much emotional firepower a religious ritual possesses."[112] Both camps agree that emotions play a critical role in the formation of belief and the transmission of religious culture. However, they differ on what gives ritual its emotional impact that motivates the religion and the formation of belief. This is not to state that a single or sporadic participation in ritual will give rise to belief, time certainly plays a factor. The participation and duration for an 'Ultimate Sacred Postulate' to gain familiarity will be discussed later on in chapter 5 with the discussion on conversion. The emphasis on emotion and ritual as the medium by which emotions can provide belief its dispositional character also insinuates how emotions can relate to an 'aim for truth' and contribute to the strength, or degree of importance, of an individual's beliefs.

As noted above, an 'aim for truth' can conflate moral truths with epistemic truths. Although the two can be interrelated, judgments about *what ought to be* are not the same as judgments about *what is* the case. The former can certainly influence the latter and vice versa. The relationships between belief and emotions have long been discussed by scholars and approached from various perspectives.[113] In the paradigm of embodiment, Davies discusses belief and emotions through 'moral-somatics,' which are "the way human bodies respond to social values and the actions of other people."[114] Such connections are evidenced by pedestrian observations of cultural cuisines and expressions of disgust. What may be a common dish for one culture may be disgusting and morally objectionable in another. In recent years, research has been conducted noting the influence of 'disgust' on moral judgments. Philosopher Jesse Prinz, who argues for the "emotional construction of morals," describes two recent studies:

> In one study, Wheatley and Haidt (2005) hypnotized subjects to feel a pang of disgust when they hear either the word "take" or the word "often." They are then asked to evaluate morally the protagonist of various stories containing one of these two words. For example, they hear about a congressman who "is often bribed" or "takes bribes." The wrongness evaluations go up when the word choice corresponds to the word that triggers disgust in the subject. In fact, when the trigger word is used in neutral stories, subjects tend to condemn the protagonist as well. For example, they hear about a student in charge of scheduling discussions in school, who *often* picks interesting topics. Subjects who are disgusted when they here the word "often" find this student morally suspect, though they can't say why ("He seems like he's up to something"). In another study, Schnall et al. (2005) asked subjects to make moral evaluations of stories while sitting at a desk that was either tidy or filthy. The filthy desk has an old greasy pizza carton next to it, a chewed up pencil, used tissues, and a dirty beverage

---

[112] Ibid.: 117
[113] Frijda, Manstead & Bem 2000
[114] Davies 2011: 186

cup. Subjects who are good at introspecting their emotions (as measured by a body self-awareness scale that is correlated with emotion awareness) responded differently. Those seated at the filthy desk judged the scenarios to be worse than subjects seated at the clean desk.[115]

These studies indicate that the feelings of disgust may have a constitutive or causal role in moral judgments.[116] It has also been reported that increased experiences of unpleasantness tend to favour utilitarian choice patterns.[117] The evidence and arguments presented suggest that beliefs contain an emotional component which influences belief's dispositional character and, to some extent, its 'aim for truth' that may conflate moral and epistemic truths. In practical circumstances, beliefs can determine which situations to accept or not accept a proposition one believes not to be true, or situations in which a belief of trust is relevant for the acceptance, or non-acceptance, of a proposition for further deliberation. This would also indicate that beliefs are, in part, constituents of action, reasons for action, and reasons about actions after the act. However, the relationship between 'belief' and behaviour has been subject to considerable debate.

3.2.3 Expressions of *Habitus* and Acceptance

Within the epistemological literature, some have argued that belief is not behavioural while others argue that belief is behavioural. For Jonathan Cohen, belief is not a disposition to perform a certain kind of action but primarily a feeling of veracity towards a proposition.[118] There are times when a proposition is felt to be true but does not result in action or any kind of verbal expression in accordance with that belief.[119] Similarly, William Alston states that "one can feel very certain that p but (frequently) not act as if one believed it and seldom use it in one's reasoning where appropriate."[120] Conversely, one may act *as if* one believed p but did not in fact believe p.[121] Both instances point to the possible discrepancies between internal processes and observable expressions or representations of those processes. This discrepancy has been noted by Needham as a point of concern for ethnographers in the field. Cohen notes the importance of distinguishing between the "disposition to execute certain

---

[115] Prinz 2007: 28
[116] For a more philosophical argument for the role of emotions in morality Cf. Prinz 2007
[117] Carmona-Perera et al. 2014
[118] Cohen 1992: 12
[119] "Consider someone who has a disposition to feel that p and lacks the disposition to speak and act accordingly. You can hardly deny that he believes that p, even if you may never know of such a reticent person unless he is yourself." Cohen 1992: 10
[120] Alston 1996: 6
[121] "By speaking and acting as if he feels that p, a person may be trying to deceive others into thinking that he believes that p, even though he actually has no such belief. Pretended belief has to be distinguished from real belief" (Cohen 1992: 8).

utterances and actions," which can, but not necessarily, be a sign of a person's belief and the "disposition to have certain feelings, which is what constitutes the belief."[122] In other words, Cohen discerns between the disposition for action and the disposition for a feeling. However, this begs the question about the relationship between behaviour and emotion. Just as internal processes are not necessarily reflected in action, it is not always possible to deduce belief from observing behaviour. In this regard, for Cohen, behaviour is *not* a necessary function of belief.

Robert Stalnaker also states that beliefs are dispositions allowing us to feel that something is true but, in contrast to Cohen's position, argues that beliefs dispose us to behave accordingly in various circumstances.[123] That is, belief *is* a "conditional disposition to act,"[124] which is represented by the recognition of a set of possibilities in "ways the world may be."[125] In this view, beliefs constitute a framework by which one perceives and acts within the world. If one believes that p, and p is not hindered by another belief, then one is disposed to act and reason with the underlying disposition that p. Philip Petit discusses this in terms of acting and reasoning on a p-pattern.[126] One can reason and behave appropriately from context to context while maintaining one's beliefs. Beliefs then take on a latent as well as an active role within our behaviours and reason.[127] Dispositions are capable of being "displayed in different kinds of situations,"[128] which allows one to react in various ways in relation to certain propositions.[129] In this view, the lack of action can also be seen as a form of behaviour which reflects one's beliefs. If one holds the belief that 'blue is a bad colour' but also believes that one should not ask about another's favourite colour, the belief is then oriented towards inaction of inquiring about a possible negative. This is often reflected in social conventions of taboo. If one holds to similar taboos and believes it inappropriate to inquire, then the belief is still a disposition for an action, albeit an inaction. In this regard, there are beliefs that are constrained from expression or action because of another belief or acceptance.

---

[122] Cohen 1992: 10
[123] Stalnaker 1984, Petit 1998: 15
[124] Stalnaker 1984: 82
[125] Ibid.: 98
[126] Pettit (1998:15-16): "to believe something is to be disposed to behave as if it were true. It is to be disposed to behave in such a way that, other things being equal, the behaviour maximizes the expected satisfaction of the agent's desires […]. Under this account of belief, that means that the agent's behaviour is of a sort that would maximize the expected satisfaction of his or her desires, other things being equal, in a p-world. […] Believing that p means that so far as your behavioural dispositions go, you treat the actual world as a p-world. For short, you act or behave as if p."
[127] Alston 1996: 4
[128] Stalnaker 1984: 84
[129] Alston 1996: 8

While this addresses the point (9) that belief is not behavioural, it can be argued that belief is indeed behavioural but that expression may be inaction due to the interactions of a belief with other beliefs and acceptances. This makes the deduction of belief from behaviour difficult. Moreover, the information one accepts can also influence one's behaviour. While one's network of beliefs that compose the structures of *habitus* "is the source of […] moves which are objectively organized as strategies without being the product of a genuine strategic intention,"[130] acceptances provide pieces of information to create the intentions for strategic action. In this regard, both belief and acceptance can have behavioural expressions. However, it is difficult to discern which behaviours are primarily due to belief, and the underlying structures of a *habitus*, and which behaviours are on the basis of acceptance. Due to this rich underlying network of "structuring structures" there are inconsistencies that can arise in behaviour and thought. This provides another layer of complexity for the investigation of belief and further complicates "belief" for ethnographers.

3.2.4 Consistency

One of the more outstanding issues in the study of 'belief,' noted by anthropologists in the previous chapter, is its inconsistency. Epistemologists have also addressed this issue in terms of belief and acceptance. According to Stalnaker, acceptances can be compartmentalized and inconsistent in such a way that belief cannot.[131] As mentioned before, with acceptance's context-relative character, one can accept something in one context and not accept the same thing in another context. This allows one to compartmentalize acceptances without committing to them. By contrast, Stalnaker argues that distinct and contradictory beliefs cannot be held without any reason why "these belief states cannot be incompatible."[132] In other words, one must have a reason that justifies to him or her self that these beliefs are not incompatible. This places limitations on the claim that beliefs are consistent, coherent, and compatible with one another. [133] Stalnaker states that it is not that "beliefs *are* always integrated into a single state, but rather they ought to be."[134] The claim that beliefs are consistent is a normative claim although he adds that "an agent who discovers a conflict

---

[130] Bourdieu 1977: 73
[131] Stalnaker 1984: 80-81
[132] Ibid.: 83
[133] Evers et al. (2014) found that there is a general degree of emotional coherence within reflective and automatic systems (from dual-process theories) but that they can be inconsistent across each other. This leads to the discussion in the following chapter on cognitive dissonance.
[134] Stalnaker 1984: 83

between his separate beliefs must modify them in some way. One cannot agree to disagree with oneself."[135] In this regard, Stalnaker adds the condition of conscious awareness: beliefs are only consistent and compatible with each other insofar as one is aware and conscious of them *as* consistent. If one is unaware of an inconsistency then it is fully possible to have distinct belief states that are incompatible. It is not until one "recognizes the consequences of the conjunction of separate beliefs" that one either "accept(s) the consequences or abandon(s) one of the original beliefs."[136] Stalnaker then appeals to a descriptive account of beliefs rather than an ideal structure of cognition which would have all beliefs compatible and coherent between and amongst them.

However, the inconsistency of beliefs is not limited to one's cognitive activities. There are also inconsistencies in behaviour which can be accounted for by acting on acceptances contrary to a belief or acting on dispositions that lead to behaviour which one is unaware. This opens the possibility of having unknown implicit beliefs that are part of one's *habitus* which can create the phenomena of self-deception. In other words, there are instances when our behaviours may be inconsistent with our thoughts or inconsistent with other behaviours and actions of which we are unaware. Common examples can be found by those who declare one thing but their actions incongruent with that claim. Other examples can point to those who are pro-life with regard to abortion and yet pro-death penalty for convicted felons. One may believe that 'killing is wrong' and yet hold the view that 'war is justified.' As noted above, such observances are complicated with the introduction of acceptances that provides additional texture to the observation of inconsistencies. Nonetheless, there are cases of a person holding inconsistent or discrepant beliefs and dispositions for negotiating and navigating their realities without ever perceiving them as inconsistent. In this regard, the philosophical literature addresses point (2) about inconsistency from the anthropological literature. The following chapter will take up this issue further in its discussion of the theory of cognitive dissonance.

3.3 CONCLUSION

The previous chapter ended with eleven points about 'belief.' This chapter engaged these points about 'belief' through the epistemological distinction between belief and acceptance. In addition, the significance of embodiment noted in anthropology was also carried over to

---

[135] Ibid.: 84
[136] Stalnaker 1984: 83

further situate and complement belief and acceptance. Notably, the paradigm of embodiment could be discussed in four different ways to facilitate this process. Belief and acceptance provided a distinction to further discern the eleven characteristics of 'belief' that have complicated and problematized 'belief' for ethnographers.

Only two of these points, however, were not discussed by the belief and acceptance distinction. The first, point (8), noted how the representation of 'belief' in Christianity should *not* be used as a model in the representation of 'belief' in other cultures and religions. The distinction between belief and acceptance, while conceived out of a western philosophical tradition, provides a set of characteristics that are not exclusive to any particular religious tradition but appeals to the cognitive structures engaged in thinking noted by dual-process theories supported by evidence from the cognitive and neuro- sciences. In this regard, the belief and acceptance distinction can apply to any cultural framework and is not particular to any religious thought. Situating 'belief' within the constructs of the mundane allows the concept to be considered in terms of Bourdieu's *habitus* as the units that compose the "structuring structures" and the socially informed body. That is, belief is the unit that contains social and historically relevant information, externally legitimated forms of meaning, which are embodied and contribute to the construction of identity. Not only does belief pertain to forms of embodied cognition but dispositional inclinations of behaviour as well.

The second point, (11), notes that focusing on what 'belief' is misdirects the intention of conveying the experience of reality in other cultures and religions. However, as noted earlier, it is curious how a discussion about how to represent and methodologically investigate 'belief' can be detached from conveying the experience of reality in another culture or religion. Ruel suggested anthropologists focus on the object of 'belief' and its influence on the community. However, without considering how to represent and investigate 'belief,' ethnographic accounts are subject to misplacing the significance of an object and its configuration in the experience of reality. It is certainly worth questioning the extent to which a phenomenology of the "other" can even be accurately represented by only focusing on the objects of 'belief.'

Thus far, the eleven points of 'belief' from the anthropological literature have been in conversation with epistemology and given further nuance and texture through the distinction and the framework of embodiment. The distinction between belief and acceptance can be summarized as follows:

Belief	Acceptance
Involuntary	Voluntary
Context-Independent	Context-Relative
Aim for truth	No necessary aim for truth

In addition, both belief and acceptances can have behavioural expressions which include the lack of action as well. The network of "structuring structures" and the incorporation of various accepted pieces of information can lead to the lack of behavioural expression in various contexts. The dispositional inclinations of belief have been also discussed in terms of *valences of affinity*. With respect to the ethnographer, although the epistemological distinction provides a sharper focus to discern 'belief,' the ambiguous relationship between belief and behaviour continues to remain. As noted in the previous chapter, the observation of singular episodes of expression is insufficient to determine belief. Moreover, behaviour can be grounded on various acceptances which can create inconsistencies and make the inference of belief from behaviour problematic.

The following chapter will address the issue of inconsistency that has created concerns for both philosophers and anthropologists. Both beliefs and acceptances has been noted to be inconsistent not only between and amongst them but discrepancies arise in relation to behaviour as well. Here, the interdisciplinary dialogue extends into the discipline of social psychology and the theory of cognitive dissonance which specifically engages with the issue of inconsistency and continues the discussion on 'belief' within the paradigm of embodiment.

4
BELIEF, ACCEPTANCE, AND COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The issue of consistency has been duly noted from the literature in both the anthropology of religion and epistemology. However, drawing on various observances in behaviour and language, the inconsistencies have seldom been investigated in considerable depth.[1] By contrast, the field of social psychology has devoted an area of research aimed specifically at this issue in the theory of cognitive dissonance. This chapter will engage this literature and contribute to the interdisciplinary dialogue by addressing the issue of inconsistency in terms of belief and acceptance as well as consider its broader implications within the paradigm of embodiment.

The chapter begins with an overview of the theory of cognitive dissonance and a discussion of belief and acceptance within each of the four research paradigms advancing the theory. This is followed by a few emergent revision theories of cognitive dissonance, which argue for the significance of beliefs about the self not only with regard to one's self-concept or sense of integrity but also a sense of responsibility towards the consequences of one's actions as well as one's committed views on a variety of things. This further engages a sense of subjectively committed truths or an 'aim for truth' in relation to the self. The chapter then proceeds to cross-cultural considerations of how different cultures find discrepancies and experience dissonance. In conclusion, the chapter ends with a few comments on how the research paradigms of cognitive dissonance could be developed to illuminate whether beliefs or acceptances are involved in the reduction of dissonance and the durability of such cognitive changes. The theory of cognitive dissonance provides further nuance to the issue of 'inconsistency' in that while beliefs may be inconsistent, the awareness of discrepancies can motivate one to resolve them with other beliefs or acceptances.

4.1 THEORY OF COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

The basic observance in the theory of cognitive dissonance (which will also be referred to as 'dissonance theory') is that we are not always consistent with what we say and what we do.[2] For example, one may not believe that 'Jesus was born on the 25th of December' but still

---

[1] Notably, Stringer (1996) has engaged this issue in his article on a 'situational theory of belief.'
[2] Festinger 1957: 1

participate in Christmas festivities. A doctor may say that 'smoking is bad for you' but smokes a cigarette during lunch. The examples are abundant. Given the occurrence of such discrepancies, the theory of cognitive dissonance considers the relationship between cognition, propositional statements, and behaviour/action.

Leon Festinger, who first proposed the theory, began with the assumption that we, as persons, strive towards consistency,[3] an ideal of cognitive integrity and subsequently congruent behaviour.[4] By 'cognition,' Festinger means "any knowledge, opinion, or belief about the environment, about oneself, or about one's behaviour."[5] Psychologist Joel Cooper further adds that cognition, within the theory of cognitive dissonance, can "refer to many different types of psychological concepts. An action is different from an attitude which, in turn, is different from an observation of reality. However, each of these has a psychological representation – and that is what is meant by cognition."[6] In this regard, cognition is equivocal to any and all "psychological representation(s)" that pertains to an action, attitude, or observation regarding one's reality, environment, self, behaviour, and relationships. Cognition, in this sense, is navigational and relational to the world in which one is living.

By contrast, Ulrich Neisser, the "Father of Cognitive Psychology," defined 'cognition' as "all processes by which the sensory input is transformed, reduced, elaborated, stored, recovered, and used. It is concerned with these processes even when they operate in the absence of relevant stimulation, as in images and hallucinations."[7] Like the scholars of dissonance theory, Neisser provides a broad definition of cognition but with a point of emphasis that resonates with the dual-system or dual-process theories mentioned in the previous chapter. That is, while dissonance theory emphasizes cognition as *about* some thing, Neisser was concerned with the perceptual processes that provide cognition its content, and places all such processes under the term 'cognition.'

---

[3] Ibid.

[4] Whether such an ideal is strived for across cultures or something particular to western cultures and influence is uncertain. The cross-cultural research will be discussed later on. If such an ideal is indeed something that people of the 'west' (Western Europe and the United States) strive for, the ideal can remain ethnographically meaningful and serve as a significant marker for persons of western cultures and influence. Simultaneously, this may not be the case either. It is possible that such an ideal is a product of modernity and the value of authenticity.

[5] Festinger 1957: 2-3; Aronson states that cognitions are ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and opinions (2008: 184); Note that the use of the term 'belief' is not necessarily equivalent to the use of the term in distinction to acceptance.

[6] Cooper 2007: 6

[7] Neisser 1967: 4

These perspectives on the definition of 'cognition' allow for broad areas of research and theoretical advancement. Researchers can investigate the cognitive processes or the product of those processes without discussing the kind or type of 'cognition' involved. Research can continue while bracketing epistemological concerns for sharper distinctions into what *kind*, or part, of 'cognition' is being investigated. The broad construction of 'cognition' for these respective fields of research, however, does not preclude a meaningful discussion on the topic of 'belief' and the role of belief and acceptance within that discussion. Focusing on how belief and acceptance configure into the theory of cognitive dissonance can provide further specificity into what kinds of cognition and 'beliefs' are involved in inconsistencies as well as provide insight into the relationship between behaviour and 'belief.'

In Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance, 'inconsistency' is substituted with 'dissonance' and 'consistency' with 'consonance.' In conjunction with the definition of 'cognition' above, Festiner presents two basic hypotheses:

1. "The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance."
2. "When dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance."[8]

In this regard, dissonance theory is about motivation and aims to explain human behaviour. Just as "hunger leads to activity oriented toward hunger reduction," Festinger states, cognitive dissonance "leads to activity oriented toward dissonance reduction."[9] In other words, the uncomfortable experience of inconsistent beliefs or cognitions leads to activity that reduces that discomfort. It should be noted that 'dissonance' is referred to in two ways. First, it refers to holding two inconsistent or incongruent and discrepant cognitions. Secondly, dissonance refers to the "psychological discomfort," anxiety or negative affect,[10] from holding such discrepant cognitions. The first refers to a type of relationship between two cognitions and the second refers to an "emotional-motivational state" that emerges from that relationship.[11] In order to prevent conflation and maintain clarity, psychologist Eddie

---

[8] Festinger 1957: 3
[9] Ibid.
[10] Harmon-Jones 2000a; the "arousing and negative affective state" has been "evidenced by research using self-report measures, the misattribution paradigm, and psychophysiological measures" (Burris et al. 1997: 18, Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones 2008); dissonance has also been associated with anxiety in other studies (Shenhav & Buckner 2014, Inzlicht et al. 2011).
[11] Harmon-Jones 2000b: 120

Harmon-Jones' distinction is useful. He calls the first *cognitive discrepancy* and the second *dissonance*.[12] This distinction will be held throughout this chapter and thesis.

The two hypotheses presented by Festinger are congruent with the points about belief mentioned from the philosophical literature. More specifically, Stalnaker stated that beliefs are internally consistent insofar as one perceives one's own beliefs as consistent and any perception of contradiction motivates one to modify his or her beliefs. Bratman discusses acceptances as pieces of information that can adjust one's default cognitive background. This refers to how one's *habitus* can adjust to appropriate contexts. Festinger points out a similar phenomenon. He states, "[n]ew events may happen or new information may become known to a person, creating at least a momentary dissonance with existing knowledge, opinion, or cognition concerning behaviour."[13] In other words, novel situations, events, or pieces of information can create a *cognitive discrepancy*, or inconsistency, with one's existing cognitive background to create the experience of *dissonance*. This is the encounter of discrepancy between expectation and experience. However, the experience of dissonance, Festinger states, does not necessarily have to be an encounter with new information or experience but may also occur due to recurrent memories from past experience.

In any case, the arousal of dissonance, for Festinger, creates pressure to reduce discomfort and find consonant relations between cognitions.[14] This leads to Festinger's second hypothesis, which asserts that persons do not actively seek to increase the levels of discomfort they may already be experiencing. We prefer to maintain consonance with what we know; we do not actively seek discomfort and direct our lives as such. This relates to statements from the philosophical literature regarding the "life one chooses to lead" and how beliefs can influence what we do or do not accept. The avoidance of discrepant cognitions, which is an avoidance of the feeling of dissonance, is the dispositional tendency to accept things that are congruent with our beliefs and similarly, the evidence that is accepted or not accepted can shape the beliefs that serve as structuring structures.

The occurrence of dissonance from a discrepancy between existing cognitions or a discrepancy with the encounter of new information or experience refers to a relationship

---

[12] Ibid.: 120-121
[13] Festinger 1957: 4
[14] Ibid.: 9

between cognition and one's 'reality.' Not only does this take into account the ability to have beliefs that correspond with reality but also the ability to manipulate, interpret, construct, and even fabricate what one considers to be 'real.' This is not to say that everything is subject to manipulation and therefore nothing is 'real,' but rather that there are ambiguities and vague areas of experience which are subject to interpretation and variation. Festinger states that "elements of cognition are responsive to reality. By and large they mirror, or map, reality. This reality may be physical, or social or psychological, but in any case the cognition more or less maps it."[15] The experiences "*which impinges on a person will exert pressures in the direction of bringing the appropriate cognitive elements into correspondence with that reality*." That is, experience directly influences and brings various cognitions into correlation with the reality of what was experienced. However, this correlation between cognition and reality is not *always* in correspondence and is only one of many phenomena which the theory of cognitive dissonance seeks to consider and explain.[16]

For the theory of cognitive dissonance, with regard to the correspondence of 'reality' and cognition, Festinger provides three relations: irrelevant, dissonant (which will be referred to as 'discrepant'), and consonant relations. An irrelevant relation of cognitions is when two cognitions "have nothing to do with one another."[17] However the degree of irrelevance and relevance, comprised of incongruent and congruent relations, is difficult to discern. Whether two cognitions are irrelevant or relevant is subjective and dependent on whether the individual regards them as such. Festinger also states that it is possible for previously irrelevant elements to become relevant through behaviour.[18] When two cognitions are relevant to each other, they are either discrepant or consonant. That is, they are either congruent with one another or incongruent with one another. Consonant relations are those when two cognitions are consistent, congruent, compatible, or correspond with one another. Discrepant relations, on the other hand, occurs when two cognitions "for one reason or another […] do not fit together."[19] However, the inconsistency of two cognitions is not without qualification. Festinger states that the discrepancy between two cognitions "will disregard the existence of all the other cognitive elements that are relevant to either or both of the two under consideration and simply deal with these two alone." This allows for the

---

[15] Ibid.: 10
[16] Ibid.: 11 (emphasis original)
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.: 12
[19] Ibid.

following: *x* and *y* are discrepant if –*x* follows from *y*. [20] According to Festinger, discrepancies can arise from "logical inconsistencies" or from discrepant "cultural mores" primarily because "the culture defines what is consonant and what is not." Discrepant cognitions can also arise from a specific opinion that is included in a more general opinion or from "past experience(s)."[21] In this regard, discrepant cognitions and the experience of dissonance can arise from various circumstances and sources of information. These various types of relations and the circumstances in which discrepancies occur are instances when beliefs and acceptances can be inconsistent with each other. However, pointing out the types of relations and the discrepancies that occur does not distinguish whether they are discrepancies among beliefs or among acceptances.

It is here that dissonance theory makes its biggest contribution to the investigation of belief. An important factor in the arousal of dissonance (psychological discomfort or negative affect) is the degree of significance a particular cognition has in relation to other cognitions. Not all discrepant relations are of "equal magnitude" and not all 'belief's will be of equal significance.[22] In this regard, it is necessary to "distinguish degrees of dissonance […] *if two elements are [discrepant] with one another, the magnitude of dissonance will be a function of the importance of the elements*."[23] In other words, there is a positive correlation between the magnitude of dissonance and the importance, significance, or 'value' attached to the cognitions or behaviours involved. It can be noted that the beliefs, which serve as dispositional structures that compose a *habitus*, are given greater significance with their 'aim for truth' than acceptances that do not have such a character. That is, beliefs will have a greater "emotional-motivational" dimension than acceptances. Cognitions that are discrepant with one's beliefs will manifest a greater magnitude of dissonance than discrepancies of acceptances. Speculatively, it may be that dissonance experienced with discrepant acceptances may not be as great because of their significance or lack of commitment to 'an aim for truth.' At the least, it can be hypothesized that any considerable magnitude of dissonance involves a belief in the discrepant relationship. For Festinger, the motivation to reduce dissonance is then in direct relation to the felt 'magnitude of dissonance.'[24] This is

---

[20] Ibid.: 13
[21] Ibid.: 14
[22] This brings us back to Lindholm's types of 'belief' from Chapter 2
[23] Festinger 1957: 16 (emphasis original)
[24] Ibid.: 38

significant as it points to the relationship between beliefs and emotions with regard to an 'aim for truth' and ethnographic method; ethnographers should note episodes of emotional distress.

Festinger contends that we encounter discrepancies and experience dissonance in everyday conditions.[25] This is exemplified by his distinction between 'conflict' and 'dissonance.' Given a choice among various options, a person can be said to be in a position of 'conflict' prior to making a decision. It is only after a decision is made that the person is no longer in conflict. Once a choice has been made, the conflict is resolved.[26] However, the commitment to a course of action, as a result of the decision, is when dissonance arises because one must come to terms with that decision and course of action.[27] Although not all circumstances will evoke dissonance after a decision is made, as degree and frequency of dissonance will vary from person to person, there are instances when post-decision dissonance will occur (discussed further below in research paradigms). Festinger proposes three methods for how this dissonance is reduced and discrepancy resolved.

The first method consists of "changing or revoking the decision."[28] This occurs when the decision made is admitted to be a wrong decision and dissonance is reduced by "revoking the decision psychologically."[29] Other instances would be insisting or persuading one's self that the choice was not one's own. That is, the decision was made due to circumstance or it was conspired by force of action by others.[30] This defers the responsibility of one's actions to other circumstances, influences, or pressures. Festinger states that such instances place the person back into a situation of "conflict," a "choice-making situation," or a situation in which one does not accept the responsibility of making such a choice.[31] This first method could involve various interactions between beliefs or acceptances that may influence one's initial decision or revoking the decision. In other words, one may have made a decision based on an acceptance but decided that it conflicted with a belief and changed the choice. Conversely, one may have made a decision based on a belief but changed the decision due to an acceptance of another piece of information from that context. The decision to revoke an

---

[25] Ibid.: 5
[26] Ibid.: 39
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.: 42
[29] Ibid.: 44
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.

initial decision can be based on one's beliefs or acceptances and may involve a variety of combinations or sets of beliefs and acceptances.

The second method in reducing dissonance and resolving discrepancy is to change "the attractiveness of the alternatives involved in the choice."[32] That is, one changes his/her "cognition about the alternatives."[33] Festinger states that this is "probably the most usual manner of reducing post-decision dissonance." He explains that it is possible to eliminate dissonance by increasing the consonant information or by eliminating the cognitions that made the alternative a considerable option, which justifies the net effect in favour of the action taken and "hence lessen the total dissonance that exists."[34] In other words, one further accepts information in support of the decision or rejects the accepted information that supported the alternative. However, Festinger notes that this is not always successful and dissonance may linger. When dissonance lingers, it would be plausible to posit that a belief was involved in the discrepant relations. That is, there was a dispositional belief with a *valence of affinity* that appealed to the rejected alternative thereby sustaining some degree of dissonance.

The third method, advanced by Festinger, is to establish a "cognitive overlap among the alternatives involved in the choice."[35] He states that there are several ways by which one can establish cognitive overlap. One is to place the alternatives into a "larger context" such that they "lead to the same end result."[36] This reduces the dissonance of making one decision over another. For example, one may decide to eat fish instead of chicken and reduce any dissonance by stating that "I am only eating to fill my stomach." This undermines the means and emphasizes the effect of the decision and its outcome rather than the decision and its alternatives. Either way, it achieves the same goal. Another way to establish "cognitive overlap" is to discover or create elements "corresponding to the chosen alternative that are identical with favourable elements that already exist for the corresponding unchosen alternative."[37] One may say that the chosen fish dish had just as much protein as the chicken. The three methods of resolving discrepant cognitions and reducing dissonance are advanced in the four research paradigms which have emerged for investigating dissonance theory.

---

[32] Ibid.: 42
[33] Ibid.: 44
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.: 42
[36] Ibid.: 46
[37] Ibid.

4.2 BELIEF AND ACCEPTANCE IN DISSONANCE RESEARCH PARADIGMS

Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance is known to be "one of the most influential theories in social psychology."[38] The theory can be configured in terms of belief and acceptance and it is also consistent with the paradigm of embodiment and *habitus*. Over the past sixty years, it has generated a tremendous amount of research and insight "about the determinants of attitudes and beliefs, the internalization of values, the consequences of decisions, the effects of disagreement among persons, and other important psychological processes."[39] Since the introduction of the theory, four complimentary research paradigms have emerged to investigate situations in which discrepant cognitions and dissonance occur: the free-choice paradigm, belief-disconfirmation paradigm, effort-justification paradigm, and induced-compliance paradigm.[40] In this section, the prototypical study for each paradigm will be described with its primary findings followed by an analysis in terms of belief and acceptance. This further elucidates the issue of inconsistency and provides examples of how social psychology can be a source of epistemological investigation.

4.2.1 Free-Choice

The first paradigm, free-choice, involves the post-decision dissonance mentioned above. Examples that pertain to this paradigm can often be found in consumer behaviour. When making a purchase there are usually several options one may be considering and after a decision is made there can be feelings of dissonance. The free-choice paradigm investigates the dissonance that occurs after a decision and predicts that there will be greater dissonance in difficult decision scenarios than easy decisions.[41] Jack W. Brehm was the first to employ the free-choice paradigm in an experiment conducted in 1956.[42] The study was advertised as market research and recruited 255 women who rated the desirability of eight different products (e.g., toaster, coffeemaker, desk lamp, radio, etc.). Each participant was then presented with a choice between two products that were close in their rated desirability (difficult decision) and two products that were not close in desirability (easy decision).[43] After deciding which of the two products they would like to keep, the women were asked to

---

[38] Harmon-Jones & Mills 1999: 3
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.: 5-10
[41] Ibid.: 6; Cooper 2007: 14
[42] Brehm 1956
[43] Ibid.: 384; Harmon-Jones & Mills 1999: 6

re-rate the desirability of the products.[44] Brehm had found that the women in the difficult decision group "changed their evaluations of the products to be more positive about the chosen product and less positive about the rejected product," while the women in the easy decision group did not engage in such "spreading of alternatives."[45] For the difficult decision group, "changing the attractiveness of the alternatives"[46] was interpreted as the method by which discrepancy was relieved and dissonance reduced. In other words, consonant information about the chosen product was increased and the cognitions that made the non-selected product favourable were eliminated, or the cognitions that made it unfavourable were increased, effectively decreasing the total amount of discrepancy and post-decision dissonance. The free-choice paradigm has been utilized in many other studies and has yielded much insight into the theory of cognitive dissonance.[47]

4.2.1.1 *Free-Choice and Belief*

During the initial ranking of items, the participants of this paradigm could have considered a myriad of properties such as price, need, looks, efficiency, brand, or capability. The standard by which certain properties or values are prioritized will naturally vary from person to person. That is, the participants will have various beliefs and acceptances, valences of affinity, about certain values, properties, or attributes involved with making a decision about a product. For example, one may value 'efficiency' in a technical product. If this was a *belief*, then the desirability of 'efficiency' as a value in a product would occur involuntarily. There would be no voluntary deliberation whether 'efficiency' is desirable. When evaluating an item, in comparison to other items, one may regard 'efficiency' as a priority in determining an item's holistic value. 'Efficiency' would then be a consistent and 'context-independent' criterion when making a decision on technical products. This would be an example of belief playing a role in ranking the series of items and selecting one product over another. In this sense, belief can be construed as having a behavioural component. The belief in the value of 'efficiency' influences the decision to select one over another.

However, as the philosophy literature noted, it is not necessarily the case that one will act based on a single belief nor is it the case that a belief will be relevant in every context. Different beliefs are highlighted in different contexts according to their relevance. 'Efficiency'

---

[44] Harmon-Jones & Mills 1999: 6
[45] Ibid.
[46] Festinger 1957: 42
[47] Harmon-Jones & Mills 1999: 6; they cite Shultz & Lepper 1996 and Stone 1999

may be a significant belief in the decision making process for a technological product, but it is not a belief one considers when purchasing a loaf of bread or a family pet. That is, different beliefs are relevant for different decisions. In this regard, beliefs may appear to be inconsistent. One decision may have been based on a belief in the value of 'efficiency' but it may have been overlooked in another decision due to another belief in a desirable attribute. The application of a belief in a particular value can then be inconsistent and even contradictory contingent upon various contexts. This does not diminish the characteristic of belief's involuntariness but rather highlights the various degrees of prominence certain beliefs can have over others in different situations and the decisions that need to be made in those contexts.

The free-choice paradigm and the discussion of belief in values or desirable traits (valences of affinity), suggests that the 'aim for truth' is learned from experience. For example, one may have chosen certain products based on their 'aesthetic' quality, such as style and colour, but may have over time learned that selecting products solely on those qualities does not ensure their 'durability' – another desirable trait. In this context, having a belief in a particular value is learned and aimed at a truth for purchasing a "good product." However, this presumes that a "good product" is durable. By contrast, one may not be concerned with durability and only particular about aesthetics and trends. For example, one may purchase a product based on its looks or popularity, as opposed to efficiency, because of a value placed on style, impressing others, staying with current trends, or any other reason. In this regard, beliefs in values can be learned from experience, or from the advice of others, and be aimed at particular social truths as true.

The selection of a product in the easy decision group did not affect the belief in certain values and the ranking of products. The values that were a factor in making the non-selected product desirable were no longer given the significance they had in making the product desirable prior to the selection. This may have occurred by a placing a greater emphasis on the beliefs that made the selected product desirable and a focus on the factors that made the non-selected product undesirable.

4.2.1.2 *Free-Choice and Acceptance*
Similarly, the values that dictated the ranking of products by participants in Brehm's study could have been accepted values rather than believed values. For instance, one may have

received advice that 'efficiency' was a desirable trait when assessing a technological product. Contingent on the amount of trust placed in the source of advice, and the content of that advice, the acceptance of this advice can influence the process of rating the set of items and selecting one product over another. In this regard, accepted values would be voluntarily deliberated in the process of ranking the products and selection.

The difficulty with analysing free-choice studies of cognitive dissonance in terms of belief and acceptance, especially with regard to acceptance, is the lack of documentation on the rationale for rating the set of items and selection. Brehm's study stressed to the participants that "desirability meant the net usefulness of the object after one had taken into consideration not only its attractiveness and quality but also how much the [participant] needed such an article."[48] The study then requests the participants state the pros and cons of each object. For example:

> the report for the grill read as follows: "This grill is versatile, grills toast, sandwiches, hot dogs, frozen waffles, etc. Waffle plates may easily be attached (cord and optional waffle plates are not supplied, these require additional purchases). The grill plates may be damaged if kept heated too long (7 or 8 min.) in closed position. The heat indicator dial fluctuates, usually underestimating amount of heat. The other surface is durable, easy to clean, wont' rust [*sic*].[49]

However, these statements do not fully capture the beliefs and acceptances involved in the reasoning process for ranking and selecting an item nor does it indicate which statements represent beliefs or acceptances. If Brehm reported the common themes or values in the participants' rationale, as well as the reasons why, from each of their assessments it may be plausible to consider which beliefs were integral in their reasoning process and which were acceptances.

The free-choice paradigm, nonetheless, presents a situation of competing beliefs and acceptances. In the easy decision group, there were no competing views of desirability as one option was clearly preferred over another. That is, one product held a stronger overall valence of affinity than another and the ranking between the two did not change. By contrast, in the difficult decision group the two products had similar valences of affinity. Selecting one over the other created discrepancy about whether the best decision was made. As a result, the participant would have experienced dissonance regarding the decision. In order to reduce this

---

[48] Brehm 1956: 385
[49] Ibid.

dissonance, the participant accepts information that supports the chosen product and accepts information that devalues the unchosen product, which resulted in "spreading the alternatives" in ranking. Not only does this reduce any discrepancy about the decision but it also reduces dissonance associated with the decision. The interplay of beliefs and acceptances could be any number of combined interactions that created the phenomena of "spreading the alternatives" and reducing dissonance associated with one's decision in this paradigm. The free-choice studies show how beliefs can influence what is, or is not, accepted and vice versa. With further inquiry, this paradigm could provide greater insight into which beliefs or acceptances played a role in making their respective decisions.

4.2.2 Belief-Disconfirmation

The next paradigm through which cognitive dissonance has been investigated is belief-disconfirmation. As the name suggests, this paradigm investigates the discrepancy and dissonance after the disconfirmation of 'belief.' If one had a belief that something was to occur but experience proved otherwise, the dissonance stems from the collision of a belief expecting-reality with cognitions of experienced-reality. For example, one may believe quite strongly that one did really well on an exam and expect a good grade but upon receipt of the exam the grade was significantly lower than expected. It is not uncommon to see distress after such an event occurs. The representative study for this paradigm is from *When Prophecy Fails* by Festinger and his associates Henry W. Riecken and Stanley Schacter. The study considers the case of a small group that "believed" a major flood would occur and that they would be picked up by a flying saucer. The researchers intended to investigate the progression of the group up to the projected date and what happened when the anticipated event did not occur.[50] The discussion of belief and acceptance for this study will be presented in chapter 6.

Within this paradigm, the anticipated event or the object of belief can vary from degrees of acceptance to belief and the response to disconfirming evidence will vary pursuant to those degrees of 'belief.' In 1975, Daniel Batson conducted a study with 50 female high school students who were active in a "youth program of a Presbyterian church in central New

---

[50] A similar case has been documented and discussed with the Lubavitch, a group of Hasidic Jews (Dein 1997, Dein & Littlewood 2000, Dein & Dawson 2008). In addition, there have been numerous other apocalyptic groups proclaiming the end of the world. Recently, in the United States, Harold Camping predicted the end of the world on May 21, 2011 and then again on October 21, 2011. There was also a prediction that the world would end on December 21, 2012 due to the enthusiasm surrounding the end of the Mayan calendar.

Jersey."[51] They were divided into two groups: "professed belief or non-belief in the divinity of Jesus."[52] That is, the participants were asked "Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God?" This question would then assign the participants into one of two groups. The participants then completed a 'Religious Belief Inventory' of thirty statements concerning 'belief' in the divinity of Jesus and the infallibility of the Bible which provided an index to the "intensity of religious belief." Batson states that "typical items included: 'Jesus actually performed miracles,' 'The Bible contains many errors,' 'The Bible is the Word of God,' and 'Jesus was only human.'" They would also complete another set of 20 statements after the study. The statements were assessed on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).[53] After the initial set of statements, they read an article "written anonymously and denied publication in the *The New York Times* at the request of the World Council of Churches because of the obvious crushing effect it would have on the entire Christian world":

> -Geneva, Switzerland. It was learned today here in Geneva from a top source in the World Council of Churches offices that scholars in Jordan have conclusively proved that the major writings in what is today called the New Testament are fraudulent.

> According to the information gained from the unnamed source within the headquarters of the World Council of Churches, Professor R. R. Lowry (author of *The Zarondike Fragments and the Dead Sea Scrolls*) assisted by other scholars, has been carefully analysing a collection of papyrus scrolls discovered in a cave in the Jordanian desert near where the famous Dead Sea Scrolls were found. Contained within this collection of scrolls, Lowry and his associates have found letters, apparently written between the composers of various New Testament books, bluntly stating: "Since our great teacher, Jesus of Nazareth, was killed by the Romans, I am sure were justified in stealing away his body and claiming that he rose from the dead. For, although his death clearly proves he was not the Son of God as we had hoped, if we did not claim that he was, both his great teaching and our lives as his disciples would be wasted!"

> Though Lowry initially suspected the authenticity of these scrolls, he was later quoted as saying, "Through radiocarbon dating and careful study of the Aramaic dialect used in writing these letters, I have found it impossible to deny that the manuscripts are authentic. You can't imagine what a struggle this has been; I find no alternative but to renounce my former belief that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. I can no longer be a Christian."

> When Dr. Ernest Carson Baker, the general secretary of the World Council of Churches, was confronted with Lowry's statement by this reporter, he at first denied that it was true. After a few minutes of questioning, however, he broke down and admitted, "This thing has got us so upset we're just not sure what to do. We just can't let this story get out!" Apparently the only avenue open to the Church in the twentieth

---

[51] Batson 1975: 179
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

century is the same avenue which it took in the first century – conceal the facts and proclaim Jesus as the divine Son of God, even though it knows such a claim is a lie.[54]

The participants then completed the remaining 20 statements of the inventory interspersed with statements about the above article, which ranged from "Lowry's discovery truly proves that Jesus was not the Son of God" to "The article was probably written by a communist."[55]

Batson found that those who scored high on the scale for 'belief' in the divinity of Jesus and accepted the veracity of the article intensified their 'belief,' while those who professed 'nonbelief,' or those who did not accept the veracity of the article, did not intensify their 'belief.'[56] In other words, those who could be speculated to have an involuntary belief in the divinity of Jesus, and accepted the article as true, intensified their position. Otherwise there was not any intensification in holding the position. If one held an involuntary belief but did not accept the article or if one accepted the article but did not have an involuntary belief – perhaps only an acceptance – did not intensify their position of 'Jesus is the Son of God.' Batson's study suggests that the response to disconfirming evidence or statements is reflected in whether an individual has a belief or an acceptance in the object of 'belief.' This is also to say that the *magnitude of dissonance* is stronger when a belief is involved, as opposed to an acceptance, in the discrepancy.

4.2.3 Effort-Justification

Another paradigm of research is effort-justification. Here the presupposition is that "dissonance is aroused whenever a person engages in an unpleasant activity to obtain some desirable outcome."[57] If one holds the cognition that an activity is unpleasant, the inference is that "one would not engage in the activity" thereby creating dissonance between 'the activity is unpleasant' and 'engaging in the activity.'[58] In this regard, dissonance would increase in proportion to the "unpleasant effort required to obtain the outcome."[59] Harmon-Jones states that dissonance would be reduced by "exaggerating the desirability of the outcome, which would add consonant cognitions."[60] This paradigm also applies to *When Prophecy Fails* as several members had quit their job or school, sold their possessions, quit smoking, and one

---

[54] Ibid.: 180
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.: 183; Burris et al. 1997: 19
[57] Harmon-Jones & Mills 1999: 7
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.

broke up with his girlfriend because she did not share his 'beliefs.'[61] Such actions can be considered to be "undesirable actions" or efforts in preparation for the end of the world. This paradigm implies that behaviour and the affective states resulting from those behaviours are factors in shaping one's beliefs and acceptances.

Elliot Aronson and Judson Mills, in 1959, were the first to design an experiment to test this hypothesis.[62] They recruited volunteers to participate in "a series of group discussions on the psychology of sex." Participants were told that in order to help people relax, as the topic of sex can be embarrassing, the discussion would take place over an intercom system with headphones and a microphone between three other members each in separate rooms. Although the participants were told that the discussion would be happening "live," in actuality the participants listened to a pre-recorded discussion. Participants were asked not to participate and simply listen to the discussion because they were new and this was their first session.[63] Prior to participating in the group discussion, the participants were separated into three groups: control, mild, and severe. The control group did not undergo any kind of initiation process whereas the severe and mild initiation conditions involved a "screening" before being admitted to the group discussion. This screening consisted of an "embarrassment test" in which participants had to read out loud some "sexually oriented material" and the degree of embarrassment would dictate admittance or non-admittance to a group. The 'severe initiation condition' read much more embarrassing and explicit material than the 'mild initiation condition.' All participants were notified that they were not obliged to take the initiation test, however they would be unable to participate in the discussion if they did not.[64]

The group discussion was engineered to be as "dull and banal as possible."[65] Aronson and Mills state that the actors in the recorded discussion,

> spoke dryly and haltingly on secondary sex behaviour in the lower animals, 'inadvertently' contradicted themselves and one another, mumbled several *non-sequiturs*, started sentences that never finished, hemmed, hawed, and in general conducted one of the most worthless and uninteresting discussions imaginable.[66]

---

[61] Festinger et al. 2008 [1956]: 77-88, 103, 109 ; Cooper 2007: 3
[62] Harmon-Jones & Mills 1999: 8
[63] Aronson & Mills 1959: 179
[64] Ibid.: 178
[65] Ibid.: 179
[66] Ibid.

And indeed, the control group and the 'mild initiation' group expressed that the discussion was "dull and banal." The 'severe initiation' group, however, expressed the opinion that they found the discussion "interesting and intelligent" and evaluated the group as positive.[67] In other words, the 'severe-initiation condition' rated the group discussion much more favourably than the control and 'mild-initiation' group.[68] This confirmed Aronson and Mills' hypothesis that participants would reduce any discrepancy and dissonance from the unpleasant (severe) initiation and the banality of the discussion by "over estimating [its] attractiveness."[69] The discrepancy is between the cognition of having participated in an embarrassing initiation and the cognition of a boring discussion group. The studies of this paradigm report that dissonance is reduced by changing the cognitive attitude towards the group discussion because the cognition of having participated in the initiation cannot be changed (otherwise, dissonance could be reduced by revoking or admitting mistake about the decision to participate). Within this paradigm, the question is whether the participants in the 'severe initiation condition' developed a belief or an acceptance of favourability towards the group in order to attenuate any discrepancies and reduce dissonance.

4.2.3.1 *Effort-Justification and Belief*

If the cognition of favourability, from the 'severe initiation condition,' towards the group discussion was involuntarily formed without conscious deliberation, this hints toward the possibility of forming a belief motivated by a disposition to reduce dissonance. Moreover, if the opinion of favourability was a belief, an 'aim for truth' would imply that the participants' response was sincere without deliberately falsifying his or her position. Given the information from the study, as a singular event, it is not possible to consider whether the participant was indeed sincere and continued to hold this position in a 'context-independent' manner. In order to establish an 'aim for truth' and 'context-independence' of favourability, a longitudinal approach is necessary. That is, the researchers could have followed-up on the opinions of the participants after a period of time had passed. Unfortunately, pursuant to research protocol in psychology, participants were de-briefed about the actual nature of the study which effectively eliminated any possibility to consider the longitudinal effects of effort-justification and the positive evaluation of a "dull" discussion group after a 'severe initiation.'

---

[67] Ibid.
[68] Aronson & Mills 1959: 177; Harmon-Jones & Mills 1999: 8
[69] Aronson & Mills 1959: 177

If the de-briefing had not occurred and the 'severe initiation' participants left the study after making a favourable assessment of the group discussion, it would be possible to follow up and observe whether the attitude toward the group remained. Hypothetically, if a longitudinal study was indeed conducted and the participants maintained a positive assessment, this would suggest that a belief was created. Only then would it be possible to state that the expenditure of effort and the experience of suffering or discomfort had a direct influence on the formation of a positive belief towards a less than enjoyable group discussion.

4.2.3.2 *Effort-Justification and Acceptance*

While belief is debatable and uncertain without further evidence, the cognition of favourability can be argued to be an acceptance. During the discussion and after the recorded discussion, participants would have had an opportunity to deliberate and think about the discussion although it is equally possible that they did not think about it at all or listen very carefully and expressed a courteous response. And yet, this opportunity was afforded to each group and only the 'severe initiation' group gave a positive response. In this regard, there is something particular about expending effort and experiencing unpleasant states, in this case embarrassment, and expressing a positive acceptance of a less than enjoyable discussion. As mentioned in the previous chapter, acceptance was argued to be motivated by an underlying belief. If the response of favourability was an acceptance, then the 'severe initiation' condition prompted the underlying belief to express the acceptance of a positive assessment towards the discussion. In other words, the acceptance was motivated by some underlying belief and served to attenuate the dissonance evoked from the discrepant cognitions of the expended effort and banal discussion. Moreover, expressing an acceptance is not truth-committed which enables the possibility of participants stating one thing to the researchers but something else in another context. This further entails that the attitude towards the discussion group could be an adjustment to reduce dissonance. Yet, without further investigation into the long-term effects of a 'severe initiation' condition, it is still not entirely possible to determine whether the expression of favourability was definitively an acceptance. That is, the study conducted by Aronson and Mills is insufficient and further research is required to delineate the textures of 'belief' and whether the 'severe initiation' condition and response contributes to belief-forming processes.

