

BECOMING A FAITHFUL ACADEMIC: A PLACE  
FOR LATTER-DAY SAINT PEDAGOGY IN  
COMPOSITION AND RHETORIC

By

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## CHAPTER I

### BECOMING A FAITHFUL ACADEMIC

For members of academia who, like me, are also people of faith, there are many conversations and ideas that seem to conflict with, contradict, or undermine what we hold dear and sacred, and some might feel that there is pressure on us to give up or silence our beliefs. A part of many of our graduate school experiences is dealing with this pressure, learning how make sense of what we learn academically, and figuring out how what we learn fits with what we feel spiritually. I consider myself a devout member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints<sup>1</sup> but I also consider myself an academic. Being able to call myself both has been a struggle, and I imagine it has for many others of many other religious faiths as well. As Elizabeth Vander Lei puts it in her introduction to *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom*:

For many students, teachers, theorists and administrators, religious faith is a significant part of their private lives; it permeates, animates, perhaps haunts their thinking. To press such writers into denying the effect that faith has on them and their writing is to pressure them, in Stephen Carter's words, 'to be other than themselves, to act publicly, and sometimes privately as well, as if their faith does not matter to them. (4)

I wish to begin this thesis with a narrative of my own struggles with this pressure as an introduction to how I have dealt with these pressures. I imagine that many others who are persons of faith may have encountered, or may yet encounter, experiences similar to mine and hope that

this narrative and my thesis can serve for them as a case study that such an identity, that of a religiously faithful academic, is possible.

My undergraduate alma mater, Brigham Young University-Idaho, was, and is for those attending, an academic experience quite different from most. Throughout its history, around ninety-nine percent of the students and faculty at this university are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (“Religious Affiliation”). The faculty and students predominantly believe in God and live lives of faith, and because of this, almost all aspects of the educational experience there involve some aspect of religion. If the research done by the Pew Research Center accurately represents the LDS population that attends BYU-Idaho, and I suspect it does, then 82 percent of students would say that religion is very important in their lives (I would include myself in this statistic) compared to 56 percent of the general U.S. public, and 69 percent would describe their level of religious commitment as high (again, I would fit into this population) while only 30 percent of the general public would identify their commitment the same way. In terms of political ideologies, 66 percent of Mormons identify as conservative, as compared to the general population’s 33 percent (I would consider myself moderate politically, but when I do agree with conservative camps, it is often because of my religious beliefs). I have had Mormon friends who considered themselves to be very liberal within the context of BYU-Idaho, but, as they leave, tend to still be quite conservative when compared to the general population. The students and faculty live lives in which the Church has become part of almost every action and experience, and because of the Church’s beliefs in the importance of the nuclear family, sexual abstinence before marriage, prohibition of abortion except in certain cases, and others, the population tends to be conservative, and tend to see that political stance as part of being a member of the Church (only 5% of members represented in the survey claimed to be liberal, and in my own experience, when a member is liberal politically, he or she is often culturally stigmatized by other church members as a member with low commitment).

In most of the classrooms of BYU-Idaho and other church-run universities, LDS doctrines and principles are regularly taught alongside all subjects, including English composition, Philosophy, Biology, Mathematics, Astronomy and others, and almost all classes begin and sometimes end with prayer. Students regularly cite references from the LDS canon of scripture<sup>2</sup> in these classes to answer questions. Talk of God and His involvement in these academic fields was and is generally accepted as fact and acknowledged openly. Truth is taught to be objective and eternal. In a philosophy course I took, I found that the answers to the questions that had plagued philosophers for centuries, i.e. “where did we come from? why are we here? what happens after this life?,” were usually easily explained using the scriptures or quotes from modern-day prophets that we had learned throughout our lives in Sunday school. Truth was readily available and easy to come by for us. During that time in my life, I felt feelings of sympathy for those who struggled so hard to find the truth through philosophic or academic inquiry. If they could only just accept what I accepted, I thought, they would not have to struggle so much.

When I graduated from BYU-Idaho and began my Master’s degree program at Oklahoma State University, I started to realize what a singular experience I had had at BYU-Idaho. For the first few months of graduate school, I had to figure out and adapt to cultural differences. For example, I still accidentally, and embarrassingly, called my professors Brother or Sister and their last name from time to time, which is the common practice at BYU-Idaho, and hearing a swear word spoken by a student (or a professor!) during class took me by surprise. But I quickly adapted to these cultural differences with little effort. I had anticipated that God would not be a part of the conversations and class discussions, but the biggest obstacle to my faith I had to face as I made the transition into graduate school was working to understand the secular humanism and progressive political ideologies that deeply inform much of academia, especially in the Humanities. Enjoying or justifying the struggle of inquiry seemed more difficult for me than it



was for my colleagues and those whose work I was reading. It seemed to me that our readings and class discussions privileged relativism and had taken as a main presumption that God either did not exist or did not matter, or even that belief in God was a sign of stupidity and weakness. I was in an environment where truth was now very difficult to obtain and some even questioned if it was possible to obtain truth or if Truth even existed. The effects of postmodernism and poststructuralism, namely the doubt that universal truth existed or could be known, was hard for me to accept because it seemed that, if I accepted these theories as how the world really worked, it would mean I would have to deny the existence of an eternal God with eternal laws and truths, which was not something I was willing to do.

Early on in the pedagogy training course we were required to take our first semester, I remember reading Maxine Hairston's "Diversity, Ideology, and Teaching Writing." In this article, Hairston paints a frightening picture of progressive pedagogues as having a deep political agenda, and of them being openly confrontational to religious beliefs, undermining the pre-existing faith of any student, and pressuring them to convert to a godless relativistic Marxism. Her quotes from professors made me feel like my religious faith was not only unwelcome in academia, but that it was an enemy to me, to my colleagues, and to the process of learning. I felt sick to my stomach reading this quote from Dave Bleich:

Religious views collaborate with the ideology of individualism and with sexism to censor the full capability of what people can say and write.... By "religious values" I mean belief in the savability of the individual human soul. The ideal of the nuclear family, as opposed to the extended or communal family, permits the overvaluation of the individual child and the individual soul. (182)

In two sentences, Bleich dismisses as dangerous two beliefs that are not only dear to me, but integral to my identity. Hairston's article helped add to my already uneasy feelings that, by

coming to graduate school, I had entered a place where I was going to have to keep my guard up. I soon became paranoid that every college professor and grad student was out to strip me of the things I held most sacred and dear, even though, as I reflect on it now, I had not seen or experienced much of anything on which to base those feelings. Somehow, in an effort to defend and retain my faith, I had created for myself an “us against them” binary world, and it would soon start to inhibit my abilities to even understand what I was there to do, read and learn from great thinkers who had come before me.

Our next reading, Nancy Welch’s “Resisting the Faith: Conversion, Resistance, and the Training of Teachers” only added to this paranoia. In this article, Welch describes her own feelings of entering grad school and dealing with similar experiences to mine, although her feelings were not in regards to her religious faith. Interestingly, however, she does use religious terminology to describe the experience. She writes how students were either “faithful or unfaithful, in the flock or out” (388), and that some students easily “converted” from their own belief systems to the new belief systems of the grad school program. She also reflects on the deep feelings of isolation, confusion, and unmet yearnings for belonging she experienced. These were all feelings I had as I read her article. Although I did not experience the outright rejection she did, I still felt as if the readings and class discussions were telling me that I did not belong. Every reading afterward became a struggle for me, and not just to read and understand; I felt as if I was at war with all of the authors because they were out to convert me and kill my God and my faith in Him, and it was my job and my duty to defend myself and my faith. Not only that, but Welch found that the only option that would work for her was to transfer to another university, an option that would be very difficult for me to do because I had a pregnant wife and small child at the time. In my paranoid state, I began to fear that all universities were going to be the same and that transferring would be futile, and I almost gave up on grad school altogether.

During this time, I read many books and articles that would later become an important part of my pedagogy, but, because I felt at war with these authors, I had a difficult time internalizing and processing most of what they had to say. I was introduced to James Berlin in our pedagogy course and, because of his openly oppositional pedagogical style, he stuck out as one of the greatest threats to my faith, and came to epitomize what I was fighting against. I remember becoming enraged reading some of his anti-capitalist words, scribbling across the pages in black pen, and tossing the stapled pages across the room. I looked for anything I could to discredit what I was reading. I pounced on awkward sentences or typographical errors as evidence that he was wrong, to the detriment of my abilities to understand what he was even arguing. I was so focused on not believing anything that I read from him and other scholars, that I missed out on a lot of insights that would later be vital to my own pedagogy. I felt that I was faced with an impossible dilemma: either give in and believe what all these godless professors were trying to teach me, or hunker down and retain my faith as I knew it, which might possibly involve leaving academia for something else. I continued in graduate school, however, I mainly did so out of laziness and fear; finding something else to do outside of graduate school was going to be just as hard as graduate school itself. Plus, as I struggled and began to ask questions and get answers, somehow I felt invigorated by the struggle in a way that I have not been able to find in anything else.

Possibly the saddest part of this narrative is that, because I was locked into this paranoia and battle to retain my faith, I somehow skimmed over most of what I could have connected with as familiar to my own teaching philosophy. In the same course in which I read Hairston, Welch, and Berlin, we also read George Hillocks, Jr., his ideas of environmental learning, and Hillocks interpretations of Vygotsky and the Zone of Proximal Development. As I hope to show later, the constructivist pedagogical camp to which Hillocks and Vygotsky belong is very similar to the Latter-day Saint views of pedagogy, and I should have felt at home and comforted reading these texts. However, either because my vision was so narrowed by my defensive stance, or because I

still lacked the vocabulary to fully understand the significance my familiarity with Hillocks and Vygotsky could provide for me, I did not respond to them meaningfully until much later. This is especially surprising because our first year composition program at Oklahoma State heavily relies on the theories of these men<sup>3</sup> to inform its pedagogical theories and, as I look back, I think there are much worse programs I could have been at. Somehow, I overlooked for years what could have helped me find my place of belonging, and instead felt isolated and under attack.

The next semester, I took a course called Rhetoric and Radicalism in which we explored some of the more extreme edges of rhetoric and composition theories. In my own warped war metaphor, this class was the front lines. I was either going to have to change all of academia and convince everyone that I was right, or be changed by the course. In this way, it became a sort of turning point for me. Among other readings in this class, we read *Rhetoric, Poetics and Culture* by James Berlin. Because I was still waging this war and because I had singled out James Berlin as the face of the enemy through my past experiences reading his work, I read this book not with the intent of learning how the history of composition courses has shaped and reflected epistemological theories as Berlin intended it, but rather I read it with the intent to discredit all of the humanities and what I perceived as their disdain for belief in God. I looked for any evidence I could to use against some unspeakable “them,” and my margin notes show this battle. I argued with Berlin there, questioning any word that I did not like, calling his theories stupid, and looking for times when he was repetitious, or some other stylistic evidence that he was not as smart as he thought he was. There are a few pages that even have angry scribbles across the entire page that I cannot remember why I made. In fact, because I also read this same book a year and a half later in a course on the History of Rhetoric and made more notes and crossed out the old confused ones, this book serves as a somewhat embarrassing palimpsest of my struggle. As I look back, my argument with him had little to do with what he was arguing, but about a battle I was waging

outside of his words. I now know I wasted so much time fighting a battle with Berlin that I missed out on what he has to offer me.

However, it was as I read *Rhetoric, Poetics, and Culture*, that I started to ask myself where I fit into the theories I was reading about. Berlin's cartographies of composition theories served as a framework for me to begin comparing and contrasting my beliefs, and many of my margin notes say things like, "Which do I believe?" or "This is how I teach I guess" or "No, I guess this sounds more like me." One note I wrote on page 95 is especially telling, I wrote, "I read these books as a conversation between myself and the author." By conversation, I am sure that I was mainly referring to the intimacy of the connection I was making with the words and that I shared with the author. While reading these texts, I felt as if I was bringing them into my bedroom and letting them see my life and judge it, or maybe allow me to judge myself through their eyes. Or perhaps a better metaphor would be that I was holding up their words covered in reflective glass so that I could see both the words and myself at the same time. By doing so, I could compare myself to the ideas and see where I matched up and where I did not. Either because I became tired of the fight, or because the words started to make more sense, I began to allow the words of the readings and class discussions to become a part of who I was.

In this state, I was primed to read Byron Hawk's *A Counter History of Composition*, which would ultimately be a key to helping me figure out how to have confidence in my faith alongside the theories I was reading instead of in conflict with them. As I will describe in chapter three, Hawk's efforts to break down the established cartographies of composition theories and illustrate the ways that the body can be crucial in the learning process allowed me to find a place for what I privilege in the act of learning, and the pedagogical theories I was familiar with as a Latter-day Saint. This familiarity came as somewhat of a surprise to me. After all, the course name said that we were learning about "radical" ways of teaching, and there I was reading some of the same ideas I had been taught in Sunday school since I was a child; I was a moderately

conservative, religious person from a very conservative religion agreeing with radical progressive pedagogical theories. I began to see through reading this book that it was possible for me, and I imagine any teacher, to believe in and use progressive pedagogical theories and practices even if we are not from or seek after progressive political ideologies. I found that, as I hope to show, the body and how I envisioned its role in the creation of knowledge allowed me to connect to the ideas I was fighting against and use them in my own pedagogy.

Later, as I was researching how religion can fit into the composition classroom for this thesis, I read Douglas Downs chapter in *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom* and discovered what was going on, why I was fighting this battle, and why I was so surprised to find the answer where I did. Interestingly, in this chapter Downs describes his frustrations in dealing with the close-minded writings of an LDS student on the topic of Gay adoption. The student, instead of inquiring into his deeply held beliefs about family, homosexuality, adoption, and the tenets of his religion, he shuts out any new information, uses tactics to silence opposing voices, and does nothing more in his paper than confirm the beliefs he already had. Borrowing from James Gee's work in Discourse analysis, Downs establishes two separate and conflicting Discourses: the Discourse of Affirmation, and the Discourse of Inquiry. He sees his student enacting the Discourse of Affirmation, which "embod[ies] behaviors, epistemologies, values, beliefs, dispositions, and habits of mind by which one affirms given knowledge and overtly resists critical inquiry into it" (42). As a professor, Downs admits that he wants his student to be engaged in the Discourse of Inquiry, which does the opposite and takes critical inquiry as the objective, or at least one of the most important parts, of learning; or as Downs puts it, "Affirmation's final answer is Inquiry's opening question" (44). These two discourses have conflicting motives and the difference between them explains many of the difficulties some people, like me, have when entering the world of academia. His student was enacting the Discourse of Affirmation and shutting out the potential for learning. Instead, he was

denying what Downs sees as the major objective of college writing, that is to inquire into beliefs and issues to find underlying assumptions that may be false and updating them with better information that can also be questioned. Downs' explanation of these discourses shows how people, not necessarily just religious people, can act in ways that make learning difficult if not impossible, much like I had: they focus their efforts on affirming what they already know instead of opening up to the possibility that what they believe may be false or not quite right.

In this article I found an explanation for my experience. Somewhat like the student, I entered graduate school with my guard up, enacting the Discourse of the "true believer" and resisting anything I saw as a contradiction to my faith before I even fully understood it. In my system of beliefs, truth was objective and eternal, and I was reading Berlin and many others telling me that truth was created socially and therefore entirely relative and possibly arbitrary. My first reaction was to enact the Discourse I knew, affirm my own beliefs, and close out conflicting information. However, Downs is careful to explain that, though it is difficult, with the help of teachers acting as guides, translators, mentors, and coaches, the Discourse of Inquiry can be practiced and then embodied within a person who was initially enacting the Discourse of Affirmation. As described above, through my graduate education, I became more fluent in enacting the Discourse of Inquiry and allowing myself to give the ideas of postmodernism, poststructuralism, and the like my attention and find out how they worked in my life, my education, and my faith.

Now that I have done so (or at least begun to do so), I have found that there is one thing in Downs' article that I can argue against in an academic way. He claims that for his LDS student, "there is no space left for religious knowledge gained through active inquiry rather than passive acceptance of revelation" (44). Part of this claim comes from Downs' misunderstanding of LDS epistemology; he claims that truth in the LDS Church is only received by the members passively from the leaders of the church, and that spiritual experiences are passive experiences. While I

agree with Downs that the Church's hierarchy can and does create a cultural situation in which acceptance is privileged and inquiry is discouraged, his argument still undermines the entire epistemological stance of LDS doctrine, that learning is accomplished through personal efforts to gain knowledge and interact with the divine to confirm truths learned through other methods. As I hope to show in this thesis, in the LDS faith and in its pedagogy, and also in my own life and educational experience, seeking knowledge through personal revelation is not a passive experience, but an embodied "act" of faith. What Downs sees as a conflict in his LDS student's ability to enact the Discourse of Inquiry is, in fact, what makes inquiry possible at all; that is, that our bodies and the interactions they have with others and our environment, which in LDS pedagogy includes the Holy Ghost, is the antennae or catalyst that makes learning possible.