Apart from this study, the effort-justification paradigm has been used to explain hazing behaviour in fraternities and sororities[70] and other groups. This paradigm can then provide a source of insight into the development of a favourable belief or acceptance in a less than favourable group and activity. With regard to religious groups, this paradigm will be discussed further in chapter 6 on *When Prophecy Fails* from which parallels can be made towards various religious groups or sects that engage unpleasant activities. According to this paradigm, the more strenuous the means for the attained ends the more positive the assessment. However, while this may be the case for activities like hiking with the end result of reaching the summit or enduring a PhD process and obtaining a degree at the end, effort-justification would be difficult to apply to all persons in all strenuous or dissonant scenarios. In other words, this paradigm is very much dependent upon how the activity and the period of time are framed. For example, effort-justification would certainly not apply to victims of rape nor would it necessarily be the case that all soldiers returning from war will have a favourable view of the purpose or end result of the war. This would only be possible after some relative period of time has passed and a positive meaning is created in retrospect. Nonetheless, the effort-justification paradigm provides a set of conditions by which behaviour and affective states can influence belief or acceptance to attenuate the dissonance from discrepant cognitions.

4.2.4 Induced-Compliance

The last research paradigm of dissonance theory is induced-compliance. As mentioned by Festinger, and noted in both the anthropological and philosophical literature, there are instances when statements are incongruent with behaviour. Statements of belief and acceptance may be inconsistent with each other and/or inconsistent with behaviour. This observation led Festinger and James M. Carlsmith to conduct their famous experiment and Bob Cohen's method of writing counter-attitudinal essays, both of which will be discussed below. Induced-compliance aims to induce inconsistencies and investigate any attitude changes from complicit activity.

In 1959, Festinger and Carlsmith conducted a study that contradicted the theories and predictions made by B.F. Skinner's behaviourism and reinforcement theory, which were

---

[70] Aronson 2008: 223

dominant at the time.[71] Reinforcement theory predicted that if one performed an action and was rewarded for that action, the greater the reward the more likely that person will have positive associations and engage in that action again.[72] The results from the Festinger and Carlsmith study showed the opposite.

Festinger and Carlsmith had participants engage in a series of "dull and boring tasks": turning pegs a quarter with the left hand and then turning them back again, repeat with the right hand, and then once again. After this task was completed, participants performed an additional task which involved taking off spools of thread with the left hand and replacing them, this was then done once more with the right hand;[73] a "dull and boring" task indeed. Afterwards, the participants were requested to fill in the spot of a "confederate" who was supposed to go into the waiting room and tell the next participant that participating in the study was a fun and enjoyable experience. Because this confederate was missing, the participant who had just finished the dull task was asked to fill the position. In compensation, "financial inducement," participants were either paid one dollar or twenty dollars, which was a lot of money in the 1950s. After the participant told the waiting participant (who was actually a confederate of the study) how enjoyable the experience was, the participant than participated in a separate evaluative interview.

Although participants in both the one dollar and twenty dollar condition told the waiting confederate that the study was enjoyable, Festinger and Carlsmith found that those who were paid twenty dollars did not think the task – turning pegs and replacing spools – was an enjoyable experience and would probably not do it again. By contrast, the participants who were paid one dollar stated that the task *was* enjoyable and would do it again.[74] This is the opposite of what Behaviourism would predict. Festinger and Carlsmith orchestrated an experiment that would create discrepancy and dissonance by doing a dull and boring task and requesting that participants make a discrepant "counter-attitudinal statement" (i.e., the task was fun and enjoyable) to the next person. Those who were paid twenty dollars were hypothesized to eliminate the discrepancy by appealing to the financial incentive. In other words, they were able to maintain that the task was dull and boring and only made the counter-attitudinal statement to the next participant for the money. However, those who

---

[71] Festinger et al. 2008 [1956]: ix; Cooper 2007: 20
[72] Cooper 2007: 20
[73] Ibid.: 15
[74] Ibid.: 16-18

received one dollar in compensation could not justify their actions to the next participant. That is, the financial incentive was insufficient to justify advocating that the dull and boring task was fun and enjoyable. Instead, the discrepancy, and any dissonance from their actions, was reduced by changing their attitude toward the task by stating that it was enjoyable and that they would participate again.

Although Festinger and Carlsmith created the landmark study, in 1962 Bob Cohen generated a study that would establish the method for this paradigm.[75] In the early 1960s, Yale University students were angered by the "severity of the actions that the police had taken against the students" and during this time, the students "generally felt negative about the police."[76] For Cohen's study, students were recruited and asked to write a "strong and forceful" essay justifying the "extreme actions of the New Haven police."[77] The monetary compensation to write this counter-attitudinal essay ranged from fifty cents to ten dollars. After the essays were written and the participants were asked about their attitude to the police, Cohen found the same results as Festinger and Carlsmith: a negative correlation between attitude change and monetary incentive. The "lower the incentive, the greater the attitude change. The higher the incentive, the smaller the attitude change."[78] In other words, those who were paid ten dollars were able to justify writing a counter-attitudinal essay and did not change their original position, while those who were paid fifty cents changed their attitudes towards the police after writing the essay. The induced-compliance paradigm, using this method of essay writing, continues to produce research and address questions about dissonance.[79]

4.2.4.1 *Induced-Compliance and Belief*

Within this paradigm, belief and acceptance can be considered with regard to the cognition formed by an initial experience – or impression of an event – and the change in cognition after advocating a counter-attitudinal position, with or without sufficient monetary justification. The initial cognition is typically generated from experience and memory. This may be from an immediate experience as in Festinger and Carlsmith's study, a past experience, or an impression of an event – like the severity of police actions in Cohen's study

---

[75] Ibid.: 19
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Harmon-Jones & Mills 1999: 10

– informed by various external sources such as friends and media. As described in the philosophy literature, beliefs can be formed involuntarily as experience unfolds or even after an experience. In the Festinger and Carlsmith study, the initial cognition was boredom and banality. The task was constructed such that this was an inevitable, involuntary, conclusion of the experience. In the Cohen study, the cognition was a general negative impression or attitude of the police surrounding a particular incident. This cognition could have been formed either involuntarily by witnessing the actions of the police or voluntarily accepted through deliberation or even by the influence of peers in a general collegiate atmosphere. In other words, the initial cognition in the Festinger and Carlsmith study can be said to be a belief while the initial cognition about the police in Cohen's study could either have been a belief or an acceptance.

If the participants in Festinger and Carlsmith's study had stopped after completing the repetitive and monotonous task, turning a series of pegs in one direction over and over and then again in the opposite direction, they would leave the study with a belief that the task was boring and banal. Not only would such a cognition be formed involuntarily but it would also be a consistent propositional statement in any context as well as associated with an 'aim for truth.' In this sense, the experience of the initial task can be argued to have created a belief. For the participants in Cohen's study, it is possible that the students held negative beliefs about the police. A passionate student would retain a context-independence and sense of consistency that the police were unjustified in the severity of their actions. Not only is it plausible that a student would consider this to be true and maintain an 'aim for truth' but the proposition would be held involuntarily. In this regard, it can be argued that the initial cognition, for both cases, is a belief although this would only be a conjecture for Cohen's study as it is equally possible for students to accept a negative view of the police while bracketing its truth claim.

The shift in attitudes for those who received minimal monetary incentive may suggest a change in beliefs. However, in order to sufficiently consider whether this change was a shift in belief a follow-up study would be required. As mentioned from the other paradigms, a longitudinal investigation would provide further data whether the participants still held the "counter-attitudinal" position that relieved the discrepancy and reduced dissonance. That is, if the initial belief ('the task is dull and boring') changed to another belief ('the task was enjoyable') then this change would be represented over time in a context-independent manner.

While this could only be investigated in a longitudinal study, the temporary shift from an initial belief to a position contrary to that initial belief, after receiving insufficient monetary compensation, suggests that the experience of discrepancy and dissonance is, at the least, relieved by temporary acceptances.

4.2.4.2 *Induced-Compliance and Acceptance*

If the initial cognition from the experience of the dull task or the general negative impression of the police was an acceptance, then the participants would have voluntarily deliberated about the task or the New Haven police without committing to 'an aim for truth.' This is a much greater possibility with the students in Cohen's study than the Festinger and Carlsmith study. As mentioned above, the students may have accepted that the police were severe in their actions based on a dispositional belief that their peers are trustworthy or they may have reflected and deliberated on the actions of the police without committing to the truth of the deliberated position. Both ways of arriving at an acceptance are equally plausible for a university student.

The shift to a contrary position can also be considered in terms of acceptance. It is not difficult to accept the opposite position and write an essay or advocate for that view. In such cases, the change in position is temporary and non-committal to an 'aim for truth.' The induced-compliance provides a set of conditions in which one may voluntarily change one's position or not. More specifically, sufficient financial justification provided an alternative reason, an incentive, for changing and reverting back to one's initial position. Similar to a debate class, one may argue against one's own position because the teacher assigned the task. In other words, if there is a justification for advocating a contrary position to one's beliefs then there is no discrepancy and no dissonance. However, when there is a lack of justification and sufficient reason for advocating a contrary position then dissonance occurs and one must find an alternative reason or temporarily change one's initial position. In the two studies, receiving one dollar (Festinger and Carlsmith's study) or fifty cents (Cohen's study) as financial compensation was not a sufficient reason. As a result Festinger and Carlsmith, as well as Cohen, found that participants were willing to modify or change their initial position. However, as noted before, this may only be a temporary acceptance to reduce the immediate discrepancy and any dissonance experienced at the time. Whether the change was permanent, as mentioned, requires a follow-up study. In this regard, the induced-compliance paradigm

may present a set of conditions by which there may be a change in beliefs or a change in acceptances.

4.2.5 Summary of Research Paradigms

Introducing the theory of cognitive dissonance and its corresponding research paradigms provide additional insight into the observation that 'beliefs' can be inconsistent. All four paradigms sought to create discrepant cognitions and investigate how dissonance was reduced. Each of the studies above created discrepancies in different ways. Making a decision between two favourable options or two valences of affinity created dissonance about making the "right decision." In the free-choice paradigm, making a selection between two conflicting beliefs, rather than acceptances, arguably creates a greater magnitude of dissonance because of belief's dispositional and embodied character. Similarly, having a belief contradicted or "disconfirmed" also has the potential to create dissonance. The discrepancy between disconfirming evidence to a committed belief creates a negative affect greater than a disconfirmed acceptance. One of the necessary conditions within the belief-disconfirmation paradigm was accepting the disconfirming evidence as true and interpreting it as "disconfirming evidence." When these conditions were met, the belief was "intensified" rather than shaken. This paradigm argued that embodied dispositional beliefs remain involuntary and context-independent despite the discrepancy. When the conditions were not met, there was no effect of "intensification." The effort-justification paradigm further displayed the relationship between one's behaviour and its effect on making acceptances to reduce discrepancy and dissonance between effort-expenditure and the justification of the end result. The induced-compliance paradigm also highlighted discrepancies between behaviour and cognition but highlighted the role of providing an external source of justification and explanation. Without a sufficient justification, there is the possibility of creating acceptances or altering beliefs to reduce the discrepancy and felt dissonance.

While the paradigms thus far displayed the various ways and situations by which discrepancies arise and dissonance reduced, and additional textures to 'inconsistency' were evident through an epistemological analysis, each of the studies fell short of distinguishing whether the cognitions involved were acceptances or beliefs. Although it is possible to infer in some cases whether a belief may have been involved, most of the studies indicated that acceptances were adopted to alleviate the participants' situation. A longitudinal investigation would have clarified whether the noted changes in cognitions were beliefs or acceptances. If

the changes in cognition remained with the participants over a period of time then it may be suggested that the initial belief or acceptance had changed into another belief.[80] Otherwise, the scenarios presented by the researchers in the respective paradigms exhibit instances in which acceptances were made to accommodate the discrepancies and dissonance experienced at the time of the study. This further contributes to the point that acceptances can create adjustments to one's default cognitive background in situations of discrepant or inconsistent cognitions and dissonance. In this regard, acceptances are a function of one's *habitus*.

While each research paradigm illustrates various ways 'inconsistency' can be investigated, one of the outstanding issues is the relationship between belief and acceptance within the dynamic of 'inconsistency.' Over the decades of research on cognitive dissonance, revisionist theories have emerged and advanced the framework by discussing the source of dissonance (i.e. negative affect from discrepant cognitions) and when the magnitude of dissonance is at its greatest. This continues the interdisciplinary dialogue and further contributes to the discussion about *habitus* and embodiment with regard to beliefs and acceptance.

4.3 REVISIONS AND PROGRESS ON DISSONANCE THEORY

In 1987, at an American Psychological Association symposium, Festinger stated:

> No theory is going to be inviolate. […] The only kind of theory that can be proposed and ever will be proposed that absolutely will remain inviolate for decades, certainly centuries, is a theory that is not testable. If a theory is at all testable, it will not remain unchanged. It has to change. All theories are wrong. One doesn't ask about theories, can I show that they are wrong or can I show that they are right, but rather one asks, how much of the empirical realm can it handle and how must it be modified and changed as it matures?[81]

The theory of cognitive dissonance has certainly matured since the 1950s. Not only has research continued through the four paradigms, but studies have also measured: physiological effects,[82] dissonance reduction in children as young as five years of age,[83] and neurological

---

[80] Jonathan Freedman (1965) reported that children retained the attitude change three weeks or more after a study on dissonance. However, the study does not specify the age of the children and creates dissonance through mild or severe threats in association with the attractiveness of a toy. The design and method is problematic as it may not be investigating a change in cognition but rather creating an association of threat with a toy. Moreover, this does not provide any insight into the attenuation of dissonance and reduction of discrepancy in adults.

[81] Festinger 1999: 383

[82] Cooper 2007: 50, 77-78, citing Schacter & Wheeler 1962; Cooper, Fazio & Rhodewalt 1978; Croyle & Cooper 1983

[83] Cooper 2007: 87, citing: Aronson & Carlsmith 1962; Freedman 1965; Lepper, Zanna & Abelson 1970

correlates of dissonance.[84] Furthermore, scholars investigating the theory have developed various positions on the emergence of dissonance and the nature of motivation that lead to cognitive changes. Overall, four competing positions have emerged: 'self-consistency,' 'self-affirmation,' 'the new look,' and a reaffirmation of the original theory, which developed into an 'action-based model.'[85]

One of the first revision theories is 'self-consistency theory,' which proposes that dissonance occurs when there is inconsistency between one's self-concept and behaviour.[86] This differs from Festinger's version which only requires two discrepant cognitions. For 'self-consistency theory' people maintain expectations of competent and moral behaviour in accordance with "conventional morals and prevailing values of society,"[87] which factors into one's self-concept. Consider the following:

1) "You are standing in the rain and you are not getting wet."
2) "You read information that smoking is bad for you but you continue to smoke."[88]

Inconsistency or discrepancy exists for both cases. While Festinger would argue that both cases evoke dissonance, Aronson and 'self-consistency theory' state that only the latter creates dissonance.[89] The presupposition is that one possesses a particular view about one's self (i.e. what kind of person I think I am) and this creates an expectation of how one should behave. Dissonance occurs when behaviour is discrepant with one's self-concept, which incorporates "personal standards" as well as expectations of competence and morality one has about one's self. The reduction of dissonance, in this theory, is aimed at maintaining one's self-concept by justifying discrepant behaviour.[90] In addition, as the self-concept is intimately tied with one's self-esteem in terms of self-expectations, 'self-consistency theory' further proposes that dissonance will occur with behaviours or actions that are incongruent with one's self-esteem. That is, if one has low self-esteem[91] (low expectations for competent or moral behaviour) dissonance will occur after a moral and competent act, but *not* after an immoral or incompetent act because those actions are expected of him/her self. This has been

---

[84] Shenhav & Buckner 2014; Izuma et. al. state, "data indicate that the anterior cingulate cortex and dorsolateral prefrontal cortex tracked the degree of cognitive dissonance" 2010: 22014; van Veen et al. "found that cognitive dissonance engaged the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex and anterior insula […] found that activation in these areas predicted subsequent attitude change" (2009: 1469).
[85] Harmon-Jones & Mills 1999: 13-15
[86] Ibid.: 13
[87] Thibodeau & Aronson 1992: 592
[88] Cooper 2007: 95
[89] Ibid.
[90] Stone & Cooper 2001: 229
[91] Glass 1964; Maracek & Mettee 1972

the case of those with negative expectancies[92] and those with mild depression.[93] By contrast, "people with higher expectancies of competent and moral character (i.e. high self-esteem) would perceive a discrepancy [with the immoral or incompetent act] and be motivated to seek justification."[94] This has also been noted to happen with perceptions of extroversion or introversion in one's self-concept.[95]

In a similar yet different manner, Claude Steele's 'self-affirmation theory'[96] proposes that dissonance occurs due to behaviours that "threaten one's sense of moral and adaptive integrity."[97] Steele states, a "motive high on people's priority list is the protection of the integrity of their self-systems."[98] While the focus is on the specific inconsistencies for Festinger and Aronson, Steele's 'self-affirmation theory' posits that the particular inconsistencies do not matter so much as the holistic integrity of the self. In other words, one could "do almost *anything* to make it right. The problem is not one of rectifying the specific wrong, but [of] finding some way to affirm the global integrity of the self."[99] In this way, it is possible to focus on other positive aspects of one's self and reduce dissonance without directly addressing the discrepant cognitions.[100] For Steele, there are other ways of restoring one's sense of integrity and reducing dissonance than addressing the specific discrepancy and cause of dissonance.

'The New Look' revisionist theory[101] indirectly focuses on the self and suggests that dissonance occurs from "feeling personally responsible for producing aversive consequences."[102] Aronson also states that the effects from dissonance are greatest when persons feel "personally responsible for their actions" and when "their actions have serious consequences […] the greater the consequence and the greater our responsibility for it, the greater the dissonance" and consequently, "the greater the dissonance, the greater our own attitude change."[103] Joel Cooper, who spearheaded the 'New Look theory,' emphasizes the

---

[92] Aronson & Carlsmith 1962
[93] Rhodewalt & Agustsdottir 1986
[94] Stone & Cooper 2001: 230
[95] Cooper & Scalise 1974
[96] Steele 1988; Spencer, Josephs & Steele 1993
[97] Harmon-Jones & Mills 1999: 14
[98] Cooper 2007: 90
[99] Ibid.: 92
[100] Stone & Cooper 2001: 230
[101] Cooper & Fazio 1984
[102] Harmon-Jones & Mills 1999: 14
[103] Aronson 2008: 216

importance of choice and foreseeability and states: "Dissonance […] will occur *only* if the consequence of a freely chosen behaviour was foreseeable when the person chose to commit the behaviour. Surprise consequences that you could not have anticipated do not produce dissonance."[104] Both the 'New Look' and 'self-affirmation' theories argue that dissonance reduction is "not about restoring consistency." 'New Look' argues that "the motivation for people to change a cognition is to make an unwanted consequence less aversive" while self-affirmation is about "restoring the integrity of the global self-system."[105]

By contrast to the revisionist theories above, Festinger's original proposal has remained viable[106] with Eddie Harmon-Jones advancing an 'action-based model.' This theory aligns itself with Festinger's original proposal but emphasizes that "*dissonance between cognitions evokes an aversive state because it has the potential to interfere with effective and unconflicted action.*"[107] That is, dissonance reduction facilitates the "execution of effective and unconflicted action."[108] According to Harmon-Jones, there are two modes of motivation, proximal and distal, for the reduction of dissonance: "The proximal motive for reducing dissonance is to reduce or eliminate the negative emotion of dissonance. The distal motivation is the need for effective and unconflicted action."[109] This corresponds with the analysis above that acceptances can be made to reduce dissonance and make adjustments to one's default cognitive background, which facilitates behaviour and the function of *habitus*. In other words, one of the primary focuses of dissonance reduction is the "rationalization of behaviour" and effective action.[110] Harmon-Jones states that the rationalization of one's behaviour "modifies cognitions other than the one that is most resistant to change." Moreover, the cognition that is most resistant to change "will not necessarily be recent behaviour or behaviour in the present situation" but the cognitions that have "successfully guided one's behaviour for years in multiple situations."[111] In this regard, Harmon-Jones argues that the 'action-based model' of dissonance theory serves an adaptive function for "effective action" and is "concerned with self-regulation."[112]

---

[104] Cooper 2007: 68 (emphasis original)
[105] Ibid.: 92
[106] Harmon-Jones & Mills 1999: 15
[107] Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones 2008: 1524 (emphasis original)
[108] Ibid.
[109] Harmon-Jones 2000b: 138
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid.: 139

All four of these positions maintain and agree that the arousal of dissonance is a source of psychological discomfort, which motivates cognitive change. The disagreement amongst them is primarily about the nature of motivation that underlies such cognitive changes[113] and the nature of the psychological discomfort.[114] However, each of the four positions involves the self in one way or another. Self-consistency theory states that the motivation for change is to maintain a consistent self-concept and discrepancies with that self-concept will evoke dissonance. Self-affirmation proposes that the motivation for change is to maintain a holistic sense of integrity and dissonance occurs when there is discrepancy with this sense of integrity.[115] New Look theory states that dissonance occurs when one anticipates or experiences unwanted consequences as a result of one's actions and the motivation to change attitudes is to reduce aversive consequences that stem from one's action.[116] The action-based model states that the motivation for change is because discrepant cognitions can interfere with "effective and unconflicted" action and dissonance occurs primarily due to a discrepancy with important and committed cognitions. [117] Each of these revisionist theories, posit that the greatest magnitude of dissonance occurs when there are discrepancies with one's beliefs associated with the self. Cognitions about one's self-concept, sense of integrity, potential consequences of one's actions, and various important and committed cognitions. In other words, beliefs about the self include any and all cognitions one regards important or possesses an 'aim for truth.'

The revisionist theories indicate that the issue of inconsistency involves the self as well as the paradigm of embodiment and *habitus*. Moreover, they further indicate that the belief and acceptance distinction can maintain its analytic utility in clarifying the issue of inconsistency. However, an emphasis on the self raises issues with cross-cultural variability and whether dissonance theory is applicable outside of the western context.

---

[113] Harmon-Jones & Mills 1999: 15

[114] Better overviews and summaries of progress on dissonance research can be found in Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones (2008), Cooper (2007), and Harmon-Jones & Mills (1999).

[115] Both self-consistency theory and self-affirmation theory have been contested by research (Harmon-Jones 2000: 126-132)

[116] This theory has been contested by research conducted by Harmon-Jones et al. (1996)

[117] Committed cognitions point to the magnitude of dissonance that can occur when dispositional beliefs are involved as opposed to a discrepancy between acceptances. The reduction of dissonance has been noted to be a "function of the resistance to change of the cognitions involved in the cognitive discrepancy and the availability of discrepancy reduction routes (Wicklund & Brehm 1976)" (Harmon-Jones 2000a: 1491).

4.4 CROSS-CULTURAL VARIATIONS IN COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

In the original theory, Festinger noted that dissonance was subject to cultural variance: "Dissonance could arise because of cultural mores […] because the culture defines what is consonant and what is not. In some other culture […] two cognitions might not be [discrepant and evoke dissonance] at all."[118] One of the ways in which cultural variance is apparent is in the different logical implications certain propositions have for the perception of consistency. Bertram Gawronski, Kurt R. Peters, and Fritz Strack note that the "*subjective* nature of personal beliefs supplements the *objective* nature of logical implication, such that (in)consistency within an individual's system of beliefs is determined by the application of logical principles to what this individual believes to be true or false."[119] Not only does this entail variance within a culture but cultural variability across cultures in the assignment of what is true or false. Wittgenstein made this point about causation and physics in chapter 2. What is 'objective' can vary from person to person and culture to culture. Moreover, what is proper or improper, correct or incorrect, right or wrong, in both behaviour and ethics contributes to, and can conflate, what is considered 'objective.' This was the distinction made earlier between moral and epistemic truths and how they can complicate and conflate one another. Cultural frameworks of courtesy, etiquette, value, and respect do not *necessarily* involve a truth value and yet they can influence the application of logical principles with regard to what is rational or irrational. This is not to dispute that there can be 'real beliefs' about the state of the world and the physical nature of things, but that the discussion becomes much more complicated in the matter of human affairs. As the revision theories have noted, there can also be variations among individuals within a culture due to variations in conceptions of the self, sense of integrity, responsibility and aversive consequences, or differences in committed cognitions. The "structuring structures" of one's *habitus* includes cultural variance and variations of embodied beliefs within cultures. In this regard, such variation should also manifest itself in cognitive discrepancies, the experience of dissonance, and how dissonance is expressed and managed.

In 2010, cultural psychologists Joe Henrich, Steve Heine, and Ara Norenzayan conducted a study surveying contemporary research and collection of data in the field of psychology.[120] They point out that most research has been conducted on persons of the following

---

[118] Festinger 1957: 14
[119] Gawronski, Peters & Strack, 2008: 299, Cf. Quine & Ullian, [1978] (emphasis original)
[120] Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010

demographic: White, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic societies (W.E.I.R.D.). Considering the world's population and diversity, "WEIRD people are statistical outliers" and even "within the West, Americans are more extreme outliers than Europeans, and within the United States, the educated upper middle class […] is the most unusual of all."[121] Jonathan Haidt notes from their study that *The WEIRDer you are, the more you see a world full of separate objects, rather than relationships.*" For example, "when asked to write twenty statements beginning with the words, "I am…," Americans are likely to list their own internal psychological characteristics (happy, outgoing, interested in jazz), whereas East Asians are more likely to list their roles and relationships (a son, a husband, an employee of Fujitsu)."[122] Hazel Rose Markus and Shinobu Kitayama launched the discussion about this difference and argue that dissonance from counter-attitudinal behaviour may not arise in those with 'interdependent,' as opposed to 'independent,' 'self-construals.'[123] 'Independent self construals' focus on a cultural goal of independence for the individual whose "behaviour is organized and made meaningful primarily by reference to one's own internal repertoire of thoughts, feelings, and action, rather than by reference to the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others."[124] Whereas for 'interdependent self-construal,' one's attitudes and opinions are not as significant as one's status, roles, or positions and the commitments, obligations, and responsibilities those positions confer.[125] In other words, the self-concept is much more contingent upon externalities and social relations: "Individual traits are important aspects of the self, but no more important than the quality of relationships."[126] As such, those with 'interdependent self-construals' will not experience, as much if any, dissonance when voluntarily making a counter-attitudinal position. Whereas research in the induced-compliance paradigm has shown that those with 'independent self-construals,' indicative of the U.S. and other western cultures, will experience dissonance when voluntarily making a counter-attitudinal position.[127] In other words, Markus and Kitayama argue that western cultures are prone to experience more dissonance when arguing for a position contrary to one's personal beliefs or values than non-western cultures.

---

[121]Haidt 2012: 96
[122] Ibid. (emphasis original)
[123] Gawronski, Peters & Strack, 2008: 298; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Heine & Lehman (1997); Miller (1984) who investigated Hindus in southern India and Americans in Chicago, makes a different distinction: 'agentic' and personally responsible outcomes versus 'holistic' and outcomes as a joint function of interrelationships.
[124] Markus & Kitayama 1991: 226
[125] Ibid.: 240
[126] Cooper 2007: 138
[127] Ibid.

According to Etsuko Hoshino-Browne and associates, although the particular instances eliciting dissonance may differ from culture to culture, the arousal of dissonance is a universal.[128] If a particular culture places emphasis on one's social relations, there will be variations in the degree to which a person associates with a social group as well as the social roles, positions, and status of others. In this cultural context, dissonance would occur when a representative of a group, or a person one identifies with, makes a statement or takes a stance that is not personally agreeable. In other words, there is a discrepancy with a valence of affinity. Cooper calls this 'vicarious cognitive dissonance' and points to cross-cultural research conducted in the U.S., Australia, and South Korea.[129] He explains that "[v]icarious cognitive dissonance is based on common group membership between you and a particular target person"[130] and "occurs in a member of a social group when a prototypical fellow group member acts in a way that produces an aversive consequence."[131] The more one identifies with that group,[132] or group member, and has a strong valence of affinity there will be a greater experience of vicarious dissonance when that group member takes a contrary position to one's personal views. In order to reduce this discrepancy and feelings of dissonance there is a greater possibility of changing one's personal attitudes towards that prototypical member or group stance.[133] As noted earlier, this change may be an acceptance of that contrary or counter-attitudinal position to temporarily reduce discrepancy and dissonance. This kind of change was demonstrated among university students in South Korea, who strongly identified with their university by contrast to a rival school.[134] That is, they were prone to experience dissonance when a representative member of their own university made a discrepant statement than a representative from another university. In another study, Japanese students exhibited a greater magnitude of dissonance and "spreading of alternatives," in the free-choice paradigm, when asked to make a difficult decision between two products to give to another person close to them.[135] In other words, the Japanese students did not experience

---

[128] Hoshino-Browne et al. 2005
[129] Cooper 2007; citing Cooper & Hogg 2007, Monin et al. 2004, Norton et al. 2003, Chong & Cooper (2007)
[130] Cooper 2007
[131] Ibid.: 147
[132] Cooper proposes two factors that allow such an affinity and identification to occur with fellow group members: "The first is whether a particular group is salient in our thinking at a particular time; the second is the degree to which we feel attached to, or identify with, a particular group. It is particularly when a group with which we identify becomes salient in our thinking that we fuse with the members of the group and use the group as a source of our own identity" (2007: 120).
[133] Ibid.: 129-130
[134] Ibid.: 148
[135] Ibid.: 144; Cooper also cites a series of studies done by Sakai in the early 80s, which suggested that the Japanese experienced more dissonance in making a counter-attitudinal statement in public, or to one's

discrepancy and dissonance when making a difficult decision for themselves but experienced dissonance when they were considering a gift for someone close to them.

The cross-cultural research above provides interesting insights into the cultural variability by which cognitions may be discrepant and when dissonance is experienced. However, it is also important to note that there is variability within cultures and that not all persons of a particular culture will find discrepancies with the same things or experience dissonance in the same manner. Alana Conner Snibbe and Hazel Rose Markus have found that there are variations in what it means to be "agentic" within different socio-economic statuses and persons of low and high socio-economic status presented different results in the 'free-choice paradigm.'[136] In the U.S., differences were also seen between white and black participants in their experience of dissonance.[137] The subcultural differences and dynamics can also be seen when "people attend more carefully to the arguments of in-group members than out-group members when reading or listening to a persuasive message."[138] The degree of identification one may have with a group will vary from culture to culture and even within cultures as some will identify more than others regardless of 'independent' or 'interdependent' self-construals. In other words, there are cultural as well as sub-cultural differences in how the self is conceived and how the self is considered with respect to one's actions and the actions of others. The research described above gives further support to the argument that beliefs are the units of embodiment and cultural history.

Cultural and subcultural variance in the experience of dissonance places emphasis on the significance given to particular beliefs and acceptances as well as variable normative standards of behaviour. In other words, what is considered discrepant and the experience of dissonance is contingent upon social and cultural variables: "Whether behaviour and attitudes are logically consistent or not, dissonance will be aroused only when the behaviour violates standards and those, in turn, exist not in a vacuum but in a social context."[139] The variations in cultural differences and (in)consistencies for standards of behaviour, suggest that "purely logical inconsistency between cognitive elements is not sufficient to arouse dissonance."[140]

---

identifying group, as opposed to private situations, and when there was a degree of personal responsibility attached to one's actions.
[136] Ibid.: 153; Snibbe & Markus 2005
[137] Ibid.: 152; citing Hill 2005
[138] Ibid.: 124-125; citing Mackie, Worth & Asuncion 1990; all of these studies also point to studies on implicit biases
[139] Ibid.: 149
[140] Ibid.

Instead the discrepancies that involve the self and one's committed beliefs, as opposed to acceptances, create the greater magnitude of dissonance.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The inconsistencies noted from the anthropological literature are given further texture with the introduction of acceptance into the discussion on 'belief.' The philosophical literature pointed out that our acceptances can be inconsistent and compartmentalized due to their voluntary and non-committal stance to truth. The research on dissonance theory indicates that discrepancies can be resolved through acceptances and that the experience of dissonance is at its greatest when dispositional beliefs are involved in the discrepancy. Particularly, beliefs that are about one's self-concept, self-integrity, sense of responsibility for aversive consequences, and other committed views that have an 'aim for truth' towards effective and guiding action create the greatest magnitude of dissonance. In other words, when these beliefs are involved in discrepant cognitive relations the experienced negative affect motivates one to reduce the discrepancy and restore a personal sense of consistency. While this does not entail that beliefs are necessarily consistent with other beliefs, it does indicate that when beliefs are perceived as inconsistent the experience of dissonance motivates its attenuation towards a subjective sense of consistency.

In this regard, the characteristics of belief mentioned above situate belief as integral to one's default cognitive background and relate to behaviour and one's overall *habitus*. A focus on the self and other committed cognitions allows for cultural variability and differences in what is consonant and discrepant. This entails that dissonance will arise in different circumstances with different cognitions and can vary for different persons of different socio-cultural backgrounds and economic statuses. While the experience of dissonance and reduction of dissonance occurs cross-culturally, the kinds of cognitions involved are culturally variable and the status of the change is uncertain. That is, while the magnitude of dissonance may be due to a discrepancy between any combination of beliefs or acceptances and dissonance reduced by any one of Festinger's three methods through beliefs and acceptances, it is uncertain whether the change is comprised of beliefs or acceptances. In this regard, the research paradigms of cognitive dissonance could discern between beliefs and acceptances by conducting more longitudinal studies. Investigating whether the cognitive change persists in different contexts and over time measures the context-independent/context-relative or voluntary/involuntary character of the cognitive change. That is, belief and acceptance can be

discerned by considering whether the cognitive change persists over time and in different contexts.

The research from cognitive dissonance further suggests that there are negotiations between and rearrangements of beliefs and acceptances. A change in belief does not entail a direct substitution to another belief or acceptance but rather a shift in position that incorporates another understanding of the subject matter that constitutes the object of belief. These potential shifts in cognition, which are motivated by being made conscious of discrepancies, have further implications for the topic of conversion. Moreover, identifying moments of dissonance as potential events for cognitive change suggest that cases of 'crises' are useful events for the investigation of 'belief.' In this regard, the themes of crisis and conversion are proposed as methodological points of entry for the investigation of 'belief' in ethnographic contexts.

5

CRISIS AND CONVERSION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

After problematizing the concept of 'belief' through the anthropological literature and deriving a set of characteristics, the epistemological distinction between belief and acceptance was introduced as a dialogical partner to begin the interdisciplinary discussion. The distinction was shown to be useful in providing nuance and discernment to the initial set of characteristics and both anthropology and epistemology highlighted the significance of the paradigm of embodiment. The previous chapter was devoted to the inconsistent character of 'belief' and the theory of cognitive dissonance was discussed within the interdisciplinary context thus far. In particular, 'inconsistency' was noted to be the product of an interactive dynamic between beliefs and acceptances which can produce inconsistent representations in language and behaviour. Moreover, the experience of dissonance, due to the perception of inconsistent cognitions, is greatest when beliefs about the self are involved in discrepant cognitive relations. The cultural variations of how the self is conceived entails that the experience of dissonance is also culturally variable. This further supported the argument that beliefs can be interpreted as the units of embodiment and cultural history that compose one's default cognitive background and function as the "structuring structures" of *habitus*.

However, there are concerns with how this interdisciplinary discussion translates to ethnographic contexts. The research on cognitive dissonance suggests that beliefs can be investigated by noting events that cause the greatest magnitude of dissonance. With this in mind, 'crises' and 'conversion' are proposed as practical points of method for investigating 'belief.' By engaging Ernesto de Martino's 'crisis of presence' and the various ways 'conversion' occurs, this chapter aims towards focusing the discussion on 'belief' for practical application in ethnographic fieldwork. The chapter first discusses the nuances of crises as potential events in which 'beliefs' become susceptible to change. This is followed by a discussion of the two paradigms by which conversion has been considered and investigated. The classical paradigm involves crisis-precipitated sudden conversions and notes an initial cognitive change prior to any changes in behaviour. The contemporary paradigm, by contrast, deals with gradual conversions which do not necessarily include an element of crisis. Instead, gradual conversions are motivated by social support, or other social needs, and occur over time through continued practice and participation (similarly, the lack of

social support can lead to deconversion). However, the notion of conversion begs the question of what it is that has exactly been converted and changed. The chapter proceeds to discuss the 'three levels' model of meaning and personality in relation to *habitus*, beliefs, and acceptances. Lastly, the chapter ends on how to focus 'crises' and 'conversion' in ethnographic contexts with respect to 'belief.' In conjunction with the investigations conducted through the previous three chapters, giving particular focus to 'crisis' and 'conversion' enables the thesis to engage in analysis of three case studies represented in chapters 6, 7, and 8.

5.1 CRISIS

Crises can be experienced in many ways. In most cases, crises are readily recognizable and yet, like many concepts, it is difficult to define and discern exactly what would constitute a 'crisis.' A pedestrian reference to the Oxford English Dictionary defines 'crises' as a "time of intense difficulty and danger." Given the postmodern emphasis on subjectivity, crises could apply to almost any situation if one perceived and interpreted it as "intense difficulty" or "danger." The dramatic responses persons can display with regard to certain phobias or moments of distress could well constitute a personal "crisis." While such instances are relevant, they lack a focal point for any constructive discussion and further analysis into the ways beliefs may be destabilized.

One account of 'crisis' that has been discussed in some anthropological literature, primarily in accounts of Pentecostal conversion, is presented by Ernesto de Martino – an Italian anthropologist and historian of religions – through what he calls 'the crisis of presence.'[1] By 'presence,' he refers to "a sense of self where persons are conscious of their own autonomy and instrumentality, where they can perceive themselves to be the authors of their intentions, actions, and definitions of self."[2] In this regard, 'presence' refers to the extent to which one is conscious of the beliefs that compose one's default cognitive background or *habitus* that provides a sense of authorship to one's intentions, actions and concept(s) of self. According to anthropologist George Saunders,[3] de Martino discusses 'crisis of presence' as the "existential drama of being exposed to the risk of not being here" by which, at times, he

---

[1] Saunders 1995: 324
[2] Toulis 1997: 126
[3] Much of de Martino's work is in Italian and relatively little is accessible to the English world. As such, de Martino's work will be referred to via scholars who are familiar with de Martino.

simply refers to an "anxiety about the possibility of one's own death."[4] Taken further, Saunders suggests that de Martino is referring to "a breakdown in the sense of self" that renders a passive and "ineffectual engagement with the world outside" posing a "fundamental existential dilemma, with moral, psychological, and cultural dimensions."[5] For de Martino, consciousness is a "sense of self" that is "fragile and labile" and capable of losing its "active posture" from "emotional shock."[6] In this sense, 'crisis' induces one's consciousness to lose its content. In psychoanalytic terms, it is a "loss of ego boundaries"[7] and a "dis-integration of personality."[8] The 'crisis of presence' then denotes a shift from an active insertion of self in the world to a passive state of being "absorbed in the world" and losing control of one's own existential sense of agency.[9] The notion involves an anxiety

> that underlines the threat of losing the distinction between subject and object, between thought and action, between representation and judgment, between vitality and morality: it is … the manifestation of an emotional reality in the face of which presence cannot be maintained, threatening to become … the object of the emotions.[10]

In other words, "a crisis of presence arises when the person is 'absorbed in the world' and 'subject to the will of others' such that one ceases to be the author of his or her own thoughts, actions, rendering oneself passive and ineffectual."[11] De Martino's 'crisis of presence' is then, in theory, a useful construct to begin considering the circumstances, conditions, and phenomena of when beliefs are destabilized and possibly identifying the particular beliefs that comprise one's *habitus* as well as the potential for cognitive change.

De Martino was primarily concerned with the effects of modernity and often associated 'crisis of presence' with the imposing influence of economic and political structures, that is, "economic marginalization and political powerlessness."[12] He develops this from his analysis

---

[4] Saunders 1995: 324-325
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.: 331
[7] In the context of spirituality and health, 'ego loss' has been associated with spiritual practices and experiences. Studies find that the experiences of ego loss can be tied to "positive spiritual experiences" (Kohls & Walach 2007), however "subjects with a lack of spiritual practice in contrast to spiritually practising individuals, suffer distress from experiences of ego loss" (Kohls & Walach 2007; Kohls et al. 2008). Similarly, epileptic seizures can "produce an alteration or loss of the sense of one's own reality, often accompanied by a sense of detachment from others and the environment, and of acting like an automaton […] an alteration or loss of the sense of the reality of the external environment – for example, the feeling that the external surround is just a dream – and also are associated with a sense of detachment" (Saver & Rabin 1997: 500).
[8] Saunders 1995: 331
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.: 332
[11] Toulis 1997: 126
[12] Saunders 1995: 332

of *latah* – "the Malaysian name for a dissociative state in which a person becomes highly susceptible to external influences, imitating the movements of others, echoing voices, and generally seeming to lose the integrity of the individual's own personality."[13] De Martino effectively re-appropriates a Malaysian concept into another context and reifies it in terms of a "psychopathological dissociation," which he interpreted as a "loss of the sense of self" and the "loss of subjectivity."[14] Configuring a 'crisis of presence' in the context of modernity draws similarities with Durkheim's use of *anomie*, which also leads to a loss of self and the *perception* of authorship in one's life. According to Durkheim, *anomie*

> throws open the door to disillusionment and consequently to disappointment. A man abruptly cast down below his accustomed status cannot avoid exasperation at feeling a situation escape him of which he thought himself master, and his exasperation naturally revolts against the cause, whether real or imaginary, to which he attributes his ruin. If he recognizes himself as to blame for the catastrophe, he takes it out on himself…suicide.[15]

Durkheim quotes Chateaubriand to characterize this state: "*Is it my fault if I everywhere find limits, if everything once experienced has no value for me?*"[16] In this sense, *anomie* and 'crisis of presence' both refer to the conditions and forces imposed upon the individual such that the accumulation of experiences can culminate in depression and other "psychopathological" states. If the effects of modernity can impose conditions and circumstances that induce a 'crisis of presence,' this also entails that such forces can destabilize beliefs, create discrepancies and dissonance, opening a cognitive space for potential change. It has been postulated that this kind of 'crisis' often precedes conversion. While this will be discussed in further depth below, it is worth noting this association between crisis and conversion as it aligns with the aim of considering the destabilization of beliefs and cognitive change.

A good example of a 'crisis' prior to a 'religious experience' that motivates conversion, often referred to by psychologists of religion, is from the great author Leo Tolstoy:

> I felt something had broken within me on which my life had always rested, that I had nothing left to hold on to, and that morally my life had stopped. An invincible force impelled me to get rid of my experience, in one way or another. It cannot be said exactly that I *wished* to kill myself, for the force which drew me away from life was fuller, more powerful, more general than any mere desire. It was a force like my old

---

[13] Ibid.: 331

[14] Ibid.: 332; while this has been suggested in a theoretical context by de Martino, research is still needed to differentiate the experiences of ego loss and psychopathological experiences to further understand the intrapersonal effects (Kohls & Walach 2007).

[15] Durkheim [1897] 1970: 285

[16] Ibid.: 287 (emphasis original)

aspiration to live, only it impelled me in the opposite direction. It was an aspiration of my whole being to get out of life…

I could give no reasonable meaning to any actions of my life. And I was surprised that I had not understood this from the very beginning. My state of mind was as if some wicked and stupid jest was being played upon me by someone. One can live only so long as one is intoxicated, drunk with life; but when one grows sober one cannot fail to see that it is all a stupid cheat. What is truest about it is that there is nothing even funny or silly in it; it is cruel and stupid, purely and simply…

What will be the outcome of what I do today? Of what I shall do tomorrow? What will be the outcome of all my life? Why should I live? Why should I do anything? Is there in life any purpose which the inevitable death which awaits me does not undo and destroy?[17]

Psychologist Frank Barron called such occurrences a 'crisis in belief,' which he states "is often a time of categorical repudiation or total acceptance, of radical change or of rigid stasis. It is no exaggeration to say that it is a time of the greatest psychological danger, in which the integrity of the self is challenged, and in which old selves die and new selves are born."[18] Others have termed this as a 'crises of meaning and control.'[19] Similarly, psychologists Daniel Batson and Larry Ventis state that "[r]eligious experience is rooted in a dissatisfaction at an existential level. There is a discrepancy between what is and what one-feels-ought-to-be with regard to one or more questions of existence."[20] Joel Cooper framed this in terms of expectation and experience as a point in which discrepancies induce dissonance; when experience is not consonant with one's expectation.[21] Batson and Ventis further state that 'crisis' tends to occur "when the individual should be happiest."[22] Citing examples from Tolstoy, Siddhartha, Augustine and William James, they speculate that existential questions arise during these times because "other problems and shortcomings can no longer be blamed for one's dissatisfaction and unhappiness."[23]

In the anthropological literature, 'crisis of presence' has been employed in describing narrative accounts of conversion. Saunders utilizes the concept to characterize the experienced struggles of Italian converts prior to their conversion to Pentecostalism. One of Saunders' interviewees stated:

---

[17] Batson & Ventis 1982: 82-83; Cf. Tolstoy 1904: 20-22
[18] Barron 1968: 148
[19] Spilka et al. 1996: 96; Cf. Clark 1929; Lofland & Skonovd 1981; Spilka, Brown & Cassidy 1993
[20] Batson & Ventis 1982: 82
[21] Cooper 2007: 2
[22] Batson & Ventis 1982: 83
[23] Ibid.

In effect, I was committing suicide. In the sense that I rejected the world, I rejected people, and – I don't know – that they didn't have anything to say to me, they didn't have anything to give me…I said, if the world is like this, and if I am like this, then I'm not interested in living…And then I had reached the point where I couldn't sleep any more, and I continued to drink from nine in the evening until five or six…an isolated atmosphere…a little like a motherly womb, an amniotic situation. I isolated myself, and lived in this space anesthetized, without pain…Perhaps this helped me a lot, that I didn't have any faith in myself at that point. That is to say, I really didn't even exist.[24]

The interviewee mentions that she was drinking "two litres a day, of alcohol" and that she could not do anything any more, that she "couldn't work, nothing."[25] Prior to the above statement, the interviewee noted her issues with her parents' personalities and her "emotional breakdown" after a series of failed relationships, which led her to drink excessively, take "psychopharmaceuticals," and enter into psychoanalysis. The statement echoes the sentiments expressed in the passage by Tolstoy above.

De Martino's 'crisis of presence' can certainly be applicable to states of depression and feelings of 'losing control' in which one's 'sense of self' and identity are shaken.[26] While a 'crisis of presence' shows promise as an episode when the magnitude of dissonance is great, it is worth further scrutinizing the characteristic qualifications for a 'crisis of presence' in order to help identify the phenomenon in the documentation of "lived experience." What follows is a critique and problematization of being 'passive' and a 'loss of self' that seems to qualify de Martino's 'crisis of presence.' The critiques are useful as they examine the extent to which 'crises' entails a destabilization of beliefs and provide further specificity to the notion. On one hand, the characteristic qualifications of de Martino's concept are inadequate, which will be pronounced further in the three case studies, on the other hand, 'crisis of presence' genuinely depicts an episode in which the magnitude of dissonance is great and beliefs destabilized.

5.1.1 Active/Passive

Firstly, there are issues with demarcating what is active and what is passive in relation to one's being "in the world." De Martino suggests that one becomes "passive" and "subject to the will of others." Yet, as social animals, we are already "absorbed in the world" and

---

[24] Saunders 1995: 324
[25] Ibid.: 327
[26] Douglas Davies explores 'identity depletion' to "include life circumstances where a sense of meaninglessness and hopelessness begin to pervade a person's life or even the life of a community, and where otherness becomes malevolent and reciprocity constricted" (2011: 68).

actively subjected to the will of others just as we actively subject others to ours. In this regard, an active-passive dichotomy is problematic. Any parent-child relationship, romantic relationship, or relationship of power can attest to an active-passive dynamic of wills. A simple glance at the interactions of language can further attest to this phenomenon. Stating that one is cold can lead another person to close the window or turn on a heater. Actively asserting that one is cold motivates the other to action such that one subjects the other (the subjected) to his/her will. While this configures language and relationships within a dynamic of power rather than empathy or compassion, they nonetheless describe our relationships as being subjected by, and actively subjecting, other persons. Another example is the phenomena of 'culture shock,' instances when the familiar is absent and one's enculturated sense of things are displaced in a world of different customs, language, mannerisms and novelties. This encounter with the foreign creates uncertainty that often directs one's attention to others as points of reference for appropriate action. In this sense, 'culture shock' creates additional pressure for one to become 'passive' and 'subject to the will of others' insofar as one is uncertain of how to behave. However, the very act of referring to the behaviour of others is an 'active' process.

5.1.2 Religious Experiences – loss of self

Secondly, 'crisis of presence' is characterized by a sense of loss in one's self and personal "subjectivity" as a consequence of being "rendered passive and ineffectual." De Martino and Saunders point to the "existential drama" that triggers this process. However, there are other instances in which a "loss of self" occurs without the angst that arises from the complexities of living. For example, a 'loss of self' can be achieved through various social practices that may induce possessions or trances, as well as other aesthetic experiences and contrary to the negative experience in a 'crisis of presence,' these experiences are described as positive.

Niko Kohls and Harald Walach have noted that practices such as yoga and other forms of meditation can induce ego loss, yet the practice "buffers" the distress from deconstructing and losing the ego. They report that "spiritually practising" participants reported their experience much more positively than those who were not "spiritually practising."[27] A 'loss of self' and control is also reported in religious, spiritual or mystical experiences. In 1979, David Hay interviewed 65 students who reported to have had a "religious experience" and

---

[27] Kohls & Walach 2007

found eight "classes" of experience which included an "awareness of a power controlling me and guiding me," "experience of a unity with nature," "awareness of the presence of God."[28] In national surveys across "the United States, Britain, and Australia, 20% to 49% of individuals report having personally had "numinous experiences," and this figure rises to more than 60% when in-depth interviews of randomly selected individuals are conducted."[29] In Britain, "eight major types of numinous experience" were identified in individuals:

> in descending order of frequency, 1) a patterning of events in a person's life that convinces him or her that in some strange way they were meant to happen, 2) an awareness of the presence of God, 3) an awareness of receiving help in answer to a prayer, 4) an awareness of being looked after or guided by a presence not called God, 5) an awareness of being in the presence of someone who has died, 6) an awareness of a sacred presence in nature, 7) an awareness of an evil presence, and 8) experiencing in an extraordinary way that all things are 'One'.[30]

Carmelite nuns have also characterised their "mystical experience" by a "sense of union with God," which can include a sense of "having touched the ultimate ground of reality," "the experience of timelessness and spacelessness," "the sense of union with humankind and the universe" and "feelings of positive affect, peace, joy, and unconditional love."[31] Similarly, Franciscan nuns described their experience as a "tangible sense of the closeness of God and a mingling with Him" which echoed the account of Angela of Foligno, a thirteenth-century Franciscan sister:

> How great is the mercy of the one who realized this union…I possessed God so fully that I was no longer in my previous customary state but was led to find peace in which I was united with God and was content with everything.[32]

In Theravada Buddhism, practitioners engage in a form of meditation which attempts to "clear all thought from their sphere of attention" and "reach a subjective state characterized by a sense of no space, no time, and no thought" producing an experience of being "fully integrated and unified, such that there is no sense of self and other."[33] In "transcendental meditation" and certain forms of Tibetan Buddhism, meditation consists of focusing "attention on a particular object, image, phrase, or word," which leads "to a subjective experience of absorption with the object of focus."[34] Despite, a sense of losing one's self,

---

[28] Yamane 2000: 180
[29] Saver & Rabin 1997: 499
[30] Ibid.
[31] Beauregard & Paquette 2006: 187
[32] Newberg, d'Aquili & Rause 2001: 7
[33] Newberg & Iversen 2003: 283
[34] Ibid.

each of these experiences were positive rather than the negative connotations associated with De Martino's 'crisis of presence.'