As I also hope to show through the work of Byron Hawk, a bridge between the existence of objective truths and total relativism, the two sides of the dilemma that caused me so much confusion and anguish, is the body. In LDS pedagogy, the body is used in conjunction with the Holy Ghost to translate objective truths into subjective bodily experience. Therefore objective truths exist, but can only be experienced through subjective bodies. Where I saw a great divide and great conflict before, I now see a functioning system of interconnectivity between the embodied individual, the divine, truth and all other outside sources of truth, which can be texts, other people, and any other outside stimuli (see figure 1). I hope that through outlining the foundations and practices of LDS pedagogy I can create a space where it is possible to separate method from content, pedagogy from politics, and help others to see that being an academic of faith, or a "real true believing scholar" as Downs calls it, is possible.

Before I go any further, perhaps I should explain some of my intentions so I do not put off anyone who believes that any kind of divine manifestation, let alone those involving secular academic subjects, to be "at best outside the academic realm or at worst anti-intellectual" (Vander Lei, 5). I will make no attempt in this paper to prove the possibility of divine help in knowledge



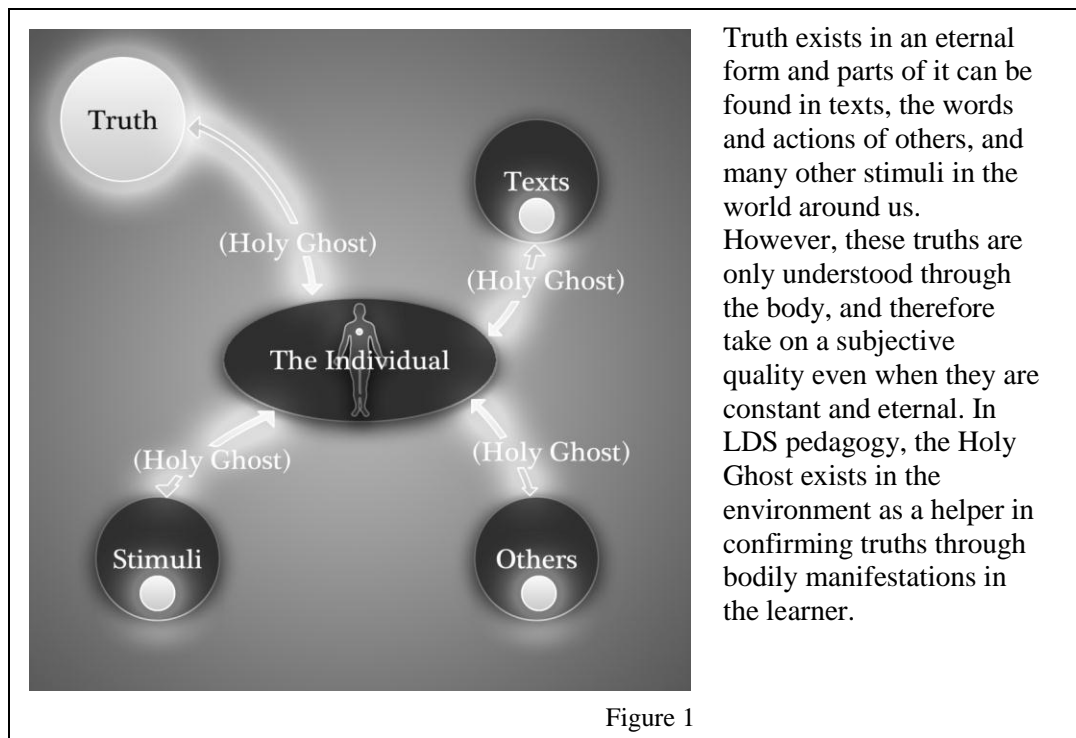
creation, the existence of God, nor the truthfulness of the divine calling of Joseph Smith as a prophet (which is an impossibility according to LDS epistemology anyway). As I have already made clear, I deeply believe in the doctrines I will be explaining here. However, I hope to show I am neither requiring nor even encouraging belief in these doctrines. I anticipate and ask for a suspension of disbelief, if any exists, from readers as I explain the connections I have made in my spiritual and academic identities. In other words, this thesis is not meant to convert anyone to the Latter-day Saint religion, nor is it meant to convince anyone that they should teach anything more or less about Latter-day Saints, or religion in general, than they already do. Rather, this thesis is an attempt to highlight some of the pedagogical practices and beliefs of the Latter-day Saint Church as I understand them and how they represent progressive pedagogical practices emanating from a non-progressive, religious foundation.

## NOTES

1. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are commonly referred to as Mormons, and the Church is sometimes called the Mormon Church. However, Church officials have urged that the full name of the Church be used on first reference, and after that the organization be referred to as either “the Church of Jesus Christ” or simply “the Church.” Also, because the term “Mormon” can also refer to splinter groups that are not part of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints yet who claim Joseph Smith as their founder, and because it could deemphasize the Church’s belief in Christ, it is discouraged that we use the term “Mormon Church.” Because of familiarity with the term, however, it is considered acceptable to refer to members of the church as “Mormons,” but “latter-day saint” or “LDS” is the preferred term for

describing church members and the culture that surrounds them. I will be following these guidelines in this writing. See Ballard.

2. The canonical works of the Church include four books of scripture; the King James translation of the Old and New testaments, The Book of Mormon, The Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price; however, they it is also an open canon and includes the words of present-day church general authorities given in semi-annual general conferences of the Church.
3. While I have relied on many male scholars in this thesis, I don't wish to undermine or discredit the work of female and feminist scholars in the history of constructivism or student-centered teaching practices. Jane Addams is one of the foundational voices in this movement, and I also learned much from Krista Radcliffe, Sharon Crowley and others. However, these scholars did not fit neatly into my narrative and I acknowledge their absence.



## CHAPTER II

### THE FOUNDATIONS OF A LATTER-DAY SAINT PEDAGOGY

My first exposure to the progressive pedagogy emanating from a non-progressive place was during my four years of undergraduate study at BYU-Idaho. During this time administrators created and implemented what they called the *Learning Model*, a document and teaching philosophy that outlines the most important pedagogical principles of the church-run private university. This document uses the LDS canon of scriptures to create a pedagogical standard and protocol. The main tenets of this document and the pedagogical principles of the LDS church as I understand them will be described in greater detail below, but for now I will say that these practices and principles closely resemble many of the tenets of constructivism, namely that students learn holistically through experience, are expected to take responsibility for their own learning and teach other students as part of that responsibility, and also that teachers act as facilitators in this process instead of distributors of known information.

As an example of this pedagogy in action, I will describe one experience from my time there. In a class on the poetry of Emily Dickinson, I or another student would be called on to explain something to the class even when we had not raised our hands to do so. We would then timidly start talking even though we had no idea exactly what to say. We soon found that we had more to say than we had originally thought. Many, myself especially, began raising our hands to

volunteer answers even though, or perhaps because, we felt the same emotion of uncertainty. In other words, the bodily feeling of uncertainty started to be a sort of pavlovian signal that learning was about to happen. I would begin my comments with, “I don’t know why I’m thinking this, or if it even connects to anything we are talking about, but…” and then say what I was thinking. Most of the time, our risks were rewarded with new connections being made either by the teacher or another student to important principles about poetry or about the human condition, along with feelings of excitement and energy. Sometimes our classes took unexpected turns as we sought out and developed ideas that the teacher had not planned for, but that were exciting and fulfilling to talk about. I soon found that I learned the most as I felt these feelings and then heard my own voice making connections that I did not even know that I knew. But there is more to this situation than can be superficially described in the events above. Each of the students will have also prepared for the class by doing the readings and work beforehand, and also, outside of class, the students strive to keep themselves morally clean in order to be able to enter the classroom and learn better; we have been taught that if we sin, we may not be worthy of divine help in our learning. One of the defining principles of pedagogy within the teaching tradition of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is its reliance on and cooperation with divinity in the form of the Spirit or Holy Ghost, to facilitate learning. In my classroom experience above, we would probably recognize and give credit to the Holy Ghost as part of the energy and excitement we felt, and also what helped us to remember and formulate our thoughts as we spoke. Each member of the class was taught to recognize this and strive to have regular interactions with the Holy Ghost in this way. Also each member of the class would strive to keep themselves pure in order to receive the benefits of the interactions with the Holy Ghost.

For members of the LDS Church, teaching and learning are daily parts of religious life. Joseph Smith, the founder and first prophet/president of the Church, taught that “it is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance” (Doctrine and Covenants 131.6). Members are expected to read and study sacred texts daily both personally and in a family setting. Members are to hold a Family Home Evening once a week in which members of the family teach each other gospel lessons. The Church has a lay clergy and every member is expected to be available to be “called” as a teacher or to any other administrative position within local church organizations at any time. Outside of the home, the Church has established private institutions of higher learning like Brigham Young University (with branches in Utah, Idaho and Hawaii) and Southern Virginia University, among others. All of these educational institutions combine secular and religious learning, and to a large extent use the same methods for teaching both. Educators focus on utilizing spiritual methods to obtain knowledge, both spiritual and secular. In the *Learning Model* and in the church-produced handbook on teaching entitled *Teaching, No Greater Call* which will serve here as representations of LDS pedagogy, much of the emphasis for both students and teachers is on “The power we access through faith in the Savior [that] allows us to exceed our natural limits and learn beyond our natural capabilities” (Learning Model, 2). In other words, we believe that we are not alone in our efforts to learn and communicate information, but rather that the Spirit of God can be involved in any interaction, and that it is especially helpful in a classroom situation.

Receiving this kind of help in learning from the Holy Ghost is an integral part of membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. After baptism, members of the LDS Church receive “the gift of the Holy Ghost” which makes a person’s access to the educating power of the Holy Ghost available all the time, when a person qualifies for it through obedience to commandments that the members have promised to observe. These commandments can involve almost every aspect of LDS life, such as not taking drugs or drinking coffee, tea, or

alcohol and reserving sexual relations for within the bonds of legal marriage, attending church meetings, fulfilling voluntary duties, etc. Also a person prays and studies the scriptures in an effort to communicate with God and receive revelations through the Holy Ghost, which feelings come in the form of bodily feelings. In a revelation from God to Joseph Smith, God explains how this feeling can come as an answer to a direct inquiry through prayer. “You must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right. But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong” (Doctrine and Covenants 9.8-9). In another revelation, God points out to Smith that the body is the forum or conduit for these communications to occur, “Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart” (8.2). *Teaching, No Greater Call* says teachers will often “feel enlightenment, joy, and peace” (47) as they seek methods for teaching their classes and these feelings will be confirmation that they are teaching their classes well. In a recent official press release from the Church entitled “Mormonism 101” the process is described this way

Most often, revelation unfolds as an ongoing, prayerful dialogue with God: A problem arises, its dimensions are studied out, a question is asked, and if we have sufficient faith, God leads us to answers, either partial or full. Though ultimately a spiritual experience, revelation also requires careful thought. God does not simply hand down information. He expects us to figure things out through prayerful searching and sound thinking.

As each member lives worthily, he or she has the promise from God that the Holy Ghost will guide them in the decisions they make in life, including decisions in classroom and other educational venues. Seen this way, it is easy to see why I disagree with Downs’ understanding of LDS epistemology as entirely passive. Whether through our eating habits, our activities, how and with whom we have sex, or where we stand and what media we expose ourselves to, our bodies

are constantly engaged in the preparation for learning and thus in the act of learning. Our learning experience is definitely not passive and therefore our propensity for enacting the Discourse of Affirmation must come from another source.

The truths that can be learned, however, are not all seen as equally important nor equally worth the attention of the Holy Ghost to confirm in the learner. Misunderstandings of this LDS perspective of the hierarchy of truth has led to many misunderstandings, especially as those completely foreign to the Church try and understand some of the Church's history and more obscure and less important teachings, such as the possible location of the Garden of Eden (which Joseph Smith taught was somewhere in what is now Missouri). Due to increased media coverage of the Church because of Mitt Romney announcing his presidential candidacy, and also because of the success of *The Book of Mormon* musical on Broadway, the Church has made an effort to help the press and others understand these doctrines, beliefs, teachings, and practices. As part of that effort, the Church created a press release called "Approaching Mormon Doctrine," and included in this document is a description of the LDS hierarchy of truth. In it, they quote Joseph Smith as saying, "The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it." The press release elaborates that "some doctrines are more important than others and might be considered core doctrines. For example, the precise location of the Garden of Eden is far less important than doctrine about Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice." Therefore, in other words, while the truths that the spirit will confirm through bodily manifestations are unlimited, this hierarchy of truth shows that some truths are of a higher priority. Therefore, an LDS Church member is not going to, and probably should not expect, powerful spiritual experiences for every truth they encounter. But through small, quiet and personal ways, members expect the spirit to

guide them in their day to day activities, which includes any kind of written or verbal communication and learning, and in running a classroom.

Also, the feelings that come from the Holy Ghost can also indicate that an individual has learned something; feelings of joy, excitement, energy, etc. serve as a test for the effectiveness of a pedagogy. The Doctrine and Covenants teaches that if true teaching has happened, “he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together” (50.21). This feeling of edification is a sign that one has learned and benefitted from a conversation, lesson, piece of media, etc. In other words, when truth has been created through pedagogy, all who are socially involved in the process should feel that they have learned something and been somehow improved or made better, not just the student.

The two documents described above, the *Learning Model* and *Teaching, No Greater Call* take this principle of divine revelation and extrapolate it into pedagogical principles. One of the underlying assumptions of the *Learning Model*, and therefore of LDS pedagogy, is again much like some of the beliefs and practices in social constructivist pedagogy; that everyone is both a teacher and a student, and therefore everyone shares the responsibility of each other’s progress in learning (1). Teachers are admonished not to teach, but to create “learning experiences” (10). Students are told that “While learning from a good teacher is very important, it is more important for you to have meaningful learning experiences on your own” (9). In the Doctrine and Covenants, which is a book of sacred scripture containing revelations from God given to Joseph Smith in the 1830s and 40s, a list is given of subjects which members are commanded to learn that includes most, if not all, of the major branches of academic study. Among them are

things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home,



things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms. (88.79)

Therefore, another pedagogical principle in the LDS philosophy is that the Holy Ghost can not only help to confirm higher spiritual truths, but also provide assistance and divine inspiration even in quotidian subjects.

In the Doctrine and Covenants a specific pedagogical method to best teach these subjects is also prescribed. “[S]eek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom, seek learning even by study and also by faith” (107.7). The last phrase of this passage became one of the doctrinal keys to establishing the basis for the BYU-Idaho *Learning Model*. Because teaching in the LDS tradition is a cooperative effort between teacher, student, and God as partners in the creation of knowledge, each is responsible to “seek... diligently” and “teach one another.” Note also that the two different methods of learning are mentioned in this verse, “by study and also by faith.” To learn “by study” is understood as the hard work of reading texts critically, doing homework, writing about the texts, and physically participating in the activities they embody—in short, secular learning. To learn “by faith” is understood as the cooperation with God and His Spirit to learn truths through divine bodily and mental manifestations. LDS pedagogy can be seen as the combination of these two methods of gaining knowledge. This is important to remember because all three parties, the teacher, or speaker; the students, or audience; and God each have their own work to perform in order to ensure that learning occurs. If any of the three fail to perform their part, it does not mean that learning will not happen, but rather that learning defaults to “learning by study” alone, which is still a valid and important way of gaining knowledge. Learning “by faith,” however, creates a meaningful and personally felt connection to the knowledge gained. The tenth prophet/president of the Church Joseph Fielding Smith taught that, “through the Holy Ghost, the truth is woven into the very fibre and sinews of the body so that it cannot be forgotten” (qtd. in Learning Model 4). I

am not sure if this quote is to be taken literally or metaphorically, but the important principle is that knowledge gained through the interventions of the Holy Ghost, like my enhanced understanding of Emily Dickinson's poetry, become part of a person's compendium of knowledge in deeper ways than knowledge gained through other methods. Not only that, but as students work to learn by faith they are promised that they will be able to "exceed [their] natural limits and learn beyond [their] natural capabilities" (Learning Model, 2).