Similarly, athletes often speak of "being in the zone,"[35] musicians and artists,[36] writers[37] and dancers also describe similar experiences of "losing one's self" in their work or during a performance. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi terms this as "the flow experience,"[38] which includes a "loss of self-consciousness and transcendence of ego boundaries."[39] Csikszentmihalyi observed that "when work on a painting was going well, the artist persisted single-mindedly, disregarding hunger, fatigue, and discomfort."[40] However, as opposed to being rendered "ineffective" one is accompanied by "a sense that one can control one's actions; that is, a sense in principle deal with the situation because one knows how to respond to whatever happens next"; the individual "operates at full capacity."[41]

5.1.3 Destabilization of Beliefs

In this regard, the active/passive dichotomy in crisis is problematic and there are qualitative differences in various experiences of "losing one's self." However, 'crisis of presence' contrasts with the experiences described above by the negative emotions involved and a lack of structured practice to achieve a "loss of self." In other words, de Martino's 'crisis of presence' and Durkheim's *anomie* are existentially depleting while the structured experiences of meditation, religious experience, or 'flow experiences' are existentially uplifting. Although a 'crisis of presence' can be destabilizing and induce a degree of passivity, such that one becomes 'subject to the will of others,' this does not render one's *habitus* ineffective. The mannerisms of being 'depressed' are still expressions of a socially informed body. In other words, a 'crisis of presence' may destabilize some beliefs but not others. The causes of crisis include a broader range of possible beliefs and acceptances than religious or flow experiences. As mentioned in the previous chapter, beliefs about the self include much more than having a sense of one's self. 'Crisis' is then relevant insofar as it potentially represents a destabilization in any number of an individual's beliefs and acceptances. What was involuntary believed may be voluntarily questioned and what was voluntary accepted may be

---

[35] Jackson 1995, 1996; Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi 1999; Kimiecik & Harris 1996
[36] Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson 1990; Csikszentmihalyi 1996
[37] Perry 1999
[38] Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson 1990: viii
[39] Ibid.: 8
[40] Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi 2009: 195
[41] Ibid.: 196

scrutinized further. The destabilization of beliefs through crisis thereby opens up the potential and possibility for change: a conversion, deconversion or a re-affirmation of beliefs and acceptances. In this sense, the methodological focus should be placed on episodes of distress that involve beliefs about the self rather than an emphasis on the characteristics of 'losing a sense of self' and being 'passive' or 'subject to the will of others.'

5.2 CONVERSION

Although crisis presents an episode by which beliefs may become destabilized and opens the cognitive space for conversion (a change in 'beliefs'), the role and significance of crisis in the conversion literature have been subject to debate. While it remains prevalent in the classical paradigm of 'sudden' conversions, the place of 'crisis' within the contemporary paradigm of 'gradual' conversion has been varied. This chapter, as well as ensuing chapters, will further show that the two paradigms can overlap and will note the significance of social support in conversion processes. Not only does 'crisis' have a varied role in conversion, but the two paradigms beg the question of what exactly is converted; what 'beliefs' change? Focusing on the dynamics of 'crisis' and 'conversion,' in conjunction or separately, brings the interdisciplinary discussion on 'belief' into thematic focus and methodological context for the next set of chapters.

5.2.1 The Classical Paradigm: Crisis-Precipitated Sudden Conversions

This paradigm has been modelled after a "Protestant understanding of Paul's religious experience on the road to Damascus" or the "Pauline experience." [42] The central focus of investigation is the transformative ability of sudden religious experiences. Many of the earliest psychologists of religion, while acknowledging 'gradual' conversions, have focused on the psychological change following a particular religious experience precipitated by crisis. G. Stanley Hall in 1881, James H. Leuba in 1896, Edwin Starbuck in 1897, and William James in 1902[43] have all discussed the topic and noted the significance of 'crisis' prior to conversion.

---

[42] Hood Jr., Hill & Spilka 2009: 209; Saver & Rabin (1997: 501-2) have also identified several other historical figures with similar 'sudden' experiences (many of which have been reported to have or suggested to have had epilepsy: Muhammad (570-632), Margery Kempe (1373-1438), Joan of Arc (1412-1431), St Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510), St Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), St Catherine de' Ricci (1522-1590), Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), Ann Lee (1736-1784), Joseph Smith (1805-1844), Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881), Hieronymous Jaegen (1841-1919), Dr. Z (Arthur Thomas Myers; 1851-1894), Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890), St Therese of Lisieux (1873-1897).
[43] "In his Gifford Lectures, James distinguished between those "once-born," who are cultivated within their faith and gradually socialized to accept it unproblematically, and those "twice-born," with more melancholy

As noted in the previous chapter, 'crisis' relates to the experience of dissonance and discrepancies that involve beliefs about the self. For this paradigm, dissonance often takes the form of guilt or anxiety. In Starbuck's 1899 study, he found that two-thirds of adolescent conversions were "at least partially triggered by a deep sense of sin or guilt."[44] James B. Pratt's 1920 study noted that prior to conversion, "twice-born individuals wallow in extreme feelings of unworthiness, self-doubt, and depreciation that are released or overcome" by conversion.[45] Elmer T. Clark, in 1929, reported that that "approximately one-third" (32.9%) of "2,174 cases of adolescent conversions" were sudden and "precipitated by either emotion or crisis."[46] Clark further distinguished between a "definite crisis awakening" (6.7%), which is a "religious transformation" from a 'sudden conversion,' and an "emotional stimulus awakening" (27.2%) in which "gradual religious growth" is interrupted by an "emotional event" prompting conversion. He goes on to state that 'sudden' conversions were characterized by fear and anxiety of which 41% occurred during revivals with high "emotional settings."[47] The experience of fear and anxiety, Clark states, was elicited by theologies emphasizing sin and guilt. [48] In this regard the dissonance, emanating from a sense of 'crisis,' can take the form of guilt, fear, and anxiety and the attenuation of that dissonance can be experienced as emotions of joy and motivate conversion.

Another factor that may contribute to the classical paradigm is the discrepancies and dissonance from unpleasant childhood memories, or other memories, which have been sustained over long periods of time. Chana Ullman presented a study, from the greater Boston area, of converts to Jewish Orthodoxy, Catholic, Bahai, or Hare Krishna (40 total) compared to 30 religiously affiliated non-converts. Socio-demographic variables such as age and education were controlled and any conversions motivated by marriage were excluded from the study. Ullman also took into account high and low degrees of religious commitment characterized by attendance in religious services and voluntary participation in religiously

---

temperaments, who are literally compelled through crisis to accept or realize their faith within an instant (James 1902/1895, Lectures VI through VIII)" (Hood Jr., Hill & Spilka 2009: 207)

[44] Hood Jr., Hill & Spilka 2009: 213; Starbuck does note that 'gradual conversions' were more characteristic of conversions in late adolescence.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.: 214

[48] Ibid.

motivated activity.[49] The study found that converts reported a "greater degree of emotional stress during childhood and adolescence, and more negative perception of their parents and a higher degree of absence of the father."[50] Converts also reported more "traumatic events and were more likely to feel that their childhood was unhappy" in comparison to the non-convert sample. Furthermore, converts were more likely to report stress and anxiety, as opposed to a "cognitive quest," as an important factor in their conversion.[51] In an overview of conversion, Ray Paloutzian notes that psychological studies[52] raise the possibility that "those who have had difficulties during childhood or adolescence (such as family stress or an insecure childhood attachment) or suffer from feelings of personal inadequacy are prone to conversion because personal or behavioural needs are not satisfactorily met."[53] This corroborates with the James-Starbuck thesis, which considers conversion as a "functional solution to the burdens of guilt and sin" prior to conversion.[54] In other words, conversion was considered as the attenuation of stress and anxiety, guilt and sin, within various contexts of crisis which aroused that dissonance. This was also a position stated by Paul E. Johnson in 1959: "A genuine religious conversion is the outcome of a crisis."[55]

Thus far, the studies above discuss 'crisis' in association with guilt, sin, anxiety, and other forms of stress that may be related to childhood events. These emotions also pertain to de Martino's 'crisis of presence' as a kind of dissonance regarding one's beliefs about the self. The classical paradigm of 'sudden conversion' highlights the negative emotions and dissonance that arise from crises or unpleasant memories and the destabilization of beliefs about the self. Moreover, the paradigm argues that conversion attenuates this dissonance in singular, 'sudden,' experiences.

5.2.2 The Contemporary Paradigm: Gradual Conversions

The classical paradigm of crisis-precipitated sudden conversions, however, has since been questioned by the contemporary paradigm and its focus on 'gradual conversions.' The requisite crisis and existential drama precipitating in conversion seems to be particular for

---

[49] Ullman 1982: 185; Questionnaires and extensive interviews were conducted to gather data. There are concerns, however, with characterizing high and low degrees of religious commitment through attendance rates in religious activities.
[50] Paloutzian, Richardson & Rambo 1999: 1056; Cf. Ullman 1989: 187-192
[51] Ibid.
[52] Starbuck 1899; Ullman 1982, 1989; Kirkpatrick 1997, 1998; Zinnbauer & Pargament 1998
[53] Paloutzian, Richardson & Rambo 1999: 1060
[54] Hood Jr., Hill & Spilka 2009: 213-214
[55] Ibid.: 212

Christian denominations. Much of the research done in the psychology of religion during the late 19th and 20th century often focused on Protestant Americans. That is, when most psychologists said "religion" they meant "Christianity" and by "Christianity" they meant Protestantism in the United States.[56] Larry Poston noted, that "emotional and crisis-triggered conversions are uncommon in many non-Christian religions – they do not, for instance characterize conversion to Islam."[57] Moreover, not all conversions to Protestantism in the U.S. were precipitated by crisis. For example, Tom W. Smith's 2006 study – with a sample of 1,328 American adults – reported that although "approximately half who indicated … a religious or spiritual experience that changed their lives indicated that a personal crisis triggered it" the other half indicated that their religious experience was the result of "gradual and routine religious practices."[58] In Clark's study, mentioned above, 66.1% of the 2,174 participants were characterized by a "steady, progressive, slow growth" without a particular crisis.[59] John Seggar and Philip Kunz also reported the predominance of gradual conversions in their study of Mormon converts[60] and the lack of reported personal problems prior to conversion.[61] These studies question whether crisis is necessary and whether 'sudden conversions' are particular to Christian conversions in the U.S.

According to Ralph Hood Jr., Peter Hill and Bernard Spilka, the contemporary paradigm is seen from a sociological perspective. Research is conducted primarily by sociologists, anthropologists, and sociologically-oriented social psychologists with a focus on "new religious and spiritual movements, many of non-Western origin or influence" or Christian fundamentalist groups as well as deconversions. They further state that gradual conversion is not defined by any singular experience, as it often is the case with the classical paradigm, but "an active agent, seeking self-transformation" and converting over time.[62] Starbuck, mentioned above, discussed 'voluntary conversions' as a "gradual pursuit of a religious ideal"[63] and Pratt, also noted above, stated that gradual conversion experiences "were less dramatic, required intellectual seeking, and were hypothesized to be more genuinely characteristic of conversion" than sudden conversions.[64] Gradual conversions do include a

---

[56] Ibid.: 207; Cf. Gorsuch 1988; Paloutzian, Richardson & Rambo 1999
[57] Ibid.: 214
[58] Ibid.: 220-221
[59] Ibid.: 214
[60] Seggar & Kunz 1972: 184
[61] Ibid.: 182
[62] Hood Jr., Hill & Spilka 2009: 215
[63] Ibid.: 212
[64] Ibid.: 207

valence of affinity and denote a process of embodiment by which one accepts the postulates and axioms of a religion through, and after,[65] continued practice and participation. However, not all gradual conversions are motivated by a "pursuit" or an "intellectual seeking" which will be discussed further below.

The two paradigms of conversion highlight different aspects of cognitive change. 'Sudden' conversions emphasise the emotions and the significance of a particular event, while 'gradual' conversions highlight the role of participation and practice. The former paradigm notes a change in 'beliefs' prior to a change in behaviour whereas the latter discusses a change in behaviour prior to a change in 'belief.' Both paradigms also suggest an initial acceptance rather than a change in belief. A 'sudden' conversion does not entail a shift in involuntary beliefs but rather an acceptance of certain religious postulates motivated by negative emotions, crisis, and underlying beliefs about the self. 'Gradual' conversions note a valence of affinity towards a religious group and engagement with a religious community prior to an acceptance of religious postulates. Although embodiment – the formation of belief from an acceptance, noted in chapter 2 – is not precluded, both paradigms do not provide evidence whether a belief was formed and embodied. The contemporary paradigm further notes various motivations, social implications and complications that may hinder, or foster, conversion and the formation of belief from acceptance.

5.2.2.1 *Social Implications of Conversion*

The reasons for conversion, although personal, are bound to various social dynamics and can have implications for groups and the broader structures of society. That is, conversion is not just an individual and isolated endeavour of changing 'beliefs' but requires a degree of reciprocity and recognition from others. For example, Dan Seeman discusses the experience of "members of a Beta Israel (Falasha) community whose ancestors converted to Christianity in Ethiopia" but in past decades sought a right to "return to Judaism" through a program of the same name in the midst of a "mass migration to the State of Israel."[66] In this context, 'conversion' is motivated by a personal and group sense of identity but complicated by identity politics within Israel and various bureaucratic processes. Due to their history, the Falasha have been "portrayed as individuals who had abandoned their people for personal

---

[65] James Richardson noted that converts often accepted a system of 'belief' *after* "participating in the group and developing a positive attitude" toward the group (Paloutzian 2005: 340; Cf. Richardson 1985, 1995).
[66] Seeman 2003: 29

gain during periods of persecution."[67] Their leaders, however, argue that "all converts to Christianity in Ethiopia had done so on pain of death and should be considered 'forced converts' under the terms of Jewish law."[68] In this regard, the Falasha, as a group, were politically and socially "subject to a profound politics of distrust, in which their motives and behaviour were analysed and parsed by competing, not necessarily sympathetic parties"[69] stating that the Falasha immigrated for the "benefits from citizenship in a relatively prosperous welfare state."[70] Moreover, they were accused of participating in Christian missionary activity as well as practices of witchcraft, accusations that not only found their way into political discourse but amongst themselves as well.[71] Despite their narratives of deep sentiments of "loss and recovery to the God of Israel"[72] and desires to "return to Judaism," conversion is complicated and hindered by political discourse, bureaucracy, history and group identity. In this regard, conversion can be attached to societal criteria that involve the dynamics of group boundaries and social acceptance.[73] For the Falasha, conversion was not simply a matter of personally accepting religious propositions and affirming a religious identity but a process justifying themselves to the state of Israel and the Jewish tradition. Falasha members may believe that they are Jewish but because this was not acknowledged and recognized, conversion became a difficult and political endeavour.

In a similar, yet different dynamic, Kalyani Menon documents the conversion practices and tensions between Christians and the Hindutva movement in India. Menon notes the politicized nature of conversions to Christianity, re-conversions to nationalist Hindutva movement, and how both groups utilize strategies and material incentives such as food, dowry payments, and other social benefits. According to Hindu nationalists, "people convert to Christianity either because they have been tricked by missionaries or because they have

---

[67] Ibid.: 34
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.: 35
[70] Ibid.: 40
[71] Ibid.: 35
[72] Ibid.: 40
[73] Andrew Buckser (2003) notes a similar dynamic in his study of Danish Jews. Not only does conversion to Judaism in the Danish context involve assimilation into a religious community but the community also "must assimilate or give up the convert" (69). Buckser states that "the experience of those who seek to convert to Judaism become points of conflict over the nature of Jewish community, authority, and religiosity," which subjects converts to "ongoing suspicion and scrutiny" (70). By contrast to Seeman's Falasha, Buckser's converts are motivated by "intermarriage" and at times the "children of intermarried Jewish men" wish to convert (73). In this regard, Buckser furthers the point about social and political implications of conversion for group boundaries and communal identity.

been seduced by offers of material remuneration."[74] Yet, Menon notes, the Hindutva movement utilize similar practices for re-conversion purposes. Both attempt to recruit converts of a certain socio-economic class through material benefits. The use of material incentive further draws parallels with the induced-compliance paradigm of cognitive dissonance in which converts may justify their conversion by appealing to material benefits. Much like the attenuation of dissonance in induced-compliance, conversion is marked by an acceptance in the religious postulates and motivated by a belief in the desire or need for certain social benefits. In other words, conversion to Christianity or the Hindutva movement were not motivated by an 'aim for truth.' Moreover, the movement and behaviour of converts are associated with "issues of national security and cultural actualization" and members of the Hindutva movement "argue that proselytizing is part of a conspiracy to destroy 'Indian' culture and to destabilize the 'Indian' polity."[75] In this sense, the Hindutva movement vilifies "Christians, Christianity, and Christian missionaries not only as morally suspect but also as a threat to the sanctity and integrity of the Indian polity" and, according to Menon, the movement "projects its agenda as the moral and patriotic duty of all Indians, thereby establishing its own legitimacy and mobilizing support for its political platform."[76] This social and political context may also contribute as beliefs or acceptances for conversion.

In this regard, 'conversion' can have various social implications and be motivated by a myriad of social reasons: identity, social benefits, group boundaries, political purposes and/or a need for basic goods (e.g. food). The social dilemma, presented in each of these cases, is characterized by those who have dispositional beliefs in their respective religious tradition deliberating about those who may have only, at the time, accepted a religious tradition for alternative purposes. These accounts follow the argument that "religious conversion sometimes has more to do with strategies of social or ethnic affiliation than with frank confessional notions of interior spirituality."[77] In other words, conversion can be a product of acceptances to attain the goals of a belief affiliated with a social identity rather than a change in beliefs or acceptances regarding religious postulates or axioms. Moreover, conversion may also be motivated by reducing dissonance and discrepancies that result from one's social

---

[74] Menon 2003: 43
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.: 51; Menon notes that this kind of national zeal and embodied belief can also lead to violent confrontations between Hindus and Christians (2003: 43).
[77] Seeman 2003: 39; Cf. Kipp 1995; Buckser also stated that "in most cases, conversion is not a matter of religious insight, a validation of a transformation of consciousness, but a means of reckoning with the consequences of a particular social action" (2003: 73).

actions, such as marriage or receiving material benefits, and publicly displaying one's commitment to an affiliation. The various reasons for conversion are, nonetheless, acts of acceptance or behaviours on behalf of some belief about one's self that fulfil different domains of cognition and meaning rather than a specific spiritual exercise or direct result of 'crisis.'

5.2.2.2 *Social Support in Conversion*

With regard to 'crisis of presence,' de Martino emphasized the role of ritual as the means of overcoming a 'crisis of presence' enabling the person to regain "a consciousness of self and ability to act in the world."[78] Nicole Toulis further adds that the "ritual process of conversion provides the individual with the resources to construct a new sense of personhood and identity."[79] The role of ritual further suggests the importance of social support and influence of others in the dynamics of conversion. In the cases of the Falasha and the converts to Christianity or the Hindutva movement, the role of other persons were significant as a means of opposition or social and emotional support which facilitated or complicated the conversion process.

Within the contemporary paradigm, Max Heirich's 1977 study noted that conversion among Catholic Pentecostals was most likely to occur with persons who were introduced to the group by friends or spiritual advisors who "facilitated the gradual use of new religious attributions in the process of conversions."[80] By contrast, those who were not introduced to the group by friends or spiritual advisors failed "to acquire the appropriate language (attributions or rhetoric) of conversion."[81] David Snow and Richard Machalek in their 1984 study[82] "found that the vast majority (from 59% to 82%) of Pentecostals, evangelicals, and Nichiren Shoshu Buddhists they investigated were recruited through social networks."[83] In other words, gradual conversions have been facilitated through other persons.[84] Intensive interaction among group members have been said to increase the likelihood of affective

---

[78] Toulis 1997: 127; Saunders 1995: 324
[79] Toulis 1997: 127; Cucchiari 1988: 318; Gill 1990: 709-11; Saunders 1995: 324
[80] Hood Jr., Hill & Spilka 2009: 229
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.: 231; Cf. Snow & Machalek 1984: 182
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.; Cf. Galanter 1980; Snow, Zurcher & Ekland-Olson 1980, 1983; Stark & Bainbridge 1980; Straus 1979

bonding,[85] which not only satisfies various "personal needs"[86] but it also enables one to reduce any dissonance and discrepancies that may have occurred during conversion.[87] As social bonds continue to develop, through practice and participation, the religious postulates of a tradition are also gradually accepted.[88] In this regard, the role of social networks can be pivotal for conversion.[89]

5.2.2.3 *Deconversion*

By contrast, the lack of social support can lead to scenarios of deconversion. Maria Pia Di Bella noted the marginalizing effects conversion can have on individuals. She discusses how "poor peasants who convert to Pentecostalism" in southern Italy are first marginalized "from their community of origin" when they decide to leave the Catholic Church and marginalized once again, within the Pentecostal group, "if they do not speak in tongues," which is often interpreted as a "gift from the Holy Ghost."[90] This creates a distinction between those who are "saved" and those who are not (the elect and the non-elect) within the congregation. Di Bella states, "members who make no effort to receive the gift are ostracized, and those who do not receive it, despite many efforts, are pitied."[91] A common motif from deconversion narratives in North America and Germany was the notion of being "debarred from paradise," which was characterized by a sense of disillusionment and abandonment from the lack of social support.[92] This occurs in Toulis' research on immigrant Jamaican women in England (discussed in chapter 7). Norman Skonovd's 1983 study also found similar results in former members of various fundamentalist Christian groups whose deconversions were prompted by a lack of social support and in turn reflection, disaffection, and withdrawal, followed by a "cognitive reorganization."[93] In this regard, the lack of social support fails to reinforce a valence of affinity towards a religion and discourages participation.

---

[85] Ibid.; Such intensive interaction and rituals have been suggested to produce the hormone oxytocin. The hormone has been suggested to facilitate bonding, increase levels of trust, love and empathy (Haidt 2006; Zak 2012; Wellman Jr., Corcoran & Stockly-Meyerdirk 2012).
[86] Paloutzian 2005: 340; Cf. Galanter 1989; Paloutzian et al. 1999; Richardson 1995
[87] This draws on the paradigms of effort-justification and free-choice as well as vicarious dissonance.
[88] Among converts to Jewish Orthodoxy, attitudes and commitment to the Jewish people gradually increased as "scores on a Christian belief scale decreased" (Paloutzian 2005: 340; Cf. Bockian, Glenwick & Bernstein 2005)
[89] Hood Jr., Hill & Spilka 2009: 229; Cf. Gooren 2007: 351
[90] Di Bella 2003: 89
[91] Ibid.
[92] Hood Jr., Hill & Spilka: 235-236
[93] Ibid.: 233-234

However, while deconversion may include a denunciation of a religious identity, or religious community, and a range of religious postulates or axioms, it does not necessarily entail a loss of meaning. This nuance is further captured by distinguishing 'spirituality' from religion. Paloutzian states that 'spirituality' connotes "values, ideas, or goals and purposes that transcend a person and to which he or she is committed."[94] In this sense, one may be "spiritual" without being "religious" and being "religious" does not necessarily entail being "spiritual." This accommodates those who identify themselves as "more spiritual than religious"[95] or "spiritual but not religious"[96] and the assertion of "independence from, and often even hostility to, religious institutions."[97] In this regard, one can deconvert from a religion but maintain certain forms of meaning, morals, values, and other embodied beliefs from being enculturated in a particular religious culture. Given the rich dynamics of various conversion scenarios, it is worth asking the question of what it is that changes in conversion.

5.2.3 Conversion and Levels of Meaning

C. Daniel Batson and W. Larry Ventis state that religious experiences, particularly 'sudden' conversions, usually involve a "*cognitive restructuring in an attempt to deal with one or more existential questions.*"[98] Such crisis-precipitated sudden conversions have been noted to usually occur once and the change is "permanent."[99] By contrast, gradual conversions are not necessarily permanent and may occur several times.[100] However, this does not entail that gradual conversions do not contribute to the process of embodiment. Sustained participation in religious practices and rituals can gradually lead to the embodiment of a community's religious postulates, axioms, values and more.

This raises the question: what types of beliefs and acceptances are changed in, and after, conversion? Psychologists of religion have noted "significant modifications of self-definition, self-confidence, and sense of purpose" in conversions and yet dramatic changes in

---

[94] Paloutzian 2005: 333; Paloutzian states that 'religion' can connote "belief in a faith system." While this can be problematic, it is not without precedent. Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1962) argued for the elimination of 'religion' and substituting 'tradition' and 'faith' instead. By contrast to the scholarly considerations of religion, a qualitative study in 2008 of 64 adults living in retirement homes report that "spirituality was a more abstract concept than religion and included nontheistic notions of a higher power" while religion "was more closely associated with community participation, specific beliefs, and organized practices" (Schlehofer, Omoto & Adelman, 2008; Hood Jr., Hill & Spilka 2009: 208).
[95] Zinnbauer, Pargament & Scott 1999
[96] Marler & Hadaway 2002
[97] Paloutzian 2005; Hood Jr. 2003, 2005; Streib et al. 2009
[98] Batson & Ventis 1982: 86 (emphasis original)
[99] Hood Jr., Hill & Spilka 2009: 212
[100] Ibid.: 217

personality or self-transformation have been subject to question.[101] In order to focus the discussion of conversion and cognitive change in terms of belief and acceptance, it is necessary to consider what types of beliefs and acceptances are subject to change; that is, what levels of meaning and personality are impacted in conversion. According to Paloutzian, James Richardson and Lewis Rambo, personality is no longer restricted in its definition to "traits" but is considered as "a blend of activity on three levels."[102] This has allowed research on personality to expand beyond its classical conception through the Big Five model. The 'three levels' model accommodates psychoanalytic theory, cognitive behaviourism, and humanistic approaches.[103] The first and most basic level of personality is characterized by the Big Five[104]: Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (OCEAN).[105] There has been very little evidence to suggest any change at this level of personality from religious conversion (both 'sudden' and 'gradual').[106] The Big Five is said to develop until adolescence and young adulthood then stabilize between the ages of

---

[101] Paloutzian, Richardson & Rambo 1999: 1065

[102] Ibid.: 1066; Cf. Emmons 1995; McAdams 1994a, 1994b

[103] Ibid.

[104] While there are other models of personality and dissenting views, Paloutzian et al. state that they have used the Big Five model "because of its clarity and succinctness in documenting a set of fairly stable traits that comprise elemental personality structure" (Ibid.: 1066; Cf. Digman 1990; McCrae 1992). McCrae and Costa Jr. (1997) have argued that the Big Five model and personality structures are universal. In addition to the established utility of the Big Five on Americans (U.S.), while remaining aware of linguistic variability and control for consistency, they also investigate German, Portuguese, Hebrew, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese samples to make their claim of universality. In other words, the Big Five is suggested to be a useful measure for investigating personality structures across cultures, although further scrutiny and research may be required.

[105] Paloutzian 2005; these personality traits which represent patterns of one's individuality are considered along a continuum (e.g. introversion v. extraversion) rather an either/or dichotomy. According to Oliver P. John and Sanjay Srivastava (1999): The 'Openness to Closedness to experience' continuum describes "the breadth, depth, originality, and complexity of an individual's *mental and experiential life*" – this trait is measured along the facets of Ideas (curiosity), Fantasy (imaginative), Aesthetics (artistic), Actions (wide interest), Feelings (excitable), Values (unconventional). The 'Conscientiousness to Lack of direction' continuum "describes *socially prescribed impulse control* that facilitates task- and goal- directed behaviour, such as thinking before acting, delaying gratification, following norms and rules, and planning, organizing, and prioritizing tasks" – this trait is measured along the facets of Competence (efficient), Order (organized), Dutifulness (not careless), Achievement striving (thorough), Self-discipline (not lazy), Deliberation (not impulsive). The 'Extraversion to Introversion' is "implies an *energetic approach* toward the social and material world and includes traits such as sociability, activity, assertiveness, and positive emotionality", which are measured along the facets of Gregariousness (sociable), Assertiveness (forceful), Activity (energetic), Excitement-seeking (adventurous), Positive emotions (enthusiastic), and Warmth (outgoing). The 'Agreeableness to antagonism' continuum "contrasts a *prosocial and communal orientation* toward others with antagonism and includes traits such as altruism, tender-mindedness, trust, and modesty" – this is measured along the facets of Trust (forgiving), Straightforwardness (not demanding), Altruism (warm), Compliance (not stubborn), Modesty (not show-off), and Tender-mindedness (sympathetic). The 'Neuroticism to Emotional Stability' continuum "contrasts emotional stability and even-temperedness with *negative emotionality*, such as feeling anxious, nervous, sad, and tense" which has been measured along the facets of Anxiety (tense), Angry hostility (irritable), Depression (not contented), Self-consciousness (shy), Impulsiveness (moody), and Vulnerability (not self-confident).

[106] Paloutzian et al. 1999: 1065; The authors review evidence from conversion and personality research and state that certain personality types may seek particular new religious groups which attract and reinforce those types within the culture of the group.

25 and 30 remaining "more or less fixed" afterwards.[107] That is, conversion does not involve any changes to this level of personality. What does change at this level is the form of discursive expression "the traits will take (i.e., in a way consistent with the new religion), not the traits themselves."[108] That is, how one expresses one's personality can change but the personality itself does not. In many respects, the first level of personality can be considered as beliefs but without an explicit 'aim for truth.' Instead, the Big Five functions as part of the underlying dispositions that drive an 'aim for truth' along with the levels of meaning at the mid and global level. The Big Five are involuntary and context-independent dispositions that act as implicit, genetically inherited, "structures" that structure the acquisition of "structured structures," which function as "structuring structures." By extension, socially acquired and embodied beliefs are the "structured structures" that function as the "structuring structures" of *habitus*.

The primary changes that occur during conversion or deconversion fall within the mid and global levels of personality and meaning. The mid level includes the broad and narrower purposes one strives towards,[109] specific goals,[110] values, and attitudes expressed in terms of novel "ways one may wish to be"[111] as well as the feelings and attitudes towards behaviour.[112] The global level, in conversion, is said to experience the most profound change[113] which includes "overarching life guides such as self-definition and identity,"[114] "overall purpose,"[115] a "new life narrative that highlights the importance of this turning point in the story and its consequences, and that which serves as the ultimate concern (e.g. God or

---

[107] Paloutzian 2005: 332; Cf. Caspi 2000; Paloutzian et al. 1999; Costa Jr. & McCrae 1994; McCrae 1992; Jang et al. investigate genetic and environmental influences on the Big Five with 1209 monozygotic twins and 701 dizygotic twins from Germany, Canada and Japan. The researchers state that "although the Big Five share genetic and environmental influences, a great deal of the variability of domains is due to genetic and environmental factors unique to each domain. Second, each of the Big Five factors is influenced by multiple genetic factors, some of which are common to all but many are not." They go on to state that "not all domains play equally important roles in personality when in practice, the opposite is often assumed" (2006: 470). This highlights how individual and cultural differences play an important role within the development and expression of personality. The dynamic between genetics and environment on personality and the development of habits have been discussed again through the Minnesota Twin Study, which investigated 137 pairs of twins who were raised independent of each other (Segal 2012).

[108] Paloutzian 2005: 332

[109] Ibid.; "e.g. to minister to other people in order to bring them into this family of faith"

[110] Ibid.; "e.g. to do my job well as an evidence of faith"

[111] Ibid.; "e.g. I want to be a good Muslim; Cf. Emmons 1999"

[112] Hood Jr., Hill & Spilka 2009: 212

[113] Ibid.

[114] Paloutzian 2005: 332; "e.g., before I was a Christian, now I am a Jew"

[115] Ibid. "e.g., to fulfil God's mission"

other supreme entity)."[116] The global level then includes "self-defining personality functions (purpose in life, meaning, and identity)."[117] Moreover, this level includes what Lindholm called "strong beliefs" and 'beliefs' of "inner certainty" from chapter 2.[118] However, the changes that occur at these levels are not necessarily changes in acceptances or beliefs but may be changes in, or the adoption of, discourse and rhetoric "that allow them to see themselves and the world transformed."[119]

5.2.3.1 *Changes in Discourse*

Changes in discourse after conversion have also been documented in the anthropology literature. Simon Coleman discusses conversion as a change in the metaphorical framework by which people understand and discuss their personal identity and social experience.[120] Thomas Brown also notes a change in discourse and understanding of group membership and personal identity, as opposed to a change in religious postulates and axioms, among converts to Christian Spiritualism in San Diego.[121] Robert Priest discussed how the incorporation of the term 'sin' changed the "direction of blame" for Christian converts in New Guinea. He states that the converts "see themselves as culpable for actions they previously would have attributed to witchcraft or spirits"[122] and that "the idea of self as sinner is presented as an emergent understanding" of the "word of *Apajui*," which roughly translates as the "word of God."[123] Roger Ivar Lohman further states that conversion, in New Guinea, "is not a matter of rethinking the nature of reality, but of 'turning the belly,' changing the individual's relationship with the spiritual being who direct his or her volition." Lohman states that "the old spirits have not ceased to exist for Asabano; they are merely ignored," and argues that "true, voluntary religious conversion [should] be measured in terms of this change in relationships with spiritual beings."[124] In this regard, the changes occurring at the mid and global level of personality are changes in goals, purposes, values, and definitions of self, but irrespective of whether they are changes in beliefs or acceptances, they are represented in

---

[116] Ibid.
[117] Hood Jr., Hill & Spilka 2009: 212
[118] The types of 'belief' and meaning in the three-levels model differ from Lindholm's types of 'belief.' Lindholm provides a more epistemological basis of constructing knowledge about the world while the three-levels model engages one's personal orientation about one's self within the parameters of one's understanding about the world.
[119] Hood Jr., Hill & Spilka 2009: 228; Cf. Gerlach & Hine 1970
[120] Coleman 2003
[121] Brown 2003
[122] Buckser & Glazier 2003: xvi; Cf. Priest 2003
[123] Numakuk, in her forties, says: "[When] they announced the word of Apajui, I discovered about myself (*dekagmamawamiajai*) that I was a sinner" (Priest 2003: 96).
[124] Lohman 2003: 109

discourse – a case of which will be discussed in chapter 7 – and selective adoption of particular practices.[125] Although the changes in discourse may reflect changes at the mid and global levels but simultaneously a change in discourse may only be a change in discourse rather than a change in meaning or 'belief.' In that sense, as mentioned in chapter 2, language is insufficient to determine 'belief' and there may be sustained continuities in meaning. In other words, conversion and changes at the mid and global levels of meaning are not necessarily total transformations.

5.2.3.2 *Continuities in Meaning*

Anthropologist Rebecca Norris states that "not only must a new faith make sense in terms defined by a lifetime in the old one but it must also work with the bodily attitudes and accustomed gestures with which the convert has grown up."[126] Norris notes the sustained habits of one's embodiment and mentions three aspects of continuities in meaning: a correspondence with "pre-existing ideals and wishes, performance choices based on pre-existing cultural conditioning, and understanding and experience coloured by embodied association."[127] Mary Ann and Van Reidhead point to these continuities in their account of a woman who converted to Catholicism from Jehovah's Witness and then deciding to become a nun in a "Benedictine monastic order." They note that the convert discussed the "profound ongoing impact of her Jehovah's Witness upbringing on her understanding of religion."[128] In other words, despite her conversion experience and decision to become a nun she maintained a sense of meaning and beliefs from her upbringing in the Jehovah's Witness tradition.

The continuities in meaning are not only relevant at an individual level but are also observable within communities and cultures. For example, the Western Toba of Argentina draw on similarities between "the Christian conception of Heaven and the indigenous image of the House of God in the sky."[129] This notes the phenomena of syncretism, or cultural blending, when an element of one religion or culture is incorporated and assimilated into

---

[125] Robert Anderson (2003) notes the selective adoption in the history of conversion in Iceland.

[126] Buckser & Glazier 2003: xviii; "A convert does not take on merely a new set of beliefs but rather a new set of beliefs as understood through the old. From within a pre-existing worldview and identity, a convert chooses his or her adopted religion because it corresponds with ideas or wishes that have arisen within an existential psychological context. Thus, though the converts with whom I have met speak of a reality beyond language, one is attracted to (or through) the language of Buddhism, another to that of Sufism" (Norris 2003: 179).

[127] Norris 2003: 179

[128] Buckser & Glazier 2003: xviii

[129] Ibid.; parallels can be seen with Korea and its terminology for 'God': Sung-wook Hong (2009) presents how the term 'God' has taken on different meanings over time in Korea and David Chung (2001) provides a detailed account of Korea's religious history of incorporating various philosophical and religious traditions.

another. Marcela Mendoza notes that these similarities and continuities can have two contradictory effects. On one hand, similarities can facilitate conversion as the "Christian imagery" may be considered "more plausible" to converts and potential converts. On the other hand, the similarities can also "confirm the image of the spiritual world advanced by traditional shamans," which in some ways validates the tradition Christianity seeks to reject.[130] Conceptual similarities and their assimilations, on an individual and cultural level, suggest that conversions do not necessarily involve a dramatic transformation or change in personality or meaning but rather a modification in cosmological schemas and their expressions relevant to one's self. This pertains to the broader changes at the global level of self, identity, and the discursive framework by which one situates a sense of purpose.

5.3 SUMMARY

The aim of this chapter was to provide methodological focus to the interdisciplinary discussion on 'belief' through the themes of 'crisis' and 'conversion.' In order to accomplish this focus, the chapter discussed the literature and the complexities involved with these themes. The previous chapter on the theory of cognitive dissonance noted the potential for 'crisis' as an episode with a great magnitude of dissonance involving beliefs about the self. To explore this further, de Martino's 'crisis of presence' was introduced and discussed in relation to Durkheim's *anomie*. Both highlighted the socio-economic pressures of modernity and its affect on the individual. However, upon scrutinizing the characteristics of de Martino's 'crisis of presence,' the passive/active dichotomy and a 'loss of self' were problematic. The difficulties of applying this concept will be seen in ensuing chapters. The focus is then placed on the negative emotions and the beliefs about the self in 'crisis' episodes. In this regard, supplementing de Martino with dissonance theory maintains the importance of 'crisis' and its capacity for destabilizing beliefs about the self.

The theme of 'conversion' was considered to be a complementary focus to 'crises' for the investigation of 'belief.' Within the 'sudden' conversion paradigm, 'crisis' was significant, which was not necessarily the case for 'gradual' conversions. However, the two paradigms are not mutually exclusive and 'sudden' conversions can be situated within the broader scope of 'gradual' conversions. That is, crisis-precipitated sudden conversions can be part of a gradual embodiment process. In the classical paradigm, the cognitive change – prompted by

---

[130] Buckser & Glazier 2003: xviii

'crisis' – precedes and motivates behavioural change. By contrast, the contemporary paradigm begins with some valence of affinity towards a group or religion. It may involve an 'aim for truth' that motivates participation or it may be rooted in various other social reasons and benefits from affiliating with a particular religion. These valences are further strengthened by social support, not only in terms of people around the individual but also in terms of consonant material and sources of information. Conversely, various socio-political factors can complicate the conversion process and the lack of social support can lead to disillusionment, marginalization, and precipitate in deconversion. In this regard, 'gradual' conversions are noted by behavioural changes through participation and practice prior to a cognitive change. Both paradigms, however, do not entail that a belief was formed or that a change in involuntary beliefs occurred. In 'sudden' conversions, the experience motivated an acceptance. For 'gradual' conversions, there is an acceptance of behavioural practices. Both paradigms, in the end, can contribute to the process of embodiment during which acceptances become beliefs over time.

The notion of conversion, however, begs the question of what it is that changes. Drawing on the 'three levels' model, the changes in beliefs and acceptances were stated to be made at the mid or global level of meaning, which deal with one's personal goals, values, and various aims for truth. Moreover, the change is accentuated by an adoption of discourse, selective practices, and ways of expression that are congruent with the religious community. This includes changes in expression utilizing different conceptual, rhetorical, and metaphorical frameworks to express and describe identity, purpose in life, values, feelings, and other views of the world or reality. In other words, conversion can entail the adoption of certain modes of expression and interpretation and yet this does not necessarily entail a change in beliefs but rather highlights an acceptance of discourse and various practices. In order to establish belief at the mid and global level, as a result of conversion and practice, further inquiry is needed to confirm involuntariness, context-independence, as well as an 'aim for truth.' In addition, conversion does not entail a complete transformation or a radical change at the mid and global levels of meaning and personality. There are continuities and sustained valences of affinity as well as other beliefs that facilitate conversion and any resulting acceptances or cognitive changes.

5.4 ETHNOGRAPHIC APPLICATION

The following chapters will be an exercise in applying the interdisciplinary discussion between the social sciences and epistemology to three case studies. Utilizing the distinction between belief and acceptance and focusing on the themes of 'crisis' and 'conversion,' the ensuing chapters will demonstrate how case studies can further contribute to the dialogue between philosophy and the social sciences on the issue of 'belief.' More specifically, the chapters will focus on how belief and acceptance can bring out additional textures to ethnographic investigations and consider the argument that beliefs are the units of embodiment and cultural history, which comprise a default cognitive background and function as the "structuring structures" of *habitus*.

Particular focus will be placed on instances of 'crises' and dissonance as well as the attenuation of dissonance in what could be considered as conversion or deconversion, i.e. some change in cognition. The three case studies differ in socio-cultural contexts and social modalities, which provides a range of different circumstances and forms of 'crisis' and 'conversion.' The first case is relatively modern and discusses the recurring social phenomenon of apocalyptic groups. Leon Festinger, Henry Riecken and Stanley Schachter wrote a famous text, *When Prophecy Fails*, which became the prototypical example for the belief-disconfirmation paradigm in dissonance theory. This case is placed within a modern western society in which a group anticipated the end of the world and that entities from space would save them from that disaster. The second case is also a perennial phenomenon among migrants assimilating themselves into a new society. Nicole Toulis, in her monograph *Believing Identity*, present the case of Jamaican women who moved to England and find themselves converting to Pentecostalism and "mediating" their identities around gender and ethnicity. The third case is by British anthropologist Godfrey Lienhardt who presents a study of cosmology amongst the Dinka in *Divinity and Experience*. This study provides a traditional context that stands in contrast to both the first and second case studies. These examples provide a range of crisis experiences, conversions, and varied expressions of their own cultural history.

6
CASE STUDY 1: *WHEN PROPHECY FAILS*

6.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the first combined treatment of the findings on 'belief.' The analysis highlights the utility of belief and acceptance in providing nuance to the activities in *When Prophecy Fails* and how further ethnographic inquiry could have contributed to distinguishing ambiguous areas in discerning 'belief.' The chapter further shows the limitations of de Martino's 'crisis of presence' in conversion scenarios but highlights the significance of the 'self' in episodes of crisis. The theory of cognitive dissonance further pronounces the belief and acceptance distinction and provides insight into the degrees of strength and valences of affinity that beliefs can have as units of embodiment and cultural history. The individual members discussed in this chapter can be appropriated within the contemporary paradigm of gradual conversions.

The chapter begins with a summary of the text followed by criticisms garnered from various disciplines. In order to appropriate the text and cultural history of the time, the background social context and a chronology of the events are presented accompanied by the seven predictions made by the primary medium of the group. This provides further context for the analysis of belief and acceptance in the noted characters. The chapter then considers any crises that may have taken place and subsequently any conversions or deconversions amongst the members as changes in acceptances and/or beliefs. Lastly, the chapter ends by discussing the findings and analysis of belief in the text and appropriates it through *habitus*.

6.0.1 Summary of *When Prophecy Fails*

The text details an account of a group from the early 1950s that expected a major flood which would purify the world and create a "new order." Led by their medium, Marian Keech, the group anticipated the arrival of a flying saucer during the early hours of December 21st. Keech "channelled" extra-terrestrial forces and transcribed their messages. She made a total of seven predictions from August to December of 1954. Between November and December 20th, Leon Festinger, Stanley Schacter, and Henry Reicken (hereinafter 'Festinger et al.') and their team of observers "encountered a total of thirty-three persons."[1]

---

[1] Festinger et al. 2008 [1956]: 77

There are three sources through which persons came to participate in the group. The first is largely from the influence of Mr. Thomas Armstrong and Mrs. Daisy Armstrong, two of the most committed members in the group. In the previous spring, Mr. Armstrong formed a group called "The Seekers" consisting of local college students at a "nondenominational Protestant church."[2] The group "met once a week to discuss ethical, religious, metaphysical, and personal problems, always seeking truth."[3] Initially the group's discussions were limited to forms of Christian Mysticism with a "comparative religious" orientation.[4] Over time, as the Armstrongs' interest grew, the topic of flying saucers came to dominate the discussion. Mr. Armstrong, who also taught at a local college, was eventually asked to refrain from such discussions and moved the meetings to his home.[5] Some of these students came to be involved with Marian Keech. The second source of members were acquaintances who joined by word-of-mouth; persons who became interested by making acquaintances with other members or the press. The last source came from Festinger et al. The researchers directly participated in some of the group's activities and hired participant-observers who attended more frequently.

Amongst the documented members, the levels of commitment varied. Those who were considered "heavily committed" are characterized in terms of behaviours congruent "with the belief that the predicted flood would actually occur on December 21."[6] Some of these actions included: public declarations of 'belief,' "quitting their jobs or otherwise freeing themselves from obligations to the post-21st future," and "committing actions" that were "difficult or impossible to undo."[7] The "less heavily committed" members were just as active in the group but expressed more doubt about the prediction and participated less in proselytizing activity.[8] Although a total of thirty-three had attended meetings, eighteen were hardly members of the group.[9] Many attended only one meeting, others were "clearly sightseers or curiosity seekers," and the "extent of belief" varied from complete scepticism to "belief in some parts of it – such as flying saucer phenomena, the existence of a spirit world, or the actuality of

---

[2] Ibid.: 43
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.: 66
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

reincarnation – but with a strong doubt about the flood prediction."[10] A total of eleven members experienced "unequivocal disconfirmation" of the flood.[11] Of those eleven, six were heavily committed to the group. Two of them eventually "gave up their belief."[12] Two admitted disillusionment and confusion "but still not completely disavowing Mrs. Keech and her particular beliefs."[13] The last two became "more strongly convinced" after the disconfirmation, although this increased conviction was only temporary for one of them.[14] By January 9th, the group no longer convened although some of them continued to communicate with each other.[15]

Festinger et al. sought out the group as an opportunity to conduct research in a "real-life" setting outside of a controlled laboratory and test the theory of cognitive dissonance. The psychologists anticipated that when the expected flood and the flying saucer do not arrive (disconfirmation), the discrepancy and the experienced dissonance would be reduced by investing further in the group and increasing their proselytizing activity (although this is not the only method of reducing dissonance). For the belief-disconfirmation paradigm, the magnitude of dissonance is associated with the importance or value of the 'belief' in question. In this case, it was the anticipated flood and existence of flying saucers. Festinger et al. specify five conditions "that will determine whether or not" an increase of proselytizing will occur after an "unequivocal disconfirmation."[16]

  I. There must be conviction.
  II. There must be commitment to this conviction.
  III. The conviction must be amenable to unequivocal disconfirmation.
  IV. Such unequivocal disconfirmation must occur.
  V. Social support must be available subsequent to the disconfirmation.[17]

Festinger et al. state that conditions I, II, and V may be necessary conditions and note the importance of social support (V) as a means to reduce dissonance and increase proselytizing activity. The role of social support, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, is a critical component for sustained group activity. Otherwise, there is a greater likelihood of "deconversion."

---

[10] Ibid.: 78
[11] Ibid.: 210
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.: 233
[16] Festinger et al. 2008 [1956]: 218
[17] Ibid.

In *When Prophecy Fails*, the reduction of dissonance occurs according to Festinger's three proposed methods discussed in chapter 4. That is, after the disconfirming event, some admitted a mistake in participating in the group and the anticipated flood. Instead they found consonant information for the experienced reality and unfavourable information for the group's cosmology. Conversely, there were those who found unfavourable information with the experience and favourable information for their cosmology. This was evident when the group members became ecstatic that the world was saved due to their devotion. Reinterpreting the event also configures within Festinger's third method of 'cognitive overlap.' Interpreting the non-occurrence of the flood fits within the larger context of their 'beliefs' in the occult: the existence of extra-terrestrial beings, planets, and ideology. Festinger et al. believed that the increased proselytizing after the event was evidence for the theory of cognitive dissonance. However, the claims from *When Prophecy Fails* drew considerable criticisms.

6.0.2 Criticisms

Festinger et al. understood their methodological limitations and the indelible influence they impressed on the group. The first limitation of their study was the short period of time for gathering data. The group had been gaining momentum since August. Festinger et al. became aware of the group in September and it was not until the beginning of November were they able to establish the parameters of their study and begin collecting data. This entails that Festinger et al. only had first-hand information for two months. While Festinger et al. do well documenting the past, as well as the ideological and cosmological background by which the group operated, these accounts were subject to retrospective narratives. This questions the information obtained and the accuracy of the events prior to November. Due to the clandestine nature of the observers, they were unable to write down information openly during meetings. Not only were there multiple observers, and thus varying perspectives and interpretations, each had to rely on his or her own memory to recall and record what had transpired during their periods of participant-observation. This potentially creates inconsistencies with the narrative Festinger et al. sought to present and they themselves may have experienced dissonance.