As I will show later, language can only do a partial job of explaining the personal experience of gaining knowledge through the Holy Ghost, however I would like to narrate one more example of it from my own experience to serve as a case that could clarify what I mean. During a graduate course in the history of rhetoric, we read *A Rhetoric of Motives* by Kenneth Burke. In a passage in chapter 1, Burke describes the shortcomings of using origins as a way of understanding an entity and calls it the "personalizing of essence" (15). As I read this, I felt the beginnings of a stirring inside me. My mind jumped to many connections including the creationism vs. evolution debates, the importance of the Church's origin stories within the traditions and teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and examples in movies I had seen. I started asking myself questions about what we might be missing out on by focusing on origins and not "culminations." For some reason I cannot explain, this concept was the most salient among many others in the chapter. In the class in which we discussed this chapter, I brought up the principle and as I was speaking, I made the connection to the movie *Batman Begins*, which focuses on the Batman's origin in order to deepen our understanding of the character of Bruce Wayne as a literal personalization of essence. In my mind, I linked this to my Church's emphasis on Joseph Smith's origin stories as a prophet and how that creates a deeper personal understanding of him as a person. As I spoke, I felt the same internal stirring, almost like an energy or excitement at having made the connection and I noticed some of my fellow classmates acknowledging the value of the connection. Now, this is not to say that my

having made this connection was a remarkable event or even one that I rarely experience, but I am saying that my work to make the connection, and the emotions I felt as I had those thoughts and shared them, were a time when I, Kenneth Burke and anyone else who influenced his writing of that chapter, and the Holy Ghost, all took part in the creation of new knowledge within me and possibly others.

In order to better understand LDS pedagogy within the area of composition pedagogy, it is important to lay out the fundamental epistemology of this pedagogy as it concerns writing and communication. In order to do so, I am borrowing the framework James Berlin uses in “Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories” and the idea that a pedagogy is defined by how it views the writer or speaker, audience, reality, and language.

Based on what we have already learned about LDS pedagogy, we can assume that the writer is an individual with the ability to find truth as gained both through physical interactions with the world and language and also with the divine. The writer or speaker’s (or teacher’s) purpose is to create public materials or sounds that others can experience, which gives the Holy Ghost the opportunity to confirm or deny the truth contained in them to the reader. In any case, the writer is an integral part of the transmission of eternal truths, but does not have and cannot have control over it. The Church’s official pedagogical handbook, *Teaching, No Greater Call*, even goes as far as to say, “No mortal teacher, no matter how expert or experienced, can bring the blessings of testimony and conversion to another person. That is the office of the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit” (41). There will be a more thorough explanation of what a “testimony” is in LDS thought in chapter four, but for right now, it is important to know that a teacher, no matter how skilled, will never be able to transfer truths to his or her students in the same way that the Holy Ghost can. While a person can be skilled in rhetoric and logic and use those skills to convince and teach others, it is ultimately the spirit that will be teaching the most important truths to the audience.

The ideal audience in LDS pedagogy, then, is made up of individuals willing to bear the burden of interpreting and seeking confirmation of truths; they do not expect to be entirely convinced of truth through logic, persuasion, or any other means the writer may have in their power. Instead, they should also seek confirmation of the information received through logical understanding through their own individual interaction with the Holy Ghost.<sup>1</sup> Again, from the official Church press release,

Individual members are encouraged to independently strive to receive their own spiritual confirmation of the truthfulness of Church doctrine [or, I would add, anything else they learn about]. Moreover, the Church exhorts all people to approach the gospel not only intellectually but with the intellect and the spirit, a process in which reason and faith work together.

Members are not taught to mistrust or deny reason, but rather that it is useful in finding truth, but ultimately not the only nor the best way to find it.<sup>2</sup>

Objective truths and reality in LDS pedagogy exist independently in a form outside of individuals and groups, and individuals can learn these truths; however, they are always understood subjectively through divine bodily manifestations of the Holy Spirit which serve to confirm or deny in a manner outside of language ideas received and understood through language and observation. Thus the truth exists eternally but is received or perceived differently for every individual and therefore untranslatable from person to person. Again however, this should not be confused with relativism or social constructivism in which the truths change as they are shaped by different cultures and discourse communities and are therefore arbitrary. The truths the person learns are eternal and consistent but understood through combinations of bodily interaction with surrounding texts, persons, and other stimuli as well as the Holy Ghost and thus each person's understanding of the truth will be very different.

In sum, then, language in LDS Pedagogy serves as a starting point for communication, but is ultimately flawed in its ability to communicate truth in the same deeply meaningful way that the Holy Ghost can. As an individual writes or speaks language, the Holy Ghost is provided with an opportunity to confirm or deny the truth of the language expression through bodily manifestation in the speakers and the listeners. Thus truth is not constructed socially, but rather the social interaction of language is vital to the learning process because it provides an opportunity for truth to be made manifest in the speaker/writer and audience.

When viewed this way, connections between LDS pedagogy and the progressive pedagogy known as post-process theory become clear. Although there are many camps within post-process theory, all agree that writing is best understood as being “public, interpretive, and situated” (Brooks, W97). Within post-process theory, writing is “*public* because the reception of writing is judged through its interactions with audience; *interpretive* because the production of texts relies on the judgments of the writer(s); and *situated* because both writer-related judgments and reader related judgments rely on sociohistorical contexts...” (Brooks, W98 emphasis in original). In much the same way, the writer in LDS pedagogy speaks or creates documents or other media publicly with the intent that they might convey some sort of truth that the audience can understand, and yet, the writer knows that ultimately it will not be her or his words or skill in rhetoric that convince the audience, but rather the Holy Ghost. It is then the audience’s responsibility to interpret the text and seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost through bodily experiences in finding the truths it does or does not contain. Because of this, there is little a teacher can do to reify his teaching into a curriculum, which is another defining characteristic of post-process theory. A teacher is not a teacher in the way that he or she knows things, and teaches those things to the students, because he or she is not the one that will do the teaching. Rather, through the social interactions and through the act of writing publicly, the student will create knowledge for him or herself as he or she interacts with the world and with the divine. Thus, the

teacher must create situations in which students can practice experiencing the process of writing in a way in which truth can be communicated to others. Thinking of writing as a process does little to help students when viewed this way because teaching the process by which writing is refined and polished is subordinate to teaching the purposes and objectives of writing to our students.

When we understand the fundamentals of LDS pedagogy and how writing and truth are viewed, we see that LDS pedagogy constructs communication in much the same way that the progressive post-process pedagogical theories do, however they do it through revealed doctrines from God rather than empirically gained academic evidence, such as what Hillocks relied on in his much-lauded meta-analysis of 1986 (See Hillocks). They do, however, differ very much in their end goals; in LDS pedagogy the purpose of any education is to help a person achieve the intelligence required to obtain eternal life and salvation, whereas the objectives of progressive pedagogies are much more oriented in this life, i.e. becoming helpful contributing citizens of a democracy and understanding the power structures inherent in our language interactions. One could say that LDS pedagogy is in some ways a witness to the effectiveness of certain aspects of the post-process theories of communication even when it comes from a decidedly conservative religious source and has a decidedly different objective.

Making this connection was another vital step for me in finding a sense of belonging in the academic community.

## NOTES

1. This is where my disagreement with Downs is the most obvious: the reception of knowledge from the Holy Ghost is not a passive experience, but an active one that

requires bodily effort to perform and church members are not encouraged to blindly follow the commandments of the prophet/president of the church, but to seek spiritual confirmation through the Holy Ghost of any teaching that comes from anywhere. Therefore simply because a student is LDS or any other religion does not necessarily predispose them to enact the Discourse of Affirmation. In fact, I imagine there are many people who consider themselves atheists who could staunchly enact the Discourse of Affirmation in the same way religious students sometimes do.

2. Perhaps some questions that may arise here are, what if two people receive confirming feelings about conflicting truths? does this undermine the validity of both? The questions that are the foundation of these question, namely, is truth constant? does everyone need to know the same truth? and why do we need to gain knowledge anyway?, are not within the scope of this paper. However, I can offer a few thoughts surrounding this philosophical conundrum: first, as I explained above, some truths are of more eternal significance than others, and perhaps the Holy Ghost can reveal to someone one thing and something else to another without conflicting a truth that really matters. Also, we might also consider that our own understanding of the situation may be limited and what we see as a conflict may not be. In the end, however, members of the Church usually work to have faith that God will be consistent in revealing the same truths to everyone, however, as I said before, they will all relate to that truth in their own subjective way.

## CHAPTER III

### LDS PEDAGOGY AS A CASE OF COMPLEX VITALISM

One question we can ask, then, is where would a Latter-day Saint pedagogy fit into the contemporary conversation of composition theories? James Berlin's cartographies of composition pedagogy theories can serve as a starting point to begin understanding where it might fit. We have already used Berlin's framework to begin to understand the foundational elements of LDS views on the writer, the audience, reality, and language. Using this same framework, Berlin maps out four schools of pedagogical thought in composition, neo-aristotelians or classicists, postivists or current-traditionalists, neo-platonists or expressionists, and the new rhetoricians or those in the social-epistemic camp. Using this map, I will create a Venn diagram of sorts to compare LDS pedagogy to these schools of thought. Ultimately however, I hope to show that LDS pedagogy does not fit into any of these schools of thought, but rather is much better understood as a case of or perhaps brother to complex vitalism, a new school of thought that Byron Hawk posits in his book *A Counter-History of Composition: Towards Methods of Complexity*.