Another concern is ethical. Festinger et al. conducted their research with a degree of deception.[18] However, due to the nature of the work and the secrecy with which Marian Keech and the Armstrongs conducted their activities, Festinger et al. inferred that an open investigation was not possible. They also wanted to minimize any possible effects of informing group members and avoided obtaining consent and confidentiality; "our observers posed as ordinary members who believed as the others did."[19] Despite their best efforts to avoid influencing the dynamics of the group, it was not possible to avoid "*any* influence" upon the movement of the group.[20] Festinger et al. had to account for their impact. In attempt to gain access and approval, several of the observers were "equipped" with "experiences" intended to pique the interest of Mr. Thomas Armstrong. A previous observer struggled during his encounter with Mr. Armstrong due to the lack of any "psychic experiences."[21] Because of this encounter the next observer was equipped with an experience, which in fact was a folktale from Mexico.[22] This immediately interested Mr. Armstrong as he exhibited "more friendliness" toward the observer and invited him to participate in future meetings.[23] Festinger et al. provided another observer with a dream,[24] which also created enthusiasm in Mr. Armstrong. However, the dream proved to be "too successful…[Festinger et al.] had unintentionally reinforced [the group's] beliefs that the Guardians were watching over humanity and were 'sending' chosen people for special instruction about the cataclysm and the belief system."[25] Moreover, Mr. Armstrong's "initial indifference to the male observer had led [Festinger et al.] to underestimate the powerful effect of the 'dream.' In all probability its effect was magnified by coming so close behind the male observer's story (they were separated by only two or three days)."[26] After the success of these observers, which unintentionally reinforced the group, Festinger et al. decided to change strategies.

---

[18] Festinger et al. did not inform the members of the group regarding their intentions of participant-observation and qualitative methodology as it is customary to do so in contemporary research.

[19] Festinger et al. 2008 [1956]: 236

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.: 239

[22] "The story our observer told was as follows: He and a companion had been driving between two Mexican cities. Toward dusk, they picked up an elderly peasant woman hitchhiking in their direction and let her occupy the rear seat. Soon she was talking to them, a long admonitory monologue full of warnings about disaster ahead. They paid little heed to her, and, after a time, she fell silent and, they assumed she slept. When they reached the outskirts of their home city, they turned to ask where she would get off, and found that she had disappeared! They had not stopped at all, and had been moving at a fast speed; they had heard no door open, no cry or noise of any kind from the rear once the old lady had stopped talking" (Ibid.: 239)

[23] Ibid.

[24] "I was standing on the side of a hill. It wasn't a mountain, and yet it wasn't exactly a hill: and I looked up and there was a man standing on top of the hill with a light all around him. There were torrents of water, raging water all around, and the man reached down and lifted me up, up out of the water. I felt safe" (Ibid.: 240).

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

They equipped two additional observers with "quite unexciting, even commonplace"[27] stories. One reported to Marian Keech that "he had read the newspaper story about her in September." Another observer stated that a man recommended she visit Keech if she "really wanted to know about flying saucers," the observer told Keech that she "felt 'sort of silly' and 'didn't know exactly why she had come,' but was 'just curious about flying saucers'."[28] These visits became significant for Keech and their appearance became newsworthy amongst other members. Keech noted that the visits were "illustrations that 'strange things are happening'."[29] The last observer, who contacted the group on Christmas day (after the disconfirmation), "was readily admitted and regarded as a spaceman, even though he told a most straightforward story of his earthly origin and occupation."[30] The appearance and timing of these observers as well as their demeanour became consonant information for the background 'beliefs' of Marian Keech and the Armstrongs, as well as the group.

Festinger et al. influenced the group in other ways as well. While committed members quit their jobs, school, habits (e.g. smoking, drinking),[31] "giving up earthly ties,"[32] sold off property,[33] changed diets,[34] and devoted themselves to the movement,[35] Festinger et al. and their observers evaded requests "and their failure to quit their jobs at once were not only embarrassing to them" but it also threatened "their rapport with the group."[36] Festinger et al. thought this "may have had the effect of making the members who had quit their jobs less sure they had done the right thing. In short, as members, the observers could not be neutral – any action had consequences."[37] The ability of Festinger et al. to anticipate meetings also led Marian Keech "to suspect that one of the authors had 'his own channels of information' to the Guardians."[38] These actions, despite their efforts to reduce their effect, provided further support for the activities and 'beliefs' that emanated around the group. Festinger et al. maintain that, although they did have some impact on the group, they did not "exercise any

---

[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.: 241
[29] Ibid.: 242
[30] Ibid.: 243
[31] Ibid.: 79, 82
[32] Ibid.: 80
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.: 80, 81
[36] Ibid.: 244
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.: 245

influence … on proselytizing activity."[39] In this regard, Festinger et al. hold the 'belief' that their influence upon the group did not impact the degree of commitment and 'beliefs' of group members and their subsequent proselytizing activity to reduce dissonance after the disconfirmation. Festinger et al. provide a critique of their study as social psychologists conducting fieldwork and approached it much like a controlled laboratory experiment. More specifically their actions, and that of their observers, were interpreted as variables that impacted the outcome. However, Festinger et al. contend they only impacted the group members' degree of commitment (conditions I and II above). The disconfirmation was "unequivocal" and the increase in proselytizing activity confirmed the predicted form of dissonance reduction. Festinger et al. further highlight the impact of "failed prophecy" on the maintenance and development of a group (historical examples include the Montanists, the Millerites,[40] and even Christianity) as well as the significance of social support.

Despite their own critique, Festinger et al. have been criticized on other methodological grounds. William S. Bainbridge noted that "often almost one-third of the members were participant observers, and that the group members were continually badgered by the press to account for their commitment."[41] In this regard, it is plausible that the "increased proselytizing and affirmations of faith may have been influenced by media pressure" and the team of observers.[42] Timothy Jenkins notes that the participant-observers continued to ask other group members about their thoughts regarding the disconfirmation and pressed Dr. Armstrong as well as Marian Keech that midnight had passed without anything happening.[43] This may have induced Marian Keech to produce another message. In other words, the participation of the observers and the press may have exerted pressure to affirm and commit to their position and evangelize. The influence of social pressures to affirm the prediction can be considered within the 'induced-compliance' paradigm of cognitive dissonance. There was no benefit for Marian Keech to affirm the date of the flood and even if she did not firmly believe in her prediction, the affirmation of the date would have led her to strengthen her 'beliefs' in the occult and that a flood would indeed occur. As Festinger et al. note, Keech remained steadfast with the predicted date once it was made. The emergent theories of cognitive dissonance would suggest that the commitment exhibited by Keech was motivated

---

[39] Ibid.: 246
[40] "Melton (1985) has argued that the Millerites were not simply focused upon prophecy and did not disband in the manner Festinger claimed in order to provide support for his theory" (Hood, Hill & Spilka 2009: 223).
[41] Hood, Hill & Spilka 2009: 223; Cf. Bainbridge (1997)
[42] Ibid.: 223
[43] Festinger et al., 2008 [1956]: 168

by 'beliefs about the self' – whether she wished to maintain consistency with her self-concept, self-integrity, the consequences of her actions, or the significance of her 'beliefs' in the occult and effective action. While the influence of social forces and the psychology of persuasion are certainly relevant, shifting the analysis to a sociological account does not reduce the significance of psychological factors and motivations discussed in the theory of cognitive dissonance.

The foremost criticism that Festinger et al. received over the decades, notwithstanding the criticisms above, is their methodological perspective. John G. Melton notes that "within religious groups prophecy seldom fails."[44] Although Festinger et al. (as outsiders) may have perceived and interpreted an "unequivocal disconfirmation" of the prophesized event the group members (insiders) may not have interpreted the event as such. This has been termed by Brent R. Coyle as the "religious gap hypothesis."[45] That is, the ascribed beliefs and acceptances to the group may not be congruent with the beliefs and acceptances of the group members. Not only has this been a concern for Festinger et al. but it is a perennial issue for social scientists in the field. In an attempt to close this gap, Diana Tumminia took the inverse position in her book, *When Prophecy Never Fails*. Tumminia considers the perspective of group members and highlights the hermeneutical considerations of both group members and social scientists (Festinger et al.). She notes that "what appears to be seemingly irrefutable evidence of irreconcilable contradictions to outsiders … can instead be evidence of the truth of prophecy to insiders."[46] Tumminia emphasizes the ability to interpret an event as a source of meaning. The claim of "unequivocal and undeniable" disconfirmation by Festinger et al. becomes problematic primarily because, for insiders, "prophecy cannot fail."[47]

Hood Jr., Hill and Spilka state that the notion of 'Failed Prophecy' is "a negotiated term and depends upon negotiated claims to reality."[48] Similarly, Jenkins notes that Festinger et al.

---

[44] Hood, Hill & Spilka 2009: 223; Cf. Melton 1985: 20

[45] Ibid.; Cf. Coyle 2001: 150; this has also been termed by psychologist William James as 'psychological fallacy' – "assuming that others must experience the world as psychologists do" (Hood, Hill & Spilka 2009: 224). Citing W. I. Thomas (1967), Zijderveld puts it nicely: "the natural and social environment of man is the environment as he (i.e. this man living in this situation) experiences and sees it and *not* the environment as the social scientist sees it" (Zijderveld 1970: 17).

[46] Hood, Hill & Spilka 2009: 224; Cf. Tumminia, 2005, 1998: 165

[47] "Zygmunt (1972: 245) defines 'prophecy' as a prediction that a "drastic transformation of the existing social order will occur in the proximate future through the intervention of some supernatural agency. The recognition of the transformation is socially constructed, and hence it cannot be unequivocally or undeniably disconfirmed" (Hood, Hill & Spilka 2009: 224).

[48] Hood, Hill & Spilka 2009: 224; Cf. Berger & Luckmann 1967; Carroll 1979; Pollner 1987

synonymize 'prophecy' with 'prediction' conceived in terms of a linear measure of time as opposed to a notion of 'prophecy' that may be a compilation of various sources commenting on society. Jenkins thus makes a rhetorical critique of Festinger et al. and their own "language ideology" to emphasize the notion of 'secrecy' as a structuring principle to highlight the significance of 'prophecy' as 'prediction' rather than discerning between the two.[49] In this regard, Jenkins is among those who argue that the notion of 'prophecy' may be "less central"[50] than assumed by Festinger et al. Focusing exclusively on prophecy can lead to the presupposition that prophecy is a major concern while ignoring the "complex cosmology that serves to integrate the group."[51] Although Festinger et al. do describe the cosmology of Marian Keech the central focus is indeed on the prophecy of the flood and its apparent disconfirmation. In this sense, Festinger et al. is subject to the 'free-choice' paradigm of cognitive dissonance: by selecting to focus on the prophecy rather than the cosmology of Sananda, Festinger et al. find further consonance and significance for the prophecy in their approach and less significance for the cosmology. The book itself highlights the importance of the prophecy and makes little note of how the cosmology impacted the group. It is very likely that the fieldwork conducted by Festinger et al. was guided by their own beliefs and acceptances. Nevertheless, Festinger et al. provide important insights on the disconfirmation of an anticipated event and present *one* method by which prophetic groups can be studied.

The hypothesis of increased proselytization is only one of several ways by which dissonance, aroused from 'belief-disconfirmation,' can be reduced. Jon R. Stone noted that "participant observation studies of prophetic groups have begun to show how rare increased proselytization is as a reaction to what is only apparently failed prophecy."[52] This has led Christopher D. Bader to conclude that "no study of a failed prophecy … has provided support for the cognitive dissonance hypothesis."[53] However, this is an extreme reaction and only

---

[49] Jenkins 2013; Jenkins argues that *When Prophecy Fails* may well be understood through a sociological and rhetorical analysis of persuasion that involves the social actors (the group, social scientists, and the press) as opposed to appealing to psychological motivations. Jenkins does note that even within a rhetorical analysis that emphasizes the element of persuasion, cognitive elements are necessarily involved. This would relate further to Robert Levine's *The Power of Persuasion* (2003), which is a social psychological investigation into persuasion and power-dynamics. Jenkins' commentary on the sociology of 'secrecy' and knowledge also invokes the notion of privileged knowledge and wisdom that resonates with the concept of 'superplausibility' (Davies 2011).
[50] Hood, Hill & Spilka 2009: 224
[51] Ibid.; Cf. Melton 1985; Jenkins (2013) discusses that the cosmology and ideology involved was in fact a commentary on society at the time.
[52] Ibid.; Cf. Stone 2000
[53] Hood, Hill & Spilka 2009: 223; Cf. Bader 1999: 120

plausible when considering the theory of cognitive dissonance as presented in *When Prophecy Fails* and an increase in proselytizing activity as the *sole* method of dissonance reduction. Others have shown,[54] the "most common response" is denying that the prophecy has failed and finding a "proper interpretation" for the event.[55] This response, also evident in the text, has been noted above and fits within Festinger's second and third method of dissonance reduction via 'cognitive overlap.'

Although Festinger et al., along with the press, certainly influenced the dynamics of the group, there have been similar groups predicting the end of the world without the influence of social scientists or the press. This places further significance to the reinterpretations of experience that occur from the 'insider' perspective of group members as well as further impetus to consider and examine the cosmology and ideology as significant vehicles of meaning and sources for dissonance reduction. The parallels between the group in *When Prophecy Fails* and other doomsday cults which have resulted in cases of mass suicide such as the People's Temple, Order of the Solar Temple, and Heaven's Gate warrant further scrutiny and investigation. In these groups, the loyalty to their charismatic leader, cosmology and ideology have played critical roles in their behaviour. In such cases, the notion of prophecy is more than a commentary on society. This issue returns to the importance of considering cognitions and 'beliefs' in relation to cosmology and ideology as a source for meaning and plausibility that also motivates and justifies behaviour. However, as noted previously, attributing 'beliefs' as causal factors to explain behaviours have been problematic. Dan Sperber mentioned that explaining behaviours in terms of 'beliefs' is a common cognitive process in folk psychology.[56] This gives rise to the familiar assumption that the 'belief' does indeed exist and the explained behaviour is a direct function of that 'belief.' Anthropologists have duly noted that this can be a mistaken assumption.[57] In this regard, the concept of acceptance from the philosophical literature is useful when considering the cosmology and ideology of groups and the ensuing actions of group members. In order to further situate the criticisms above and the investigation of belief and acceptance in ethnographic studies, it is necessary to consider the sequence of events, predictions, and the forms of crises and (de)conversion that occur.

---

[54] Carroll 1979; Dein 1997, 2001; Melton 1985; Tumminia 1998
[55] Hood, Hill & Spilka 2009: 224
[56] Sperber 1985; This has also been well documented on research investigating 'attribution theory' (Malle 2004)
[57] Boyer 2013

6.0.3 Background Social Context

When Prophecy Fails takes place during the early 1950s in the United States. Jenkins dates the occurrence back to 1954 in the Chicago area,[58] although Joel Cooper dates the anticipated cataclysm in 1955;[59] while the exact year is of little importance, 1954 will be used for the sake of consistency. Festinger et al. note that Marian Keech, the primary spiritual medium of the group, began receiving messages earlier in the spring of that year. Historically, this is just after the end of the Korean War in 1953 and the world is in the midst of a Cold War dominated by tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. This context is significant because it contributes to the atmosphere in which Marian Keech and other members of the group had lived. A strong anti-communist propaganda, post World War II tensions and violence around the world provides a context to the cosmological background Keech develops through her writings. Marian Keech's interests in the occult began in the 1930s, "fifteen years earlier."[60] In other words, she was witness to World War II, Pearl Harbour, Hiroshima, and the Korean War. She is also a part of the generation that witnessed the birth of television and new forms of technology. The activities of the group precede the launch of *Sputnik* in 1957 by the Soviet Union and the ensuing "Space Race." All of these events can be argued to have contributed to her ideas and the formation of 'beliefs.'

The American public interest in flying saucers peaked in 1947, research conducted by Robert Bartholomew and George Howard show that there were no recorded episodes "involving mass sightings of saucer-like objects" prior to that year.[61] A sighting reported by Kenneth Arnold, a businessman from Idaho, in July of 1947 has been attributed as a significant event that launched the idea of 'flying saucers' into popular consciousness.[62] The United States Air Force began an official investigation into 'flying saucers,' ultimately coining the term 'Unidentified Flying Object ('UFO') in 1953.[63] Flying saucers and the possibility of alien life forms were seriously considered. A Gallup Poll in August of 1947 revealed that "nine out of ten Americans had heard about the saucers."[64] In other words, in the span of a month from Arnold's reported sighting the idea of flying saucers had spread across the United States of

---

[58] Jenkins 2013: 2
[59] Cooper 2007: 3
[60] Festinger et al. 2008 [1956]: 35
[61] Partridge 2003: 5
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.

America. By the end of 1947, a total of "850 UFO sightings" were reported in the U.S.[65] Given this burst of interest, it is not surprising that flying saucers and the notion of "spacemen" continued into the early fifties when Marian Keech's group began to take shape.

The events documented in *When Prophecy Fails* begin in the spring of 1954,[66] the earliest date being April, up to December of that year with a brief follow up after the dispersal of the group. Festinger et al. document a span of nine months of which only the last two were recorded from first-hand experience. In these last two months, four predictions were made out of seven during the documented nine months. This background is significant as it provides details about the predictions in question, the development of the group, and the background of particular group members for the analysis of belief and acceptance.

6.1 CHRONOLOGY

Festinger et al. report the following month-to-month sequence of events. If a prediction was made during that month, a description and analysis of the prediction in terms of belief and acceptance will follow. The first prediction occurs in April in which Marian Keech's background will be discussed. The second occurs in July, which will be discussed in conjunction with the background of Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong. The third prediction is in August and the remaining four predictions occur in December as the time draws closer to the anticipated date of the flood (total of seven predictions). For Festinger et al., the central focus of the "prophecy" is made apparent in the third, fourth, and fifth prediction. The exact date of the flood is stated in September.

6.1.1 April

During this month, Marian Keech is receiving messages from "Sananda" and receives a message that constitutes her first prediction. In late April or early May, Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong contact Marian Keech and their friendship developed through letters and overnight visits over the ensuing months.[67]

---

[65] Ibid.
[66] The 'Unarius Science of Life' (a group that similarly speaks of spaceships and contact with beings from outer space) also began in 1954 (Tumminia 2003: 65).
[67] Festinger et al. 2008[1956]: 44-45

6.1.1.1 *Marian Keech and the First Prediction*

The first prediction was exclusive to Marian Keech and preceded the formation of the group. In order to appropriate this prediction, in terms of belief and acceptance, it is necessary to briefly consider some of her background. As noted above, her interests in the occult began in the 1930s whilst living in New York. Festinger et al. note that she attended a lecture on "theosophy" and became fascinated in the subject. She began to attend more lectures on the topic and picked up mimeographed copies so that she could study more carefully.[68] While this does not entail that Keech had developed a belief in theosophy, her continued interests in the topic suggests an acceptance and a valence of affinity towards theosophical ideas. This valence may have been motivated by 'an aim for truth,' an "intellectual seeking," or some other social reason. Nonetheless, her continued interest and attendance is an indicator of her interest and valence of affinity. In this sense, during the 1930s, Keech was in the early phases of a gradual conversion towards the embodiment of theosophical ideas.

The mission of the modern theosophical movement is best articulated through the founder, H. P. Blavatsky. She claimed that the "ascended masters" had existed throughout history and included religious figures like Jesus and the Buddha. Blavatsky further claimed that some of these masters were dwelling on the planet Venus and that she, along with other "pupils," had been in contact with them and channelled their teachings.[69] The mission of the Theosophical Society was to "communicate these teachings to humanity and thereby contribute to the moral and spiritual evolution of the race."[70] In addition to these ideas, Keech also became interested in the writings of Godfre Ray King (Guy Ballard) who founded the "I AM" movement[71] – an offspring of theosophy and the teachings of H. P. Blavatsky. Ballard published a book called *Unveiled Mysteries* in 1934 and, much like the theosophical movement, claimed to receive messages from saints and other "Masters." Ballard's "I AM" movement expands upon theosophy and incorporates "extraterrestrial data."[72] Another person of interest, for Keech, was Reverend John Ballou Newbrough, who wrote *A Kosmon Bible*.[73] Newbrough also fits within the theosophical trajectory as he claimed that "the contents of the book were given to him by direct revelation; he served merely as the scribe of higher

---

[68] Ibid.: 35
[69] Partridge 2003: 10
[70] Ibid.
[71] Festinger et al. 2008[1956]: 36
[72] Partridge 2003: 8-9
[73] Festinger et al. 2008[1956]: 36

forces."[74] Later on, Keech had also joined a 'dianetics' group – better known today as "scientology"[75] – founded by L. Ron Hubbard.

This framework of being a "pupil of the masters," channelling their teachings, and communicating them to humanity, sets a precedent for Keech. Throughout the documented events, she is frequently in contact with an entity called Sananda, a name that has been used in theosophical circles and often identified as Jesus ("I have come many times to the Earth planet as a leader and as a spiritual ruler responsible for that which does happen in this plane or cycle"[76]). The background that Festinger et al. construct for the reader suggests that Keech maintained an active interest and was heavily influenced by the occult throughout the '30s, '40s, and '50s. Festinger et al. also state that she attended a lecture by an "expert on saucers who expounded the belief that these objects did indeed transport visitors from outer space or other planets,"[77] which may have instilled the idea of being transported by flying saucers. All of these interests can be argued to have shaped the attitude and framework by which Marian Keech directed the group.

Her interests in theosophy, prior to the formation of the group, indicates that she has maintained a particular disposition towards the occult and developed a network of beliefs influenced by the movements described above. In other words, the propositional attitudes toward "nonterrestrial sources," the idea of "ascended masters" (as evidenced by her continued use of "Sananda"), spiritual mediums and the practice of channelling, appear to possess the characteristics of belief: context-independence, involuntariness, an aim for truth, and arguably subsequent behaviour consistently congruent with those beliefs, i.e. consonant-seeking behaviour. As noted in previous chapters, it is not sufficient to deduce beliefs from singular expressions of language or behaviour but any evidence must be considered in a longitudinal perspective. The involuntary reception, retrieval, and expression must be diachronically consistent, irrespective of any inconsistencies with other statements or behaviours. For Marian Keech, her interests continued over the span of fifteen years, since the 1930s, and ultimately became the focal point in 1954. In this regard, Keech can be argued to have developed and gradually embodied these ideas over this time span.

---

[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.; L. Ron Hubbard published *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* in 1950
[76] Partridge 2003: 12
[77] Festinger et al. 2008[1956]: 36-37

Her beliefs in the occult are further realized through her belief that she was a spiritual medium – a practice she developed over time. Festinger et al state that Keech's first experience as a medium began a year before the events of the group. She remarks, "I felt a kind of tingling or numbness in my arm, and my whole arm felt warm right up to the shoulder" and that she

> had the feeling that someone was trying to get my attention. Without knowing why, I picked up a pencil and a pad … My hand began to write in another handwriting. I looked at the handwriting and it was strangely familiar, but I knew it was not my own. I realized that somebody else was using my hand.[78]

In these writings, she found "many indecipherable words and perplexing neologisms"[79] and placed the fault of this indecipherability within herself. She then gave herself the task of developing this practice "through concentration, through prayers for help and guidance and through constant, obedient practice" and aimed to develop a "higher level of skill in transcribing the messages from the spiritual realm."[80] Each day she sat for a message, or a lesson, and spent many hours in bitter frustration, often plagued by doubt, as she tried to grasp the meaning of the words and phrases her pencil wrote while some days there were no messages at all.[81]

Against this background, it is possible to talk about Keech's reception of a message, the first prediction, from Sananda in April:

> When you go to the lecture you will be contacted by a man from Langley Field. He has been on our planet for a brief stay. He will say to you: 'You are early.' That will be his sign to you that he knows you. He came through the atmosphere on a beam of light.[82]

However, there is little follow-up information about what Keech had done with this information. Festinger et al. do report that on one occasion, she had been "ordered" to go to a particular street where she waited for "nearly an hour" but nothing occurred. On another occasion, she was "promised saucer "sightings" at or near her home, but was disappointed."[83] All of which preceded the groups' formation in 1954.

---

[78] Ibid.: 35
[79] Ibid.: 37
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.: 49
[83] Ibid.

It is uncertain whether these initial predictions can be considered as acceptances or beliefs. Acting on such information, does not qualify them as a definite acceptance or definite belief. Further evidence is required to determine whether a particular propositional message maintains the characteristics of belief or acceptance in Keech. Her attitudes towards these messages were not reported nor do Festinger et al. mention whether she discussed them in any other context. In this sense, it is not possible to discern any voluntariness or involuntariness, context-independence or context-relative, or an 'aim for truth.' There is insufficient data to discern one or the other.

However, given her background and precedent of acting on these messages, it is plausible to assert some dynamic between belief and acceptance. After the reception of a message "ordering" her to do something, Keech had responded in accordance with that message despite being "disappointed" afterwards. In this sense, Keech may hold the attitude of accepting such messages *as if* they were true, while not committing to their truth claim. Continuing to accept such messages despite repeated disappointment, however, does suggest that she maintained an involuntary and context-independent belief in the cosmology behind the source of these messages. In other words, Keech can accept a prediction and not believe in that prediction, but her consistent and context-independent action does entail a belief in the source of the prediction (Sananda) and the cosmology that provided the prediction. That is, accepting that p does not entail a belief in p but it does entail a belief in q. In this regard, Keech may continue to act on the messages she receives without committing to their truth and fruition of those messages but her persistence is an enduring characteristic resulting from a belief in theosophical ideas. Such background beliefs provide Keech with a disposition to accept her messages as true without necessarily believing that they are true. This enables various reasons and justifications (resolving discrepancy and reducing dissonance) for why an event did not occur, which will be discussed with regard to her final prediction.

6.1.2 May

In this month, Marian Keech continues to receive messages from Sananda and "Elder Brother"[84] detailing a cosmology and ideology. On May 23, Keech received the following message from Sananda:

> We are planning to come in great numbers in the weeks ahead, as the war preparations are being formulated … [certain earth dwellers] will be gathered up and

---

[84] Another entity within the theosophical cosmology

> relieved of the experiences of the holocaust of the coming events. … [Festinger et al state] … the theme of war is adumbrated in a number of other messages during the late spring and early summer, and there are many references to the blessedness of harmony and peace, to the misery, futility, and madness of conflict.[85]

This kind of content corroborates with Jenkins' discussion on the term 'prophecy' as it relates to social commentary of the time.

6.1.3 June

Festinger et al. do not mention any activity during this month.

6.1.4 July

Keech receives additional messages regarding the cosmology and nature of those with whom she is communicating. She spends the fourth of July with the Armstrongs and makes her second prediction.[86]

6.1.4.1 *The Second Prediction and the Armstrongs*

Marian Keech's second prediction came in late July, which Festinger et al. interpret as the "strongest test of her convictions and her loyalty to her teachers."[87] On July 23, she transcribed the following message:

> The cast of light you see in the southern sky is of our direction and is pulsating with a turning, spinning motion of the craft of the 'tola' [spaceship] which is to land upon the planet in the cast of the day of August first – at the Lyons field. It will be as if the world was coming to an end at the field when the landing occurs. The operators will not believe their senses when they see the craft of outer space in the midst of the field … It is a very accurate cast that we give.[88]

The discussion of the first prediction suggested that Keech held a system of beliefs that included a disposition to accept these messages as true without necessarily committing to the expectation that they will indeed come true. And yet, she continues to act on the basis that her predictions *will* come true. Moreover, the inconsistencies and incongruence with past experiences do not negate the possibility that this message was believed rather than accepted. Nevertheless, without further evidence of Keech during this time, it is not possible to confidently state that this message was believed or accepted. It is worth noting that the last statement of "accuracy" in this message lends further emphasis of its importance and 'aim for

---

[85] Festinger et al. 2008[1956]: 48
[86] Ibid.: 45
[87] Ibid.: 49
[88] Ibid.: 50

truth' and although it is not possible to consider the impact of this last statement, it certainly would not have gone without Keech's notice. The lack of evidence, however, limits a confident ascription of belief or acceptance to this message. At the very least, her messages are accepted.

Festinger et al. note that Keech intended to go to Lyons field alone but the information had spread to others – how and by who is not mentioned. On August 1st, twelve persons had gathered to witness the saucer landing. Once the group decided on a location to park, they waited. Keech says, "We didn't know what we were looking for; we were looking for saucers."[89] While they waited, Keech became aware of "an unknown man" approaching the party.[90] As the man drew nearer to the group, she "sensed something strange" and "recalls a somewhat strange 'look in his eye' and a curiously rigid bearing."[91] One of the ladies from the group was alarmed but Keech "felt only curiosity and sympathy for the stranger" and offered a "sandwich and a glass of fruit juice."[92] The man declined the offer. She then tried to offer a slice of watermelon but he "was no place to be seen." Keech states "I knew something was going on that I didn't understand. I knew I was close to something."[93] The appearance of this man would become significant as a source of meaning and interpretation for the second prediction.

The group continued to wait at Lyons field for the next two hours[94] but did not see any signs of a flying saucer. Festinger et al. state that at this point, "Mrs. Keech was grave" and thought to herself: "That message did come through my hand. I am more or less responsible if I have misled anyone today."[95] This statement suggests that Keech felt dissonance from the discrepancy of the unfulfilled event and her prediction. According to the revisionist theories, this dissonance may have been due to the experience of an "aversive consequence," an incongruent self-concept, self-integrity, or because the prediction was a significantly held cognition and impeded the efficacy of her actions. It is unfortunate that there was not an observer present during this event to document the reaction of Keech in more detail as it

---

[89] Ibid.: 50
[90] Ibid.: 51
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.

would provide insight into the magnitude of her dissonance. As noted before, the greater the magnitude of dissonance the greater the likelihood that a dispositional belief was involved.

After waiting, the group had eventually dispersed. Keech along with Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong began to think about what had transpired. This discussion would soon lead to the reduction of dissonance and resolve the discrepancy between the anticipated event and its non-occurrence. But first, it is worth briefly noting the reaction of those present at Lyons field. According to Festinger et al., twelve persons gathered that day "but only five remained disciples in December….Two disappeared … for a time, but returned later; only the Armstrongs [and Keech] remained steadfast throughout"[96] this time and December. The other seven had "dropped Mrs. Keech forthwith, as a false prophet."[97] Based on behaviour alone, these seven received Marian Keech's claim about a flying saucer landing as an acceptance (there is no additional information to discern otherwise). There can be any number of reasons for accepting this claim in a voluntary manner with little to no commitment to an 'aim for truth.' The disappointment of the day was sufficient enough to disengage them in any further activities with this group. Whether they had any dispositions or beliefs towards occult ideas is unknown.

The Armstrongs, however, continued to support Marian Keech and their relationship began with correspondences and a few meetings three to four months prior to this event. However, the Armstrongs interest in the occult preceded this relationship. Before meeting Marian Keech, Mr. Armstrong had been leading "The Seekers" group, in 1949 or shortly thereafter, which discussed various issues around Christian mysticism and later on flying saucers. Originally from Kansas, the Armstrongs had served as medical missionaries in Egypt for one of the "liberal Protestant churches." But Mrs. Daisy Armstrong's "nervous collapse" became a turning point in their religiosity. In some sense, this corroborates with the changes that can occur from a 'crisis' indicated in the previous chapter. The details of Mrs. Armstrong's "nervous collapse" are unknown but the episode had motivated a change in their valence of affinity for meaning. Festinger et al. state that they could not find solace from prayer nor did they "understand why they had been singled out for persecution by such malignant emotion; after all, they had always led a good life, had tried to do the right thing, and were certainly

---

[96] Ibid.: 53
[97] Ibid.

engaged in good works."[98] As a result, they "started searching."[99] While they did not denounce Christianity, the Armstrongs began incorporating alternative sources and avenues of meaning. They

> turned to the study of mysticism and the occult, in which they read widely eclectically. They studied some of the sacred writings of Hinduism, the Apocrypha, *Oahspe*, and books and pamphlets on theosophy, Rosicrucianism, New Thought, the I AM movement, and the mystical (though not, apparently, the political) writings of William Dudley Pelley. The ideas they encountered in this literature, and discussed at length, seem to have opened their minds to … the existence of a spirit world, whose masters could communicate with and instruct people of the earth; were convinced that extrasensory communication and spiritual migration (without bodily change or motion) had occurred; and subscribed to many of the more common occult beliefs, including reincarnation.[100]

Mr. Armstrong also met with, and interviewed, George Adamski – who contributed to the popularization of flying saucers and UFO religions – and became convinced "flying saucers were real, not illusory, that they came from other planets, and that they carried men, or beings, who were visiting earth on missions of exploration and observation."[101] The Armstrongs' interest in the occult can be projected to have developed between 1946 and 1949, and progressed during the early '50s. In this regard the Armstrongs have developed a dispositional attitude of belief over a period of time towards flying saucers prior to their meeting with Marian Keech in the spring of 1954. That is, they had gradually converted – motivated by a crisis-precipitated sudden conversion – and developed an 'aim for truth' and, as it will become evident later on, an 'involuntariness' as well as a 'context-independence.' This provides a background context for the Armstrongs and their continued engagement with Keech.

After their experience at Lyons field, Marian Keech, Thomas and Daisy Armstrong discussed the event. The discrepancy and dissonance is temporarily reduced as the three of them "agreed that something had happened on the roadside, but we didn't know what it was or how to explain it. We were all sensitized to that degree – that something had happened though we had no mental concept of it."[102] In other words, the disappointment of the incongruent experience was resolved by interpreting the event not in terms of the failure to witness a flying saucer but rather in terms of the encounter with the strange man.

---

[98] Ibid.: 42
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.: 42-43
[101] Ibid.: 43
[102] Ibid.: 52

On the next day, Marian Keech transcribed a message that reassured them of what had occurred: "It was I, Sananda, who appeared on the roadside in the guise of the sice."[103] Keech recognized that 'sice' was a term the "Guardians" (those who have been contacting her through messages) used for "one who comes in disguise" or "one whose true identity is unknown."[104] This message was happily received by Keech and the Armstrongs. Festinger et al. state that it was "an exultation that far outweighed the disappointment over the disconfirmed prediction."[105] Marian Keech further interpreted that the encounter with the man on the side of the road was an encounter with Jesus (Sananda): "She had looked upon Jesus … had talked with him, and had performed the simple Christian act of offering hospitality to the casual, undistinguished stranger."[106] This information increased her curiosity about why she was "chosen to receive the reincarnated Son of God?" and further reinforced her prior beliefs that "she was especially selected that the voices she heard and the presences she felt were real, were valid, were the stuff of transcendent life – and she their humble earthly vehicle."[107] This new information added consonance to her prior beliefs and provided further support for her decision to go to Lyons field, which reduces the dissonance surrounding the disappointing event.

6.1.5 August

The event that was the focus of the second prediction, described above, took place on August 1st. Although the anticipated flying saucer did not arrive, the appearance of a man on the side of the road provided a means of explanation. Subsequently, Keech received a message about the identity of the man and a third prediction about a flood. Throughout this month, information regarding the flood is expanded upon and Mr. Armstrong dispatched "more than fifty copies" of a seven page letter to the press at the end of the month.[108]

6.1.5.1 *The Third Prediction*

The third prediction produced by Marian Keech was the first indication that a cataclysm would occur. Although there was no mention of a specific date, Keech was notified that the

---

[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.: 53
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.: 59

disaster would be a flood ("the lake seething"[109]). This message was received on August 2nd, the same day Keech was informed about her encounter with Sananda above:

> … the Earthling will awaken to the great casting [conditions to be fulfilled] of the lake seething and the great destruction of the tall buildings of the local city – the cast that the lake bed is sinking to the degree that it will be as a great scoop of wind from the bottom of the lake throughout the countryside. You shall tell the world that this is to be, for such it is given. To you the date only is secret, for the panic of men knows no bounds.[110]

This message was then expanded upon in three additional messages received later on. The first, received on August 15 from Sananda, specified that the cataclysm would be a flood for the purposes of purification and the "creation of the new order."[111] Ten days later (Aug. 25), the second message indicated that the flood would not be limited to the local area but across the U.S., Canada and Mexico[112] and that a new mountain range would be created signifying the past and representing the new.[113] On August 27th, a third message was received stating that the catastrophe would be a global event extending across Egypt, France, England and Russia.[114]

The elapsed time from the first message to the fourth message is significant for several reasons. Over the span of twenty-five days, the message snowballed from an initial notice of a flood to a global event. The magnitude of the event escalates from a lake bed sinking to a major flood across the globe and the world will be purified with the creation of a new order. Given the beliefs of Marian Keech and the Armstrongs' tendency to accept the predictions and act upon them, the first message could either be a belief with an 'aim for truth' or an acceptance that it may or may not occur. The escalating magnitude of the event over several weeks, however, suggests that the idea of a disaster was not only accepted but had a context-independence and 'aim for truth.' That is, for Marian Keech and the Armstrongs, it would be safe to qualify that they believed this catastrophic event would occur. This is supported by future events and their persistent anticipation for the flood to occur.

The increasing magnitude of the disaster provides further consonance to the belief of Marian Keech's importance as a medium and the background cosmological ideas of theosophy.

---

[109] Ibid.: 57
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.: 58
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.: 58-59
[114] Ibid.

Given the background that Marian Keech considers Sananda to be the true identity of religious figures like Jesus and the Buddha, the message of an impending disaster is one of tremendous "privilege" with which Marian Keech and the Armstrongs would have received with "awe" and "reverence." Festinger et al. state "[h]ere, in the hands of three fairly ordinary people (by the world's standards) had been placed the most important news of our time … A grave responsibility, an incomparable privilege had been thrust upon them."[115] In this regard, these messages add further significance to Marian Keech not only as a medium around which a group will develop but it also furthers Keech's sense of self-importance. The messages provide further consonance to her prior encounter with Sananda as to why she was "chosen to receive the reincarnated Son of God."[116] This strengthens her background beliefs in Sananda, other Guardians, the associated cosmology, and how Keech understands herself as a medium within that schema.

This empowerment is also suggested to have motivated Thomas Armstrong to notify the public. Three days after the notice of the flood's global scale, Mr. Armstrong sent a letter to the press. "On August 30, he dispatched more than fifty copies of a seven-page mimeographed" letter, in which Mr. Armstrong emphasized Marian Keech's "ESP [Extrasensory Perception] Lessons."[117] At this point there were no predictions of when the flood would occur. It was not until September that December 20th became public information as the "date of evacuation."[118] The first press release sent by Mr. Armstrong, according to the theory of cognitive dissonance (induced-compliance paradigm[119]), commits the Armstrongs and Marian Keech to the prediction that a flood will occur. Festinger et al. state that it was clear "Mrs. Keech fully believed in the legitimacy of her messages and had publicly committed herself to the prediction of the flood both through Dr. Armstrong's press release and the interview."[120] From the perspective of Festinger et al., Marian Keech's "conviction and commitment were high."[121]

---

[115] Ibid.: 59
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] The action to notify the press was voluntarily done on their own accord without any external incentive to justify the action. The act was motivated solely by their desire to notify the public. In this regard, the induced-compliance paradigm would suggest that this action commits them to this action if confronted with any discrepancy. A similar interpretation could be made through the free-choice paradigm as well.
[120] Festinger et al. 2008[1956]: 65
[121] Ibid.

6.1.6 September

During the month of September, Mr. Armstrong sent out a second press release.[122] Marian Keech was interviewed by a local newspaper on September 23 and Festinger et al. notice the following headline: "PROPHECY FROM PLANET. CLARION CALL TO CITY: FLEE THAT FLOOD. IT'LL SWAMP US ON DEC. 21, OUTER SPACE TELLS SUBURBANITE."[123] The news article "expanded somewhat on these bare facts" and states that the city will be destroyed by a flood "just before dawn, Dec. 21."[124]

6.1.7 October

Two of the authors visit Marian Keech and report only a "few if any local followers" were part of the group.[125] During this month, the Armstrongs mimeographed Marian Keech's writings.[126] Mr. Armstrong reinstates the "Seekers" at their church and promises the church that he would exclude talk of flying saucers.[127] Instead, Keech begins to hold meetings at her home.[128]

6.1.8 November

November is when Festinger et al. begin documenting their reports by first-hand observation. During the second week, Festinger et al. add a male observer.[129] A few days later, a female observer was sent to join the group.[130] These observers provided fictive stories in order to appeal to Mr. Armstrong and Keech. They were enthusiastically received and indirectly provided consonant information to the group. Subsequently, two additional observers (one male and one female) provided rather mundane accounts and also gained access to the group.[131] The Seekers continued to meet throughout this month. On November 23rd, Bertha Blatsky, a group member, goes into a trance and "channels" the "Creator."[132] This event would create a small tension of power and authority within the group. However, as time goes by, it would become evident that Marian Keech remains the primary medium and leader/authority figure of the group.

---

[122] Ibid.: 60
[123] Ibid.: 32 (emphasis original)
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.: 65
[126] Ibid.: 67
[127] Ibid.: 68
[128] Ibid.: 89
[129] Ibid.: 70
[130] Ibid.: 71, 240
[131] Ibid.: 240-241
[132] Ibid.: 95

6.1.9 December

The month of December was the most active. Bertha has another episode channelling the Creator[133] but due to concerns of authenticity and accuracy of messages between the mediums, another medium, Ella Lowell (who channels "Dr. Browning"), was consulted on December 5th regarding the flood.[134] On December 14th, Lowell confirms the date of the flood during her visit to the group.[135] During this month, Mr. Armstrong was dismissed from his teaching position at the college[136] and on Dec. 16th Marian Keech speaks with a reporter who showed up at her door.[137] Prior to the 20th, Keech made three predictions. During her encounter with four "boys from Clarion," discussed below, Keech experienced a moment of 'crisis' as her position and the validity of her predictions were put into question. However, this was soon overcome through Keech's persistence with the "boys from Clarion." On the night of the flood, Keech received a message that the "cataclysm had been called off" and subsequently received messages prompting her to give additional predictions. The last participant-observer was added on December 25. The group eventually dispersed and the team of observers followed up with a few group members between January and March.

6.1.9.1 *The Fourth Prediction*

The fourth prediction consists of two related minor predictions. One made by an anonymous caller and the second produced through Keech's writing. On December 17th, an anonymous caller told Keech that "a saucer would land in her back yard to pick her up at four o'clock that afternoon."[138] She relayed the message to five of the members (the Armstrongs and three others) and the observers present at that time. All of them prepared for the flying saucer and behaved as if it would arrive at the stated time: "By noon, all five of the members of the group had removed every scrap of metal from their persons – including zippers, metal clasps, buttons with metal backing, bobby pins, and belt buckles."[139] This was an idea from Mr. Armstrong to ensure that they would be able to board the saucer. The members waited in the backyard at four o'clock in the afternoon. By 5:30 p.m., everybody had given up on the arrival of the flying saucer. There was no discussion about what had transpired and did not

---

[133] Ibid.: 114
[134] Ibid.: 117
[135] Ibid.: 120
[136] Ibid.: 134
[137] Ibid.: 137
[138] Ibid.: 142
[139] Ibid.: 142

seem interested in the question.[140] Soon, Keech received a message assuring her that the group members would be picked up and that she would "return to 'the Father's house' and need not come back to earth again."[141] This message reaffirmed "Marian's importance and the validity of her messages" but it also aroused questions about why the flying saucer did not arrive.[142] The group agreed that the event "had been an alert" and that the flying saucer would arrive at the proper time; the event was reinterpreted as a test of faith: "The four o'clock watch had been a practice session."[143] Similar to the event at Lyons field, an alternative explanation was provided for the flying saucer.

The second part of the fourth prediction is made by Marian Keech that evening. After the initial episode, Keech received a message at midnight that a "flying saucer was … on its way to her backyard to pick up the chosen, and it would not wait for anyone who was not ready."[144] This prediction builds on the interpretation of the event earlier that day. Because the four o'clock incident was "practice," this prediction indicated to Keech and the others that this was not "practice." The group members waited outdoors, "elated with anticipation," and interpreted the lightning in the sky as "signals."[145] Keech said "she saw a bright spot of light hovering around the chimney."[146] However, like earlier in the day, at 2 a.m. the members could not stand the cold. Keech wrote another message:

> The first half of the message consisted of repeated blessings to those who are patient and disciplined. Those who were patient and disciplined would be rewarded. The rest of the message boiled down to saying that we were to go back and rest and that, at the proper time (unspecified) a man would come to lead us to the place where we would be picked up.[147]

When the members returned inside, at about "twenty minutes past three in the morning," Keech discussed "whether we were or were not well-drilled actors and referred to the experiences of the day as drill and basic training."[148] Keech then interpreted this event like the prior: it was "practice." Festinger et al. state that the rest of the group members did not discuss the event and "kept it a secret."[149]

---

[140] Ibid.: 144
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.: 145
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.: 147
[145] Ibid.: 148
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.: 149
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid.

6.1.9.2 *The Fifth Prediction*

On the morning of December 20th, Keech received the following:

> At the hour of midnight you shall be put into parked cars and taken to a place where ye shall be put aboard a porch [flying saucer] and ye shall be purposed by the time you are there. At that time you shall have the fortuned ones forget the few who have not come – and at no time are they to be called for, they are but enacting a scene and not a person who should be there will fail to be there and at the time you are to say 'What is your question?'… and at no time are you to ask what is what and not a plan shall go astray and for the time being be glad and be fortuned to be among the favoured. And be ye ready for further instructions.[150]

This is the final prediction prior to the anticipated flood. A total of fifteen persons were present for the flood: ten members of the group and five observers. All of them participated in making preparations for midnight and accepted Keech's messages. At this point, it is uncertain whether the ten members, besides Marian Keech and the Armstrongs, had a belief that the saucer would arrive or believed in the ideas of Keech. Festinger et al. do not mention what the members talked about in other contexts regarding the prediction, so context-independence or 'an aim for truth' can not be determined. As noted before, it is also not possible to discern belief or acceptance from behaviour alone and belief should be deliberated from a longitudinal perspective and take into account the background and past of a person. A more detailed analysis regarding the status of belief in some of the other members will be discussed later on. Prima facie, as all of the present members participated behaviourally, it can be said that they have at least accepted the prediction that a flying saucer would arrive. The members conducted a "thorough rehearsal of the passwords" necessary to board the flying saucer.[151] They also went through the practice of removing all the metal from their bodies.[152]

As midnight passed, interpretations of the event began to arise. The first explanation surfaced five minutes passed midnight from Bertha Blatsky, the medium for the Creator. She "announced that the plan still held: there had been a slight delay, that was all, a slight delay."[153] At half past midnight, the Creator began to discuss "the promise of a miracle … that would be wrought that very night … the death and resurrection of Marian's husband."[154] Mr. Keech did not involve himself with the group and the predictions of Mrs. Keech. Festinger et al. note that the "Creator had once before predicted the demise of the

---

[150] Ibid.: 161
[151] Ibid.: 163
[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid.: 165
[154] Ibid.: 165-166

nonbelieving Mr. Keech" and this message of a miracle may have invoked that previous prediction in the minds of the members, although this one involved a "resurrection."[155] Mr. Keech was checked on three times after this prediction and each time he was declared to be still breathing. Bertha Blatsky, the Creator, then declared that the miracle had already occurred.[156] Festinger et al. state that "this solution was so inadequate … that even the authority of the Creator could not gain acceptance for it. It was quickly buried in silence."[157] At about 2:30 a.m. Keech received a message for the group to take a coffee break.[158] During this break, she stated:

> Well, all right. Suppose they gave us a wrong date. Well, this only got into the newspapers on Thursday and people had only 72 hours to get ready to meet their maker. Now suppose it doesn't happen tonight. Let's suppose it happens next year or two years or three or four years from now. I'm not going to change one bit. I'm going to sit here and write and maybe people will say it was this little group spreading light here that prevented the flood. Or maybe if it's delayed for a couple of years there'll be time to get people together. I don't know. All I know is that the plan has never gone astray. We have never had a plan changed. And you'll see tomorrow the house will be full of them and we'll have an open house and I'll need every one of you to answer the phone and maybe they'll ask us to go on television. I'm not sorry a bit. I won't be sorry no matter what happens.[159]

This proved to be foreshadowing of the official interpretation. At 3 a.m. the other group members began speculating and reinterpreting the original message whether it was "symbolic."[160] At 4:45 a.m. Keech received the message that would define what had occurred:

> For this day is it established that there is but one God of Earth, and He is in thy midst, and from his hand thou has written these words. And mighty is the word of God – and by his word have ye been saved – for from the mouth of death have ye been delivered and at no time has there been such a force loosed upon the Earth. Not since the beginning of time upon this Earth has there been such a force for Good and light as this room not floods this room and that which has been loosed within this room now floods the entire Earth. As thy God has spoken through the two who [*sic*] within these walls has he manifested that which he has given thee to do.[161]

In other words, "the cataclysm had been called off."[162] After this message was accepted by the members, Keech followed with two more messages in "rapid succession."[163] The first read: "Such are the facts as stated that the group has sat for the Father's message the night through and God has spoken and that is every word to be said." The second message "was to

---

[155] Ibid.: 166
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.: 167
[159] Ibid.: 169
[160] Ibid.: 169
[161] Ibid.: 171
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid.

the effect that the main message and the introduction were to be headed 'The Christmas Message to the People of Earth.'[164] According to Festinger et al., one member departed after this message but "the rest of the believers were jubilant."[165] The next course of action was to notify the press about the news.

The enthusiasm with which the "Christmas Message" was received raises questions about the role of the emotions with respect to belief and acceptance. More specifically, to what extent does the expression of emotion entail 'involuntariness' and/or an 'aim for truth'? The expression of joy and enthusiasm suggests that the message was involuntarily received. However, this does not entail that the "Christmas Message" was believed afterwards and sustained in a context-independent and involuntary manner, nor is it clear that this reaction indicates the message was considered as true. This issue remains an area of ambiguity and will be discussed later in the conclusion of this chapter.

6.1.9.3 *The Sixth Prediction*

The sixth prediction is a minor one. On December 22nd, Keech received the following message:

> So shall ye be at the altar at the time of the evening when there is a tola [flying saucer] directly over you. So by your own tape shall ye play a song and dance your own time. Use the mike and put it on the altar and sit where you are and put the hand to the mike not too close and be the first to get the direct taped posy word. And give thyself the pleasure of pretty song which has been sung by the boys' glee club of the Losoloes. Be in the altar at the time of eight o'clock and at that time ye shall give the boy the job of recording but stay where you are.[166]

At the stated time, the group gathered:

> Marian resting in an armchair, extended her right arm with fingers pointed to within a few inches of the microphone and uttered not a sound. The tape recorder was turned on to the recording position and for almost an hour the group waited in complete, devotional silence while the writing hand of Marian Keech presumably transmitted the songs of Losolo University to the tape.[167]

The tape was blank. When Keech was asked about the tape, she replied that she was "thinking while the machine was turned on to record."[168] Festinger et al. state that this was all they discovered about the "rationalization of this disconfirmation."[169]

---

[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.: 172
[166] Ibid.: 186
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid.: 187

6.1.9.4 *The Seventh Prediction*

The last prediction was made on December 23rd. Keech received a message that commanded the group to "assemble at 6 p.m. on the 24th on the sidewalk in front of the Keech home and to sing Christmas carols. The group would be visited by spacemen."[170]

Prior to the event, they notified the press and invited "the public to be present."[171] At 6 p.m., Marian Keech, the two Armstrongs, their children, and three other members gathered in front of the house. According to Festinger et al. approximately "two hundred people" gathered for the Christmas carols and the group "sang and waited for the spacemen for perhaps twenty minutes" before they returned inside.[172] During interviews with the press and internal discussions amongst themselves, Festinger et al. note two primary points advocated by the group. The first asserts that the spacemen did indeed appear but "were invisible or unknown to the mob of unbelievers."[173] The second point was that the spacemen did not want to land a saucer "for fear of creating a panic in the rowdy mob of onlookers."[174] These points were mentioned to members of the press and over phone conversations between members as they informed those who could not participate.