Out of the four pedagogical theories presented in Berlin's chapter in *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory*, LDS pedagogy probably most closely resembles classicism in that it relies on the discovery of truths that exist eternally and independently outside of or apart from human understanding. In both, the audience is expected to be engaged with the information being presented in order to determine its worth and truthfulness. The crux of classical thought, though,



is logic and the skill of the speaker and audience in using logic to find truth. Classical classroom practices require students to memorize and emulate techniques of rhetorical argument taught by the masters like Aristotle. The problems inherent in this school of thought, pointed out by the “new rhetoricians” like I.A. Richards and Chaim Perelman, are the same reasons classicism and LDS pedagogy do not align: language is too subjective to ever fully convey eternal truth the way the classicists describe. As Berlin says, classicism relies on an “uncomplicated correspondence between the sign and the thing” (257) or among reality, how we understand reality, and the language we use to express it. This easy correspondence is obviously not the case, especially as the world becomes smaller through digital communication and much of the debate surrounding ideas like love and justice come down to semantics and ultimately amount to cultural tropes that Berlin points out are fraught with power dynamics. LDS pedagogy acknowledges these limits in language and gets past them by relying more on the Holy Ghost, which does not rely on language to send its message, but rather feelings manifest in the bodies of those seeking it, as the source of truth rather than language itself. A scripture in the Doctrine and Covenants encourages members to “study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right,” (9.8). While logic, or “study[ing] it out in your mind” is valued and a necessary part of LDS epistemology, a divine confirmation of any conclusion achieved through logic is an important step for information to be accepted as truth.

Positivism or Current-traditional pedagogy is probably the least like LDS pedagogy in that it relies entirely on objective observations and measurable phenomenon to find truth. It relies on empirical evidence to support all truth, and dismisses anything for which there is no verifiable evidence. Also it denies the possibility of or the validity of personal feelings and sees them as an obstacle to finding truth, which must be observed under strict conditions that do not allow for them or their influence. In this school of thought, a writer is merely a reporter of observations, and the audience wishes only to know the quantifiable and replicable observations of the

observer. Positivists make an effort to remove any possibility of the bias inherent in personal feelings in their language. Therefore current-traditional classroom practices focused on teaching accepted methods of conveying information such as the essay or lab report. “The research paper,” Berlin writes, “represented the insistence in current-traditional rhetoric on finding meaning outside the composing act, with writing itself serving as a simple transcription process” (*Rhetoric and Reality*, 70). However, As Bruno Latour points out in his book *We Have Never Been Modern*, even with all the effort put into trying to keep science objective and empty of human frailties, scientific discoveries always emanate from a network of discoveries that are uncontrollable by the scientists and that always imbue any discovery with very human and subjective elements. LDS pedagogy overcomes any of the troubles inherent in this school of thought by never claiming objectivity in the first place. The “banking model” (see Friere) of education that comes from the positivistic current-traditional pedagogies cannot work when an LDS pedagogue sees himself as learner along side with the students. He or she is still in the process of learning and observing the world, and therefore cannot stand as an expert in front of them that “gives” them knowledge. He or she knows that knowledge is created within the students as they work to understand it. More on this will be discussed in chapter 5.

Perhaps it will surprise a few readers to know that LDS pedagogy does not function as a sermon would, with a single teacher/speaker lecturing or “preaching” to a group of students or “congregation.” While there are church functions that include a single speaker addressing an audience, the majority of teaching and learning in the Church and church-run schools occurs through small group discussions facilitated by a teacher. In fact, in the 2007 version of BYU-Idaho’s *Learning Model*, teachers are counseled, perhaps blithely yet nevertheless tellingly, that a way to help students and teachers to begin to “act for themselves and accept responsibility for learning and teaching” would be for a teacher to “[hold] a brief and tasteful memorial service for the purely lecture-based classroom” (10). In other words, teachers are to make their pedagogical

intentions clear that all are equally responsible for creating an atmosphere conducive to creating knowledge, not just the teacher. The *Learning Model* clearly and unequivocally separates itself from current-traditional rhetoric, the teacher-centered classroom, and the idea that the teacher has the knowledge and gives it to the students. Therefore, LDS pedagogy and the current-traditional system of teaching have little equal ground to stand on.

According to Berlin's explanation in *Rhetoric and Reality*, expressionistic rhetoric came about in reaction to the rigidity of the positivist school which was seen as "the training for a middle-class, professionally certified meritocracy" (71), and, instead of relying entirely on outside phenomenon for the truth, sought for a "cultivation of the self" through "traditional learning of literature, language, and art" (72). If science could not give the full truth because it denied personal feelings, they may have thought, perhaps all meaningful truth transcends this world and therefore cannot be taught because it comes from genius. They believed that "writing involves the self and is an art. Learning and teaching it can be accomplished but not explained" (72). In the expressionist's school as Berlin explains it, these classroom experiences were created to allow the unconscious mind to transcend the world and allow the inner voice of the writer to become free of Freudian repression (74). LDS pedagogy does not see transcendence of the physical world or our conscious minds as an important part of learning, but rather that they play a vital role in the creation of knowledge. To reiterate the quote from Joseph Fielding Smith, "through the Holy Ghost, the truth is woven into the very fibre and sinews of the body so that it cannot be forgotten" (qtd. in *Learning Model* 4). LDS pedagogy differs from expressionism in that the individual is not the origin of the knowledge and therefore studying classical literature or poetry will not give access to transcendent truth because of anything within the text itself, but rather, only through a subjective understand of truths represented in the text as confirmed by the Holy Ghost.

I have already covered much of the differences and similarities between LDS pedagogy and social-epistemic pedagogy, which I have referred to until now as progressive pedagogy. Here is a short summary. Social-epistemic pedagogy envisions the writer and audience as an integral part of the understanding of truth, and sees them working in concert to create truths socially and see truth as dynamic and entirely contextual. To both, discussion and communication are vital steps for the creation of knowledge because it is in those very acts that knowledge is created. Also it teaches that language must be, and always is, interpreted subjectively and personally, much like the idea in LDS pedagogy all truths are received in personal ways. Again, however, social epistemic rhetoric denies that truths exist independently and are waiting to be discovered by an individual. Rather they posit that truths are created in the very act of social communication, and therefore, truth is impossible without language and entirely situated.

As I explained in my narrative, one of Byron Hawk's efforts in *A Counter-History of Composition* was to redraw Berlin's cartographies of composition pedagogies. As he does, he points out that by Berlin's advocacy of social-epistemic composition theory, "he misses not only complex-vitalism's post-dialectical approach to complex interrelationships but also the notion of the bodily experience and knowledge as being the local moment out of which more complex understanding is connected and initiated" (113). Also, Hawk posits through the arguments of Henri Bergson that "Berlin has to conflate experience and language in order to understand experience semiotically and dialectically.[...] The body can know and understand the world prior to conscious linguistic understanding" (113). While Berlin emphasizes the creation of knowledge occurring dialectically, meaning through language and classroom interactions, he overlooks the body's importance and potential influence and the "language" of the body that is different from our own semiotic codes. "The kind of heuristic pedagogy Berlin establishes," writes Hawk, "cannot achieve its ends if it ignores the centrality of the body and its levels of connectedness to specific, lived situations" (120). Much like in LDS Pedagogy, the body, according to Hawk, is not

where knowledge originates, but the body can act in concert with a complex system in ways that help an individual understand the world around him or her in ways that thought itself cannot, and so is a vital part of the learning process.

As I said above, I suggest that LDS pedagogy's closest relative in the composition theory family is as a brother of Hawk's Complex Vitalism. Hawk's argument focuses around the confusion surrounding Coleridge's use of the term "vitalism" (which has through history been misconstrued as a branch of romantic expressivism) and posits how it can be used to develop a pedagogy and epistemology complex enough to function in our posthuman, poststructuralist, and postmodern world. Although in this thesis I have relied on them as a framework for the ease of describing LDS pedagogy, Hawk eventually demonstrates the futility of James Berlin's attempts to create all-encompassing maps of epistemology, and opens the way for new epistemologies, like Complex Vitalism and LDS pedagogy, to emerge and have a place outside of them. For Hawk, one of the main components of knowledge creation, the component that has been overlooked and misrepresented through history, is the body. He outlines how our observations of and bodily interactions with our surroundings are the basis for knowledge creation. "[P]erceptions, (potential bodily reactions)" Hawk writes, "and thought (possible conceptual relations) form a feedback loop.[...] Knowledge, both abstract and practical, can emerge only through this larger feedback loop between bodily potential and conceptual possibility" (117). This feedback loop metaphor Hawk uses represents the interactions between body and mind. First, the body reacts to the environment and then the mind creates conceptual relations based on that reaction. These thoughts then inform the body how it should act and react, and the mind creates conceptual relations from the new actions, creating a loop. "The body," then "is the critical, epistemological link between situation and invention" (120). Without the body, the effects of the environment could never be assessed by the mind. Because of the ever-changing, ever-shifting world we live in, this "local moment" (113) of knowledge creation can be the only knowledge we can trust.