Festinger et al. hypothesized an increase in proselytizing activity after the disconfirmation of the flood. While proselytizing activity did increase, Festinger et al. do not discuss this in much depth. Congruent with previous discussions and criticisms about *When Prophecy* Fails, it would seem that dissonance and discrepancies were reduced primarily through a reinterpretation of the events such that the explanation was congruent within the framework of cosmology and Marian Keech as a medium. In this regard, there is continuity in the actions and cognitions of Marian Keech, the Armstrongs, and others. As proposed in the previous chapter, in order to investigate 'belief' further, the themes of crises and conversion within this chronological context should be considered in further detail.

6.2 CRISES

In the-previous chapter, Ernesto de Martino's 'crisis of presence' was described as depicting a state of being characterized by distress, negative emotions and destabilized beliefs about the

---

[169] Ibid.
[170] Ibid.: 188
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.: 189
[173] Ibid.: 191
[174] Ibid.: 192

self that expressed a 'loss of self' subjecting the individual to the "will of others." This section will consider this concept with regard to Marian Keech and her two episodes of crisis. The experience of disappointment in the absence of a flying saucer and flood in the other members will be discussed in the following section on conversion.

Keech's first crisis came from an encounter with the "boys from Clarion." On the night of December 18th, a "twenty-year-old youth" who claimed he was Sananda appeared with "four companions."[175] Marian Keech, the Armstrongs, and a few other members were convinced they "were from outer space," while a few others were sceptical or unsure of "what was going on."[176] After Keech spent "nearly an hour" with them "she was visibly shaken. She stood weeping near the door of the room where the boys were getting ready to leave the house, her frail body turned to the wall and her fists clenched at her sides."[177] When the visitors tried to leave, Keech would not let them and they discussed for an additional thirty minutes.[178] Festinger et al. note that after they departed, Keech "recovered" from her shock.[179] She described the conversation with the "boys from Clarion" as follows:

> They kept forcing me to take back things. He kept trying to pressure me into saying they were not true. They kept telling me that what I had said was all false and mixed up. And they told me that they were in contact with outer space too and all the writings I had were wrong and that everything I was predicting was wrong.[180]

Because Keech *believed* the visitors were from outer space, the contradictory information she received from them was enough to invoke the "shock" mentioned above. In other words, the cognitive dissonance Keech experienced was a result of receiving discrepant and inconsistent information with her prior beliefs and acceptances. The visitors mentioned that *her* statements "were not true," that what *she said* "was all false and mixed up," and that everything *she* "was predicting was wrong." These provocative statements were aimed directly at Keech's beliefs about her self and her actions. This arguably destabilized her sense of self. The magnitude of dissonance resulting from these statements was great enough to motivate Keech to resolve the discrepancies and reduce the dissonance immediately. She would not let the "boys from Clarion" leave and insisted on further discussion. Eventually, they had told Keech that "they had indeed come to test her and, if she passed the test, then to

---

[175] Ibid.: 154
[176] Ibid.: 155
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.: 156
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid.

reassure her and support her … the trial had ended on a note of triumph for Marian." [181] In other words, the very force that provided the destabilizing information was also the restabilising source.

Keech's second crisis was evident during the period of uncertainty between the anticipated arrival of the flying saucer and the interpretation of the event. Between 3 a.m. and 4:30 a.m. of December 21st, Festinger et al. state:

> Mrs. Keech broke down and cried bitterly. She knew, she sobbed, there were some who were beginning to doubt but we must beam light on those who needed it most and we must hold the group together. The rest of the group lost their composure too. They were all, now, visibly shaken and many were close to tears. It was a bad quarter of an hour.[182]

The public acts of acceptance and sustained interest by group members created the platform for crisis. In other words, the crisis was group-generated and motivated by the predictions made by Marian Keech which were supported and legitimated by the group members – especially Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong. Without the group conceding authority to Keech and validating her capacities to channel and transcribe messages, she would not have had the influence she had. This crisis is then a socially constructed product of this mutual exchange between group members and leader. On December 21st, when Keech was losing a sense of solidarity within the group, her beliefs were shaken and displayed the distress above. In reciprocal fashion, when Keech broke down the other members began to lose their composure as well.[183] In this regard, the authority figure and the group are co-dependent and affect each other.

Both episodes of crisis displayed a significant amount of distress and emotion from Marian Keech. While both episodes have arguably destabilized her beliefs and sense of self, the social forces that initiated crisis are much different than the socio-economic conditions de Martino and Durkheim envisioned that renders one 'passive.' In Keech's first crisis, she was active in approaching and legitimating the "boys from Clarion." When she received the discrepant information, she became 'passive' and subject to their will. However, she was active and insistent they remain when they tried to leave. She became subject to the information they told her and was able to restabilise her sense of self and identity with their

---

[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid.: 170-171
[183] Ibid.

reassurance. In Keech's second crisis, she could not be 'passive' or 'subject to the will of others.' As medium and leader of the group, she had to produce a message that would satisfy her self and group members. Keech was subject to her self, both active and passive, in her role. It is difficult to state whether she had lost her sense of self during this breakdown and her beliefs destabilized. Although she was visibly shaken, she maintained a certain sense of composure by focusing her attention on the state of the group and receiving a new message that declared the cancellation of the cataclysm. In this regard, Keech's second crisis was arguably less severe than the first.

6.3 CONVERSIONS

The previous chapter showed the various ways by which conversion occurred as a social and psychological phenomenon. This was demonstrated through the distinction between sudden and gradual conversion. With regard to belief and acceptance, conversions were a point of interest as they potentially depict a change in belief or acceptance to another belief or acceptance. Although there were no new converts or members who would join the group in *When Prophecy Fails*, Festinger et al. do report on members who had "deconverted" from group membership or created new meaning. This section will consider any significant changes among members – either as conversion or deconversion scenarios – and then consider cases that highlighted the strengthening or weakening of belief or acceptance. The first four members were not present at the Keech home on the day of the anticipated flood. These members are argued to have abandoned their beliefs or acceptances while some created an alternative meaning from the event. One member, by contrast to others present at the Keech home, is argued to have transitioned from a position of acceptance to belief. The last three members are cases attesting to the durability of beliefs.

6.3.1 Deconversions: "I just don't go for it anymore"

The cases discussed here are those who initially held acceptances or beliefs in the ideas of the group and the anticipated flood but then abandoned the ideas after the event. Most of them were not present at Keech's home on the night of the flood. Three of them are argued to have accepted and then no longer accepted the theosophical ideas whereas one member is argued to have believed but then changed to a position of non-acceptance.

Kitty O'Donnell is a person who can be argued to have initially "converted" but then "deconverted." She attended the Seekers' meeting in October at the request of another

member, Bob Eastman – someone she had met at a bar and had a "desire to please him, it was not long before Kitty became one of the most convinced and committed members" of the group.[184] Kitty initially thought the members of the group were "a bunch of crackpots."[185] In other words, she did not have any prior beliefs or acceptances affirming flying saucers and beings from outer space. Towards the date of the anticipated flood, Kitty had "quit her job, left home, and … had spent and given away all her money."[186] She was behaviourally committed to being picked up by a flying saucer and the arrival of the flood, although she was not present at Keech's home that night. When the flying saucer did not arrive and Mrs. Daisy Armstrong told the "Christmas Message" to Kitty over the phone, she left to see Ella Lowell (one of the other mediums).[187] By December 26th, she declared that she did not believe any more. In a phone conversation with Bob Eastman, she stated:

> I'm glad you believe in it then. I don't – I'm all done with them, I'll tell you that much…. I just regret that I made such an ass of myself giving away my money and stuff … I'm not going to go on like I was before, because I just don't believe in it – I mean I've had passages in the Bible pointed out to me – not by Ella Lowell either, but by my folks, and I just don't go for it any more.[188]

Over the span of two months, Kitty went from thinking the members were a group of "crackpots" to behaviourally committing to the flood and then renouncing the group five days later. In the phone call above, Kitty states: "I never believed in it a whole lot anyway. I did to an extent, but I mean it was no surprise it didn't come off."[189] This dramatic range of activity questions the extent of Kitty's "conversion" to the group. She displayed all the behavioural signs of investing in the flood and yet her departure was rapid.

Kitty's "conversion" and "deconversion" are best understood in terms of acceptance. There are several factors that prevent ascribing belief despite her behaviour. Festinger et al. insinuate that Kitty joined the group, in part, by an interest in Bob Eastman.[190] Despite her initial thoughts that the group members were "a bunch of crackpots," she voluntarily participated in the group. In this regard, Kitty's case is congruent with the paradigm of gradual conversions. It could be argued that she initially accepted the theosophical ideas of Marian Keech without an 'aim for truth' but from a valence of affinity for Bob. Over the

---

[184] Ibid.: 80
[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid.: 219
[187] Ibid.: 220
[188] Ibid.
[189] Ibid.: 203
[190] Ibid.: 80

course of two months, it is uncertain whether she held the ideas of Marian Keech in any involuntary manner. That is, Festinger et al. do not document whether she received, retrieved, and expressed these ideas involuntarily. While she had committed the date of the flood to memory as she prepared for it by quitting her job and giving away her money, it is unknown whether she committed to the theosophical ideas of Marian Keech. Festinger et al. do not state whether she regarded these ideas as true or whether she spoke about these ideas to other persons in different contexts. In this regard, due to insufficient evidence, it is not plausible to state that she had embodied these ideas within the span of two months. By contrast, acceptance without an 'aim for truth' enables the explanation that Kitty could participate in the group's activities and engage in behaviour congruent with the group without necessarily committing to their ideas. Moreover, acceptance still allows for a range of attitudes and emotions from hope to doubt. The lack of social support and "disconfirmation" of the flood led Kitty to voluntarily deliberate, consult the Bible, and abandon the ideas of the group, which is also within the contemporary paradigm of conversion.

Two other members of the group, Clyde Wilton and Fred Purden, also held acceptances of the flood and the theosophical ideas of the group. When the flood did not occur they both abandoned these ideas. Clyde Wilton on March 12 wrote:

> I shall be reluctant to go out of my way for purposes which aren't clearer to me than the trips to Lake City were. I do have a feeling that important events or happenings are imminent – within the next few years or decades. Just what – I do not know… Yes I was disappointed in the outcome of events. I had been led to believe that perhaps the teachings were all true. Then when things turned out as they did, it left me wondering what part, if any, of the teachings might be true … I think there is something to the teaching: strive for one's own knowingness. This is difficult and one never feels really sure except on relatively rare occasions.[191]

He states that he previously thought the predictions and the teachings were, perhaps, "all true." This is a non-committal position to an 'aim for truth' while acknowledging its possibility. The change in attitude suggests a context-relative element. He was introduced to the group in September, and although his background beliefs regarding these ideas are unknown, this entails an involvement of four months (September to the end of December). By March his attitude had changed after deliberation and voluntary reflection, pondering "what part, if any, of the teachings might be true," but feeling resonance with the teaching: "strive for one's own knowingness."[192] In this regard, Clyde had disavowed the particular theosophical ideas of

---

[191] Ibid.: 206
[192] Ibid.

Marian Keech but found a valence of affinity and meaning at a global level. Clyde's case is congruent with the literature on gradual conversion and deconversion in that he had shifted his position but nonetheless found some form of meaning. This is also consistent with Festinger's proposed method of 'cognitive overlap' as a means of dissonance reduction. While Clyde abandoned the particular ideas of Marian Keech, his participation was justified and dissonance reduced by finding meaning at a global level that found consonance with his own beliefs towards life experience.

Fred Purden also expressed a similar voluntary reflection. Although he accepted the explanation that the prediction of the flood was a test and did not disavow Marian Keech, he states that he does not think the disaster will ever occur.[193] He gives the following rationalization:

> When you stop and think of it, it seems rather cruel to drown all these people just to teach them a lesson, doesn't it? The way to teach people a lesson, or the way to educate people is to educate them slowly; you can't educate them with one big jolt. And it seems rather silly to drown people and hope to educate them in the astral life. It doesn't seem very logical, does it?[194]

In this sense, there is insufficient evidence to determine belief but enough to posit acceptance. Kitty, Clyde and Fred transitioned from the acceptance of ideas, entertaining their truth-claims, to the non-acceptance of some, the affirmation of others, or the creation of their own acceptances.

The one case that can be argued to have held a belief and then deconverted after the event is Susan Heath. She was initially a student member of the Seekers from the previous spring. By the time of the anticipated flood, Susan had been engaged with the ideas of Mr. Thomas Armstrong for a little over a year. Festinger et al., as they did with others, measured Susan's commitment by her behaviour. They state that she was loyal to Mr. Armstrong when he was asked to cease his activities at the church. She quit her "student religious activities" but when the "Community Church … tried to dissuade her by pointing out reasons for doubting the flood prediction" she remained "steadfast" in her commitment to Mr. Armstrong.[195] Susan also engaged in proselytizing activity on her own in her dormitory and at one point came into "acute disagreement with her roommate … whose friendship she sacrificed" rather than

---

[193] Ibid.: 222
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid.: 84

"change her beliefs."[196] Prior to the date of the flood, Susan appears to have held the beliefs of the group. She advocated these ideas in contexts outside of the group ('context-independent') as evidenced by the activities described above. Moreover, sacrificing a friendship, quitting student church activities out of loyalty to Mr. Armstrong, and her proselytizing activity suggests a committed 'aim for truth.' It is uncertain whether she held these ideas prior to joining the Seekers or if she had adopted and incorporated them into her Christian beliefs over time. Nevertheless, the evidence presented indicates that Susan developed a belief in these ideas and remained loyal to Mr. Armstrong prior to the date of the flood.

Like Kitty, Susan was not present at Keech's home for the anticipated event. When she heard the news in the morning, she spoke with a fellow member of the Seekers and compared the ideas from the group with Christianity ("Apostles' Creed, the Trinity, and the celestial and terrestrial forms of Jesus Christ"). She states:

> From what I gather, Christ has had several lives since He was here on earth as Jesus, and now it just so happens His name is Sananda and He is living on a different planet, probably a planet with more people of higher development but not as high as Sananda.[197]

After the day had passed, she was further interested in writing "a magazine article" explaining "what this was that we believe in."[198] In this sense, Susan's position of understanding was one of continuity[199] between Christianity and theosophy. The reported evidence continues to suggest that Susan initially held a position of belief.

By May, however, Susan expressed something different and declared that "she now saw many contradictions in the belief system … she definitely didn't accept the rationalization for the nonappearance of the flood" and declared that she no longer believed in "this stuff."[200] Five months after the date of the flood, she disavowed the theosophical ideas of Marian Keech. In the span of approximately two years, Susan had shifted from a position of belief to non-acceptance. Festinger et al. do not discuss Susan's experience during the months after the anticipated flood but it is certain that she did not have the support of the group or participate

---

[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid.: 223
[198] Ibid.: 224
[199] 'Continuity' was discussed in the previous chapter on gradual conversions.
[200] Festinger et al. 2008[1956]: 225

in any group activities. While it would be plausible to suggest that she had other forms of social support and most likely continued to participate in Christian activities.

Susan's change was not motivated by any sense of crisis or a 'crisis of presence.' The non-occurrence of the flood was not a destabilizing event nor was there evidence to suggest that she experienced distress or a 'loss of self' or became 'passive' and 'subject to the will of others.' This would suggest that Susan did not experience a great magnitude of dissonance and that her belief in the flood was not held in high significance to her sense of self. Yet, she continued to maintain a belief after the "disconfirmation" of the flood, evidenced by her desire to write an article on "this is what we believe." Susan's case shows that beliefs can have varying degrees of importance, which is reflected in the experience of discrepancy and dissonance. The change in cognition for Susan was not a crisis-precipitated "deconversion" but rather a gradual process after a marginalizing effect from the dissipation of the group. For two years, Susan can be argued to have temporarily embodied the theosophical idea that Sananda is Jesus and engaged in activities reflecting that idea. However, after the non-occurrence of the flood, Susan underwent a gradual deconversion. Initially, she remained loyal to the group but as time passed the lack of support and her re-engagement with the Bible motivated a deconversion.

There were four others who had also left the group but are less interesting. One, a young high school student by the name of Arthur Bergen, was present with the group at the Keech home on December 20th but left the group when the flying saucers did not appear. Festinger et al. state that "Arthur indicated that he no longer had faith in Mrs. Keech. He still believed in flying saucers, still believed in the possibility of contact with outer space, but he had given up on Marian and her beliefs."[201] This indicates a belief in flying saucers and an acceptance in Marian Keech's ideas. The other three had left prior to the anticipated date of the flood due to the non-occurrence of one of the predictions made by Keech. These four can be said to have held acceptances of the ideas Keech proposed and her predictions. When the predictions did not occur, the four had left the group and only Arthur is confirmed to have "still believed in flying saucers" and "contact with outer space." All of them had others around them (e.g. spouse, boyfriend, parents) that may have motivated their departure from the group.

---

[201] Ibid.: 210

6.3.2 From Acceptance to Belief

By contrast to those above, a few members can be argued to have engaged in transition from a state of acceptance to a possibly embodied belief. The strongest example, Cleo Armstrong (daughter of Thomas and Daisy Armstrong), is a member who initially expressed reservations and scepticism to the ideas emanating from the group, which suggests a position of acceptance. After the day of the flood, she arguably commits and gradually develops a belief.

Cleo, a college student, participated in the group activities but was largely motivated by the insistence of her parents. Festinger et al. describe that she "skipped occasional meetings" and "expressed dislike for other members of the group."[202] During a "private lesson with Mrs. Keech, Cleo had received a number of messages, which she showed to her father" and as Mr. Armstrong was attempting to discuss the messages with her, she "broke out crying, repeating again and again" that the messages were "nonsense, it doesn't mean a thing."[203] On another occasion, when Mr. Armstrong thought the phone calls were "coded messages" and "tests from the boys from outer space," she exclaimed: "That's asinine!"[204] By contrast, on one occasion in early December, she purchased a lot of "new clothes because she wanted to enjoy wearing pretty things while she could, before the flood came."[205] She had also participated in removing metal from her clothes with the other members.[206] This mix of context-relative behaviours and statements from Cleo represent a position of reluctant acceptance towards the group.

However, on the date of the flood and afterwards, Cleo's behaviour indicate a marked change from above. On December 22nd, "Cleo busied herself helping her father and Mark Post rid themselves of metal. She replaced buttons, made leather thong replacements for belt buckles, and so on."[207] When the flood did not occur she willingly engaged with the press, something she had not done previously, actively advocating and arguing with reporters as well as increasing her proselytizing activities.[208] On January 17th, she had an argument with "the chief skeptic" of the group (Hal Fischer) who reported to one of the observers that "Cleo was

---

[202] Ibid.: 78
[203] Ibid.: 199
[204] Ibid.: 199-200
[205] Ibid.: 78
[206] Ibid.: 200
[207] Ibid.
[208] Ibid.: 201

firmly convinced about the prediction and Mrs. Keech's messages."[209] In May, Cleo had an argument with Susan Heath (described above) who stated, "I no longer believe this stuff, but Cleo sure does."[210] She joined her parents with medium, Ella Lowell, also in May, waiting to be "picked up by a flying saucer at the garage ramp of the largest hotel in Collegeville."[211] Cleo was certainly exposed to these ideas from her parents prior to joining the group. However, she remained sceptical until December and can be said to have only accepted the ideas without committing to 'an aim for truth.' After the date of the flood and up to five months afterwards, she continued to engage and commit to the ideas of Marian Keech and her parents. Based on the evidence reported by Festinger et al., Cleo argued for her position in different contexts with different persons, which suggests context-independence, involuntariness, and an 'aim for truth.'

Susan Heath's example serves as a good point of contrast to Cleo Armstrong. Susan showed behaviour that indicated a context-independence but denounced them after the non-occurrence of the flood while Cleo was initially sceptical and only afterwards began advocating the ideas in a context-independent manner. In this regard, Cleo's case takes the opposite trajectory from Susan. Furthermore, there were no indications that either had experienced a 'crisis of presence' after the non-occurrence of the flood. Neither experienced the event as a debilitating episode of distress that rendered them 'passive' or 'subject to the will of others.' This lack of crisis suggests that there was not a significant degree of importance attached to the flood or arrival of a flying saucer. Nonetheless, they both experienced discrepancies and dissonance with the event. While Susan actively discussed the event with a fellow Seeker and eventually disavowed the group, Cleo actively inserted herself in engaging with the press and proselytizing activity as a means of reducing dissonance. In this regard, Susan arguably began from a position of belief to disbelief and Cleo from a position of acceptance to belief. However, Festinger et al. only report five months after the event for Cleo and could have obtained further evidence from a follow-up interview to establish an embodied belief.

---

[209] Ibid.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Ibid.: 196

6.3.3 Durable Beliefs

The cases of Marian Keech and the Armstrongs provide cases of how beliefs can persist i.e., when prophecy never fails. While the non-occurrence of the flood was, to some extent, a crisis it was not significant enough to induce a 'crisis of presence' and destabilize beliefs for the possibility of cognitive change. This suggests that belief as an involuntary, 'aim for truth,' context-independent phenomenon is a durable cognition that can sustain itself over long periods of time. By contrast to Susan and others, these beliefs must have a strong valence of affinity and enough significance to one's sense of self in order for them to maintain this kind of durability.

The background of Marian Keech and the Armstrongs were described in depth above and after December 21st, all three of them continued to sustain and act on those beliefs. In early January, Festinger et al. report that Keech had moved to Arizona and joined a dianetics (scientology) centre.[212] After the move, she "continued to receive messages from Sananda which she relayed to her flock by mail."[213] This suggests that she still held the beliefs regarding the ideology and cosmology as before and continued to consider herself a medium. The two crises she experienced may have destabilized her momentarily but she received assurances to re-stabilize and affirm her beliefs. As mentioned earlier, in both cases, she had to be active and provide a source of meaning and explanation. Similarly, the Armstrongs also remained steadfast in their beliefs. They had sold their house and Thomas Armstrong was no longer looking for "permanent employment in the foreseeable future as he was touring around the country – contacting people interested in the teachings … was traveling with Daisy and people who had sources of contact."[214] Daisy Armstrong stated in a letter, "believe me, we certainly have had divine guidance all along the way. We get orders from 'upstairs' en route …. We've been promised many wonderful things and we still know who our *Director* is. We go as his guests – his representatives."[215] In May, together with their daughter Cleo, they had met with Ella Lowell in anticipation of being picked up by a flying saucer.[216]

---

[212] Ibid.: 233
[213] Ibid.: 195
[214] Ibid.: 196
[215] Ibid.: 197
[216] Ibid.

Marian Keech and both Armstrongs have continued to maintain their beliefs in a context-independent manner and behaviour consistent with an 'aim for truth,' which suggests a developed involuntary disposition towards these ideas. Given the duration in which they have sustained and continued to advocate their beliefs entails that these ideas are embodied and played an integral part in how they structured their lives.

6.4 CONCLUSION

The analysis of *When Prophecy Fails* in terms of belief and acceptance highlighted the various textures and degrees of belief persons can have towards cosmological ideas and the anticipation of events. The distinction placed the focus on context, voluntariness, and indications of an 'aim for truth' regarding their language and behaviour in a longitudinal manner. Acceptance prevented premature ascriptions of 'belief' to statements that may or may not represent a commitment of truth to a particular view. These distinctions proved to be useful for analysis and their application has provided further insight into the investigation of 'belief' in ethnographic contexts. Moreover, the analysis supported the significance of the 'self' and the thesis that beliefs are the units of embodiment possessing varying degrees of significance and valences of affinity. The content of such beliefs and acceptances represent a niche of cultural history harbouring ideas of a particular theosophical culture and a broader social history of UFOs in the U.S. during that time.

Prior to the date of the anticipated flood, many took actions that seemingly committed them to 'an aim for truth' in the arrival of a flying saucer and a cataclysmic flood. While each of their actions certainly had an influence on one another, their actions were dramatic: a few quit their jobs, gave away their money, spent a lot of money, sold their property, all of which displayed a strong commitment to the "prophecy." Yet, many were no longer committed to the group when the flood did not occur and the saucer did not arrive. Furthermore, those present at the Keech house were joyful when they were informed that the "cataclysm had been called off." The documented evidence, however, is ambiguous and raises issues with the relationship between belief and behaviour. By utilizing the belief-acceptance distinction, it was possible to consider these actions as behavioural expressions of acceptances rather than beliefs in the stated propositions from the group. With regard to the expressions of joy, while emotions are involuntary and may represent some other underlying belief, the expression itself does not necessarily entail a context-independence or an 'aim for truth' towards the proposition that evoked the expression. That is, emotions may indicate a belief but it does not

entail a belief in the object at which the emotion is directed. In this regard the observation of emotions provides one dimension into the investigation of belief yet they are insufficient pieces of evidence on their own. Similarly, emotions can provide insight into the experience of crises and should be noted in that capacity as well. In addition, the actions of other group members are also important in considering belief and acceptance. As noted above, those who took drastic actions to indicate their level of commitment were mutually supporting and motivating one another. In this sense, the social context and the presence of social support, or lack thereof, are significant factors in the perpetuation of beliefs and acceptances, which was evident in the accounts of Kitty, Fred, Clyde, Susan, and Cleo and their respective cognitive changes.

When Prophecy Fails also showed how de Martino's 'crisis of presence' had its limitations in application to the documentation of lived experience. The closest case to such a crisis was in the reported evidence of Marian Keech. However, her experiences did not depict the characteristics of a 'crisis of presence.' Instead, due to her position within the group, she was not passive but active in resolving the destabilizing experiences nor did she experience a 'loss of self' or a sense of authorship in her identity. What did become evident was the destabilization of beliefs when her position and identity as medium were jeopardized by the "boys from Clarion." This supports the hypothesis that beliefs can have varying valences of affinity and that beliefs associated with the self have the greatest significance. That is, the greatest magnitude of dissonance is experienced when beliefs about the self are discrepant and in conflict with experience – corroborating the revisionist theories of cognitive dissonance and the concept of 'believing selves' from anthropology.

Although it is uncertain whether the non-appearance of the flying saucer produced a 'crisis of presence' in the documented members, there was a process of dissonance reduction and making sense of the discrepancies they experienced in relation to their own actions. From a broader perspective of events, the conversions – changes in cognitions – occurred in a gradual manner and the distinction between belief and acceptance assisted in pronouncing a more nuanced account of the changes that took place. The analysis of several group members, after the non-occurrence of the flood, showed a variety of changes: from acceptance to non-acceptance (or the creation of new meanings; a new acceptance), from acceptance to belief, and from belief to non-acceptance. Within this process the variables of time, social support and continued exposure to consonant information and activity contributed to the process of

change and embodiment, as evidenced by the cases of durable beliefs in Marian Keech and the Armstrongs. In other words, these factors contributed to the development of an 'aim for truth,' involuntariness, and context-independence about themselves in relation to certain theosophical ideas. By contrast, the lack of those factors motivated a process of reflection and deliberation away from those ideas.

Each member of the group discussed in *When Prophecy Fails* present their own dynamics of embodiment and *habitus*. The analysis in this chapter shows the significance one's social environment and supporting figures can have on one's *habitus* and in turn how *habitus* can manage one's personhood as being part of a social group. This tension between the social and personal was expressed through the various ways group members were able to resolve their discrepancies, and thereby dissonance, between their personal sense of self and group participation. Many reduced dissonance by disavowing the ideas of Marian Keech. Clyde found new forms of meaning after renouncing Keech while Cleo became committed to the theosophical ideas and renounced her previous position of scepticism. By contrast, Marian Keech and the Armstrongs maintained their personal sense of conviction and continued in their pursuit.

7
CASE STUDY 2: *BELIEVING IDENTITY*

7.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the second application of belief and acceptance to a case study. By contrast to the previous chapter, which noted a scenario generated by individual choices and group momentum, *Believing Identity* frames a 'crisis of presence' as a pre-existing background within a particular social history of England concerning 'black women.' The 'conversion' that occurs in *Believing Identity* is a cognitive change that affirms a 'Christian' identity. The analysis in this chapter highlights an implicit embodied disposition towards Christianity but an explicit negation of being 'Christian.' Moreover, the chapter notes how a religious experience can be a motivating event to affirm a 'Christian' identity. In other words, one may unknowingly believe that one is a 'Christian' but not accept a 'Christian' identity, and a religious experience can be a turning point to accept that identity. However, the process of believing an explicit 'Christian' identity and mediating socially imposed identities is an active and gradual process that involves the availability and acceptance of discourse. The distinction between belief and acceptance highlights this gradual process and provides further nuance in the extent to which the discourse – a part of cultural history – becomes embodied i.e., accepted and believed. Moreover, the chapter highlights the significance of social support and community over loyalty to a particular denomination.

This chapter follows a similar framework to chapter 5 and begins with a brief summary of the text followed by its criticisms. The social context and character backgrounds are then provided to appropriate 'crisis' and 'conversion.' This section discusses the context of being 'black' and 'woman' in England through the details of three women and their autobiographical memory. Against this background, a 'crisis of presence' is considered as a socially imposed phenomenon. In turn, through belief and acceptance, 'conversion' is discussed in two parts: the first details the affirmation of a 'Christian' identity and the second considers the mediation of their identity as 'black' 'Jamaican' 'women' through the discourse of being 'Christian' and 'saint.' The chapter then concludes with comments on the utility of the epistemological distinction, autobiographical memory as belief, and the embodiment of discourse as cultural history in relation to embodiment and *habitus*.

7.0.1 Summary of *Believing Identity*

In *Believing Identity: Pentecostalism and the Mediation of Jamaican Ethnicity and Gender in England*, Nicole Rodriguez Toulis discusses the migration of Jamaican women to England and how they have negotiated socially imposed labels of identity through participation in a Pentecostal Church. Her work fits within a broader discussion on Pentecostalism and the construction of identity around ethnicity, gender, and religion. The text challenges the dominant paradigm of considering Pentecostalism either in terms of self-expression and deprivation or as a "compensatory stance based on withdrawal from society."[1] Instead, Toulis raises basic questions about conversion, the "nature of a religious community," and the significance of belief in relation to identity, meaning, and the "nature of society and one's place in it."[2] She argues that converting to Pentecostalism provided a framework of 'Christian' identity to mediate and negotiate the demographic markers of being 'Black,' 'Jamaican,' and 'Woman' in a time of racial tensions in British society.

7.0.2 Criticisms

The criticisms Toulis received are primarily engaged with the broader sociological and anthropological discussions on the study of Pentecostalism. Other criticisms were aimed at her lack of an explicit model of conversion and account of its process. By extension, this raises questions about her employment of 'belief' in conversion and the construction of identity.

Anthropologist Diane Austin-Broos, who also worked with Jamaicans, appropriately notes that Toulis' work highlights the inadequacies of past paradigms for the study of Pentecostalism which discusses the religion either as a mode of self-expression and deprivation or a compensatory stance of withdrawal.[3] However, Austin-Broos does raise a few concerns about Toulis' account of the pastor's feminized identity and attributing it to an "association with Jesus."[4] She also raises a broader issue as to whether Pentecostalism is indeed preferable "to most other options in their social milieu."[5] In this regard, Austin-Broos is uncertain how Toulis' account fits within the broader sociological global context of Pentecostalism and fundamentalism. These issues, while significant, are beyond the scope of

---

[1] Toulis 1997: 33
[2] Ibid.: 34
[3] Austin-Broos 1999: 167
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.

a focused discussion on 'belief' as they delve into sociological concerns of gender, religion, and the global trends of Pentecostalism and poverty. While these are all relevant factors, the discussion of poverty and gender in relation to religious institutions and 'belief' entails a broader socio-historical investigation than the intended focus of this chapter.

Stephen Glazier, an anthropologist who has worked on conversion, commends Toulis' discussion on the construction of identity and how she challenges the assumption that an ethnic identity is coterminous with a religious identity.[6] However, Glazier critiques Toulis on the use of literature from the 1960s and 1970s without referencing more contemporary work from the 1990s. He notes that Toulis provides an incomplete model of conversion without a precise definition.[7] She does, however, utilize Ernesto de Martino's 'crisis of presence' and its employment in other ethnographic accounts of conversion, which invokes the paradigm of crisis-precipitated conversions. And yet, Toulis' use of 'crisis of presence' depicts a broader social crisis that concerns the state of society rather than a personal episode. The characters Toulis discuss are persistently negotiating with their social surroundings and stereotyped impositions of identity. In this regard, crisis-precipitated conversion fits within the broader paradigm of gradual conversions. Toulis' model will be discussed further in the section on conversion.

The lack of an explicit model of conversion, despite her use of de Martino, is also associated with the lack of delineating an account of 'belief.' However, she notes the significance of an internal change for her model of conversion which places a focus on the mediation of identity – not only with regard to how others perceive them but also how they perceive themselves. In this sense, Toulis implies a change in 'beliefs about the self' but does not delineate what 'belief' is or how she employs the term. Instead, Toulis situates her discussion, as Glazier notes,[8] within the framework of Clifford Geertz's essay 'Religion as a Cultural System'[9] and a network of meaning. This invokes Talal Asad's critique from chapter 2. Asad was cautious about Geertz and socio-historical conceptions of power defining the study of religion through a particularly Christian framework. Yet, because Toulis is indeed talking about Christianity in the denomination of Pentecostalism, appropriating her ethnography within Geertz's

---

[6] Glazier 2000: 788
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Geertz 2002[1966]

framework as a networked system of 'belief' and identity serves her purpose in discussing the negotiation of social forces, personal identity, and *habitus*.

Toulis' work certainly stands outside the usual either/or paradigm of considering Pentecostalism, which can be argued to be a product of trends in the study of religion. Appropriately, Toulis considers basic questions regarding membership, identity, crisis, and conversion without giving particular status to Pentecostalism and the socio-historical and cultural conditions that motivate its global perpetuation. Toulis' ethnography is useful and provides insight on a sociological level but is lacking at a psychological level. Nevertheless, Toulis provides a useful investigation of identity and how it relates the individual to the group. In this regard, Toulis' use of 'belief' can be further scrutinized in relation to the belief-acceptance distinction and how 'belief' may be re-appropriated with respect to crisis and conversion. More specifically, the belief and acceptance distinction becomes useful in considering the extent to which these women believed in their identity as Christians and how the mediation of gender and ethnicity were forms of acceptances or beliefs.

7.1 SOCIAL CONTEXT & CHARACTER BACKGROUNDS

Believing Identity is based on Toulis' fieldwork from January of 1990 to June of 1991; approximately one year and a half of participant-observation and interviews. Her subject of study is the King Street congregation for the New Testament Church of God (NTCG) in Birmingham, England. Toulis interviews first-generation Jamaican migrant women who found themselves in the midst of racial tensions and difficulties engaging with social structures such as employment and religion. The primary characters discussed by Toulis are Sisters Lorraine Jones, Martha Adams, and Elma Queen. At the time of their interviews, and Toulis' fieldwork, Martha and Lorraine were in their sixties and Elma in her seventies. Each had immigrated to England in their late twenties or early thirties, which not only suggests they arrived in England with a cultivated social ethos from Jamaica but that they have also grown accustomed to British life which was the social context of ethnic and gender bias.

Unlike the particular theosophical movement and UFO religions in *When Prophecy Fails*, the context of black women in Britain, during the twentieth century, contains a much richer and complex historical background with implications from colonialism, slavery, capitalism and Christianity. This section will only briefly summarize what is provided by the scholars utilized by Toulis. She addresses each demographic marker: 'black,' 'black women,' and

'Pentecostalism.' However, only the first two markers will be discussed as they are the demographics in which the mediation of identity occurs.

Following sociologist Stuart Hall, Toulis discusses three phases in the development of post-war 'black' identity.[10] The first phase is the social label 'West Indian Migrant' during 1945 to 1965. During this period, "the general ideology of imperialism, with its assumptions of racial hierarchy and Black inferiority, structured the way in which the colonial migrant was initially received and perceived by others in British society."[11] All three of the women, mentioned above, arrived in England during this time. Toulis notes that the early research conducted on race in Britain discussed the gap between "public ideology and private views."[12] This gap consisted of a publicly "favourable attitude towards Black people" with a politically recognized extension of "equality," but in private there was an "antipathy and prejudice" by which Black people "were not accepted on equal terms in relationship where there was a possibility of social and physical contact."[13] The second phase, during the late 1960s through the 1980s, is 'Black self-ascription' in which "West Indians were no longer addressed as 'immigrants' but as an 'ethnic minority' among other[s]."[14] The public attention "focused on a criminalized Black male youth" and the phase became "associated with crime and the problem of a pathologized Black community."[15] Toulis further states that this negative association of 'Black' identity did not pertain to any one particular section of "Britain's African-Caribbean population" and did not correlate directly with any "specific politics."[16] The third phase of 'New Ethnicity' during the 1990s was characterized by "a sense of belonging rather than exclusion; it engages difference and is premised upon the commonality of experience over the purity of origins."[17] However, this did not render the past expressions obsolete and "while the process which creates new forms of identity is cumulative, with the arrival of new actors in each phase, the experiences and negotiations of the previous generation recede into a passive and acquiescent past."[18] This is the time when Toulis conducted her study.

---

[10] Toulis 1997: 4; Cf. Hall 1992
[11] Ibid.; Cf. Banton 1967: 368; Glass 1960; Little 1947; Patterson 1965; Rex 1973
[12] Ibid.: 4
[13] Ibid.: 4-5
[14] Ibid.: 11
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.: 13
[17] Ibid.: 16
[18] Ibid.

According to Toulis, research focusing on migrants has largely ignored[19] the experience of women. By 1992, "over fifty percent of the British population who were born in the Caribbean were female, and women who had been born in Jamaica were the only group of female migrants outnumbering their male counterparts."[20] When West Indian women were acknowledged, "they were interpreted with reference to contemporary stereotypes of Black people and the dominant conception of gender for White women."[21] Toulis draws on the work by Joyce Eggington,[22] Sheila Patterson,[23] and Nancy Foner[24] to discuss the working conditions for these women and the stereotypes by which they were subjected. Toulis also draws on works of fiction[25] to further explore the circumstances of West Indian women in Britain and how these experiences were incorporated into their "perceptions of self."[26] In the 1980s, "research focused squarely on the crucial issue of motherhood and work for Black women."[27] However, Toulis notes, that while research "acknowledged the complex articulation of race, class and gender in determining the engagement of Black women in the workforce, they failed to acknowledge the complex articulation of these issues, which results in a different construction of the family and of gender for Black women."[28]

It is within this context Toulis attributes a pre-existing 'crisis of presence' in identity. The social conditions by which Jamaican migrant women entered England was a climate of misconstrued conceptions that prescribed the parameters of their social arena. In this sense, Toulis' use of 'crisis of presence' denotes a socially generated and imposed cultural context that prevented these women from being the authors of their own identity as individuals. Instead, they were grouped and essentialised in terms of social categories which overshadowed their individuality and sense of personal authorship. In this regard, the acceptance of a 'Christian' identity and striving to embody (i.e. believing) that identity becomes a means to negotiate these preconceived categories and retain authorship of their personhood in British society.

---

[19] "We lack an understanding of the different factors which prompted women to migrate, their circumstances in Britain, the nature of their domestic relationships, how they encountered racism, and how they felt about these issues, made sense of them and incorporated them into views about themselves." Ibid.: 18
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Eggington 1957
[23] Patterson 1965
[24] Foner 1976
[25] Selvon 1993[1956] ; Riley 1987; Rhys 1973
[26] Toulis, 1997: 20
[27] Ibid.: 22; Cf. Dex 1983; Phizacklea 1983; Phoenix 1988; Stone 1983
[28] Ibid.: 23

7.1.1 Sister Lorraine Jones

Sister Lorraine Jones was born in Clarendon, Jamaica in the early 1930s and into her 60s by the time she was interviewed by Toulis. Growing up she was "raised as a Presbyterian" but, in retrospect, "she says she was not a 'Christian' at the time."[29] It was not until her religious experience did she become 'saved' and identify as a 'Christian.' Lorraine has three children and although she was Presbyterian, her religious affiliation did not prevent her from engaging with other religious services: "two of her three children were 'blessed' by a Pentecostal minister and the third was christened in the Jamaican Anglican church."[30] When Lorraine arrived in England in 1962, she was around 30 years of age and in the following year she married her 'childhood sweetheart,' Jake, in an Anglican church. Lorraine's religious activity, although she did not identify herself as a Christian, suggests that she had a dispositional belief to be Christian. In a context-independent manner she engaged with various religious denominations to bless her children and consummate her marriage in a church. This would suggest that her disposition to be Christian was indeed involuntary and that there was a dispositional aim towards the truth explicated in the Christian tradition. The development of this dispositional attitude can be attributed to her upbringing and the Christian climate of Jamaica. This implicit disposition, contrasted with an explicit denial of a Christian identity, will be discussed later on.

Lorraine's first job in England was "piecework in a metal-goods factory; cleaning and polishing saucepans and kettles. She referred to the job as 'ghetto work' since there was only one White woman in her section."[31] She states that the conditions of this job "were the worst she had ever experienced; the chemicals damaged her skin."[32] After the union intervened, she transferred jobs "with a reduction in wages" and then again to "testing and packing lamps."[33] Working in various factories was a very different experience from the domestic work that Lorraine was used to in Jamaica. She also noted that it was in the factory where she first encountered "White People, English People."[34] In 1963, during her pregnancy, Lorraine left work due to illness and returned nine months later. She continued to work for relatively short periods of time in various jobs and while she worked day-shifts her husband worked the

---

[29] Ibid.: 62
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.: 70
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.: 71

night-shifts.[35] Unfortunately in 1966, Jake had died. Four years into her arrival, Lorraine was left alone to raise her children. Although "her family in England rallied around her and supported her"[36] the grief of being recently widowed coupled with the stresses of being a single mother in a foreign land amounted to a "very difficult time coming to terms with Jake's death."[37]

Several years later, Lorraine became "a member of a mixed Baptist congregation," consisting of "mostly White people."[38] In 1972, age 40, she was baptized after the Lord "spoke to her" and she would soon become a "deaconess in the Baptist congregation, the only Black woman in the post."[39] During this time, "she felt she was doing well … and the congregation showed her their appreciation, until she was filled with the Holy Spirit."[40] Afterwards, her fellow church members "accused her of 'putting it on' and disturbing the service. Lorraine felt she had to leave, because in a 'nominal church' you cannot speak in tongues."[41] In the Baptist church, she notes that there was a 'holy quietness' and "no one would invite her into their home on a Sunday to share fellowship … there was a 'selfishness going on' and she didn't feel 'free to worship.'"[42] She would leave this church and join the King Street congregation around 1978.[43] At the time she began working in a hospital until she retired in 1986.[44] By the time of Toulis' fieldwork, Lorraine had been in England for approximately 30 years and was in her early 60s. Lorraine's religious experience and her change from a Baptist to the King Street Pentecostal church will be the primary points of discussion later on with regard to 'belief' and identity.

7.1.2 Sister Elma Queen

Sister Elma Queen is Lorraine's aunt. She was born in Clarendon, Jamaica around 1923[45] and like Lorraine, raised Presbyterian but felt "she was not a 'Christian' then."[46] Elma

---

[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.: 62
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.: 63
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.: 70
[45] Ibid.: 64
[46] Ibid.

immigrated to Gloucester, England in 1956 when she was around 33 years of age[47] and worked in an asylum with "long hours for little pay … her shift was thirteen hours a day and she worked every Sunday for three years and ten months."[48] She then moved to London in 1960 where she worked as "an auxiliary nurse in a psychiatric hospital until 1968."[49] During this time, she saved money to send for her daughter from Jamaica and by 1962 she had paid for her passage.[50] In 1962, she married a man from Barbados in an Anglican church.[51] She gave birth to her first son in 1964 and a second son in 1968.[52] Several years after her two sons were born Elma and her husband separated.[53] Like Lorraine, Elma became a single mother in a foreign land. In the early 1970s she moved to Birmingham to be with her sister and worked in a "specialist hospital."[54] She then returned to London and worked in a geriatric hospital until 1974 at which point she moved back to Birmingham and became a "state-enrolled nurse at a specialist hospital until her retirement in 1987."[55] Elma would join the King Street congregation that same year, although it is not clear whether she joined before or after her retirement.

Prior to King Street, Elma attended various church services. She had her sons "christened at an Anglican church"[56] and over the years she had attended "two Baptist congregations, the Elim Pentecostal Church, the United Reformed Church and the Seventh Day Adventist Church."[57] However, for thirty years, she was unable to be a regular church member because of her work schedule.[58] Elma was "saved at an evangelist's tent meeting" and "felt she had become a committed Christian" in 1986 around the age of 63.[59] After this experience at the tent meeting, she attended the Evangelist's church but never felt "settled"; she went from church to church but "always felt disappointed."[60] At one point, "Elma fell ill with the flu, and although her brethren had her name and address, no one came to visit her or bothered to find out how she was doing. She attributes this disappointment to the machinations of the

---

[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.: 71-72
[49] Ibid.: 72
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.: 64, 72
[52] Ibid.: 72
[53] Ibid.: 64
[54] Ibid.: 72
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.: 64
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.: 65
[60] Ibid.

devil."[61] She would soon request a visit from the Seventh Day Adventists who were evangelizing at the time.[62] After someone from the church visited and prayed with her, she decided to join the church. After attending the Seventh Day Adventist church for about a year she was baptized but "soon became discouraged and began to feel the enemy was turning against her and causing friction with her membership."[63] She perceived a "growing sense of isolation" as nobody came around to "visit her or share fellowship."[64] For Elma, a "strong church" where church members "would come and pray for you, talk with you and give you support" was important.[65] In 1987, Lorraine invited her to attend an event held by the King Street congregation and "decided to become a member almost immediately."[66] The following year, at age 65, she was "re-baptized."[67] By the time of Toulis' work, Elma was in her early 70s and had lived in England for nearly 40 years. Similarly, Elma's religious experience and her changes in denomination will also be the primary topic of discussion for 'belief' and identity. Elma's desire for a "strong church" foreshadows the significance of social support and community for a sustained sense of religious identity.

7.1.3 Sister Martha Adams

The last character for discussion is Sister Martha Adams who was born in St. Elizabeth, Jamaica around 1927 and raised as a Methodist.[68] In 1955, Martha was around 28 years of age when she arrived in England. She had three children in Jamaica and after she married her husband in 1957 they had five children together.[69] Martha was first employed at a knife manufacturer and was one of four black women in the department.[70] She had never worked in a factory but accepted the job at 5 pounds a week and contrary to her past work experience, she worked on 'Good Friday.'[71] This would be a significant change for Martha and will be discussed further later on but it is worth noting that working on 'Good Friday' would create some dissonance for her. At the knife factory, she encountered some hostility from white women who "threatened [her] and her friend and said they shouldn't bother coming to

---

[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.: 66
[70] Ibid.: 73
[71] Ibid.

work."[72] She would soon move to Birmingham and work in various other establishments: several different factories, a general hospital and then at a children's home. During this time she had a son, two daughters, and worked "three nights at the hospital and then worked four and a half hours at the nursery."[73] Martha's account does not have a timeline for which her sequence of work occurred or when she had her children. Nonetheless, she worked in several different organizations and balanced being a mother and a wife.

Much like Lorraine and Elma, Martha was engaged in a variety of church services from different denominations. When she met her husband, "they were not members of any church" but decided to get "married in an African-Caribbean Pentecostal church" because they "did not feel it was right to be married in a registry office."[74] Moreover, three of her children were christened in a Methodist church in Jamaica, one was christened in a Methodist church in England, two were dedicated in a Pentecostal church where Martha was married, and two were christened in an Anglican church. Martha also sent three of her children to Sunday school at a Christadelphian church, two at an Anglican church and one at the King Street congregation.[75] Despite engaging in these services, Martha was not comfortable going to an English church. She had occasionally attended a "Chistadelphian service" but tells Toulis that "she wasn't comfortable there" either:

> At that time the English church didn't seem to accept us, you know. I didn't have that problem, but a lot of people claim they go to the church and the minister ask them not to come back, because he is going to lose his congregation. That didn't happen to me, because I never went to any church as such here. After I came here I stop going to church. You know the work and especially when I start having the children, I didn't bother.[76]

At age 55, Martha decided to become a member of the King Street congregation in 1982.[77] At the time of Toulis' fieldwork, Martha was 63 years old and lived with her husband and youngest daughter.

For each of these women, there is a theme of not identifying as 'Christian' and yet partaking in various religious services. The belief and acceptance distinction will highlight the textures of 'belief' involved in their identities, religious activities, as well as their religious

---

[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.: 74
[74] Ibid.: 66
[75] Ibid.: 66-67
[76] Ibid.: 66
[77] Ibid.: 67

experiences. Moreover, the discussions below will highlight the Christian influences that inform one's *habitus* as dispositional beliefs towards Christianity. Despite these dispositions and valences of affinity towards Christianity, each of them had moved from denomination to denomination and did not feel comfortable at various English churches. This discomfort is related to the 'crisis of presence' discussed below.

7.2 CRISES

As noted earlier, Toulis utilizes de Martino's 'crisis of presence' to depict the social conditions of 'Black women' in British society. This placed them in a position of passivity and constrained authorship over their personal identity. All three had to adjust to unfamiliar conditions, different people, and were introduced to qualitatively different working environments than what they were accustomed to in Jamaica. For Lorraine and Elma, this experience also included being single working mothers. According to Toulis, this "pre-existing state of suffering means that in the construction of their narratives, less emphasis is placed on single transformative crises, such as illness, death, bereavement, rancour, or racial victimization, which are characteristic of other Pentecostal conversion narratives."[78] That is, "they found themselves in a continuous process in which the meaning of their social identity was continuously being redefined and debated … they experienced ineffectual engagement with society and other religious institutions."[79] There was a difficulty relating to and engaging with the people in England. Lorraine provides an example, "If I say I saw some lovely breadfruit out the shop, you know what I'm talking about 'coz we're from the same place. When you talk to an English person about breadfruit it's like talking a different language – don't understand, it's a different experience."[80] In this sense, the comfort and solace derived from a sense of culture, community, and social support was an important aspect of their lives yet they found this to be noticeably absent in their search for a church community. Prior to King Street, they never felt comfortable or settled in their churches. It was ultimately this dimension of community in their experience at King Street that motivated their membership and provided the language to mediate ethnicity and gender. This foreshadows the significance of community as opposed to any particular commitment to denomination.

---

[78] Ibid.: 128
[79] Ibid.: 127-128
[80] Ibid.: 173

For Toulis, the 'loss of self' that accompanies a 'crisis of presence' is described in terms of a hindrance to one's capacity for authorship of one's identity. The constraints of socio-economic circumstances, socially imposed labels, and presumptions comprise part of the forces of modernity discussed by de Martino and Durkheim. In other words, their experiences at work, at "other religious institutions,"[81] and in various social spaces left them "subject to the will of others" and "ineffectual engagement with society."[82] They were "not the authors of their social identities."[83] One of the speculated qualities of crises is the capacity to destabilize involuntary beliefs. And yet, because the circumstances of these women were diachronic and cumulative, further examination is required to consider whether there was a destabilization of belief or a gradual adaptation and series of adjustments to their British environments.

The narratives provided by each of these women can only describe and convey so much. Not only would there have been experiences they did not mention to Toulis but the experiences they do describe can not fully capture the vividness with which their experiences are remembered. Moreover, what they do recount to Toulis will not fully translate their experiences nor will they necessarily be accurate depictions. In this sense, Toulis must imagine their experiences and then translate those experiences for the reader to image the difficulties of their work environments, making a living, being a single mother and the subtle hostilities and prejudices with which (white) people may have treated them. But despite the best efforts of our imaginations and empathies, as the great novelist Dostoevsky notes: "a thousand things may happen in reality which elude the subtlest imagination."[84] In this sense, the experiences of each woman cannot be fully accounted for by Toulis nor can they be fully re-presented here. Nonetheless, the information provided is significant because it is drawn from memories held for a long period of time. Each of these women were in their sixties or older when they spoke with Toulis and much of their background information is retrieved in an involuntary manner. They are long-term memories[85] and each of them readily provided Toulis with when and where they were born, their religious affiliations while growing up, who they were married to, when they had their children, the character of their children, what

---

[81] Ibid.: 128
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Dostoevsky 1912: 795
[85] Their long-term memory is autobiographical consisting of both episodic (experiential) and semantic (dates, names, places) memories.

jobs they had and more. Autobiographical background information can be involuntarily retrieved and expressed in a context-independent manner. They did not necessarily have to voluntarily deliberate about when their children were born nor would this information vary from context to context. Furthermore, one can assume that these expressions possess an 'aim for truth' as their accounts describe what they think is true (irrespective of whether they are true or not[86]); what had actually occurred.[87] In this regard, one's autobiographical memories are beliefs. Specifically, they are beliefs about identity and the self in relation to others and one's social environment. This would also be the case with regard to their superficial markers of identity and what they themselves believe what it means to be 'black' 'Jamaican' 'women.' All of this constitutes part of their default cognitive background and *habitus* that orients themselves in relation to their reality.

Toulis notes that each of these women were raised either Presbyterian or Methodist. Although it is not plausible to simply state that they were 'Christian' due to a childhood upbringing in their respective denominations, a degree of religious embodiment is inevitable; that is, they learned how to use their bodies in a Christian manner in Jamaican society. However, despite their upbringing, none of them were committed to a particular Christian denomination. They attended different churches and utilized the services (e.g. marriages and christenings) from different denominations. This suggests a context-independent and dispositional engagement and embodiment of Christianity, which is also to say that there is an implicit belief with a valence of affinity towards Christianity regardless of denomination. The *habitus* developed from a Christian upbringing is also evident in the dissonance they experienced in their social and work lives. For example one of the earlier adjustments Martha had to make while working in England was "working on Good Friday." Toulis states:

> Martha had been brought up to believe that you should not work on Good Friday; she was upset and terrified, because she thought something terrible would happen to her. While she was at work that Friday the sky grew dark with an advancing thunderstorm, and Martha believed God was punishing her. She looked at the other Black women in

---

[86] There are issues of falsifying one's narratives by confabulating, falsifying, or exaggerating their experiences. This can be remedied by distinguishing context-relative and context-independent narratives. That is, if an experience is told inconsistently across various contexts there is a likelihood of some element of falsification. However, if the story is told consistently in a context-independent manner then it may not be falsified but the consistency of the story across time and space indicates that it is likely that the particular experience is remembered in that way or believed to have occurred in that way. That is, it is possible to believe in a false narrative about one's own experiences; Cf. Barber & Mather 2014

[87] Not only the life details that partially constitute one's semantic memory but the experiences that comprise one's episodic memory are what they think truly happened during their life.

the factory and noticed that they were not scared; she thought perhaps they had been raised differently.[88]

Martha was in her late twenties, or early thirties, when she had to make this adjustment, which is notable considering her age when she was interviewed by Toulis. Even though Martha did not actively attend religious services, recalling this adjustment not only signifies its memorability but it also indicates the degree of religious embodiment. The feelings she remembered and the thought of "God…punishing her" suggests that she held this belief in an involuntary manner. Toulis states that Martha was "brought up to believe that you should not work on Good Friday," which produced the dissonance she mentions above. This experience occurred without any voluntary deliberation and an 'aim for truth' that God was "punishing her." Despite such implicit involuntary beliefs from their embodiment, in retrospect, they did not explicitly consider themselves 'Christian.' The conversion that takes place is with regard to their beliefs about the self and the affirmation of a 'Christian' identity which in turn mediated the socially imposed demographic markers that created a 'crisis of presence.'

7.3 CONVERSION

Establishing the 'crisis of presence' as the social conditions in which these women were living, as opposed to a single episode or short period of time, provides a context for two conversions. The first conversion is sudden, prompted by religious experience, which led to the acceptance and affirmation of a 'Christian' identity. The second is a gradual mediation of demographic markers through their participation in a Pentecostal church on King Street.

7.3.1 Affirming a Religious Identity

For Lorraine, Elma, and Martha, it was not until their religious experience and conversion did they begin to identify themselves as 'Christian.' This raises a question regarding what it means to be 'Christian' and why these women did not feel that they were prior to their religious experience. Toulis states:

> Before conversion, not all members' lives were devoid of religion. From a post-conversion perspective, members describe themselves as having been 'Christian in a loose sense of the word'; they believed in God, in going to church and in prayer. As one woman put it, 'You have the religious mind, but you're not committed, you're still doing wrong.' Gaining conviction usually begins with an intensely spiritual, physical and emotional episode, a 'vision,' in which it is understood that the Lord is speaking to the person.[89]

---

[88] Ibid.: 73
[89] Ibid.: 128

For these women, according to Toulis, being 'Christian' was not associated with religious affiliation but rather religious conviction and lifestyle. One may have a "religious mind" by way of believing in God, church attendance, and prayer but these things do not make a person 'Christian.' Members of the King Street congregation aligned being 'Christian' with "getting convicted," "getting saved," "accepting God's will," conversion was being "born of the water, the spirit and the blood," and "being born again."[90] From this, Toulis gathers that being a Christian "means to accept and internalize the qualities members believe are characteristic of Christ, being obedient and humble; pure and without sin; kind, loving, nurturing and just… to 'lead a Godly and sober life' and to 'walk in the 'spirit.'"[91]

For Lorraine, Elma, and Martha, their religious experience motivated conversion in terms of conviction and re-affirming a 'Christian' identity grounded in a particular set of attitudes and ethics. Prior to conversion, Toulis states that they only considered themselves "Christian in a loose sense of the word." They ascribed a 'Christian' identity to themselves but did not believe they were committed. In other words, they only accepted themselves to be 'Christian' but did not explicitly believe and have an 'aim for truth' in their use of a 'Christian' label despite an implicit belief towards a 'Christian' identity. Retrospectively, this also entails a degree of voluntary reflection and deliberation about what it meant to be a 'Christian.' After their religious experience they developed a conviction to being 'Christian,' which suggested a conversion in identity for Toulis. That is, *Believing Identity* portrays a conversion from an acceptance – stemming from their religious embodiment – to a belief they were 'Christian'; a 'belief about the self.'

The particular content of the religious experience – for Lorraine, Elma, and Martha – itself is not particularly relevant for the discussion of belief and acceptance. However, the impact and time of life at which the experience occurred are significant. As mentioned above, their respective religious experiences occurred during adulthood and prior to their membership at King Street. Lorraine was in her forties and Elma was in her early sixties. Although the exact age range is not specified for Martha, her experience also came while she was in England and of significant age. Although their religious experience confirmed a Christian identity, prior to King Street, their membership and church participation was only temporary. Like other gradual conversions, noted in chapter 5, Toulis states that "the gains made by conversion are

---

[90] Ibid.: 126
[91] Ibid.: 135

not necessarily permanent and can easily be lost."[92] This raises questions regarding the cognitive effects of the religious experience. The experience led to a temporary commitment to a church and denomination. That is, Lorraine, Elma, and Martha temporarily accepted the church and community but the lack of social support had a marginalizing effect motivating their departure. In other words, they did not believe in the community after their conversion but they did believe in committing to a Christian identity. Each of them recalled their religious experience without deliberation and in an involuntary manner, which suggests a context-independence of this belief about being 'saved.' In addition, each of them considered their respective experience as true and believed in the validity of the experience and that they were 'saved.' In this regard, their conversion experience is about their 'beliefs about the self' rather than beliefs or acceptances about denominational commitments or particular propositions.

The conversion to affirm a Christian identity as a 'belief about the self' was not just the result of a religious experience. Toulis states:

> From the histories offered by Lorraine, Elma and Martha, it is clear that the experience of being a Christian woman does not stem from the simple act of church attendance; further, a person's career as a Christian does not follow a straightforward trajectory. It cannot be said that crises … automatically lead to conversion. Instead religious experiences and actions intersect the narratives of these women, and of others, at random points; it is the cumulative effect of these experiences that results in conversion.[93]

In this regard, much like the conversions in *When Prophecy Fails*, time and experience played a significant role in the development of a belief about 'being Christian.' Although their affirmation of a Christian identity was prompted by a sudden religious experience, the mediation of other demographic identity markers was the result of a gradual conversion and adoption of discourse. Unlike the affirmation of a Christian identity, the mediation of social demographic markers of identity is motivated by the social support and discourse provided by the King Street congregation.

7.3.2 Mediating Identity

According to Toulis, the re-affirmed 'Christian' identity and their participation at King Street mediated the socially imposed identities of 'black' 'Jamaican' 'women.' Undoubtedly, these demographic markers are also beliefs they hold about themselves but the social assumptions

---

[92] Ibid.: 134
[93] Ibid.: 67

attached to these identities are not. The socially imposed crisis consists of a collision between these assumptions of personhood and their beliefs about the self. The attenuation of this crisis constitutes the second conversion and becomes a method of mediating the overpowering socially imposed identities. More specifically, this conversion involved placing their beliefs about religious identity as part of their being prior to their identity of ethnicity and gender.

Unfortunately, what is noticeably absent in Toulis' account is how these three women in particular viewed the social ascriptions of being 'black' 'Jamaican' 'women' in England. Instead, as described above, Toulis provides a general overview – a socio-historical narrative – of what it meant to be a black Jamaican woman in Britain. However, the extent to which these descriptions and analyses pertain to Lorraine, Elma, and Martha is uncertain: how were they affected and what did they believe about such markers of identity. In turn, this begs the question of "what" was converted. As noted above, they may have beliefs or acceptances of what others in British society believed or accepted about 'black' 'Jamaican' 'women.' But the specifics for each woman are unknown.

Toulis argues that, for King Street members, their 'Christian' identity mediated whatever racism and discrimination they experienced and their own thoughts about being black Jamaican women. The members chose to emphasize their beliefs about being 'Christian' which was "seen as more important than the superficial identities of ethnicity or social status."[94] By doing so, they were able to "restore individual agency over passivity" and overcome the "logic of racism that is based upon visible and cultural differences" which tends to assume "a fixed internal essence."[95] In other words, focusing on their 'Christian' identity empowered them in the midst of a racist and discriminatory environment. However, Toulis mentions, this required "continuous religious work" to nurture, sustain, and safeguard this aspect of their identity against "threatening social forces" in a reality which they sought to negotiate.[96] The mediation of identity is then a negotiation between beliefs about the self as a Christian, which is "defined on the basis of [their] internal nature,"[97] and beliefs about their external dimensions of identity, which contributes to the "logic of racism" by others. Toulis states that this conversion is a "rejection of an identity inscribed on the skin for one inscribed

---

[94] Ibid.: 162
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.: 164

on the heart"[98] and that the reconstruction of a 'Black' identity can only be accomplished "if one continuously affirms belief" and a 'Christian' identity.[99]

Similarly, Toulis argues, the 'Christian' identity also mediated the construction of gender. Within the King Street congregation, the discourse surrounding the term 'saint' does not differentiate between genders and constructs the notion of personhood "with reference to a 'Christian' identity" by which both men and women are held to the same standards of behaviour and expectations.[100] Toulis further states that just as both men and women "must go through the process of conversion … all saints possess the same agency … though they may possess different amounts of agency based on differences in spiritual maturity."[101] However these are normative and representations of ideal types, Toulis states "identity and agency as a saint cannot be completely divorced from the gendered roles of males and females."[102] There are inconsistent and contradictory messages within the congregation, "when a woman must fulfil her responsibilities as wife, mother, employee and saint, or the inconsistencies which arise with regard to the agency of female saints such that they cannot ordinarily perform infant dedication or baptize new converts."[103] Such inconsistencies suggest cognitive dissonance and its reduction. Yet, Toulis does not describe how Lorraine, Elma, and Martha dealt with them but instead argues that identity remains flexible allowing them to mobilize different identities as mothers or saints to fulfil different roles and forms of agency. She states that with this malleability, "women can widen the scope of their agency piece by piece and thus effect a change from an agency of enablement to an agency of doing."[104]

However, the extent to which the mediation of 'black' and 'woman' were embodied and involuntarily used in the discourse of these women is uncertain. Toulis does not discuss what the three women thought about their roles as 'saints' or as 'women' in the church nor does she discuss what they thought and felt about the label of 'black.' Undoubtedly, these women would have had beliefs and other thoughts about the stereotypes of black women as well as the gender roles in their church community. Toulis' analysis seemingly suggests that these

---

[98] Ibid.: 210
[99] Ibid.: 206
[100] Ibid.: 258
[101] Ibid.: 261
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.: 261-262
[104] Ibid.: 262

gendered roles did not change but were supplemented with the identity of 'saint.' Whether they believed in this identity of 'saint' or accepted its function is unknown. There are no indications that they regarded the identity of 'saint' as true or represent that it was part of their holistic identity in an involuntary manner.

What can be noted is that their beliefs regarding gender interacted with the role of 'saint' as part of their default cognitive background and respective adjustments relative to context. Adopting this discourse was a continuous and gradual process of asserting their identity as 'Christian' and 'saint,' which corroborates with the contemporary paradigm of conversion. The gradual conversion of mediating gender and ethnicity is then the result of accepting and adopting a form of discourse permeated within the King Street community and motivated by participating in church activities. In addition to the discourse of being a 'saint' that mediated gender, one example of the discourse at King Street mediating 'black' was to emphasize being 'Christian' with a focus on the "heart" rather than the "skin." The changes in perception and forms of social mobility were not only noticeable in the church but in other public spaces as well:

> … even by my talking I didn't know that people was noticing me and listening to me that much. Last week, Thursday…I was walking along with this White lady and I said, "Come on love, the road is clear, we can cross now" and she says, "Which church do you go to?" I said "I go to [King Street] I'm a Pentecostal." She said, "Oh, say no more, because from the moment I hear you talk something in me click; something in me click with you because I can tell that you are a Christian." And from there we hold such a wonderful conversation and when the bus came I go and sat with her and we been talking about the goodness of the Lord.[105]

The discourse further emphasized a gender and colour neutral standard of behaviour and provided these women with an avenue to mediate a socially imposed identity towards an identity of active authorship and construction. This mediation hinged on the affirmation of a 'Christian' identity through conversion, adoption of discourse, and a supporting social community.

7.4 CONCLUSION

Toulis admirably provided an account of explicitly adopting a 'Christian' identity and its function in mediating a socially imposed 'crisis of presence' consisting of presumptions about ethnicity and gender. Indeed, it is no small task to capture the depths and complexities with which 'black women' were treated and essentialised in British society. However, the

---

[105] Ibid.: 187

enormity of this landscape may have curbed a more detailed analysis of 'belief' and the affirmation of a 'Christian' identity among Jamaican women at King Street. While Toulis does well in mapping the social and historical contour of ethnicity and gender in England to analyse the mediation of identities through the affirmation of a 'Christian' identity, she draws on public statements and other church members to convey the affirmation and mediation of identity rather than engage in further discussions with the three women about gender, ethnicity, and being 'saints.' In the midst of providing a sociological group analysis of the King Street congregation as well as individual accounts, there are concerns with the presupposition that group statements in a public space are also representative of personal beliefs.

The evidence Toulis provides, first and foremost, establishes that biographical accounts drawn from one's autobiographical memory are beliefs. Not only do the contents of autobiographical memory contain a commitment and 'aim for truth' regarding one's life but the content may be retrieved in an involuntary and context-independent manner. More specifically, they are beliefs about the self. The personal history of Lorraine, Elma, and Martha further indicate that while they were not explicitly religious, each of them had a tendency to engage in Christian services without any particular commitment to a specific denomination. That is, they each had a belief, an embodied disposition and valence of affinity, towards Christianity without explicitly believing in a 'Christian' identity; an implicit belief but not an explicit belief.

In retrospect, each of them only ascribed to being 'Christian' in a "loose sense" and it was not until they had a religious experience of being 'saved' did they identify as Christian. In other words, they reflected on what it meant to be Christian, and possibly accepted being Christian, but it was not until after the religious experience did they explicitly believe in and accept being 'Christian.' When they had the experience of being 'saved' there was a conviction to be, and identify as, Christian:

> For saints, in the unsaved world people are content to live with received identities, but to be a 'Christian' involves an act of will; to continue to be a 'Christian' requires constant effort, vigilance and self-scrutiny. Inasmuch as 'Christian' identity is constructed, the 'Christian' person is also constructed – one makes oneself, and God is the only arbiter of that project.[106]

---

[106] Toulis 1997: 210

The acceptance of a 'Christian' identity is constant process of accepting an identity through "effort, vigilance and self-scrutiny" whilst still having an embodied disposition towards Christianity and a *habitus* composed of other beliefs as well. Moreover, the conviction to be 'Christian' did not sustain a commitment to any one particular denomination and the importance of church community became integral to maintaining a Christian identity. The social support and sense of community was the significance of the Pentecostal church of King Street and equipped them with the discourse of 'saint' to mediate labels of gender and colour. However, the extent to which this discourse was embodied and effectively mediated being 'black' and 'woman' is uncertain. In this regard, there are two levels of practice in discourse and identity for the conversion that Toulis describes. On one level, there is a continuous and active conscience in being 'Christian' and embodying that affirmed identity. In addition to this process, there is another level of commitment to accepting the discourse of 'saint' as a means of mediating society's impositions. While Toulis argues that conversion to Pentecostalism provided these Jamaican women with the tools to mediate gender and ethnicity, she provides insufficient evidence to determine the extent to which the accepted discourse of 'saint' mediated the broader 'crisis of presence.'

Nonetheless, Toulis' analysis of the mediation of identity showed the nuances of 'belief' in the gradual processes of affirming identity and the significance of community and social support for sustaining the process of embodying a Christian identity and its discourse. More specifically, her discussion captures a dynamic between a common discourse within a church community and its influences on the individual that seemingly prioritizes – for the women discussed – being 'Christian' before 'black' and 'woman.' In this regard, for Toulis, converting to Pentecostalism mediated gender and ethnicity. However, Toulis' discussion perhaps, configures more appropriately into the role of language in the embodiment process of cultural histories. Within the broader social history, there are connotations and presuppositions involved with being 'black' and 'woman' in England (during the 60s, 70s, 80s, and the 90s when Toulis interviewed the three women) which contributed to a 'crisis of presence.' Conversely, each of the women found a church community in King Street where they were comfortable and exposed to a discourse that provided them with the means to mediate the 'crisis of presence.' In other words, Toulis provides ethnographic evidence of how *habitus* manages and attenuates the discrepancies and experiences of dissonance (encounters between personal conceptions of self and socially imposed assumptions) through the affirmation of a 'Christian' identity and accepting a mode of discourse.

8

CASE STUDY 3: *DIVINITY AND EXPERIENCE*

8.0 INTRODUCTION

Unlike the previous two cases, *Divinity and Experience* describes a traditional context in the Dinka of south Sudan and presents a different cultural milieu and folk epistemology than the western contexts of the U.S. and U.K. Due to the broad and general overview of Dinka cosmology presented in the text, the application of belief and acceptance is limited to a series of possessions that formulate a broader crisis in a young man named Ajak. While there is difficulty discerning whether this individual believed he was possessed during his episodes, the concept of acceptance introduces additional textures to how Dinka cosmology can be applied to experience and causation. The chapter further argues that the Dinka framework provides a general cultural discourse of explanation from which Dinka persons can generate acceptances about possible causes. Subsequently, this discourse is carried over into ritual as a means of reducing dissonance and discrepant cognitions. In other words, ritual contributes to a conversion process attenuating Ajak's "troubled conscience" and realigning him with his sub-tribe and familial context.

Once more, this chapter follows the format of the previous two chapters. Beginning with a brief summary of Lienhardt's text of the Dinka, followed by its criticisms, and a terse overview of the social and cultural context, the chapter describes a series of possessions and discusses the applicability of de Martino's 'crisis of presence.' Specifically, it considers the extent to which Ajak experienced a 'loss of self' and whether he believed or accepted that he was possessed. Moreover, the section considers the speculations about the causes of Ajak's possession in terms of belief and acceptance. The possessions were ultimately resolved through the participation in ritual, which alleviated Ajak's 'crisis' and reduced any dissonance he may have been experiencing. The chapter concludes with some remarks on the utility of belief and acceptance in the Dinka context as well as the belief in a paradigm of discourse and cultural history from which acceptances can be made for the explanation of causality and experience.

8.0.1 Summary of *Divinity and Experience*

Godfrey Lienhardt's *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka* provides a thorough typography of Dinka cosmology in south Sudan and how it reflects the "Dinka experience" of

the social and natural world. Lienhardt first maps a general overview of their organization structures, ecology, and resources, followed by a brief emphasis on the intimate relationship the Dinka have with their oxen, which are represented as extensions of personal identity. However, this discussion is curtailed by his account of Dinka cosmology and how it configures into experience. The discussion of the oxen is delegated to its role in sacrifice and attenuating 'divinities' that have caused negative experiences. The metaphysical structure of the Dinka world focuses around 'divinities,' which is a subcategory of what Lienhardt calls 'Powers.' These terms are used instead of 'God,' 'gods,' or 'spirits' due to their semantic constraints that may misconstrue Dinka discourse. According to Lienhardt, 'Divinity' is the cause of life events and the epistemic force that determines truth from falsehoods. This is the domain of cultural knowledge and practice where the textures of 'belief' will be explored with regard to crisis and conversion. The overview of Dinka cosmology that Lienhardt constructs aims to provide coherence and structure to the Dinka culture and their interpretations of experience, causation, and knowledge. In this regard, Lienhardt follows in the tradition of anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard who provides an explanation of causation amongst the Azande in Sudan.

8.0.2 Criticisms

At the time of the text's publication, in 1961, criticism and comments were directed towards Lienhardt's rationalization of magical elements and symbolism,[1] his emphasis on the incompatibility of the "ideological and sacrificial importance of cattle" with the "utilitarian economic uses of livestock,"[2] and the lack of clarity in some of his distinctions.[3] The biggest criticism, however, is done in retrospect and directed toward the anthropological discourse of representing 'other' cultures during Lienhardt's era. That is, the tendency to construct a general overview of a culture from the observation of a particular group and information gathered from particular persons is a problematic and perennial concern in anthropological fieldwork. Although Lienhardt states that "Dinka experience naturally differs from group to group and person to person,"[4] he generalizes the cultural context and background knowledge of the Dinka nonetheless. For example:

> The Dinka, of course, do not know the sky as ultimately a mere appearance, as we do, conditioned as we are by a knowledge of facts unknown to them. For them, the sky is

---

[1] Horton 1962
[2] Schneider 1962
[3] Huntingford 1962
[4] Lienhardt 1961: 156

> fixed in space at a vast distance from the earth, and could in theory be reached and touched if a man were to go far enough.[5]

The issue, as discussed previously, lies in the politics of representation and whether this kind of statement of knowledge and 'belief' pertains to all Dinka across sub-tribes and geographical areas. On one hand, there are concerns about generalizing a cultural epistemology from select informants.[6] On the other hand, there is the issue of epistemological difference and the active creation of the 'other.' Lienhardt distinguishes "knowledge of facts," by Western standards, from the "knowledge of the Dinka." This creates an epistemological standard by which other forms of knowledge are considered naïve. Not only does this kind of language depreciate non-western forms of knowledge but it also presumes that all Dinka persons think in this manner. Lienhardt's statements about Dinka epistemology and cosmology perpetuate and strengthen "the assumptions that such a belief is actually there."[7] A more accurate statement, of course, would include the caveat that according to (some) Dinka (what the Dinka describe as) the sky "is fixed in space" and (some Dinka think it) could be "reached and touched if a man were to go far enough."

These issues touch on the relevance of belief and acceptance as practical ascriptions of cognitive states. Lienhardt's text is filled with statements he received from various informants; statements which Lienhardt seemingly believed, or accepted, were 'beliefs' of the Dinka.[8] However, statements like those about the sky are given insufficient evidence to consider whether they are made independent of context, in an involuntary manner, and possess an aim for truth. The information Lienhardt received are, at the very least, statements reflecting the acceptances of Dinka persons with whom Lienhardt was in communication. In other words, there is a lack of clarity and evidence to discern whether the statements Lienhardt report are involuntary statements made by the Dinka with an 'aim for truth' or whether they are voluntarily deliberated statements for Lienhardt's consideration. Lienhardt could have obtained further information by asking multiple people, whether these statements were made in multiple contexts, and if Lienhardt considered they were made with or without deliberation. All of these questions would contribute to determining whether the Dinka believed or accepted such statements about the sky: that the sky was tangible, fixed in space,

---

[5] Ibid.: 32

[6] Lienhardt draws on Prof. Seligman, hymns, informants, and observation

[7] Boyer 2013: 351

[8] "A most common feature of ethnographic description is that the author takes people's [religious] beliefs as a starting point in explaining behaviour … such statements linking behaviours to beliefs explain the former in terms of the latter, an operation that is fundamental to our folk-psychology (Sperber 1985)" (Boyer 2013: 350)

and that they do not know the sky is "a mere appearance." Lienhardt makes this type of observation and statement throughout the text which point to the areas where focused inquiry could have occurred. The textures of 'belief,' with the introduction of acceptance, reveals further nuances to the understanding of cultural knowledge in the Dinka context. Moreover, the epistemological distinction will show that the general overview Lienhardt provides is a resource of cultural acceptances from which Dinka persons can make acceptances for the explanation of causality and crises.

8.1 SOCIAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT

Divinity and Experience is based on Lienhardt's fieldwork from 1947 to 1950 (a little over two years) with the "Western Dinka of the Bahr-al-Ghazal Province of the Sudan, and particularly the Rek tribal group."[9] According to Lienhardt, the Dinka population is approximately 900,000 and spread across a wide area in "the swamps of the central Nile basin in the Southern Sudan."[10] Their material resources are scarce with an absence of metal and perennial difficulties in agriculture and fishing. All "material necessities … are made from grass, mud, and wood, with the addition of material from wild and domestic animals."[11] Importantly, Lienhardt notes, the Dinka have a strong dependence on cattle;[12] the "only form of wealth which can be inherited is livestock."[13] However, it is not clear how the Dinka's relationship to their cattle and its configuration within personal identities relate to their broader cultural landscape of cosmology and causality. In order to focus the discussion of belief and acceptance within the represented Dinka context, this section will not attempt to recapture Lienhardt's account of the social and cultural context of the Dinka nor will it attempt to summarize his detailed descriptions of Dinka cosmology, myths, and forms of supernatural agency. Instead, this section will note the context in which causality is attributed to supernatural agents and how Dinka discourse manages experience. This provides the background to consider 'crisis' and the various acceptances or beliefs within such episodes.

According to Lienhardt, in "Dinkaland," there are various kinds of 'spirits' (called *jok* in the Dinka language) which he refers to as 'Powers.'[14] He states that "[t]hese Powers are regarded as higher in the scale of being than men and other … terrestrial creatures, and operate beyond

---

[9] Lienhardt 1961: 1
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.: 2
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.: 28

206

the categories of space and time."[15] Although they are given a different status of being, the 'Powers' do not constitute a separate 'spirit-world.' They actively participate in human life "often affecting men for good or ill" and "emerge in the interpretation of events" effectively constituting a broader division of the world between 'that which is of men' and 'that which is of Powers.'[16] Lienhardt states, the Dinka "do not suppose that all the Powers which may exist in their world have been encountered by men."[17] Theoretically, this provides the Dinka with an unlimited number of 'Powers'[18] to attribute causality:

> Some are known as the grounds of sickness, and others, figured with varying degrees of distinctness and individuality, are associated with particular places … Divinities are altogether more clearly figured as individuals and are of much greater importance. They manifest themselves to men, and in men.[19]

In this regard, the "Dinka religious notion and practice define and regulate the relations between beings of these two different natures in the single world of human experience."[20]

Within the category of 'Powers,'[21] *nihialic* expresses both a singularity and plurality of 'Powers.' Like Rodney Needham, Lienhardt was confronted with the issue of translation. Instead of using the term 'God' to translate *nihialic*, Lienhardt uses 'Divinity' as it can be used to convey "*a* being, a *kind* of nature or existence, and a quality of that kind of being; it can be made to appear more substantive or qualitative, more personal or general, in connotation, according to the context, as in the word *nihialic*."[22] For the Dinka, divinity is "both singular and plural in intention"[23] for which Lienhardt also uses the term 'divinities' to describe its manifold use. Lienhardt states that the Dinka "assert with uniformity which makes the assertion almost a dogma that 'Divinity is one.' They cannot conceive of Divinity as a plurality."[24] Yet, there are multiple divinities that comprise the singularity of Divinity. This multiplicity is most apparent in Lienhardt's distinction between *clan-divinities* and *free-divinities*. The former is associated with Dinka descent-groups and vary from: Giraffe, Hippopotamus, Lion, Ant-hill, Heglig-tree, Patuic (a species of moth), *Apac* grass, Head (of

---

[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.: 32
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.: 28
[21] All divinities are part of the category of 'Powers' (Ibid.: 31)
[22] Ibid.: 30 (emphasis original)
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.: 156

animals), Heart (of beasts), Termite, Stone and other various things.[25] According to Lienhardt, there is "no theory about the principle upon which some species are included among clan-divinities, and some omitted."[26] When Lienhardt asked what he should have as his clan-divinity, "it was half-jokingly suggested that I should invoke Typewriter, Paper, and Lorry, for were these not the things which always helped my people and which were passed on to Europeans by their ancestors?"[27] This led Lienhardt to interpret,[28] "clan-divinities are explicitly regarded by the Dinka as representing, for their clansmen, qualities and strength which a man derives from his agnatic descent."[29] Free-divinities, by contrast, "establish relationships with individuals, and through them with their families"[30] and are not directly associated with the clans. Furthermore, the free-divinities "make their presence known by causing illness, by possessing human beings and announcing through their mouths their names and demands, and sometimes speaking in dreams."[31] In this regard, within the broader construct of 'Divinity,' the 'divinities' are extensions that comprise the virtues of the Dinka as well as the causes of vice.

The multiplicity and singularity of Divinity, according to Lienhardt, "ultimately is the grounds of everything that is in man and nature."[32] This enables an epistemological and moral plane for "reconciling an infinitely good Divinity" with the presence of "evils in the world." Yet, Divinity takes on characteristics in the "affective experience of fertility and prosperity, and of a just, kind, and reasonable order in the events of men's lives" distinctive from the experiences of "sterility, barrenness, and sudden inexplicable death."[33] Lienhardt further asserts that "[c]ruelty, lying, cheating, and all other forms of injustice are hated by Divinity."[34] Lienhardt expands:

> Divinity … also represents truth, justice, honesty, uprightness, and such-like conditions of order and peace in human relations. Where these are considered absent, Divinity is also said to be absent from human affairs … When their results are felt, in sickness, discord, malice, and so on, to understand them as reflecting the absence of a Divinity is also to recognize them in a way which makes action to restore Divinity, to

---

[25] Ibid.: 110
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Lienhardt is deliberating on what he believes are Dinka beliefs, although they very well may be acceptances of the Dinka persons he observed or interviewed. In this regard, such interpretations are acceptances of Dinka culture, based on his beliefs about Dinka beliefs.
[29] Ibid.: 110
[30] Ibid.: 30
[31] Ibid.: 57
[32] Ibid.: 159
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.: 46

> restore order and health, possible. It is thus that their notion of Divinity may be seen to arise in the experience of order in relation to disorder, life in relation to death, and in other experiential opposites which we have mentioned … Divinity is thus comprehended in and through natural experience, and not merely as a theoretical force producing the order of the world from without."[35]

The complex and multifaceted way in which divinity is considered amongst the Dinka, provides a paradoxical framework to explain and moderate experience. Divinity is the cause and resolution of experience:

> When the word *nihialic* is murmured as an adequate account of accident, luck, disaster, triumph, hope, or disappointment, it often represents a type of adjustment to the uncertainties and chances of human life, a recognition of real ambiguities in experience rather than a pious aspiration towards resignation to the will of an ultimately benevolent personal God.[36]

This background of Dinka cosmology provides the conceptual framework to consider any form of crisis and conversion that may be described by Lienhardt as well as the extent to which the Dinka believe or accept this cosmology and draw on this framework to explain causality and experience. It is worth reiterating that Lienhardt's fieldwork was done during the 1960s with a particular sub-tribe of the Dinka. The account of divinity and divinities may not be consistent with other Dinka tribes and things may have changed over the past fifty years in Dinka society and culture. Moreover, there is a question whether such a framework constructs a system of personally held truths amongst Dinka persons as opposed to a broader form of available discourses to describe their experiences and causation complicit to a cultural system without a personally committed 'aim for truth.' The distinction between belief and acceptance can assist in elucidating such textures of complicity and personal commitments.

8.2 CRISES

In previous chapters, the theme of crises focused on the application of Ernesto de Martino's 'crisis of presence.' Due to Lienhardt's general and normative account of the Dinka, an in-depth consideration of crises – either individually or socially – is not satisfactorily feasible. However, Lienhardt does provide an account of possession which was motivated by a crisis. This section will consider the extent to which a 'crisis of presence' is applicable to such an account. On one hand, Lienhardt's account of possession highlights the limitations of a 'crisis of presence' as well as the limitations of Lienhardt's ethnography to clearly discern belief

---

[35] Ibid.: 158
[36] Ibid.: 54

amongst the Dinka in scenarios of possession. The application of belief and acceptance to this case of crisis and possession exposes areas where further inquiry could have illuminated additional textures to the description of 'belief' in the Dinka context.

In *Divinity and Experience*, Lienhardt provides an account of three possessions in a young man named Ajak. At an early age, this young man "had left home for the town […] and had found various poor kinds of work there, which distressed his father and caused a breach between son and father."[37] Ajak still admired his father and often spoke of him but before they could reconcile Ajak received news of his father's death.[38] This distressed him and, arguably, created dissonance – a possibility which will be discussed later on. Instead of going back home, Ajak continued "to work," travel and earn money[39] maintaining the position that disagreed with his now deceased father.

According to Lienhardt, Ajak's possession "started by becoming maudlin with beer" and it was "announced" – Lienhardt does not mention by whom – that Ajak "had the creator in his body" or "a ghost in his body."[40] Lienhardt states that Dinka persons are 'passive' to the activity of divinities, which "wake up" or "seize" the person's body and when they are possessed or in contact with a divinity, Lienhardt states the following as "characteristic behaviour of men."[41]

> Ajak was running round and round outside a hut, breathing heavily and panting and grunting. He did not appear to hear when addressed. It was said that this outburst had been preceded by a period of sitting alone, during which he chanted and muttered to himself. This is often a sign of impending possession. Nobody knew the songs he had been singing; they were said to be hymns to Divinity … Ajak ran about for some twenty minutes, apparently quite unaware of spectators. As he gradually tired his movements became clumsier and less vigorous, and his breathing was deeper and quicker. Although he seemed to be gazing straight ahead, without care for where he was going, he avoided bushes and sumps of wood in his path. Eventually his legs began to give way beneath him, and he staggered and eventually fell sprawling on the ground, where he stayed, rolling about and lashing out with his arms and legs. He lay there for some time. Bursts of frenzied movement were interspersed with quieter periods, when he sang snatches of songs which nobody could understand. By this time a few spectators from the village had gathered round.[42]

---

[37] Ibid.: 57
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.: 58
[42] Ibid.: 58-59

Lienhardt further observed that "[s]ome smiled at the performance" and one spectator commented that it was a "Power of his home" while another said that "he has a ghost in his body."[43] In other words, there were speculations about the cause of Ajak's behaviour as well as insinuations of scepticism. These speculations by observers draw from common explanations of such behaviour within the cultural framework of divinities. In other words, they gave causes that could be accepted by other Dinka persons without committing to a truth-claim that this was or was not the case. Nonetheless, it suggests that some of the spectators accepted that Ajak may have been possessed by some divinity. This acceptance could also be extended to Lienhardt, although he considers alternative explanations that would suggest another degree of scepticism. In other words, there are degrees of acceptance with varying degrees of attitudes to a truth-claim. This range suggests differing underlying dispositions or valences of affinity toward the possibility of truth or inclinations towards falsehood. This variation of scepticism from Lienhardt to other Dinka persons can be attributed to the different enculturated attitudes towards the explanation of behaviour.

After these speculations, Ajak was interrogated by an older man but gave no reply. He just "continued to moan and roll about" and then without a word he "got up and went to bed … showing by this time the presence of mind to adjust his mosquito-net carefully."[44] While this would have been an opportune time for Lienhardt to speak with Ajak and gain further evidence, it may have been inappropriate. From the description of this first event, it is difficult to suggest whether this was a 'crisis of presence' by de Martino's standards. Lienhardt provides no description of distress or negative emotions and there is no definitive evidence to suggest that Ajak experienced a 'loss of self' or became 'passive' and subject to the 'will of others.' Although Lienhardt states that 'divinities' "seize" or "wake up" the person's body, this does not suggest a passivity on Ajak's part to the extent that he became subject to the will of other persons or forces. The description above implies that Ajak was conscious enough to avoid "bushes and sumps of wood in his path" and "adjust his mosquito-net" which raises questions about the awareness Ajak had of his actions. This ambiguity of consciousness extends to an ambiguity of whether Ajak believed he was possessed or accepted that he was possessed and behaved in a congruent manner. The first possession does not indicate either/or.

---

[43] Ibid.: 59
[44] Ibid.: 60

The next morning, Lienhardt reports, that Ajak "either feigned not to remember anything of what had happened, or he really had forgotten" and "denied with irritation" the episode of the previous night.[45] This further suggests Lienhardt's scepticism over Ajak's performance. Ajak's "irritation" also suggests that Lienhardt may have been insistent in his inquiry to the point of agitating Ajak. Nonetheless, denying the state of possession suggests two possibilities to a 'crisis of presence.' The first, as Ajak states, is that he did not have any conscious recollection of his actions, which leaves open the possibility whether Ajak believed he was possessed. If Ajak had indeed lost consciousness during the episode, it would entail that he experienced a 'loss of self.' In this regard, denying the episode would have been an involuntary expression with an 'aim for truth.' If it was indeed the case that Ajak did not remember the previous night then he would also maintain this position in a context-independent manner and imply belief. However, it is difficult what to make of his 'irritation' when he denied this activity to Lienhardt. The second possibility is that he did not lose conscious recollection and believed that he was the author of his actions but denied them. This would suggest that Ajak was conscious of his possession performance and did not experience a 'loss of self.' In this sense, he would have believed that his actions took place but accepted that he did not and expressed that he did not to Lienhardt. This opens the possibility for an instance of self-deception and an act of deceiving Lienhardt. In this case, the acceptance of denying any possession activity could have been specifically stated for Lienhardt without an 'aim for truth' and voluntarily deliberated to tell Lienhardt that he was not possessed. It is difficult to determine which of the two possibilities was what happened with Ajak.

Later, Ajak tells Lienhardt that "on one previous occasion his father's ghost had seized him when he was away from, and had flung him on a fire."[46] This indicates that Ajak believed he had been possessed by his father's ghost before, insinuating that he accepts the possibility of being possessed again. Moreover, using this discourse of possession further establishes a context-independent convention of appealing to divinities and ghosts from which persons can attribute causality. However, this does not establish whether Ajak believed he was possessed the previous night. As noted before, singular statements are insufficient to consider whether they are statements of voluntary reflection and deliberation or context-independent involuntary statements of belief. If it was the former then, as Lienhardt states, Ajak "feigned

---

[45] Ibid.: 60
[46] Ibid.

not to remember" but if it was the latter, then Ajak had no memorable consciousness of his possession and told Lienhardt what he considered to be the truth.

Several months later, during Lienhardt's fieldwork, Ajak became possessed for a second time. However, Lienhardt does not mention how the possession started or what may have triggered it. He does observe that "after some preliminary singing Ajak began to run about," at which point he decides to intervene he "thought it better to secure him" so that Ajak would not fall on a cattle-peg. Ajak then "rolled about as before, and again there were periods of comparative calm, alternating with bursts of singing and more frenzied movements."[47] When spectators arrived, they "objected to his being prevented from running" and said "if a Power wanted to kill him, it would; otherwise, he would be safe."[48] Once again, this reinforces that the 'Powers,' 'divinities,' are a plausible discursive source of causal explanation and any action can be considered in terms of the intentions of a supernatural agent. Like the first possession, an old man questioned Ajak and attempted to receive an answer from "the source of the possession."[49] Ajak was then "becoming more composed and calm" and instead of giving an answer, "sang a hymn" unknown to Lienhardt. He then "became quite rational, and quietly spoke a few words in his own voice … He said that he had never killed a man, and that it was not something at home which was troubling him … that he had nothing on his conscience as far as home was concerned."[50] Considering Lienhardt's prior observation of Ajak's distress with the death of his father, this statement is of particular interest. While it is unknown how much time had passed since the death of his father, Ajak may have been insinuating that nothing of recent was distressing him at the time of this possession. However, the experience of grief and dissonance, if not resolved, can endure over a long period of time. It will become evident after the third possession that this statement was indeed an expression of acceptance to negate conventional reasons for possession. That is, he negated a 'troubled conscience' and possible reasons for the divinities to take action. But after Ajak denied this to the old man, he became possessed again. When Lienhardt spoke to Ajak by name, someone said: "it is no use speaking to Ajak; it is *not* Ajak."[51] Lienhardt explains, "when a man is strongly possessed, it is held that 'it is no use speaking to *him*', as a human person, for what

---

[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.: 61

is acting is not the man but the Power."[52] This suggests that, at the very least, the Dinka conventionally accept that there is a 'loss of self' during states of possession and appeal to the 'Power' that may be the agent. As mentioned earlier, the extent to which this loss of self and agency is believed with 'an aim for truth' is uncertain although it is a conventional form of explaining causality and agency.

The next day, Ajak was again "sceptical about what had occurred, but said that on the previous day he had not felt at all well – his body had been 'heavy' – whereas now it had become light, or well."[53] This scepticism by Ajak is a similar dynamic of belief and acceptance after his denial of the first possession. That is, he truly did not remember the previous day or wanted to convince Lienhardt that he experienced a 'loss of self' and was seized by a divinity. For the third episode, Lienhardt was unable to observe the possession in detail and again he does not mention how much time had passed from the previous possession. Nonetheless, Lienhardt reports that Ajak

> … ran out into the forest in the middle of the night, where the darkness and the floods made it impossible to find him. One could hear his voice singing somewhere in the distance, and eventually someone caught up with him just as he was about to walk into a crocodile-infested river, and redirected him towards home, where he was eventually found comfortably sleeping in his bed before the search for him in the forest had been abandoned.[54]

In this position, Lienhardt accepts the account reported to him and further notes that "everyone agreed that something was wanting [*sic*] to kill him."[55] That is, Lienhardt observed an accepted consensus that some *thing* seized Ajak's agency. Subsequently, Ajak agreed and was "convinced" that he was in danger. He "thought it was because his brother had parted with their cow dedicated to Deng" (Deng is one of the free-divinities)[56] but others disagreed:

> … whichever Power it was which wanted to harm him, it did so when he was far away from home, while Deng, though it might indeed lead people off into the forest, would not do so in order to kill them, and would more probably make them sick at home. Nor, urged some, could the grounds of possession be the father's ghost, nor the clan-divinity, for they would have made their wants known when asked, and in any case would not have troubled their man when he was in a foreign place.[57]

In the end, there was no agreement about the cause of Ajak's possession. Lienhardt states that Ajak was "never possessed again" and a year later Ajak mentioned that "he had been troubled

[52] Ibid.: 148
[53] Ibid.: 61
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.: 62
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.

and confused the previous year; but that he had since been home and attended sacrifices for Divinity, his clan-divinity, and his father's ghost, and since then had been well and at peace."[58] This affirmation confirms the continued distress Ajak had about the death of his father and their disagreement. In other words, Ajak continued to have dissonance about his father's death and concerns about returning to his sub-tribe. The context-independent distress suggests a belief in these causes although he did not always accept this (e.g. the second possession). Moreover, the distress associated with the death of Ajak's father motivated Ajak's episodes of possession and only after he had returned home and engaged in rituals with sacrifices was he able to attenuate this dissonance. However, Lienhardt did not inquire whether Ajak remembered the three episodes of possession or what he thought about them. This would have established whether Ajak believed that he was possessed and the extent to which he remembered them. His confession to Lienhardt does suggest that his beliefs surrounding his father's death were indeed beliefs and a consistent source of distress.

In this sense, Ajak's beliefs about his relationship with his father and sub-tribe were destabilized and a source of distress. That is, Ajak's crisis was the news of death and the experience of grief. It is not clear, however, whether the three episodes of possession themselves could constitute a 'crisis of presence' that destabilized his beliefs. The difficulty in discerning a 'crisis of presence' through the three accounts of possession is that the possessions were expressions of Ajak's 'troubled conscious' regarding the death of his father and the destabilized beliefs associated with that news. Lienhardt does not discuss any displays of distress or negative emotions and the question of whether his states of possession constitute a 'crisis of presence' begs the question regarding Ajak's state of consciousness during his possessions and whether he experienced a loss of authorship over his actions. Ajak states that he does not remember his states of possession although he acknowledges the danger from the third possession. In this regard it is difficult to apply a 'crisis of presence' to Ajak's sense of self as he was not directly subject to the will of other persons or become passive to them. Lienhardt could have asked a few more questions during the time of Ajak's possessions and a year later when they spoke again. This would have established 'context-independence' in whether Ajak had any beliefs about what had occurred to him during those

---

[58] Ibid.

possessions. However, an investigation into the personal nuances of 'belief' and consciousness during states of possession was not the aim of Lienhardt's project.[59]

This is not to say that crisis does not occur with the Dinka, much like any culture, Lienhardt states: "every man at some time must meet with suffering or misfortune, death or disease among his family."[60] Lienhardt insinuates, throughout the text, that the reason for Ajak's possessions was the death of his father before they could reconcile their differences. Prior to Ajak's first possession, Lienhardt states, Ajak "used to dream about his father, and felt guilty about the death of the old man and his absence from home at that time."[61] As noted above, the grief Ajak was experiencing and the dissonance associated with his father's death was context-independent (from before Lienhardt's encounter with Ajak to a year after Lienhardt witnessed the possessions). The sadness of losing a loved one was compounded with feelings of guilt from not being present when his father died and not reconciling their differences prior to his passing. Ajak would have also had other thoughts and emotions about his family and sub-tribe (e.g. feelings of obligation, duty, or responsibility – unfortunately Lienhardt does not inquire further into Ajak's thoughts and feelings) which would have contributed to his feelings above and his reasons for not returning home when he heard the news. In this regard, Ajak's possessions could be considered in terms of cognitive dissonance. Not only are there discrepant cognitions from the experience of an unexpected death and not reconciling his differences with his father but also not being with the sub-tribe at the time. According to the belief-disconfirmation paradigm and the free-choice paradigm, the position Ajak took prior to his father's death is intensified: an intensification of guilt, grief, and the position of working and travelling outside of the sub-tribe. Arguably, the intensification of these emotions is expressed in the form of possession within the Dinka cultural and social milieu.

While there are reservations and insufficient information to discern whether Ajak *believed* he was possessed or whether the spectators *believed* Ajak was possessed, the expression of possession is within the conventional parameters of Dinka behaviour. Conversely, the explanatory reasons for his behaviour were speculated within conventional Dinka acceptances of causation. That is, the causes and reasons for Ajak's behaviour are accepted in terms of attributing causation to the personality of the divinities. Lienhardt states that during

---

[59] This issue of consciousness and possession is discussed in much more depth in *Spirit Possession and Trance. New Interdisciplinary Perspectives* edited by Bettina Schmidt and Lucy Huskinson (2010).
[60] Lienhardt 1961: 47
[61] Ibid.: 59

one of Ajak's possessions, some of the spectators "smiled at the performance."[62] According to Lienhardt, it is "a familiar one to all Dinka" and that even "a small boy can give a convincing imitation of possession of this sort."[63] In this sense, the performative act of possession "is more appropriately defined in terms of a system or function of cultural communication," the behaviour of divinities for the Dinka "provides the substance of the public discourse on Otherness that is an essential interpretive function of possession."[64] The 'crisis of presence' experienced by Ajak is then similar to Toulis' application of the concept to the broader social and cultural conditions. In other words, Ajak experienced a 'loss of self' and authorship of identity within the parameters of "cultural communication" becoming passive and subject to the will of a Power. This experience of losing authorship was also corroborated by his observers and perhaps even motivated by them. In this sense, Ajak became subject to socio-cultural norms and impositions of conventional behaviour.

Similarly, the reduction and attenuation of dissonance, the resolution to Ajak's possessions was also conducted through the cultural paradigms for resolving issues with divinities and the death of his father. Ajak tells Lienhardt that since he had been home, he "attended sacrifices for Divinity, his clan-divinity, and his father's ghost, and since then had been well and at peace."[65] That is, Ajak's possessions were resolved through ritual. According to Roy Rappaport, the participation in ritual does not entail a direct *belief* but establishes "conventional understandings, rules and norms in accordance with which everyday behaviour is *supposed* to proceed."[66] In the Dinka context, ritual provides the general acceptance of 'divinities' and other 'Powers' as the cause and resolution to various misfortunes. This aspect of ritual is then a socially accepted method of converting the cause of misfortune into accepted resolutions for those misfortunes.