Knowledge created by any other means would be merely a representation of a situation at a certain time, and would fail to include any and all circumstances. Hawk's Complex Vitalism positions the body at the center of knowledge creation, not as the origin of the knowledge, but as the antennae or catalyst. It is in the interactions of the body with its environment in which knowledge is created.

In LDS theology, the body is used in much the same way, as a tool to gain knowledge. The body is seen as the temporary housing of an eternal spirit during our mortal lives and the eternal home of the same spirit after the resurrection. The time a person has with a body during this life is a probationary period in which he or she must work to gain as much knowledge as he or she can before death, which is the separation of the eternal spirit from their corruptible and mortal body. Because communication with the Holy Ghost is the method of gaining knowledge of all truth, the crux of LDS learning is how well a person interacts with the Spirit of God, or the Holy Ghost, during his or her life. In LDS pedagogy, the Holy Ghost and His interaction with learners (and their bodies) is seen as an essential part of the learning environment and thus becomes one of the major components needed for learning to take place. The Holy Ghost, the body's reaction to His manifestations, and how the mind then perceives those reactions, become three parts of the feedback loop. And that is where knowledge originates.

As stated above, this interaction comes through bodily feelings described as a "burning in the bosom" or of "joy and peace," and are the bodily interaction with the Spirit of God to manifest truth to an individual. These feelings and interactions with divinity also play a major part in an LDS teacher's pedagogical strategies. In LDS teaching manuals and handbooks, teachers are told to be constantly seeking inspiration on how to teach their students, and students are told to constantly seek inspiration in learning. "As you ponder and pray about a lesson and about the people you teach," says the teaching manual, "your surroundings can come alive with answers to questions and examples..." (*Teaching 22*). The Doctrine and Covenants teaches

instructors, “it shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say” (100.6). *Teaching, No Greater Call* elaborates on the possibility of spontaneity in the classroom. “You may occasionally feel a prompting to leave something out of a lesson or to add something that you have not prepared. [...] When learners ask questions, you may feel prompted to lay aside your preparations and thoughtfully discuss those questions. [...] Humbly follow these feelings” (48). So, much like Byron Hawk posits, LDS pedagogy views knowledge, especially knowledge as invention, originating in bodily feelings, especially feelings that come from interactions with one’s environment, an environment that includes the Spirit of God.

Maintaining an environment where the Holy Ghost can be present is vital to LDS teachers. They are counseled to “do all [they] can to improve the physical surroundings in which [they] teach” (*Teaching* 76). In *Teaching, No Greater Call*, it is suggested that teachers should keep the classroom clean, arrange the seats in the classroom so that “learners can see and hear [them] and each other,” and even to make sure no student’s seat faces a bright window in which the sun would shine in their eyes. The meticulousness asked of LDS gospel teachers in maintaining a clean, calm environment, shows LDS pedagogy’s belief in the importance of what Hawk calls “the ecology of the classroom” in creating knowledge (224). Largely taking ideas from Paul Kameen, Hawk says that “All knowledge, not simply knowledge about teaching or writing, emerges from ecologies, in which ideas surface through the possibilities that the rhetorical situation opens up.[...] both the teacher’s knowledge and the student’s texts evolve in the emerging moments between the two” (225). We can understand “rhetorical situation” to include minute details in the classroom setting such as lighting and seat arrangement.

Thus we see that Byron Hawk’s Complex Vitalism, a pedagogically progressive theory rooted in the postmodern, and his revision of the prevailing theories of composition pedagogy closely align with the main tenets of LDS pedagogy even though it stems from a theological base. As I explained in my narrative, Hawk’s counter-history and explanation of embodied cognition

was the entryway for me to begin to understand all that I have presented here. As I came to understand the role of the body, it became easier for me to make sense of what I knew and how it combined with what I was learning as a graduate student. I am confident that what I learned as I made these connections was what gave me the confidence to complete my graduate education and maintain my devotion to my faith. I found that what I first saw as a conflict was actually just an incomplete picture; I needed to understand the role of the body in the learning process in order to understand everything else.



## CHAPTER IV

### LDS EPISTEMOLOGY AND RIP/MIX/BURN

In the last two chapters, I have tried to establish the theoretical, or really doctrinal, foundations of LDS pedagogy and I hope I have shown how it is closely aligned with, yet different, from progressive pedagogies. All of these theories try to build curricula locally from the needs of the students, and each employs many of the same classroom tactics such as group work, engaging students in teaching each other, and spending much class time in discussion rather than lecture. What sets LDS pedagogy apart is its justifications for the practices. Therefore it is important to spend ample time discussing the ways in which LDS pedagogy views epistemology and the body's importance in learning so that we can better understand the classroom practices from that perspective because these are the justifications for the practices.

The strength of a person's testimony in such doctrines as the divine nature of Jesus Christ, the verity of the divine calling of Joseph Smith to restore the Gospel and Priesthood of Jesus Christ, and the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, is seen as one of the vital factors of obtaining salvation and exaltation in the LDS faith and also more pragmatically as a basic requirement for entrance into LDS temples. The process by which a person gains this knowledge is much like the process with which all people gain any knowledge, but also involves the intervention of the Holy Ghost to confirm the truths through bodily manifestations (see figure 1)

The idea of gaining knowledge, or in LDS terminology, gaining a testimony, can be better understood when compared to Alexander Reid's explanation of gaining knowledge through the metaphor of Rip/Mix/Burn. I hope Reid's metaphor can serve as a "secularized" version of LDS epistemology.

In Reid's *The Two Virtuals* he uses the metaphor of Rip/Mix/Burn, the process by which information is distributed digitally through compact discs or other digital media, to represent the pedagogically progressive process of what he has labeled "embodied and distributed cognition" (127). *Ripping*, in the world of digital music or other information, is the process of copying the digital pieces of a song or sound from a CD or other data storage unit onto a computer; *mixing* is then rearranging songs or sounds, or parts of songs or other sounds to create a new compendium; and *burning* is the act of rewriting the new mix onto a CD or transferring it to another device. Information in this model is composed of millions of disparate pieces of information that can be called upon in certain moments and burned into a reified representation of how they have combined in new ways. When we apply this metaphor to the creation of knowledge we learn some valuable lessons. Reid says, "the topological unfolding of thought is a similar process [to rip/mix/burn] in which cognitive content is 'ripped' from materiality via sensory organs, 'mixed' with other content including memory, and 'burned' into language at the conscious level" and suggests that "there is no cognition except this kind" (130). In other words, much like a computer pulls information from discs or the internet, we, through sensory information from the material world around us are constantly pulling in information. Like bytes and bits, these are tiny pieces of information that all reside in memory ready to be recombined and used for different purposes. Then, in our minds, these pieces of sensory information (or data in the terminology of the metaphor) get mixed with other pieces of information, including memories of past experiences. Then, finally, through physical acts of language creation, whether writing, speaking, making a photograph, editing video, creating a website or visual display etc., we are burning the bits and

pieces of information into a tangible, permanent, semiotic form that others can interact with. However, this artifact that is produced only represents a fleeting moment in that person's knowledge as opposed to a concrete representation of permanently gained knowledge.

Understanding knowledge creation this way can help us understand how LDS pedagogy envisions epistemology, the emphasis on moral purity in the learning process, and how it translates to day to day pedagogical practices. All members of the Church are constantly faced with teaching and learning opportunities. We surround ourselves with church discussions and teachings. Our very environment becomes imbued with the doctrines and principles we hold dear, in other words, we make sure that all that is being "ripped" into our minds through these experiences leads us toward our goals of church membership and eventually salvation. Continuing with the computer metaphor, we can consider our minds, conscious and subconscious, as a hard drive. They have finite space for storage, and the only "files" available to us are what are on the hard drive. We also believe that the testimonies we have are not monolithic objects, but rather dynamic confluences of our experience. We believe that in order to gain and strengthen our testimonies, we cannot participate in things that will fill up that hard drive with inappropriate kinds of information. For this, church officials regularly command and counsel to reject pornography, R-rated movies, and any other media that does not lead to strengthening the core doctrines mentioned above. Exposure to these kinds of things can weaken our beliefs by introducing ideas that could weaken our testimonies.<sup>1</sup>

Church members are regularly admonished to spend time "pondering" on the things we learn in church and through our scripture studies. This could be one example of the "mixing" aspect of gaining a testimony. As discussed in other places in this thesis, members are not expected to simply believe the doctrines taught, but rather to try them out in their lives, and also to compare them to the experiences they have already had with truths they have already learned. They take in all these material things from their environment, i.e. church teachings, scripture,

bodily experiences, and also manifestations of the Holy Ghost, and mix them with their memories and past experiences to create their own personalized version of the eternal truths.