8.3 CONVERSION

Conversion has primarily been framed in terms of any changes that may present a case of acceptance or belief to another acceptance or belief. However, being constrained by Lienhardt's representation of the Dinka, the only certain belief that can be ascribed to Ajak is his distress associated with his father's death. The resolution of Ajak's possession and the

---

[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Huskinson & Schmidt 2010: 7; cites Lambek 1989: 44
[65] Lienhardt 1961: 62
[66] Rappaport 1999: 123 (emphasis original)

judicial/moral authority ascribed to 'Divinity' present an interesting dynamic of acceptance regarding the explanation of illness, unfortunate events, possessions, other forms of crises, and their resolutions.

According to Lienhardt, "Divinity is held ultimately to reveal truth and falsehood… the final judge of right and wrong … the guardian of truth – and sometimes signifies to men what really *is* the case, behind or beyond their errors and falsehoods."[67] Divinity, in this capacity, represents "truth, justice, honesty, uprightness, and such-like conditions of order and peace in human relations" and the absence of such conditions is the "absence of Divinity in human affairs."[68] More importantly, Lienhardt states the Dinka "have no problem of the prospering sinner, for they are sure that Divinity will ultimately bring justice."[69] Lienhardt explains that when the forces of Divinity are felt

> … in sickness, discord, malice, and so on, to understand them as reflecting the absence of a Divinity is also to recognize them in a way which makes action to restore Divinity, to restore order and health, possible. It is thus that their notion of Divinity may be seen to arise in the experience of order in relation to disorder, life in relation to death, and in other experiential opposites which we have mentioned… Divinity is thus comprehended in and through natural experience, and not merely as a theoretical force producing the order of the world from without.[70]

It is within this framework the resolution of Ajak's troubles and possessions can be understood further. Lienhardt observes that the "[r]elationships between human beings and the divine are regulated by the transfer of cattle in dedication and sacrifice."[71] After Ajak had participated in "sacrifices for Divinity, his clan-divinity, and his father's ghost" he has since been "well and at peace."[72] The participation in these rituals of sacrifice re-establishes Ajak in relation to his sub-tribe. That is, Ajak is re-situated within the context of his sub-tribe and his possessions and troubles are resolved through ritual. While participation does not entail *belief* in the propositional reasons for conducting ritual, they are acceptances by which the people of a culture communicate and establish convention. This was the case for Ajak's

---

[67] Lienhardt 1961: 46-47
[68] Ibid.: 158
[69] Ibid.: 47
[70] Ibid.: 158
[71] Ibid.: 24; "It is particularly in minor crises which yet demand sacrifice that inferior creatures [sheep, goats, and other creatures] may be made to represent cattle. There is a hierarchy of values in Dinka society – in the total domestic society of men and beasts – at the top of which are human beings, beneath them cattle, and beneath them sheep and goats. To a quite inferior order belong chickens, and commodities such as fish, grain, canoes, and tobacco. As cattle may be substituted for human beings, so sheep and goats may sometimes be substituted for cattle, while on occasion chickens may be substituted for sheep and goats, though here the disparity in value between the superior and inferior creature is greater than in the higher ranks" (Lienhardt, 1961: 25)
[72] Ibid.: 62

possessions. The rituals of sacrifice provided the necessary forms by which Ajak's troubled conscience could be reconciled with his grief, guilt and other associated emotions with the death of his father. More importantly, the sacrifices provided the means for a mutual understanding between Ajak and his sub-tribe. Through the various sacrifice rituals, Ajak was able to reconcile with those who are closest to him. In this regard, ritual played a role in reducing dissonance and converting previously held acceptances and beliefs surrounding the death of his father. For those in Ajak's sub-tribe, the rituals created acceptance among the community that Ajak was troubled by possessions and attenuated the possible 'Powers' that may have been disturbing him.

8.4 CONCLUSION

In *Divinity and Experience*, Lienhardt provides a general landscape of Dinka cosmology and descriptive language from which Dinka persons can attribute causality. However, this cosmological background provides little to suggest that the particular propositions, which explain causality, are embodied beliefs. Due to issues with generalizing across an entire population and culture, this chapter directed its focus on the description of a single Dinka person's experiences of possession in order to consider the application of belief and acceptance. This treatment pronounced the textures of 'belief' within the dynamic of conventional modes of discourse and personal attitudes towards possession. Moreover it highlighted instances when Lienhardt could have asked further questions to obtain additional evidence to discern belief from acceptance.

The observation of Ajak's possessions illustrated the conventional methods of communicating a "troubled conscious" as well as the conventional methods of describing and explaining the cause of those possessions by Dinka observers. While it was difficult to discern whether Ajak believed he was possessed by his father's ghost or some other divinity, it was evident that he believed in the communicative paradigm and accepted the possibility of being possessed by his father's ghost or some divinity. Congruent with the paradigm of possessions, Ajak also accepted the rituals' function in order to appease the divinities. Accepting the rituals and the propositional claims contained within them, Ajak was able to publicly attenuate any dissonance and discrepancies he was experiencing with his family and sub-tribe regarding the death of his father. In other words, the rituals were the means of converting past beliefs and acceptances to a state of being that aligned with his sub-tribe. Within the context of Ajak's possessions, his 'crisis of presence' can be considered in two

respects. On one hand, in terms of the socio-cultural paradigm of communication, it can be argued that he had experienced a loss of self and authorship during his possessions insofar as a divinity had "come over" him and his performance represented the actions of some divinity. Within this paradigm, Ajak had become passive to the divinity. Sociologically, he had become passive and experienced a loss of self and sense of authorship to the conventional methods of expressing distress. On the other hand, Ajak's 'crisis of presence' can be interpreted in terms of cognitive dissonance with the death of his father and the possessions were a result of this dissonance and the discrepancies involved. In other words, the news of his father's death destabilized some beliefs about his self as he was unable to reconcile their differences. As mentioned above, the attenuation of Ajak's dissonance was accomplished through the participation of rituals with his sub-tribe and family.

The cosmological background mapped by Lienhardt then is not a system of embodied beliefs composed of particular propositions to explain causality but rather a domain of conventional acceptances and parameters which Dinka persons can utilize in discursive thought and practice as meaningful ways of explanation. In other words, *Divinity and Experience* describes the embodiment of a paradigm of discourse as ways of understanding and structuring experience without necessarily committing to any particular proposition or set of propositions. This accounts for the tendency to speculate about the mental state of others in these terms as acceptances but without the commitment that accompanies belief. In this regard the performative acts of possession, rituals, and modes of discourse effectively perpetuate the accepted norms for explaining causality and behaviour contributing to the process of embodiment and local *habitus*. The case of Ajak's possessions and their resolution shows the ways in which personal tragedy can be resolved through communicative and communal action in ritual. Expressing one's distress through local communicative paradigms, i.e. possession, directed the attention of other persons to speculate about the distress and the reasons for its cause. Moreover, it was through the social dimension that the individual was able to attenuate the distress and dissonance that motivated Ajak's possessions. In this regard, the dynamic of *habitus* is advanced by an adaptive default cognitive background and beliefs about the self in relation to one's social context.

9
CONCLUSION

Although sociology is defined as the science of society, in reality it cannot deal with human groups, which are the immediate concern of its research, without in the end tackling the individual, the ultimate element of which these groups are composed. For society cannot constitute itself unless it penetrates individual consciousnesses [sic] and fashions them 'in its image and likeness.' [1]

- Emile Durkheim

… in one sense it is very true that every psychological phenomenon is a sociological phenomenon, the mental element being identified with the social one. But, in another sense, everything is reversed. The proof as to what is social can only be a mental one; in other words, we can never be sure we have fathomed the meaning and function of an institution if we are not capable of reliving its impact upon the individual consciousness. As such an impact is an integral part of institutions, any interpretation must aim to match the objectivity of the historical or comparative analysis with the subjectivity of the experience as it has been lived. [2]

- Claude Lévi-Strauss

9.0 INTRODUCTION

These two quotations pinpoint the aim of this thesis in its attempt to navigate an interdisciplinary landscape and conduct an exercise in compatibility and dialogue between philosophy and the social sciences on the topic of 'belief.' The thesis showed that these fields of inquiry could mutually benefit and complement each other in a joint endeavour of investigation. Furthermore, what emerged from this dialogue was the significance of 'beliefs about the self' and that beliefs could be interpreted as the *units of embodiment and cultural history* which function as the "structuring structures" of *habitus*.

The problematization of 'belief,' from the anthropology of religion, revolved very much around the issues of language, particularly with regard to concerns of translation and the levels of description as well as the issues of power and the semantic history of 'belief.' The anthropological literature yielded eleven characteristics of 'belief,' which were then juxtaposed with the epistemological distinction between belief and acceptance. Apart from the critique of Christo-centrism and the tangibility of the object of 'belief,' epistemology provided a sharper focus to the eleven characteristics. However, the belief and acceptance distinction proved to be inadequate in providing an account of 'belief' formation and how it

---

[1] Curtis & Petras 1970: 35
[2] Moscovici 1993: 14; Cf. Lévi-Strauss 1960; similarly, Bloch (2012) has recently echoed this overlap and the necessary relationship between anthropology and psychology.

functioned in thought processes. With this in mind, the paradigm of embodiment and Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* was included to highlight further textures within beliefs and acceptances as well as their relationship to each other. Drawing on the theory of cognitive dissonance and its research paradigms, revisions, and cross-cultural research, the issue of inconsistency illustrated additional depths to belief and acceptance. More specifically, it showed that there were explicit and implicit involuntary belief processes. The research also highlighted the role of emotions and 'beliefs about the self' in the 'magnitude of dissonance,' which motivated the reduction of negative affect and the attenuation of discrepancies through acceptances. In this regard, beliefs and acceptances were placed within a more dynamic framework of cognition while continuing to hold its analytic utility for discernment.

The characteristics of belief and acceptance were then brought to focus on the themes of 'crisis' and 'conversion' and applied to three case studies. These themes were significant due to their emphasis on instability and change. Crisis as a methodological point of inquiry challenged the involuntariness of belief and raised the question of what would occur when a belief was destabilized. Moreover, any destabilization of belief also suggested a potential susceptibility to change i.e. conversion. The thesis explored the various reasons and social forces that prompted conversion and noted the two types of conversion, 'sudden' and 'gradual,' which were discussed in the literature. 'Sudden' conversions were characterized by a cognitive change prior to a behavioural change whereas 'gradual' conversions focused on the role of social support and continued practice prior to a change in cognition. In terms of belief and acceptance, the former was often prompted by a particular experience which would motivate an acceptance and explicit belief that would, over time and effort, become an implicit belief with behavioural implications. By contrast, 'gradual' conversions were usually motivated by social reasons (with or without an acceptance of the ideas of a group) and continued practice prior to any acceptance and eventual development of an explicit and implicit belief. This dynamic was also present throughout the three case studies: in the behaviour and considerations of being 'Christian' in *Believing Identity*, the practice and discourse around possession in *Divinity and Experience*, as well as the channelling practices of Marian Keech and theosophical discourse in *When Prophecy Fails*.

In light of all that has been considered thus far, this concluding chapter provides a summary of the contribution epistemology and the social sciences make to one another. More specifically, epistemology's analytic utility for social scientific investigations will be noted

and the framework of 'believing selves' and 'beliefs about the self,' in conjunction with the paradigm of embodiment, from the social sciences will be discussed. Lastly, the thesis will end with a discussion of beliefs as the units of embodiment and cultural history, as well as possible future directions for research on 'belief' and morality in the study of religion.

9.1 UTILITY OF BELIEF AND ACCEPTANCE; FROM EPISTEMOLOGY TO SOCIAL SCIENCE

The anthropological literature[3] pointed out that many ponder what it means 'to believe' or 'not to believe' in some thing. That is, the question of what one "believes" invokes reflection and engages what one *accepts* about 'belief' rather than necessarily gaining insight into the person's belief.[4] A direct line of questioning is thereby loaded with semantic variability and history, in both Christianity and the English language, which has led persons of non-Christian backgrounds to deny that they "believe" anything.[5] In this regard, distinguishing what it means 'to believe' or 'not to believe' is not a simple task. From the anthropology of religion, eleven characteristic points were derived from its critiques:

1) The object of belief may or may not exist.
2) Beliefs can be inconsistent.
3) Beliefs can be held without reason or evidence.
4) Belief is associated with a subjective commitment to truth.
5) Belief is not voluntary.
6) There is always a degree of uncertainty in belief.
7) Belief may be dispositional or feeling-based.
8) Belief as it is conveyed in Christianity is not the same for other religions.
9) Belief is not behavioural.
10) Belief is not a distinct interior psychological state.
11) Focusing on what 'belief' is misdirects the focus from conveying the experience of reality in other cultures and religions.

However, many of these characteristics were directed towards 'religious beliefs' rather than 'beliefs' in general. By introducing the philosophical distinction between belief and acceptance, further depth and texture is provided which modifies the above list to what qualifies as belief and what qualifies as acceptance:

---

[3] Carlisle & Simon 2012(noted in chapter 2); Day 2013b

[4] "When anthropologists interview their subjects about their belief states, they cause them to reflect on their beliefs in ways that are likely new and foreign. What the anthropologist then records as 'beliefs' are in fact by-products of analytic processes, and not direct expressions of believed understandings. Furthermore, when subjects claim to believe they could mean many different things: it could reflect a personal understanding or strategy, be motivated by a desire to conform, or simply be a lie" (Carlisle & Simon 2012: 226-227).

[5] Cassaniti 2012

Belief	Acceptance
Involuntary	Voluntary
Context-independent	Context-relative
Aim for truth	Not necessarily aimed for truth
Can be Inconsistent	Can be Inconsistent
Can be Behavioural	Can be Behavioural

In other words, the eleven characteristic points of 'belief' can be re-evaluated in terms of belief and acceptance. With respect to points (1) and (3), the thesis showed that the belief and acceptance distinction is not concerned with the particular object of 'belief' or its forms of justification. Moreover, (1) and (3) beg the question whether the study of religion should be concerned with whether an object of 'belief' is *real* or whether the 'belief' is justified in its rationale and evidence.[6] While questions of normativity might be of interest to some, this thesis was rather occupied with descriptive and methodological issues in understanding: "whether Dracula exists or not is less important … than the fact that Rachel believes and hopes that he will pay her a visit tonight."[7] In this regard, point (2) was particularly relevant to both belief and acceptance but, as evidenced through the research on cognitive dissonance, conscious awareness was significant to the issue of inconsistency. While acceptances can be consciously inconsistent and compartmentalized, one may not necessarily be aware of an inconsistency in beliefs, and only when the discrepancy is made apparent is there a magnitude of dissonance that motivates the resolution and attenuation of that discrepancy. In other words an inconsistency in beliefs creates a greater magnitude of dissonance than an inconsistency in acceptances.

The magnitude of dissonance in discrepant cognitions, either beliefs or acceptances, then relates to point (4) in that beliefs are associated with a subjective aim for truth whereas acceptances are not. A discrepancy among beliefs is also a discrepancy in one's aims for truth and this inconsistency in 'aim' arouses dissonance. This indicates that beliefs are emotionally committed to their 'aim for truth.' As noted in chapter 3, a subjective aim for truth extends to various forms of morality and ethics which include what one considers right/wrong, correct/incorrect, proper/improper, ethical/unethical, good/bad, as well as normative notions of ethical behaviour in what should or ought to be done. The values attached to these

---

[6] The labels of 'rationality' and 'irrationality' invoke normative questions of epistemology constructing a standard of 'knowledge' upheld by a particular criterion derived out of a western tradition of philosophy and science. In this regard, 'rationality' and 'irrationality' concerns issues of power which relates the pursuit of knowledge to a broader metaphysics.

[7] Frijda, Manstead & Bem 2000:4

dichotomies are then related to the degree of significance associated with a belief and thereby the magnitude of dissonance when they are contradicted, violated, or discrepant with experience. Characteristics (5) and (7) translate to the involuntary and dispositional character of belief which contrasts with the voluntary and reflexive character of acceptance. In this sense, acceptances contain an element of doubt, point (6), rather than beliefs.

Point (8) is a classic anthropological statement noting that the weight and centrality of 'belief' in Christianity is not a universal characteristic across all religions. This makes Christianity a questionable model of 'religion' by which non-Christian religions are framed and compared. Needham, in his analysis, at times conflated 'belief' with 'faith' which was problematic because not all religions, as Ruel noted, consider 'belief' or 'faith' as an "object" of acquisition. By contrast, the distinction between belief and acceptance avoids the issues involved with Christianity's influence on the category of 'belief.' Moreover, the distinction shifts the focus from interpreting 'belief' strictly in terms of language towards a framework of embodiment as a process of socialization and enculturation. This shift confounds point (11) as it implies the possibility of conveying "the experience of reality in other cultures" without a focus on 'belief.' While this is certainly the case with regard to cosmological or religious conceptions of 'belief' or even discussing the definition of 'belief' for another culture, it is not plausible to convey and describe the experience of cultures and religions without discussing cognition and how experience is culturally structured and embodied by individual persons. In order to navigate and experience reality, one must have an understanding and awareness of that reality. As shown by the three ethnographic cases, point (11) is perhaps a caution best suited towards religious expressions of acceptance. Focusing on singular propositional statements of religious 'belief' may indeed misdirect the investigation into how persons experience their reality. In other words, what people say about their experience is not necessarily equivalent to how they live and experience reality.

Through the epistemological distinction, 'belief' is brought into sharper focus. However, the most practical concern is the extent to which belief and acceptance can be applied to ethnographic contexts. As most fieldwork is conducted through interviews, participation and the observation of behaviour, the relationship between 'belief' and expression, in both behaviour and language, is a critical concern. In the characteristics above, point (9) states that 'beliefs are not behavioural' and this would certainly be true if 'belief' was considered strictly in terms of propositional statements or Rappaport's 'cosmological axioms' and

'Ultimate Sacred Postulates.' However, the relationship between involuntary dispositional beliefs and expression is more complex. Both beliefs and acceptances can be behavioural but neither necessitates behavioural expression. In other words, not all beliefs and acceptances translate into action which is also to say that the lack of action is a form of behavioural expression. Stating that 'belief' is not behavioural is then an inference from presupposing 'belief' as a singular internal state, point (10), which would suggest an if-then correlation. However, one does not always act on the basis of a single piece of information or principle. Instead, as the literature and case studies have shown, behaviour and linguistic expressions are the result of a complex interactive system of beliefs and acceptances that may also result in the lack of action.

Utilizing the characteristics that distinguish beliefs from acceptances, in prolonged periods of observation, it is possible to consider whether an explanation or justification of behaviour is one or the other, which prevents premature ascriptions of 'belief' to cognitive states. The characteristics that define belief are all inter-related. 'Involuntariness' is related to 'context-independence' such that one believes in, or believes that, something is the case regardless of context; a belief will be consistent over space and time, although there may be variations in its expression. This is not to say that beliefs cannot change – the literature on crisis and conversion has shown that beliefs can indeed change over time – but rather that beliefs are enduring and can be expressed in a myriad of ways. Moreover, 'involuntariness' is associated with 'an aim for truth,' a subjective commitment, that something is the case (for that person) irrespective of context. Here 'truth' is not simply defined in terms of "fact" but includes the domains of morality, ethics, and propriety mentioned above. In this regard, belief can only be ascribed to a person when observed over a long period of time. Ethnographies that only cover the span of a few months are seemingly insufficient to determine whether a person *believes* some thing as ethnographers may only be exposed to represented acceptances. The ethnographer is presented with the task of carefully observing particular persons in multiple contexts and situations over time with a keen eye towards consistent propositions, behaviours, and what could be assessed as an 'aim for truth.' What is observed or interpreted as inconsistent can note the likelihood of various acceptances or beliefs playing a factor in one's cognition and behaviour. However, if observed long enough and consistently, a system of embodied beliefs should surface that represents a self, various levels of meaning, and identity.

In this regard, a longitudinal dimension is necessary for any ethnographic and social scientific investigation[8] interested in 'belief.'

The relationship between belief and behaviour, as well as the relationship between belief and an 'aim for truth,' raises questions about belief and various kinds of 'knowledge.' As Charles Lindholm noted, there are different types of 'belief' presented in propositional form. The different types of 'belief' represented variations of belief and acceptance with their respective degrees of significance and 'aim for truth.' The representation of myths, stories, and various narratives can also be considered through the belief and acceptance distinction. *Divinity and Experience* illustrated how the sources of explanation were drawn on cultural and collective acceptances rather than beliefs.[9] Acceptances provide room for speculation as well as scepticism and a range of attitudes towards certain narratives and myths that are not necessarily concerned with an 'aim for truth' in its literal content. In other words, narratives and myths – both oral and written traditions – contain values, morals, lessons, and various forms of meaning a listener or reader may interpret. In this regard, 'belief(s)' may be represented without adhering to a strict literalism to the accepted content.

Beyond conventional linguistic propositional forms, the dispositional and involuntary character of belief within the framework of *habitus* also introduces behavioural knowledge represented through our habits, bodily postures, emotional reactions (including bodily movement), moods, demeanours and a various practices. Many of our behaviours are involuntary without conscious reflection or voluntary deliberation. They are context-independent and the 'aim for truth' associated with behaviour can vary from claims of sense perception (e.g. this colour is red), positions of comfort, physical pains and pleasures, physical responses (e.g. itchiness), emotional responses to various moral domains,[10] moods associated with certain social spaces or persons, as well as various aesthetic preferences, enculturated practices or habits. For example, there are those who were raised in a vegetarian environment/culture without any personal commitment to vegetarianism or a sense of normative 'truth.' By contrast, there are those who commit to vegetarianism with a particular 'aim for truth,' out of a conscientious objection for what ever reason (e.g. grotesque animal

---

[8] Chapter 4, on cognitive dissonance, noted that a longitudinal dimension was necessary in order to consider whether the change in cognition represented a belief or an acceptance.

[9] The argument about group acceptances, as opposed to beliefs, has also been made by Wray (2001) and Hakli (2006) in the philosophical literature.

[10] Haidt (2012) provides the following moral domains: care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, sanctity/degradation, liberty/oppression.

farming practices), but will enjoy the occasional hamburger or steak. In this regard, there may be variations between practice and theory. The former person is a vegetarian in practice but not theory, which is a (implicit) embodied belief without a (explicit) belief in the propositional sense. The latter is a vegetarian in theory (explicit) but not in practice (implicit), which is the inverse scenario. And of course, there are those who are vegetarian in both practice and theory with an implicit embodied belief and an explicit propositional belief. This illustrates the alternative kinds of knowledge in addition to traditional forms of propositional knowledge that can be represented in persons and represent various combinations of beliefs and acceptances. In this regard, the utility of belief and acceptance is demonstrated not only with respect to various combinations of theory and practice, or thought and behaviour, but also in ethnographic contexts and psychological studies by bringing further analytical scrutiny and indications of when evidence is insufficient to discern belief.

9.2 BELIEVING SELVES; FROM SOCIAL SCIENCE TO EPISTEMOLOGY

The textures of 'belief' pronounced by epistemology and the various types of knowledge that 'belief' invokes, presumes a framework of persons as "centres of experience and agency, and the sociocultural structures within which those individuals live."[11] *Habitus* and the proposal of 'believing selves,' noted in chapter 2, provide the conceptual adaptability for anthropologists to not only discuss the various types of 'beliefs' and forms of knowledge but also *how* persons justify their 'beliefs.' Moreover, this framework engages individuals as learning agents navigating their realities with "subjective commitments to truth" about the existence of things. This includes

> … the truth of some proposition about the world or the nature of the self, the truth of someone's or something's abilities or the quality of relationship to oneself (and, thus, "trust" in those abilities or that relationship), or the moral truth of an orientation for living one's life.[12]

The framework of 'believing selves' is taken further by the research done on the theory of cognitive dissonance. The revisionist theories have all implicated a view of the self as the source of, and the motivation to reduce, dissonance. While Festinger's original theory proposed that any discrepant cognition would cause negative affect, the past several decades of research have indicated that the magnitude of dissonance is greatest when some belief about the self is involved: either one's self-concept, self-perception/self-integrity, negative consequences of one's actions, or when beliefs significant to the individual are discrepant

---

[11] Carlisle & Simon 2012: 223
[12] Ibid.

with another cognition or experience of reality, which hinders effective action. This advances the framework of 'believing selves' by focusing on beliefs about the self, in conjunction with its social extensions of identity and relationships to sociocultural structures, as particular beliefs that hold the greatest significance and thereby capable of the greatest magnitude of dissonance. The dynamic of belief and acceptance in their respective roles in thinking as they revolve around the various ways the self and identity are culturally informed and constructed provides subtler and much more specific ways dissonance and the framework of 'believing selves' can be discussed.

In this thesis, additional inquiry into this area of 'belief' was promoted through the themes of crisis and conversion. The notion of a 'crisis of presence' served de Martino's purpose in describing the influence of society on the individual in producing a state of depression. A state of being that rendered the individual 'passive' and 'subject to the will of others' such that a sense of self and authorship of identity was temporarily lost. While the concept was useful for Saunders in describing the state of depression in Italians prior to their conversion to Pentecostalism, and served Toulis' study in depicting the social milieu of England during the early 20th century, 'crisis of presence' became questionable when it was scrutinized at the individual level with regard to the extent by which one lost a sense of self and authorship. In *When Prophecy Fails*, the gathered group members became upset when the flying saucer did not arrive and the flood was cancelled. During the moments of anxiety and tension, they became subject to the channelling practice of Marian Keech. However, as discussed in chapter 6, the individual members could hardly be argued to have experienced a 'loss of self' or a sense of authorship and while Marian Keech was also distressed she remained active in finding a resolution to the event. In other words, she did not lose her sense of self as the 'medium' and leader of the group. Similarly, in *Divinity and Experience*, Ajak could not be argued to have been 'passive' during his episodes of possession. He was certainly active in his performance and whether he experienced a 'loss of self' and *believed* that he was possessed is uncertain. In this regard, both Ajak and Marian Keech were not 'subject to the will of others' instead they were subject to the culture and reality to which they submitted. Ajak was subject to the culture of divinities and the practices of being possessed while Keech was subject to the pressures of her group and subsequently the messages of Sananda and the theosophical culture. In another context, the women of *Believing Identity* were subject to the stereotypes of 'black' 'women' in England but active in navigating their daily lives, despite

such sociocultural and linguistic impositions. In this sense, a detailed application of a 'crisis of presence' at the individual level, although helpful to some extent, can become problematic.

However, this is not to say that dissonance or a destabilized belief was not experienced by these individuals. Quite the contrary, dissonance was greatest when the self was directly involved. This was evident in *When Prophecy Fails* and *Divinity and Experience*. For Marian Keech, the magnitude of dissonance was at its greatest when her identity and status as a medium, along with the veracity of her messages, were put into question. She granted her visitors the veritable status of being the "boys from Clarion" and they provided her with discrepant information about her self and identity. This was argued to be a bigger crisis than the non-occurrence of the flood and the flying saucer, it was not until "the boys from Clarion" re-confirmed the veracity of her messages and her status as medium did she gather herself. In a different, yet similar manner, Ajak was distressed by the death of his father. This information created discrepancies about any possibility for reconciliation with his father in the future and returning to his sub-tribe. That is, Ajak would not be able to restore his self-concept as a son or his self-perception and sense of integrity with his family and sub-tribe and avoid the negative consequences, all of which were significant to Ajak and his course of action. Ajak's dissonance and discrepant thoughts were not alleviated until he had returned home and participated in the rituals of his sub-tribe. In other words, the rituals restored his relationship to his family and sub-clan. Although the Dinka rituals are represented in terms of appeasing the divinities and ghosts, they effectively reduced Ajak's dissonance and discrepant cognitions with the death of his father. The cases of Marian Keech and Ajak both reinforce the revisionist theories' focus on the self as the point in which the magnitude of dissonance is greatest.

The framework of 'believing selves' with a focus on "subjective commitments to truth," in conjunction with the revisionist theories of cognitive dissonance, provides a greater impetus to pay particular attention to individual persons in all the culturally diverse ways the self may be considered and conceived, as well as the times of crisis and conversion in particular cultural contexts. Not only do the social sciences provide a much richer source for epistemological investigation but they also motivate epistemology to develop a more dynamic relationship between beliefs and acceptances as opposed to considering them as static categories of discernment for singular propositional statements. The framework of 'believing selves' and *habitus* enables further discussion about the relationship of 'belief' to

various forms of knowledge. The three case studies demonstrated the various textures of belief, both implicit and explicit, as well as textures of acceptance (which was noted in chapter 3). Furthermore, beliefs and acceptances are not either/or determinants in their respective attitudes to 'truth.' An acceptance does not necessarily entail that there is no 'aim for truth' but rather implies a degree of indifference, doubt, suspicion, or reservation of 'truth' until further evidence is provided. Not only does this raise epistemological issues about the definition of 'truth' but it also begs the question regarding the relationship between what is 'true' and what is 'real.' Any 'aim for truth' includes a "subjective commitment" or a personal drive that is guided by the (implicit and explicit) criteria that motivate one to be compelled. In other words, the textures of beliefs and acceptances will vary according to context or type of 'truth.' Not all beliefs and acceptances fit neatly within a true or not true scale of determining what is real or not real. The epistemological distinction should then be considered along more specific variations of what may be included in 'truth.' For example, an 'aim for truth' may include an 'aim for good' or an 'aim for propriety' which could motivate a belief or an acceptance on various ethical or moral grounds with varying degrees of commitment and significance. This would account for an array of attitudes, propositions, experiences, and observations that do not fit within a spectrum of a particular definition of 'truth' but equally qualify as belief or acceptance because it contains an 'aim,' or lack thereof, within the 'aim for truth' characteristic.

9.3 THE UNITS OF EMBODIMENT AND CULTURAL HISTORY

The discussion of 'belief' through epistemology within the framework of embodiment, *habitus*, and 'believing selves' develops additional nuance for the relationship between culture, society, group, and individual. Not only does this framework engage the subtleties of affinity and notions of 'freedom' within a particular culture, or a society of multiple cultures, but it also enables a more detailed discussion of particular cultural histories within those cultures and societies rather than presupposing a strong cultural determinism. The three cases studies presented very different cultural contexts and modes of being during their respective period of social history: '50s America, '90s England, and '50s Sudan.

In *When Prophecy Fails*, the authors document the cultural history of UFOs and the theosophical movement within a U.S. social history during that time period. Marian Keech and her group can be situated within that context with each member reflecting their own particular cultural history. For example, Marian Keech and the Armstrongs have,

independently of each other, been engaged with theosophical ideas for several years and embodied them as part of their self and identity with their own personal histories. In this sense, the embodied cultural history of Marian Keech will differ from the Thomas and Daisy Armstrong thereby giving further particularity to the dynamics within the group. It would be plausible to discuss group dynamics as a dynamic of interacting cultural histories that constitute an intersubjective space. In another context, the three women in *Believing Identity* each represent a different cultural history. Each of them had lived a significant portion of their lives in Jamaica prior to migrating to England, which entails an embodiment of a particular Jamaican ethos with a particular 'Christian' background. Each of the women were inclined to engage in Christian services both in Jamaica and England while only accepting a 'Christian' identity as part of their personhood. In other words, they had an embodied implicit, but not an explicit, belief in being 'Christian.' It was not until their religious experience did they begin to explicitly believe they had a Christian identity in a context-independent manner. Moreover, it was not until they had joined the King Street congregation, and accepted its cultural history as well as its discourse for being 'saints,' did they place their 'Christian' identity before the labels of being 'black' and 'woman' in England. In other words, the King Street community facilitated a 'Christian' identity as integral to their personhood over other dimensions of identity. For Ajak in Lienhardt's *Divinity and Experience*, the embodiment of a cultural history is also evident. Ajak believed in the cultural discourse and practices of possession, which provided him with a culturally appropriate vehicle to express his "troubled conscience," while accepting the objects of belief, i.e. divinities, for his possessions. It is worth noting that the embodied cultural history of Ajak will differ from the cultural history of another person from another sub-clan with their own variation of a ritual or performance of being possessed. The particular trajectories and cultural influences on individuals will culminate in personalized embodied cultural histories and each person will, accordingly, reflect a particular *habitus* and effective identity appropriate to their contexts.[13]

---

[13] This also invokes theories about the transmission of ideas as acceptances to shaping beliefs. Dan Sperber's "epidemiology of representation…argues that ideas can be passed from one person to the next; that culture is composed of contagious ideas and also of productions (writings, artwork, tools, etc.) that spread ideas; and that one can explain culture by explaining why and how some ideas spread more effectively than others. In his epidemiological approach, individual mental representations are transformed by the communicator into public representations, and they are then re-transformed by the audience into mental representations. Mental representations that are repeated and spread throughout a group become cultural representations. Finally, the propagation of mental representations produces causal chains composed of interactions between individuals' cognitive processes and their shared environment…Sperber (1996: 70-92) claims that, although enduring religious beliefs spring from everyday experience, they are evocative because they diverge from common experience in startling ways, Whereas everyday knowledge is rigidly constrained and must conform to stored knowledge, other kinds of mental representations arise from our cognitive ability to form "meta-representations"

As evidenced by the analysis of individual persons, each person and group represented a particular cultural history within the broader constructs of their respective social period. Although, social and cultural histories are inter-related they are not synonymous. While social histories depict a general public attitude, or zeitgeist, the multiple cultural histories within them account for various public opinions and ways of being. That is, cultural histories are capable of transcending particular time periods and geographical boundaries in a way that social histories cannot.

9.4 FUTURE INTERSECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

The combined treatment of belief and acceptance illustrated the textures of 'belief' among, and within, persons as the "subject of culture" and "centre of experience" in their respective contexts. As noted in chapter 3, one dimension of the paradigm of embodiment is the *process* of enculturation by which societal norms and cultural ethos become part of the individual's *habitus*. This process, or rather processes, apart from the embodiment that occurs from infancy to adulthood, was evident in the various forms of conversion discussed in chapter 4 and the three case studies. The introduction of the belief-acceptance distinction enables us to discuss subtleties about *what* is embodied and shows that the cultural background serves as a source of acceptances which may or may not become belief. This provides an intermediary dimension between culture and self in the process of embodying a cultural history. In other words, acceptance is an attitude towards what is socially exposed and presented to the individual.

A common theme throughout the three case studies was the role of social support in the respective scenarios of 'conversion' and sustainment of position. Marian Keech would not have been capable of maintaining her position as medium without the people supporting, either accepting or believing, her in that role. The three women in *Believing Identity* would not have accepted the discourse of 'saint' and maintained an active position in affirming and believing in a 'Christian' identity without the support of the King Street church community. Similarly, Ajak was arguably motivated by those observing and accepting his states of possession as Dinka practice. In turn the public acts of ritual assuaged the divinities and his father's ghost effectively reducing any dissonance Ajak might have been experiencing with

(representations of our own representations) such as religious thoughts. Humans are dispositionally inclined to use meta-representations to expand knowledge" (Andresen 2001: 17).

the death of his father. In this regard, the role of social support was significant in each of the three case studies and stresses the importance of other persons and cultural contexts in the formation and perpetuation of beliefs and acceptances. This compels a more socially situated descriptive epistemology as opposed to an epistemology that abstracts the individual from the social.

Psychological studies of the past, when ethical guidelines were much more permissive than today, have shown that the group can exert considerable influence on the individual. For example, in 1971, when Phillip Zimbardo conducted his famous 'Stanford Prison Experiment' he illustrated the influence of prescribed social roles (prisoner or guard) and situational forces in the creation of a prison culture that affected the behaviour and psychology of the college students participating in the study. The prison guards, who were empowered by their role insofar as the design of the study enabled them, shaped a culture of power and abuse which spawned a culture of defiance amongst the prisoners.[14] The intensity with which these roles were accepted and/or believed demonstrated the impact of socially constructed roles, situations, and variables within those situations, on individual persons and their "will to resist"[15] or reproduce a particular culture. The 'Stanford Prison Experiment' demonstrates how the culture of a place can pressure individuals, contingent upon their level of involvement, into particular paradigms of expression and the acceptance of those expressions contributes to the perpetuation of that cultural history. Even if one does not believe in an opinion, one may accept and conform to the vocalizations of a majority that propagates a particular culture.[16] In this sense, the resilience and perpetuation of a culture is dependent upon acceptances and the underlying beliefs guiding them. Moreover, cultural histories also

---

[14] Zimbardo further explicates his position for investigating situational forces and context as causal forces of "evil" behaviour in persons in his book *The Lucifer Effect* (2007). Drawing on his Stanford Prison Experiment and his research on the abuses at Iraq's Abhu Graib prison – also acting as an expert witness for one of the MP prison guards – along with a dearth of evidence from the social sciences, Zimbardo argues that personal dispositions should not be considered as the sole and primary target for explaining negative behaviour: "situational power triumphs over individual power in given contexts" (2007: x).

[15] Ibid.: xii; Zimbardo states that the 'Stanford Prison Experiment' assessed "the extent to which the external features of an institutional setting could override the internal dispositions of the actors in that environment. Good dispositions were pitted against a bad situation." That is, the study provided "a powerful illustration of the potentially toxic impact of bad systems and bad situations" on otherwise, "good people" (195). A similar study (Peters 1985) was conducted by school teacher Jane Elliot who divided her classroom of third-grade children between brown and blue eyes. Privileges were granted to the blue-eyed group for one week and then the reverse. She designated one group as "superior" and the other "inferior" during their week of privileges. The construction of such a system empowered the privileged group to take certain attitudes against the "inferior" group. These studies contrast, and also potentially complement, Zijderveld's *The Abstract Society* (1970) in which he builds a discussion of protest premised by the proposition: "man as being able to say no" from Max Scheler.

[16] Asch 1951; Fein et al. 2007; Milgram 1963

reflect the modes of cultivating and reproducing moral attitudes as well as the various ways for managing various moralities,[17] all of which are evident in parenting practices as well as disciplinary measures in various social arenas (e.g. law). Claims of normativity are then also a kind of cultural history within a particular framework of discerning what *should* or *ought* to be the case with underlying embodied mechanisms around cultural forms of 'reason' and 'emotion' that drive normative and prescriptive claims.[18]

Discussing epistemology within the framework of embodiment and the social sciences as well as the themes of 'crisis' and 'conversion' in ethnographic contexts raises further questions regarding the relationship between beliefs and emotions, values, moralities, and identity as a contributor to and product of cultural and social histories. Not only does this engage in the various types of memory, noted by cognitive and neuroscientists[19] in relation to

---

[17] One distinction is between a morality of duty and a morality of aspiration found in the philosophy of law – pronounced by Lon Fuller (1964). The former points to the morality around realizing human potential and achieving forms of "excellence" or "prosperity" while the latter is directed towards the social structures enforcing taboos, rules, and regulations – what one is allowed and not allowed to do within a society. Anthropologist Joel Robbins (2007a) carves up the distinction between a morality of freedom and a morality of reproduction. It is arguable, however, that even acts of personal freedom also contribute to the reproduction of a cultural heritage in negative terms of "what you should not do" and thereby enforcing a morality of reproduction, which echoes sociologist Georg Simmel's comment that our sense of social belonging is a "mixture of enforcement and personal freedom" (1997 [1912, 1906]: 182). This further configures into the broader discussion of Durkheim's *Homo duplex*, which notes that we are "a member of a species, a social being who plays predefined social roles which urge [us] to think and act and feel according to the rules and patterns of [our] society. That means [our] unique experience of life is simultaneously a learned experience of a social life within the traditional structures of the 'objective' time of clock and calendar" (Zijderveld 1970: 113).

[18] Philosopher Ronald de Sousa (2008) argues how most philosophical arguments and rationalizations are underpinned by underlying emotions and values; William James, in his essay 'The Will to Believe' (1956), discusses the underlying 'passions' that influence our opinions and values.

[19] Memory systems have largely been divided into declarative and procedural forms; both of which relate to the emotional system of memory (Eichenbaum 2012). Procedural memory involves various forms of practice, motor skills, perception and attention, as well as notions of performance whereas declarative memory consists of episodic and semantic memory, as well as formulating what is termed 'autobiographical memory.' As evidenced by biographical accounts from the women in *Believing Identity*, autobiographical memory constitutes beliefs about the self and personal history. Although recalling personal episodes can vary from telling to telling which can impact how one remembers the experience (Stringer 2013; Conway & Pleydell-Pearce 2000), the overall coherence of biographical narratives are maintained as opposed to particular details (Koriat, Goldsmith & Pansky 2000). In other words, 'autobiographical memories' are composed of particular beliefs that are coloured by acceptances according to the context in which a narrative is recollected (Harris, Rasmussen & Berntsen 2014). While 'autobiographical memory' is not necessarily laden with emotional content, particular episodes certainly can have an emotional dimension. Memories about certain events (episodic memory) such as remembering what one did, or had for lunch, the previous day or the content of semantic memory such as remembering the capital of England, do not involve emotional content but are learned beliefs and acceptances. In addition, 'beliefs' without emotional content are much more susceptible to change. For example, when astronomers declared that Pluto was no longer a planet the belief that 'Pluto is a planet' was easily changed as there was no particular emotional commitment to Pluto being a planet. This was also the case with Susan Heath from *When Prophecy Fails* as she changed from a position of belief in theosophical ideas, the anticipated flood, and the arrival of a flying saucer to a position of disbelief and abandoning the group. While the change in beliefs about the status of Pluto is based on authoritative figures from astronomy, the change in Susan can be attributed to the lack of social support motivating the ideas of the group and cultural history of theosophy.

emotional memory,[20] but also the translation of memory to belief, values, and moralities that configure into systems of thought for action. Within dual-process or dual-system theories, the emotions have been considered to be a part of System 1 or Type 1 processes.[21] That is, the experience of emotions is largely automatic although they are not necessarily automatically expressed. Moreover, the expressions of emotions are subject to cultural-specificity and within the parameters of what is culturally appropriate or inappropriate. The involuntariness of belief thereby incorporates the involuntariness of emotions but their expression can be mediated by other beliefs or acceptances about the circumstances of the situation, which may or may not manifest in an explicit behaviour representing an emotion. Nonetheless, all emotions reflect some kind of belief that may or may not be conscious to the individual.[22]

The relationship between emotions and beliefs is most often reflected and observed in situations when the magnitude of dissonance is great and the individual experiences some form of crises or "moral breakdown." While there were concerns with de Martino's 'crisis of presence,' the destabilization of beliefs and the experience of dissonance were important points of inquiry for the study of 'beliefs.' This methodological focus on dissonance and crisis was also advocated by Kenelm Burridge and later on advanced by an anthropology of morality in Melanesia.[23] Specifically, Burridge proposed that

> …rather than detailing codes of conduct or ethical rules, we focus upon dilemmas, conflicts, and confrontations as situations in which moral assumptions are tested, affirmed or changed. Moral conventions, from this point of view, are provisional: subject to modification or abandonment in the face of experience.[24]

Similarly Jarett Zigon proposed that morality can be investigated by focusing on "moments that shake one out of the everydayness of being moral," or what he calls 'moral breakdown.'[25] Resolving the 'moral breakdown,' Zigon states, is when "ethics is performed"

---

[20] Eichenbaum 2012
[21] Evans 2008; Evers et al. 2014
[22] This pertains to the realm of the unconscious and what has been discussed in philosophical (Frankish 2010, 2012; Wylie 2011; Saul 2013) and psychological literature (Jost et al 2009; Greenwald et al 2009; Casper & Rothermund 2012; Stanovich et al 2013; Smith et al 2014; Newell & Shanks 2014) as 'implicit bias.' Much of this research also extends to the area of prejudice and discrimination. An overview of the relationship between religion, morality and prejudice in the psychology literature is presented by Hood jr., Hill and Spilka (2009), which also represents how beliefs are related to morals and emotions. The discussion of implicit biases further supplements the belief-acceptance distinction as well as the relationship between beliefs and emotions. Moreover, Rudman et al (2001) has suggested that implicit biases and prejudice may change through affective processes although the extent to which these changes observed in the study had longitudinal effects is uncertain. The literature on 'conversion' has, however, noted the possibility for changing implicit biases over a longer period of time.
[23] Barker 2007
[24] Ibid.: 2
[25] Zigon 2007: 133

and is the process of "returning to the everyday unreflective mode of everyday moral dispositions."[26] In other words, "the performance of ethics" is the process of dissonance reduction and resolving the perceived discrepancy. The approaches to morality and 'beliefs' are then similar and congruent with the investigation of cognitive dissonance and the ways dissonance is reduced and moral discrepancies resolved.

'Beliefs' about morality are significant not only to the individual[27] but also in their contribution to the function of society. To further elucidate this, it is helpful to draw on Davies' concept of 'moral-somatics.' Moral-somatic processes are concerned with the processes of embodiment that depicts the way "an individual's feeling state is influenced by social context."[28] In this regard, Davies situates 'moral-somatic' processes within a Durkheimian framework that considers "society as a moral community," which involves a "world of reciprocal relations between people whose collaborative endeavour creates a moral community of which each individual is a part and yet is sensed as being 'beyond' the individual."[29] However, not all dimensions of society can be considered 'moral.' Having a belief about what time the bus arrives and feeling anxious because the bus is late is certainly a different kind of somatic process than having a belief and feelings about the beheading or torture of a person. While a late bus may be associated with values of punctuality and feelings of anxiety or anger may occur as the expression of dissonance from the discrepant experience of a late bus, it is not the same kind of belief when hearing the news of someone being beheaded or a prison dedicated to torture. In this sense, the former is perhaps more aptly termed 'socio-somatic' processes whereas the latter involves 'moral-somatic'

---

[26] Ibid.: 138

[27] It is worth noting that social scientists are also susceptible to encountering discrepancies and feeling dissonance during their research. This is the case irrespective of discipline. Philip Zimbardo experienced significant distress, in his complacency, as one who contributed to the abuse during the 'Stanford Prison Experiment,' which he discusses further in his book, *The Lucifer Effect*. Anthropologists in the field engaging with cultures and regions that are, more often than not, radically different from their own backgrounds will certainly experience norms, practises, and morals that are discrepant with their own and feel dissonant about various situations. In this sense, it is important to note one's own experiences of dissonance that stem from "working in the field." That is, social scientists must be capable of discussing their own feelings, emotions, and embodied cultural histories as their experiences can shape and frame their interpretations and descriptions. In other words, the social scientists' emotions are also valid source of evidence within the context of research (J. Davies & Spencer 2010). Godfrey Lienhardt, Nicole Toulis, and Leon Festinger et al. could have enriched their own work by discussing their own presuppositions and emotional experiences during their documentation, explanation, and interpretation of the cultural histories they investigated.

[28] Davies 2011: 187

[29] Ibid.; In other words, the relationship between individual and culture or society is inherently circular in that the individual is simultaneously informed by and contributes to the broader structures of culture and society. (Moore & Sanders 2014)

processes.[30] Both socio- and moral-somatics have taken shape from the embodiment of socially and culturally sensitive information that engages a dynamic of emotions, memory, and socially accepted ideas.[31] In this regard, both socio- and moral-somatics are beliefs that embody particular cultural histories regarding certain values and moralities that contribute – in consonance or dissonance – to the broader function of a given society and its structures.[32] It is through these beliefs, implicit[33] and explicit, that we reinforce the social constructs of normativity and conversely what is 'other,' criminal, terrorist, hero, and more. In other words, our embodied and accepted cultural histories – our beliefs and acceptances – bind the individual with the social and contribute to what we conceive as the good, the bad, the ugly, and even the weird.

---

[30] Moral-somatic processes can include Haidt's domains of morality (2012) noted in footnote 10.

[31] Davies provides a similar account in terms of ideas and values: when an idea is emotionally charged it becomes a value (2011: 196). This dynamic can be translated to ideas as acceptances and values as a form of belief. In this regard, the emotions play a significant role in the development of certain beliefs that pertain to values and morals.

[32] This connection by which the accepted values and beliefs of a given society and/or culture pertains to the individual through "emotional and sensory dynamics of individuals as members" of that society has been discussed in terms of 'cultural intensification' by Davies (2008)

[33] A great deal of research is being done on 'implicit biases' (see footnote 22). In the study of religion, this area has been discussed in the cognitive science of religion with a distinction between reflective and intuitive beliefs (Sperber 1997; Baumard & Boyer 2013), which is a form of dual-process theory of religious belief. In this regard, the reflective-intuitive distinction is analogous, if not the same, with the acceptance-belief distinction as demonstrated in chapter 3. In the social scientific study of religion, considerable work has been done on the relationship between religious beliefs, prejudice, and morality (mentioned in footnote 22) as well as areas on women in theology (Guest, Sharma & Song 2013), on atheists and God (Lindeman et al 2014), on religious heritage and interracial marriage (Perry 2014), and on death (Jong et al 2012). This is an area that could be developed much further with interdisciplinary methods and collaboration in the study of religion.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alston, W. P., 1996: Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith. In *Faith, Freedom, and Rationality; Philosophy of Religion Today*, edited by J. Jordan & D. Howard-Snyder, pp. 3-27. Oxford: Rowan & Littlefield

Anderson, R. T., 2003: Constraint and Freedom in Icelandic Conversions. In *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion*, edited by A. Buckser & S. D. Glazier, pp. 123-132.Oxford: Rowan & Littlefield

Andresen, J., 2001: Introduction: towards a cognitive science of religion. In *Religion in Mind*, edited by J. Andresen, pp. 1-44. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Amiras, M. Z., 2008: Experience Beyond Belief: The 'Strangeness Curve' and Integral Transformative Practice. *Social Analysis*, 52(1): 127-143

Aronson, E. 2008: *The Social Animal* (10th Edition). New York: Worth Publishers

Aronson, E. and Carlsmith, J. M., 1962: Performance expectancy as a determinant of actual performance. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 65(3): 178-182

Aronson, E. and Mills, J., 1959: The effect of severity of initiation on liking for a group. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 59(2): 177-181

Asad, T., 2002(1982): The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category. In *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion* (1st Edition), edited by Michael Lambek, pp. 114-132. Oxford: Blackwell

Asch, S., 1951: Effects of group pressure upon the modification and distortion of judgment. In *Group, leadership and men*, edited by M. H. Guetzkow, pp. 117-190. Pittsburgh: Carnegie

Atran, S. and Heinrich, J., 2010: The Evolution of Religion: How Cognitive By-Products, Adaptive Learning Heuristics, Ritual Displays, and Group Competition Generate Deep Commitments to Prosocial Religions. *Biological Theory*, 5(1): 18-30

Atran, S. and Norenzayan, A., 2004: Religion's evolutionary landscape: Counterintuition, commitment, compassion, communion. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 27: 713-770

Austin-Broos, D., 1999: Review of Nicole Toulis 'Believing Identity: Pentecostalism and the Mediation of Jamaican Ethnicity and Gender in England'. *New West Indian Guide*, 73(1/2): 166-168

Bader, C., 1999: New perspectives on failed prophecy. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 38: 119-131.

Bainbridge, W. S., 1997: *The sociology of religious movements*. New York: Routledge

Balzer, M. M., 2008: Beyond Belief? Social, Political, and Shamanic Power in Siberia. *Social Analysis*, 52(1): 95-110

Banton, M., 1967: *Race Relations*. London: Tavistock.

Barber, S. J. and Mather, M., 2014: How retellings shape younger and older adults' memories. *Journal of Cognitive Psychology*, 26: 263-279

Barker, J., 2007: Introduction: The Anthropological Study of Morality in Melanesia. In *The Anthropology of Morality in Melanesia and Beyond*, edited by J. Barker, pp 1-21. Aldershot: Ashgate

Barron, F., 1968: *Creativity and Personal Freedom*. Princeton: Van Nostrand

Batson, D. B., 1975: Rational Processing or Rationalization?: The Effect of Disconfirming Information on a Stated Religious Belief. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 32(1): 176-184

Batson, C. D., and Ventis, W. L. 1982: *The religious experience: A social-psychological perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press

Baumard, N., and Boyer, P., 2013: Religious Beliefs as Reflective Elaborations on Intuitions: A Modified Dual-Process Model. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22(4): 295-300

Beauregard, M., and Paquette, V., 2006: Neural correlates of a mystical experience in Carmelite nuns. *Neuroscience Letters*, 405: 186-190

Bem, D., 1970: *Beliefs, Attitudes and Human Affairs*. Belmont: Brooks/Cole

Berger, P. and Luckmann, T., 1967: *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Garden City: Doubleday

Biehl, J., Good, B., and Kleinman, A., 2007: Introduction: Rethinking Subjectivity. In *Subjectivity: Ethnographic Investigations*, edited by J. Biehl, B. Good, A. Kleinman, pp. 1-23. Berkeley: University of California Press

Bielo, J., 2012: Belief, Deconversion, and Authenticity among U.S. Emerging Evangelicals. *Ethos*, 40(3): 258-276

Bivins, J. C., 2012: Ubiquity Scorned: Belief's Strange Survivals. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 24: 55-63

Bloch, M., 2012: *Anthropology and the Cognitive Challenge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Bockian, M. J., Glenwick, D. S., and Bernstein, D. P., 2005: The applicability of the stages of change model to Jewish conversion. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, *15*(1): 35–50.

Borofsky, R., 2005: *Yanomami: The Fierce Controversy and What We Can Learn from It*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Bortolotti, L., 2010: *Delusions and Other Irrational Beliefs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Bourdieu, P., 2011(1977): *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Boyer, P., 2013: Why "belief" is hard work: Implications of Tanya Luhrmann's *When God Talks Back. HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 3(3): 349-357

Bratman, M. E., 1992: Practical Reasoning and Acceptance in a Context. *Mind*, 101.401, 1-15

Brehm, J. W., 1956: Postdecision changes in the desirability of alternatives. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 52(3): 384-389

Briñol, P., Petty, R. E., and Wagner, B., 2009: Body posture effects on self-evaluation: A self-validation approach. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 39(6): 1053-1064

Brown, T. K., 2003: Mystical Experiences, American Culture, and Conversion to Christian Spiritualism. In *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion*, edited by A. Buckser and S. D. Glazier, pp. 133-145.Oxford: Rowan & Littlefield

Brzozowski, G., 2013: Spatiality and the Performance of Belief: The Public Square and Collective Mourning for John Paul II. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 28(2): 241-257

Buckser, A., 2003: Social Conversion and Group Definition in Jewish Copenhagen. In *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion*, edited by A. Buckser and S. D. Glazier, pp. 69-84. Oxford: Rowan & Littlefield

_____., 2008: Cultural Change and the Meanings of Belief in Jewish Copenhagen. *Social Analysis*, 52(1): 39-55

Buckser, A. and Glazier, S. D., (Eds.) 2003: *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion*. Oxford: Rowan & Littlefield

Burris, C. T., Harmon-Jones, E. and Tarpley, W. R., 1997: "By Faith Alone": Religious Agitation and Cognitive Dissonance. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 19(1): 17-31

Bushman, B. J., 1988: The effects of apparel on compliance: A field experiment with a female authority figure. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 14: 459-467

Carlisle, S., 2012: Creative Sincerity: Thai Buddhist karma Narratives and the Grounding of Truths. *Ethos*, 40(3): 317-340

Carlisle, S. and Simon, G. M., 2012: Believing Selves: Negotiating Social and Psychological

Experiences of Belief. *Ethos*, 40(3): 221-236

Carmona-Perera, M., Marti-Garcia, C., Perez-Garcia, M. and Verdejo-Garcia, A., 2014: Erratum: Valence of emotions and moral decision-making increased pleasantness to pleasant images and decreased unpleasantness to unpleasant images are associated with utilitarian choices in healthy adults. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 8 (50): 1-2

Carroll, R. P., 1979: *When prophecy failed: Cognitive dissonance in the prophetic traditions of the Old Testament*. New York: Seabury Press.

Casasanto, D., 2009: Embodiment of Abstract Concepts: Good and Bad in Right- and Left-Handers. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 138(3): 351-367

Casper, C. and Rothermund, K., 2012: Gender Self-Stereotyping Is Context Dependent for Men But Not for Women. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 34: 434-442

Caspi, A., 2000: The Child Is Father of the Man: Personality Continuities From Childhood to Adulthood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(1): 158-172

Cassaniti, J., 2012: Agency and the Other: The Role of Agency for the Importance of Beliefs in Buddhist and Christian Traditions. *Ethos*, 40(3): 297-316

Chagnon, N. A., 1968: *Yanomamo: The Fierce People*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston

Chapple, E. D. and Coon, C. S., 1947. *Principles of Anthropology*. London: Cape

Chong, J. and Cooper, J., 2007: Cognitive dissonance and vicarious dissonance in East Asia: Can I feel your discomfort but not my own? Poster presented at the meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Memphis, TN.

Chung, D., 2001: *Syncretism: The Religious Context of Christian Beginnings*. Albany: State University of New York Press

Clark, E. T., 1929: *The psychology of religious awakening*. New York: Macmillan

Clarke, D., 2000: The Possibility of Acceptance Without Belief. In *Believing and Accepting*, edited by Pascal Engel, pp. 31-54. Norwell: Kluwer Academic Publishers

Cohen, L. J., 1989: Belief and Acceptance. *Mind*, New Series, 98(391): 367-389

_____., 1992: *An Essay in Belief and Acceptance*. Oxford: Clarendon Press

_____., 2000: Why Acceptance that *P* Does Not Entail Belief that *P*. In *Believing and Accepting*, edited by Pascal Engel, pp. 55-64. Norwell: Kluwer Academic Publishers

Cohen, G. L. and Prinstein, M. J., 2006: Peer contagion of aggression and health-risk behaviour among adolescent males: An experimental investigation of effects on public conduct and private attitudes. *Child Development*, 77: 967-983

Coleman, S., 2003: Continuous Conversion? The Rhetoric, Practice, and Rhetorical Practice of Charismatic Protestant Conversion. In *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion*, edited by A. Buckser and S. D. Glazier, pp. 15-28. Oxford: Rowan & Littlefield

Conway, M.A. and Pleydell-Pearce, C.W., 2000: The construction of autobiographical memories in the self-memory system. *Psychological Review*, 107(2): 261-288

Cooper, J., 2007: *Cognitive Dissonance: Fifty Years of a Classic Theory*. London: Sage

Cooper, J. and Fazio, R. H., 1984: A new look at dissonance theory. In *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 17, edited by L. Berkowitz, pp. 229-264. Orlando: Academic Press

Cooper, J., Fazio, R. H., and Rhodewalt, F., 1978: Dissonance and humor evidence for the undifferentiated nature of dissonance arousal. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 36: 280-285

Cooper, J. and Hogg, M. A., 2007: Feeling the anguish of others: A theory of vicarious dissonance. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 39, edited by M. P. Zanna, pp. 359-403. San Diego: Academic Press

Cooper, J. and Scalise, C. J., 1974: Dissonance produced by deviations from lifestyles: the interaction of Jungian typology and conformity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 29: 566-571

Costa Jr., P. T. and McCrae, R. R., 1994: Set like plaster?: Evidence for the stability of adult personality. In *Can personality change?*, edited by T. E. Heatherton & J. I. Weinberger, pp. 21-40. Washington D. C.: American Psychological Association

Coyle, B. R., 2001: Twelve myths of religion and psychiatry: Lessons for training psychiatrists in spiritually sensitive treatments. *Mental Health, Religion, and Culture*, 4:147-174

Croyle, R. and Cooper, J. 1983: Dissonance arousal: physiological evidence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 45: 782-791

Cruz, V., Good, K., and Goldberg, V., 2002: *Faces of the Rainforest: The Yanomami*. New York: PowerHouse Books

Csikszentmihalyi, M., 1996: *Creativity*. New York: Harper Collins
Csikszentmihalyi, M. and Robinson, R. R., 1990: *The Art of Seeing: An Interpretation of the Aesthetic Encounter*. Los Angeles: Getty Publications

Csordas, T., 1990: Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology. *Ethos*, 18(1): 5-47

_____., 1994: Introduction: the body as representation and being-in-the-world. In *Embodiment and experience: The existential ground of culture and self*, edited by Thomas Csordas, pp. 1-24. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Cucchiari, S., 1988: "Adapted for Heaven": Conversion and Culture in Western Sicily. *American Ethnologist*, 15(3): 417-441

Curtis, J. E., and Petras, J. W. (Ed.), 1970: *The Sociology of Knowledge: A Reader*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co Ltd

Day, A., 2013a: Varieties of Belief over Time: Reflections from a Longitudinal Study of Youth and Belief. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 28(2): 277-293

_____., 2013b: Euro-American Ethnic and Natal Christians: Believing in Belonging. In *Social Identities Between the Sacred and the Secular*, edited by Abby Day, Giselle Vincett, & Christopher R. Cotter, pp. 61-74. Surrey: Ashgate

Day, A., and Lynch, G., 2013: Introduction: Belief as Cultural Performance. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 28(2): 199-206

Davies, D. J., 2008: Cultural intensification: A Theory for Religion. In *Religion and the Individual*, edited by Abby Day, pp. 7-18. Hampshire: Ashgate

_____, 2011: *Emotion, Identity, and Religion: Hope, Reciprocity, and Otherness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Davies, J. and Spencer, D. (Eds.), 2010: *Emotions in the Field: The Psychology and Anthropology of Fieldwork Experience*. Stanford: Stanford University Press

De Sousa, R., 2008: Really, what else is there? Emotions, value and morality. *Critical Quarterly*, 50(4): 12-23

Dehanas, D. N., 2013: Keepin' it Real: London Youth Hip Hop as an Authentic Performance of Belief. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 28(2): 295-308

Dein, S., 1997: Lubavitch: A contemporary messianic movement. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 12(2): 191-204

_____., 2001: What really happens when prophecy fails: The case of Lubavitch. *Sociology of Religion*, 62: 383-401

_____., 2013: How Useful is 'Religious Belief' in the Anthropology of Religion?. *Anthropol* 2: e116. doi: 10.4172/2332-0915.1000e116

Dein, S. and Littlewood, R., 2000: Apocalyptic suicide. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 3(2): 109-114

Dein, S. and Dawson, L. L., 2008: The 'Scandal' of the Lubavitch Rebbe: Messianism as a

Response to Failed Prophecy. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 23(2): 163-180

Dex, S., 1983: The Second Generation: West Indian Female School Leavers. In *One Way Ticket*, edited by A. Phizacklea, pp. 191-205. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Di Bella, M. P., 2003: Conversion and Marginality in Southern Italy. In *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion*, edited by A. Buckser and S. D. Glazier, pp. 85-94. Oxford: Rowan & Littlefield

Digman, J. M., 1990: Personality structure: Emergence of the Five-Factor model. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 41: 417-440

Dostoevsky, F., 1912: *The Brothers Karamazov*. London: William Heinemann

Droogers, A., 2014: The World of Worldviews. In *Methods for the Study of Religious Change: From Religious Studies to Worldview Studies*, edited by A. Droogers and A. van Harskamp, pp.17-42. Bristol: Equinox

Durkheim, E., 1970 (1897): *Suicide: A Study in the Sociology*. London: Routledge

Eichenbaum, H., 2012: *The Cognitive Neuroscience of Memory: an introduction* (2nd Edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press

Elisha, O., 2008: Faith Beyond Belief: Evangelical Protestant Conceptions of Faith and the Resonance of Anti-humanism. *Social Analysis*, 52(1): 56-78

Eggington, J., 1957: *They Seek a Living*. London: Hutchinson

Emmons, R. A., 1995: Levels and domains in personality: An introduction. *Journal of Personality,* 63(3): 341–364

_____., 1999: Religion in the Psychology of Personality: An Introduction. *Journal of Personality*, 67(6): 873-888

Engel, P., 2000: Introduction: The Varieties of Belief and Acceptance. In *Believing and Accepting*, edited by Pascal Engel, pp. 1-30. Norwell: Kluwer Academic Publishers

Erikson, E. H., 1956: The Problem of Ego Identity. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 4: 56-121

_____., 1959: *Young man Luther*. London: Faber and Faber Press

Evans, J. St. B. T., 2008: Dual-Processing Accounts of Reasoning, Judgment, and Social Cognition. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 59: 255-278

Evers, C., Hopp, H., Gross, J. J., Fischer, A. H., Manstead, A. S. R., and Mauss, I. B., 2014:

Emotion response coherence: A dual-process perspective. *Biological Psychology*, 98: 43-49

Fein, S., Goethals, G. R., Kugler, M. B., 2007: Social Influence on Political Judgments: The Case of Presidential Debates. *Political Psychology*, 28(2): 165-192

Ferguson, R. B., 1995: *Yanomami warfare: a political history*. Santa Fe: American Research Press

Festinger, L., 1954: A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, 7: 117-140

_____., 1957: *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Stanford: Stanford University Press

_____., 1999: Reflections on Cognitive Dissonance: 30 Years Later. In *Cognitive Dissonance: Progress on a Pivotal Theory in Social Psychology*, edited by E. Harmon-Jones & J. Mills, pp. 381-385. Washington D. C.: American Psychological Association

Festinger, L. and Carlsmith, J. M., 1959: Cognitive consequences of forced compliance. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 58: 203-210

Festinger, L., Riecken, H. W., and Schachter, S., 2008 [1956]: *When Prophecy Fails*. Foreword by Elliot Aronson. London: Pinter & Martin

Foner, N., 1976: Women, Work and Migration: Jamaicans in London. *New Community*, 15(1/2): 85-98

Frankish, K., 2010: Dual-Process and Dual-System Theories of Reasoning. *Philosophy Compass*, 5(10): 914-926

_____., 2012: Dual systems and dual attitudes. *Mind and Society*, 11:41-51

Freeman, J. D., 1983: *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The making and unmaking of an anthropological myth*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

_____., 1998: *The Fateful Hoaxing of Margaret Mead: A historical analysis of her Samoan Research*. Boulder: Westview Press

Freedman, J. L., 1965: Long-term behavioural effects of cognitive dissonance. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 1(2): 145-155

Frijda, N. H., Manstead, A. S. R., and Bem, S. (Eds.), 2000: *Emotions and Beliefs: How Feelings Influence Thoughts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Fuller, L. L., 1964: *The Morality of Law*. New Haven: Yale University Press

Galanter, M., 1980: Psychological induction into the large group: Findings from a large modern religious sect. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 137: 1574-1579

_____., 1989: *Cults: Faith, healing, and coercion*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gawronski, B., Peters, K. R, and Stack, F. 2008: Cross-Cultural Differences Versus Universality in Cognitive Dissonance: A Conceptual Analysis. In *Handbook of Motivation and Cognition Across Cultures*, edited by R. M. Sorrentino & S. Yamaguchi, pp. 297-314. New York: Elsevier

Geertz, C., 2002(1966): Religion as a Cultural System. In *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion* (1st Edition), edited by Michael Lambek, pp. 61-82. Oxford: Blackwell

Gerlach, L. P., & Hine, V. H., 1970: *People, power, change: Movements of social transformation*. Indianapolis: Bobbs- Merrill.

Gill, L., 1990: "Like a Veil to Cover Them": Women and the Pentecostal Movement in La Paz. *American Ethnologist*, 17(4): 708-721

Gladwell, M., 2000: *The tipping point*. New York: Little Brown

Glass, D. C., 1964: Changes in liking as a means of reducing cognitive discrepancies between self-esteem and aggression. *Journal of Personality*, 32(4): 531-549

Glass, R., 1960: *Newcomers*. London: George Allen and Unwin/Centre for Urban Studies

Glazier, S. D., 2000: Review of Nicole Toulis 'Believing Identity: Pentecostalism and the Mediation of Jamaican Ethnicity and Gender in England'. *American Ethnologist*, 27(3):787-788

_____., 2008: Demanding Deities and Reluctant Devotees: Belief and Unbelief in the Trinidadian Orisa Movement. *Social Analysis*, 52(1): 19-38

Gombrich, R. F., 1971: *Precept and Practice*. Oxford: Clarendon Press

Good, K. and Chanoff, D., 1991: *Into the Heart: One Man's Pursuit of Love and Knowledge Among the Yanomama*. New York: Simon & Schuster

Gooren, H., 2007: Reassessing conventional approaches to conversion: Toward a new synthesis. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 46: 337-353

Gorsuch, R. L., 1988: Psychology of religion. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 39: 201-221

Greenwald, A. G., Uhlmann, E. L., Poehlman, T. A., and Banaji, M. R., 2009: Understanding and Using the Implicit Association Test: III. Meta-Analysis of Predictive Validity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97(1): 17-41

Griffiths, A. P., 1963: On Belief. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 63: 167-186

_____., (ed.) 1967: *Knowledge and Belief*. London: Oxford University Press

Guest, M., 2012: Religion and Knowledge: The Sociological Agenda. In *Religion and*

Knowledge: sociological perspectives, edited by M. Guest & E. Arweck, pp. 1-21. Burlington: Ashgate

Guest, M., Sharma, S., Aune, K. and Warner, R., 2013: Challenging 'Belief' and the Evangelical Bias: Student Christianity in English Universities. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 28(2): 207-223

Guest, M., Sharma, S., Song, R., 2013: *Gender and Career Progression in Theology and Religious Studies*. Durham, UK: Durham University

Haidt, J., 2006: *The Happiness Hypothesis: Putting Ancient Wisdom and Philosophy to the Test of Modern Science*. London: Arrow Books

_____., 2012: *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Penguin

Hakli, R., 2006: Group beliefs and the distinction between belief and acceptance. *Cognitive Systems Research*, 7: 286-297

Hall, S., 1992: The New Ethnicities. In *'Race', Culture and Difference*, edited by J. Donald & A. Rattansi, pp 252-259.London: Sage

Hampshire, S., 1959: *Thought and Action*. London: Chatto & Windus Press

Handelman, D., 2008: Returning to Cosmology – Thoughts on the Positioning of Belief. *Social Analysis*, 52(1): 181-195

Harding, S. F., 1987: Convicted by the Holy Spirit: The Rhetoric of Fundamental Baptist Conversion. *American Ethnologist*, 14(1): 167-181

Harman, G., 1986: *Change in View*. Cambridge: MIT Press

Harmon-Jones, E., 2000a: Cognitive Dissonance and Experienced Negative Affect: Evidence that Dissonance Increases Experienced Negative Affect Even in the Absence of Aversive Consequences. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26(12): 1490-1501

_____., 2000b: An Update on Cognitive Dissonance Theory, With a Focus on the Self. In *Psychological Perspectives on Self and Identity*, edited by A. Tesser, R. B. Felson & J. M. Suls. Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association

Harmon-Jones, E. and Harmon-Jones, C., 2008: Action-Based Model of Dissonance: A Review of Behavioral, Anterior Cingulate, and Prefrontal Cortical Mechanisms. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 2(3): 1518-1538

Harmon-Jones, E., Brehm, J. W., Greenberg, J., Simon, L., and Nelson, D. E., 1996:

Evidence That the Production of Aversive Consequences Is Not Necessary to Create Cognitive Dissonance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70 (1): 5-16

Harmon-Jones, E. and Mills, J., 1999: An Introduction to Cognitive Dissonance Theory and an Overview of Current Perspectives on the Theory. In *Cognitive Dissonance: Progress on a Pivotal Theory in Social Psychology*, edited by E. Harmon-Jones & J. Mills, pp. 3-21. Washington D. C.: American Psychological Association

Harris, M., 1984: A cultural materialist theory of band and village warfare: the Yanomamo test. In *Warfare, Culture, and Environment*, edited by R. B. Ferguson, pp. 111-140. Orlando: Academic Press

Harris, C. B., Rasmussen, A. S., and Berntsen, D., 2014: The functions of autobiographical memory: an integrative approach. *Memory*, 22(5): 559-581

Henrich, J., Heine, S. J., and Norenzayan, A., 2010: The weirdest people in the world?. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 33: 61-135

Heine, S. J. and Lehman, D. R., 1997: Culture, dissonance, and self-affirmation. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23: 389-400

Hicks, D., 2008: Glimpses of Alternatives – The *Uma Lulik* of East Timor. *Social Analysis*, 52(1): 166-180

Hill, D. M., 2005: Race and cognitive dissonance: the role of double-consciousness in the experience of dissonance. Unpublished Masters' thesis. Princeton University

Hintikka, J., 1962: *Knowledge and Belief: an introduction into the logic of the two nouns*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press

Hong, S., 2009: *Naming God: The Case of Protestant Christianity*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock

Hood Jr., R. W., 2003: The relationship between religion and spirituality. In *Defining religion: Investigating the boundaries between the sacred and the secular: Vol. 10. Religion and the social order*, edited by D. Bromley (Series ed.), A. L. Greil & D. Bromley (Vol. eds.), pp. 241-265. Amsterdam: Elsevier Science.

Hood Jr., R. W., 2005: Mystical, spiritual, and religious experiences. In *Handbook of the psychology of religion and spirituality*, edited by R. F. Paloutzian & C. L. Parks, pp. 348-364. New York: Guilford Press.

Hood Jr., R. W., Hill, P. C., and Spilka, B., 2009: *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach* (4th Edition). New York: Guilford Press

Horton, R., 1962: Review of Godfrey Lienhardt 'Divinity and experience: the religion of the Dinka'. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 32(1): 78

Hoshino-Browne, E., Zanna, A. S., Spencer, S. J., Zanna, M. P., Kitayama, S., and

Lackenbauer, S. 2005: On the cultural guises of cognitive dissonance: the case of Easterners and Westerners. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 89: 294-310

Howe, H. R., 1978: Max Weber's Elective Affinities: Sociology Within the Bounds of Pure Reason. *American Journal of Sociology*, 84(2): 366-385

Howell, B. M., 2007: The Repugnant Cultural Other Speaks Back: Christian Identity as Ethnographic "Standpoint." *Anthropological Theory*, 7(4): 371-391

Hume, D., 1739: *A Treatise of Human Nature: Being an Attempt to introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects*. 3 vols. London

Huntingford, G. W. B., 1962: Review of Godfrey Lienhardt 'Divinity and experience: the religion of the Dinka'. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 25(2): 408-408

Hutchinson, L. and Schmidt, B.E., 2010: Introduction. In *Spirit Possession and Trance: New Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by L. Hutchinson & B. E. Schmidt. pp. 1-15. London: Continuum

Inzlicht, M., Tullet, A.M., and Good, M. 2011: The need to believe: a neuroscience account of religion as a motivated process. *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, 1(3): 192-212

Izuma, K., Matsumoto, M., Murayama, K., Samejima, K., Sadato, N., and Matsumoto, J., 2010: neural correlates of cognitive dissonance and choice-induced preference change. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, 107(51): 22014-22019

Jackson, S., 1995: Factors influencing the occurrence of flow state in elite athletes. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 7: 138-166

_____., 1996: Toward a conceptual understanding of the flow experience in elite athletes. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 67: 76-90

Jackson, S. and Csikszentmihalyi, M., 1999: *Flow in sports*. Champaign: Human Kinetics

James, W., 1956: *The Will to Believe and other essays in popular philosophy Human Immortality both books bound as one*. New York: Dover

_____., 1985 (1902): *The varieties of religious experience*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Jang, K. L., Livesley, W. J., Ando, J., Yamagata, S., Suzuki, A., Angleitner, A., Ostendorf, F., Riemann, R., and Spinath, F., 2006: Behavioral genetics of the higher-order factors of the Big Five. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 41: 261-272

Jenkins, T., 2013: *Of Flying Saucers and Social Scientists: A Re-Reading of When Prophecy Fails and of Cognitive Dissonance*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

John, O. P., and Srivastava, S., 1999: The Big Five trait taxonomy: History, measurement,

and theoretical perspectives. In *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (2nd Edition), edited by L. A. Pervin & O. P. Johns, pp. 102-138. New York: Guilford Press.

Jong, J., Halberstadt, J., and Bluemke, M., 2012: Foxhole atheism, revisited: The effects of mortality salience on explicit and implicit belief. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48: 983-989

Jost, J. T., Rudman, L. A., Blair, I. V., Carney, D. R., Dasgupta, N., Glaser, J., and Hardin, C. D., 2009: The existence of implicit bias is beyond reasonable doubt: A refutation of ideological and methodological objections and executive summary of ten studies that no manager should ignore. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 29: 39-69

Kant., I., 1797: *Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels*. 2nd Edition, rev. Leipzig

Kahneman, D., 2011: *Thinking, fast and slow*. London: Penguin

Kimiecik, J. C., and Harris, A. T., 1996: What is enjoyment? A conceptual/definitional analysis with implications for sport and exercise psychology. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 18: 247-263

Kinzler, K. D. and Spelke, E. S., 2007: Core systems in human cognition. *Progress in Brain Research*, 164: 257-264

Kipp, R., 1995: Conversion by Affiliation: The History of the Karo Batak Protestant Church. *American Ethnologist*, 22(4): 868-882

Kirkpatrick, L. A., 1997: A longitudinal study of changes in religious belief and behaviour as a function of individual differences in adult attachment style. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* 36(2): 207–217

_____., 1998: God as a substitute attachment figure: A longitudinal study of adult attachment style and religious change in college students. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin,* 24(9), 961–973.

Kirsch, T., 2004: Restaging the Will to Believe: Religious Pluralism, Anti-Syncretism, and the Problem of Belief. *American Anthropologist*, 106 (4): 699-709

Kline, D., 2012: The Quaker Journey and the Framing of Corporate and Personal Belief. *Ethos*, 40(3): 277-296

Knobe, J., 2004: What is experimental philosophy?. *The philosopher's magazine*, 28: 37-39

Kohls, N. and Walach, H., 2007: Psychological Distress, Experiencing of Ego Loss and Spirituality: Exploring the Effects of Spiritual Practice. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 35(10): 1301-1316

Kohls, N., Hack, A., and Walach, H., 2008: Measuring the Unmeasurable by Ticking Boxes

and Opening Pandora's Box? Mixed Methods Research as a Useful Tool for Investigating Exceptional and Spiritual Experiences. *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 30: 155-187

Koriat, A., Goldsmith, M., and Pansky, A., 2000: Toward a psychology of memory accuracy. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 51: 481-537

Lambek, M., 1989: From disease to discourse: remarks on the conceptualization of trance and spirit possession. In *Altered States of Consciousness and Mental Health*, edited by C. A. Ward, pp. 36-61 Newbury Park: Sage

Lepper, M. R., Zanna, M. P., and Abelson, R. P., 1970: Cognitive irreversibility in a dissonance-reduction situation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 16: 191-198

Lévi-Strauss, C. 1960: Introduction to M. Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France

Levine, R. V., 2003: *The Power of Persuasion: How We're Bought and Sold*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons

Lichtenberg, G. C., 1958: *Aphorismen*. Zurich: Mannese

Lienhardt, G., 1961: *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka*. Oxford: Clarendon Press

Lindeman, M., Heywood, B., Riekki, T., and Makkonen, T., 2014: Atheists Become Emotionally Aroused When Daring God to Do Terrible Things. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 24(2): 124-132

Lindholm, C., 2012: "What is Bread?" The Anthropology of Belief. *Ethos*, 40(3): 341-357

Lindquist, G., 2008: Loyalty and Command: Shamans, Lamas, and Spirits in a Siberian Ritual. *Social Analysis*, 52(1): 111-126

Lindquist, G. and Coleman, S., 2008: Introduction: Against Belief? *Social Analysis*, 52(1): 1-18

Little, K. L., 1947: *Negroes in Britain*. London: Kegan Paul

Lizot, J., 1985: *Tales of the Yanomami: Daily Life in the Venezuelan Forest*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Lofland, J. and Skonovd, N., 1981: Conversion motifs. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 20: 373-385

Lohman, R. I., 2003: Turning the Belly: Insights on Religious Conversion from New Guinea Gut Feelings. In *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion*, edited by A. Buckser and S. D. Glazier, pp. 109-122. Oxford: Rowan & Littlefield

Luhrmann, T., 1989: *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic and Witchcraft in*

Present-Day England. Oxford: Blackwell.

_____., 2006: Subjectivity. *Anthropological Theory*, 6(3): 345-361

_____., 2012: *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*. New York: Vintage Books

Lutz, C., 1986: The Anthropology of Emotions. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 15: 405-436

Mackie, D. M., Worth, L. T., and Asuncion, A. G., 1990: Processing of persuasive in-group messages. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58: 812-822

Mair, J., 2012: Cultures of belief. *Anthropological Theory*, 12(4): 448-466

Malle, B. F., 2004: *How the Mind Explains Behavior: Folk Explanations, Meaning, and Social Interaction*. London: MIT Press

Mandes, S. and Rogaczewska, M., 2013: "I don't reject the Catholic Church – the Catholic Church rejects me": How Twenty- and Thirty-somethings in Poland Re-evaluate their Religion. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 28(2): 259-276

Mannheim, K., 1936: *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich

Maracek, J. and Mettee, D. R., 1972: Avoidance of continued success as a function of self-esteem, level of esteem certainty, and responsibility for success. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 22(1): 98-107

Marler, P. L., and Hadaway, C. K. 2002: "Being religious" or "being spiritual" in America: A zero-sum proposition? *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41: 289-300.

Markus, H. R. and Kitayama, S., 1991: Culture and the self: implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98: 224-253

Mauss, M., 1973: Techniques of the body. *Economy and Society*, 2(1): 70-88

Mayo, B., 1964: Belief and Constraint. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 64: 139-56. Reprinted in *Knowledge and Belief*, edited by A. P. Griffiths, pp. 147-61. London: Oxford University Press

McAdams, D. P., 1994a: Can personality change? Levels of stability and growth in personality across the lifespan. In *Can personality change?*, edited by T. F. Heatherton & J. L. Weinberger, pp. 299–313. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association

_____., 1994b: *The person: An introduction to personality psychology* (2nd Edition). Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace

McCauley, R. N., 2001: Ritual, memory, and emotion: comparing two cognitive hypotheses.

In *Religion in Mind*, edited by J. Andresen, pp. 115-140. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

McCrae, R. R., 1992 (Ed.): The Five-Factor Model: Issues and applications. *Journal of Personality*, 60(2)

McCrae, R. R. and Costa Jr., P. T., 1997: Personality Trait Structure as a Human Universal. *American Psychologist*. 52(5): 509-516

Mead, M., 1928: *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilisation*. New York: William Morrow & Company

Melton, J. G., 1985: Spiritualization and reaffirmation: What really happens when prophecy fails. *American Studies*, 26: 17-29

Menon, K. D., 2003: Converted Innocents and Their Trickster Heroes: The Politics of Proselytizing in India. In *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion* edited by A. Buckser and S. D. Glazier, pp. 43-54.Oxford: Rowan & Littlefield

Merleau-Ponty, M., 1962: *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Milgram, S., 1963: Behavioural study of obedience. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67: 371-378

Miller, J. G., 1984: Culture and the development of everyday social explanation. *Journal of Personality and Social psychology*, 46: 961-978

Mills, C. W., 1956: *The Power Elite*. New York: Oxford University Press

Mitchell, J. P. and Mitchell, H. J., 2008: For Belief: Embodiment and Immanence in Catholicism and Mormonism. *Social Analysis*, 52(1): 79-94

Monin, B., Norton, M. I., Cooper, J., and Hogg, M. A. 2004: Reacting to an assumed situation vs. conforming to an assumed reaction: the role of perceived speaker attitude in vicarious dissonance. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 7: 207-220

Moore, H. L. and Sanders, T., 2014 (Eds.): *Anthropology in Theory: Issues in Epistemology* (2nd Edition). West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons

Moscovici, S., 1993: *The Invention of Society: Psychological Explanations for Social Phenomena*. Translated by W. D. Halls. Cambridge: Polity Press

Mullen, B., Cooper, C., and Driskell, J. E., 1990: Jaywalking as a function of model behaviour. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 16(2): 320-330

Nakamura, J. and Csikzentmihalyi, M., 2009: Flow Theory and Research. In *Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, edited by C. R. Snyder and S. J. Lopez. pp. 195-206. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Needham, R., 1972: *Belief, Language, and Experience*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell

_____., 1985: *Exemplars*. London: University of California Press

Neisser, U., 1967: *Cognitive Psychology*. New York: Appleton

Newberg, A. B. and Iversen, J., 2003: The neural basis of the complex mental task of meditation: neurotransmitter and neurochemical considerations. *Medical Hypotheses*, 61(2): 282-291

Newberg, A. B., D'Aquili, E., and Rause, V., 2001: *Why God Won't Go Away*. New York: Ballantine Books

Newell, B. R. and Shanks, D. R., 2014: Unconscious influences on decision making: A critical review. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 37: 1-61

Newman, J. H., 2002 (1979 [1870]): *An Essay In Aid Of A Grammar Of Assent*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press

Norton, M. I., Monin, B., Cooper, J., and Hogg, M. A., 2003: Vicarious dissonance: attitude change from the inconsistency of others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85: 47-62

Norris, R. S., 2003: Converting to What? Embodied Culture and the Adoption of New Beliefs. In *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion* edited by A. Buckser and S. D. Glazier, pp. 171-182. Oxford: Rowan & Littlefield

Ortner, S., 2005: Subjectivity and Cultural Critique. *Anthropological Theory*, 5(1): 31-52

Osborne, J., 1961: *Luther*. London: Faber and Faber Press

Padilha, J., dir., 2010: Secrets of the Tribe. 98 min. Avenue B. Paris

Paloutzian, R. F., 2005: Religious Conversion and Spiritual Transformation: A Meaning System Analysis. In *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* (1st Edition), edited by R. F. Paloutzian and C. L. Park, pp. 331-347. New York: Guilford Press

Paloutzian, R. F., Richardson, J. T., and Rambo, L. R., 1999: Religious Conversion and Personality Change. *Journal of Personality*, 67(6): 1047-1079

Partridge, C., 2003: Understanding UFO Religions and Abduction Spiritualities. In *UFO Religions*, edited by C. Partridge, pp. 3-42. London: Routledge

Patterson, S., 1965: *Dark Strangers*. Harmondsworth: Penguin

Perry, S. K., 1999: *Writing in flow*. Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books

Perry, S. L., 2014: Hoping for a Godly (White) Family: How Desire for Religious Heritage

Affects Whites' Attitudes Toward Interracial Marriage. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 53(1): 202-218

Peters, W., dir., 1985: Frontline: A Class Divided. 46 min. PBS WGBH. Boston

Pettit, P., 1998: Practical belief and philosophical theory. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 76(1): 15-33

Phizacklea, A., 1983: In the Front Line. In *One Way Ticket*, edited by A. Phizacklea, pp. 95-112. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Phoenix, A., 1988: Narrow Definitions of Culture: The Case of Early Motherhood. In *Enterprising Women, Ethnicity, Economy and Gender Relations*, edited by S. Westwood & P. Bhachu, pp.153-175. London: Routledge

Polanyi, M., 2009 (1966): *Tacit Dimension*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Pollner, M., 1987: *Mundane reason: Reality in everyday and sociological discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Pouillon, J., 1982 (1979): Remarks on the verb 'To Believe'. In *Between Belief and Transgression: Structuralist Essays in Religion, History and Myth*, edited by M. Izard & P. Smith, trans. John Leavitt. Chicago: Chicago University Press

Priest, R. J., 2003: "I discovered my sin!" Aguaruna Evangelical Conversion Narratives. In *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion*, edited by A. Buckser and S. D. Glazier, pp. 95-108. Oxford: Rowan & Littlefield

Prinz, J. J., 2007: *The Emotional Construction of Morals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Quine, W. V. O. and Ullian, J. S., 1978: *The web of belief* (2nd Edition). New York: McGraw-Hill

Ramos, A., 1995: *Sanuma Memories: Yanomami Ethnography in Times of Crisis*. Madison: University Wisconsin Press

Rappaport, R. A., 1999: *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Rex, J., 1973: *Race, Colonialism and the City*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Rhodewalt, F. and Agustsdottir, S., 1986: Effects of self-presentation on the phenomenal self. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50(1): 47-55

Rhys, J., 1995: *Let Them Call it Jazz*. London: Penguin

Richardson, J. T., 1985: The active vs. passive convert: Paradigm conflict in conversion/recruitment research. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *24*(2): 119–236
_____., 1995: Clinical and personality assessment of participants in new religions.

The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 5(3): 145–170.

Riley, J., 1987: *Waiting in the Twilight*. London: The Women's Press

Robbins, J., 2007a: Between Reproduction and Freedom: Morality, Value, and Radical Cultural Change. *Ethnos*, 72(3): 293-314

_____., 2007b: Continuity Thinking and the Problem of Christian Culture: Belief, Time and the Anthropology of Christianity. *Current Anthropology*, 48(1): 5-17

Rosenthal, D. M., 1995: Moore's Paradox and Consciousness. *Philosophical Perspectives*, 9: 313-333

Rudman, L. A., Ashmore, R. D., and Gary, M. L., 2001: "Unlearning" Automatic Biases: The Malleability of Implicit Prejudice and Stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81(5): 856-868

Ruel, M., 2002 (1982): Christians as Believers. In *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion* (1st Edition), edited by M. Lambek, pp. 99-113. Oxford: Blackwell

Ryan, A., 1973: By-ways of belief. Review of Needham (1972). *New Society*, 11th January.

Sakai, H., 1981: Induced compliance and opinion change. *Japanese Psychological Research*, 23: 1-8

Sakai, H., and Andow, K., 1980: Attribution of personal responsibility and dissonance reduction. *Japanese Psychological Research*, 22: 32-41

Sakaki, M., Fryer, K., and Mather, M., 2014: Emotion Strengthens High-Priority Memory Traces but Weakens Low-Priority Memory Traces. *Psychological Science*, 25(2): 387-395

Saul, J., 2013: Implicit Bias, Stereotype Threat, and Women in Philosophy. In *Women in Philosophy: What Needs to Change?*, edited by Katrina Hutchison and Fiona Jenkins, pp. 39-60. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Saunders, G. R., 1995: The Crisis of Presence in Italian Pentecostal Conversion. *American Ethnologist*, 22(2): 324-340

Saver, J. L. and Rabin, J., 1997: The Neural Substrates of Religious Experience. *Journal of Neuropsychiatry*, 9(3): 498-510

Schachter, S. and Wheeler, L., 1962: Epinephrine, chlorpromazine, and amusement. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 65: 121-128

Schlehofer, M. M., Omoto, A. M., and Adelman, J. R., 2008: How do "Religion" and "Spirituality" Differ? Lay Definitions Among Older Adults. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 47(3): 411-425

Schnall, S., Haidt, J., and Clore, G.L., 2005: Disgust as Embodied Moral Judgment.

Unpublished Manuscript, Department of Psychology, University of Virginia.

Schneider, H. K., 1962: Review of Godfrey Lienhardt 'Divinity and experience: the religion of the Dinka'. *American Anthropologist*, 64: 862-864

Seeman, D., 2003: Agency, Bureaucracy, and Religious Conversion: Ethiopian "Felashmura" Immigrants to Israel. In *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion* edited by A. Buckser & S. D. Glazier, pp. 29-42. Oxford: Rowan & Littlefield

Segal, N. L., 2012: *Born Together – Reared Apart: The Landmark Minnesota Twin Study*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Seggar, J. and Kunz, P., 1972: Conversion: Analysis of a step-like process for problem solving. *Review of Religious Research*, 13: 178-184

Selvon, S., 1993(1956): *The Lonely Londoners*. London: Allan Wingate

Shenhav, A. and Buckner, R. L., 2014: Neural correlates of duelling affective reactions to win-win choices. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, 111(30): 10978-10983

Shoemaker, S., 1995: Moore's paradox and self-knowledge. *Philosophical Studies*, 77(2-3): 211-228

Shultz, T. R. and Lepper, M. R., 1996: Cognitive dissonance reduction as constraint satisfaction. *Psychological Review*, 103: 219-240

Simmel, G., 1997 (1902): Contributions to Epistemology of Religion. In *Essays on Religion*, edited and translated by H. J. Helle in collaboration with L. Nieder, pp. 121-133. London: Yale University Press

_____., 1997 (1912, 1906): Religion. In *Essays on Religion*, edited and translated by H. J. Helle in collaboration with L. Nieder, pp. 137-214. London: Yale University Press

Simon, G. M., 2009: The Soul Freed of Cares? Islamic Prayer, Subjectivity, and the Contradictions of Moral Selfhood in Minanghabam, Indonesia. *American Ethnologist*, 36(2): 258-275

_____., 2012: Conviction without Being Convinced: Maintaining Islamic Certainty in Minangkabau, Indonesia. *Ethos*, 40(3): 237-257

Smith, W. C., 1991 (1962): *The Meaning and End of Religion*. Minneapolis: First Fortress Press

Smith, W. R., 1889. *Religion of the Semites*. New York: D. Appleton and Company

Smith, J. D., Boomer, J., Zakrzewski, A. C., Roeder, J. L., Church, B. A., and Ashby, F. G.,

2014: Deferred Feedback Sharply Dissociates Implicit and Explicit Category Learning. *Psychological Science*, 25(2): 447-457

Snibbe, A. C. and Markus, H. R., 2005: You can't always get what you want: educational attainment, agency, and choice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88: 703-720

Snow, D. A., and Machalek, R. 1984: The sociology of conversion. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 10: 167-190.

Snow, D. A., Zurcher, L. A., Jr., and Ekland-Olson, S., 1980: Social networks and social movements: A microstructural approach to differential recruitment. *American Sociological Review*, 45: 797-801

_____., 1983: Further thoughts on social networks and movement recruitment. *Sociology*, 17: 112-120

Sorenson, R. A., 1988: *Blindspots*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Spencer, S. J., Josephs, R. A., and Steele, C. M., 1993: Low self-esteem: The uphill struggle for self-integrity. In *Self-Esteem and the Puzzle of Low Self-Regard*, edited by R. F. Baumeister, pp. 21-36. New York: Plenum Press

Sperber, D., 1985: *On anthropological knowledge: Three essays*. New York: Cambridge University Press

_____., 1996: *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach*. Oxford: Blackwell

_____., 1997: Intuitive and Reflective Beliefs. *Mind & Language*, 12(1): 67-83

Spilka, B., Brown, G. A., and Cassidy, S. E., 1993: The structure of mystical experience in relation to pre- and post-experience lifestyle correlates. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 2: 241-257

Spilka, B., Ladd, K. L., McIntosh, D. N., Milmoe, S., and Bickel, C. O., 1996: The Content of Religious Experience: The Roles of Expectancy and Desirability. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 6(2): 95-105

Stalnaker, R. C., 1984: *Inquiry*. Cambridge: MIT Press

Stanovich, K. E., West, R. F., and Toplak, M. E., 2013: Myside Bias, Rational Thinking, and Intelligence. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22(4): 259-264

Starbuck, E. D., 1899: *The psychology of religion*. London: Walter Scott

Stark, R., and Bainbridge, W. S., 1980: Networks of faith: Interpersonal bonds and recruitment to cults and sects. *American Journal of Sociology*, 85: 1376-1395

Steele, C. M., 1988: The psychology of self-affirmation: sustaining the integrity of the self. In

Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, vol. 21, edited by L. Berkowitz, pp. 261-302. San Diego: Academic Press

Stone, J., 1999: What Exactly Have I Done? The Role of Self-Attribute Accessibility in Dissonance. In *Cognitive Dissonance: Progress on a Pivotal Theory in Social Psychology*, edited by E. Harmon-Jones & J. Mills, pp. 175-200. Washington D. C.: American Psychological Association

Stone, J. R. (Ed.), 2000: *Expecting Armageddon: Essential readings in failed prophecy*. New York: Routledge

Stone, K., 1983: Motherhood and Waged Work: West Indian, Asian and White Mothers Compared. In *One Way Ticket*, edited by A. Phizacklea, pp. 33-52. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Stone, J. and Cooper, J., 2001: A self-standards model of cognitive dissonance. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 37: 228-243

Straus, R. A., 1979: Religious conversion as a personal and collective accomplishment. *Sociological Analysis*, 40: 158-165.

Streib, H., Hood Jr., R. W., Keller, B., Csoff, R.-M., and Silver, C. 2009: *Deconversion: Qualitative and quantitative results from cross- cultural research in Germany and the United States* (Research in Contemporary Religion, Vol. 4). Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Strhan, A., 2013: Practising the Space Between: Embodying Belief as an Evangelical Anglican Student. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 28(2): 225-239

Stringer, M. D., 1996: Towards a Situational Theory of Belief. *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford*, 27(3): 217-234

_____., 2013: The Sounds of Silence: Searching for the Religious in Everyday Discourse. In *Social Identities Between the Sacred and the Secular*, edited by Abby Day, Giselle Vincett, & Christopher R. Cotter, pp. 161-172. Surrey: Ashgate

Stroeken, K., 2008: Believed Belief: Science/Religion versus Sukuma Magic. *Social Analysis*, 52(1): 144-165

Stromberg, P., 1993: *Language and Self-Transformation: A Study of the Christian Conversion Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Swedberg, R., 2005: *The Max Weber Dictionary: Key Words and Central Concepts*. Stanford: Stanford University Press

Taves, A., 2009: *Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building-Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

Thibodeau, R. and Aronson, E., 1992: Taking a closer look: reasserting the role of the self-

concept in dissonance theory. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 18: 591-602

Thomas, W. I., 1967: *On Social Organization and Social Personality*. London: University of Chicago Press

Tierney, P., 2000: *Darkness in El Dorado: How Scientists and Journalists Devastated the Amazon*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company

Tolstoy, L. N., 1904: *My confessions*. Boston: Dana Estes & Co.

Toulis, N. R., 1997: *Believing Identity: Pentecostalism and the Meditation of Jamaican Ethnicity and Gender in England*. Oxford: Berg

Tumminia, D., 1998: How prophecy never fails: Interpretive reason in a flying saucer group. *Sociology of Religion*, 59: 157-170

_____., 2003: When the archangel died: from revelation to routinisation of charisma in Unarius. In *UFO Religions* edited by C. Partridge, pp. 62-82. London: Routledge

_____., 2005: *When Prophecy Never Fails: Myth and Reality in a Flying-Saucer Group*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Tylor, E. B., [1871] 1920: *Primitive Culture*. New York: J. P. Putnam's Sons

Ullman, C., 1982: Cognitive and emotional antecedents of religious conversion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 43: 183-192

_____., 1989: *The transformed self: The psychology of religious conversion*. New York: Plenum Press

Ullman-Margalit, E. and Margalit, A., 1992: Holding True and Holding As True. *Synthese*, 92: 67-187

van Fraasen, B. C., 1980: *The Scientific Image*. Oxford: Clarendon Press

van Veen, V., Krug, M. K., Schooler, J. W., and Carter, C. S., 2009: Neural activity predicts attitude change in cognitive dissonance. *Nature Neuroscience*, 12(11): 1469-1475

Wellman Jr., J. K., Corcoran, K. E., and Stockly-Meyerdirk, K., 2012: 'God is like a Drug…': Explaining Interaction Ritual Chains in American Megachurches. Paper presented at the American Sociological Association's 107th Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado

Wheatley, T. and Haidt, J., 2005: Hypnotic Disgust Makes Moral Judgments More Severe. *Psychological Science*, 16(10): 780-784

Wicklund, R. A. and Brehm, J. W., 1976: *Perspectives on cognitive dissonance*. Hillsdale:

Lawrence Erlbaum

Willard, A. K. and Norenzayan, A. 2013: Cognitive biases explain religious belief, paranormal belief, and belief in life's purpose. *Cognition*, 129: 379-391

Wilson, R. A. and Foglia, L., 2011: Embodied Cognition. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2011 Edition). Edward N. Zalta ed. URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/embodied-cognition/>

Wittgenstein, L., 1958 (1953): *Philosophical Investigations* 2nd Edition. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell

_____., 1966: *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*. Compiled from notes taken by T. Smythies, R. Rhees & J. Taylor, edited by C. Barrett. Oxford: Basil Blackwell

_____., 2002 (1979 [1931]): Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough. In *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion* (1st Edition), edited by M. Lambek, pp. 85-89. Oxford: Blackwell

Wray, K. B., 2001: Collective Belief and Acceptance. *Synthese*, 129: 319-333

Wylie, A., 2011: Women in Philosophy: The Costs of Exclusion. *Hypatia*, 26(2): 374-382

Yamane, D., 2000: Narrative and Religious Experience. *Sociology of Religion*, 61(2): 171-189

Zak, P. J., 2012: *The Moral Molecule*. London: Bantam Press

Zigon, J., 2007: Moral breakdown and the ethical demand: a theoretical framework for an anthropology of moralities. *Anthropological Theory*, 7(2): 131-150

Zijderveld, A. C., 1970: *The Abstract Society: A Cultural Analysis of Our Time*. Middlesex: Penguin

Zimbardo, P., 2007: *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*. New York: Random House

Zinnbauer, B. J., and Pargament, K. I. 1998: Spiritual conversion: A study of religious change among college students. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* 37(1): 161–180.

Zinnbauer, B. J., Pargament, K. I., and Scott, A. B., 1999: The Emerging Meanings of Religiousness and Spirituality: Problems and Prospects. *Journal of Personality*, 67(6): 889-919

Zygmunt, J. F., 1972: When prophecy fails. A theoretical perspective on the comparative evidence. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 16: 245-268