The “burning” process of knowledge is much the same as in Reid’s metaphor. To do so, members are admonished to keep journals, and express their beliefs about the Church often to others, and as I have explained above, pedagogues make a big effort to give students time to express their thoughts verbally in class discussions. Also, the Church hosts monthly “testimony meetings” in which members take the pulpit and share their testimonies with the congregation. Through the process of “burning” their knowledge, feelings, and memories into written or spoken words or other media, they are actually creating knowledge within themselves. There is an old saying in the Church that sums this up quite well, “A testimony is gained in the bearing of it.” In other words, knowledge is actually created in the very process of expressing it and the more opportunities one has to do so, the more knowledge they will have and their convictions to the knowledge they have will become stronger. To an outsider, it may seem like many members all say the same things when they talk of their beliefs in the church. They might say such phrases as, “I believe this is the true church,” “I believe Joseph Smith is a prophet,” “I believe the Book of Mormon is true,” etc. However, even though the words sound the same, each member arrived at that truth in their own personal way, through their own personal information ripped into their minds from their environment. When a member of the Church “bears” his or her testimony, in a testimony meeting or otherwise, they are experiencing but also creating an “unfolding” and “compression” of experiences and material experiences into language. They are creating truth and confirming it to themselves by speaking it. Reid says, “Each event in writing [and I will add speaking]... emerges from a rhizomatic network of proliferating, contagious affects produced from a process of compression, but then unfolds, spreading outward with potential... Each word then is a burning: the apprehension and compression of a topological event of affective unfolding” (141). Although “each word is [only] a noisy, partial capture” of what the person

“knows”, the member is burning their experiences into a medium that can be understood and consumed by others, and they arrived at it by ripping “data,” and mixing them.

This theory of knowledge creation in LDS pedagogy is an integral part of LDS thinking and experience and evidence of it is found in a parable from the Book of Mormon. Alma 32:28-32 contains a sermon given to a group of poverty stricken outcasts by a prophet named Alma around 74 B.C. In it, the prophet is explaining the process by which faith is turned into knowledge. Many members read this scripture as direction for how to gain a testimony, but it will be most helpful to us here if we see it as an epistemological analogy on how any knowledge is created.

The parable begins with Alma comparing “the word” to a seed in verse 28. It might be easy to read this “word” as “the word of God” or another theologically dense term with little academic use. However, for our purposes, we can see this “word” as any idea that a person is exposed to. The parable continues that, in order to know if the idea is a good one, or in other words, truthful, a person must “give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart.” Again, this language can, at first, be taken as non-academic and even cliché. But if we use Reid’s metaphor to guide us, we can take the idea of planting a seed in a heart to mean putting judgments or first impressions on hold until we can have more experiences that we can combine with the idea to enrich and complicate it. When a person does this, the parable teaches that this person will begin to feel that

it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.

In other words, if a person has given an idea adequate time and space to allow his or herself to have experiences that can change how he or she feels about that idea and if the idea is a good one, or in other words true, that person will not only continue to think about it, but will experience physical manifestations of its truthfulness. However, according to the parable, this does not mean that knowledge has been created (see verse 29). In order to make a person's "knowledge perfect" about that idea, more and more experiences are required that can confirm or deny the idea through experience and the constant feedback of bodily feelings (verse 32-34). Eventually these experiences will "nourish" that seed until it is a fruit-bearing tree. If the idea passes all the tests of experience, the fruit can be plucked or enjoyed (verse 42). I am going to take the liberty of imposing my own reading of this verse based on what I know from Reid and say that part of "plucking the fruit" of the knowledge that has been created through experience is being able to reify it into written or spoken word.

These bodily actions and feelings, however, should not be constrained to merely kinesthetic experience; by advocating the incorporation of bodily information I am not saying that students need to build sentences out of blocks, or run laps while dictating a thesis (although I would not discount these either). Rather, I wish to stress that all the thoughts and feelings a student might have during a class period will have at least some impact on how that student learns what is being taught. The physical feeling of being uncomfortable because of, say, cognitive dissonance, embarrassment, excitement, or even boredom can be just as meaningful as anything else that a student does or does not leave the class with.

In order to take advantage of this, LDS pedagogues believe any classroom experience should revolve around "creating learning experiences" (*Learning Model*, 10). This involves creating situations, or "simulations" to borrow from Reid's language, in which learners and teachers practice and experience the principles being taught through bodily actions and feelings. If rip/mix/burn accurately represents how we construct and express knowledge there is little

difference between experience felt in a simulated version of an activity and “the real thing.” I see the motivations behind this principle being closely related to Vygotsky’s ideas of the zone of proximal development or “the area of immature, but maturing processes” a child encounters as they learn (202). Vygotsky posited that a person (he focused on children and therefore I am taking liberties and projecting his ideas onto older persons) can only achieve levels of mental development that he or she is close to but has not yet achieved, and that there are “optimum times in the child’s development for each type of teaching” (203). There are three very important ideas that I feel directly relate to the LDS emphasis on the creation of learning experiences and its foundations in the epistemology I have described. First, it is the teacher’s job to either find out what a student can do independently or help a student determine this for him or herself. This is one of the motivations of creating learning experiences. As the *Learning Model* states, a teacher must “Design learning experiences in which students are required to discern how their current way of thinking is limiting them from learning an important concept” (3). Second, because a person can only learn what is within his or her grasp but not yet fully understood, a teacher is faced with a conundrum: teaching a class of 19 would either require creating 19 separate lesson plans individually specified for each student, or create a pedagogy in which students make these discoveries for themselves. Third, the bodily feeling of being uncomfortable (possibly even the feelings of humiliation and failure) and students taking “leaps of faith” into areas of discomfort and fear are inherently, then, two very important parts of the learning process, because they becomes signals for the student to locate their own zone of proximal development. The learning experiences of LDS pedagogy, and also the constructivist pedagogies derived from Vygotsky’s work, require students and teachers to be on the edge of what they know and extending past it by risking making comments in class when they are not entirely sure of what they are saying, or writing a rough draft even when they have not fully developed the idea in their heads before they begin. This liminal space Vygotsky describes is the area where the most important learning takes place and where new knowledge is created in the individual. In this way, the body plays an

important role in helping students determine their own zones of proximal development instead of relying on inherently biased standardized testing to find it for them. The *Learning Model* teaches that students have a responsibility to participate in class activities and discussions in order to ensure that they are having the experiences that will allow them to create knowledge. As an example of an ideal situation in which a student fulfills their responsibility, the *Learning Model* gives this example. “Applying the principles of the Learning Model, and with a deep breath, a student volunteers her opinion during class discussion and actively listens to understand others” (10). The ideal LDS pedagogue understands, takes into account, plans for, and figures out ways, not to avoid a student’s discomfort at taking a risk on offering a not-fully-formed comment, but rather to encourage that discomfort because it is a sign that the student is at the very least attempting to “burn” new knowledge for themselves and for the class.

Another LDS classroom practice that emanates from this epistemological foundation is the emphasis on preparation for both the student and the teacher. Because the time spent in class is both crucial for providing experiences in which a person can create new knowledge in themselves, and fleeting, usually only around 150 minutes a week in a the average freshman composition classroom, preparation is vital to take the most advantage of it. The Learning model teaches that “students [should] prepare for class by completing assignments beforehand, seeking additional information that might pertain to class discussions, finding opportunities to teach course material to peers, and actively applying core concepts in their individual lives” (10). This is not to say that all teachers do not emphasize student preparation; it is surely a requirement that all teachers should and do admonish their students to follow. However, because, in the LDS pedagogical perspective, a student must first rip all that is available to them, and mix it with their experiences and memories so that they can then burn it to others, preparation for class time takes on a new importance.



The progressive pedagogical theories behind embodied cognition that are seen in Reid's Rip/Mix/Burn metaphor are clearly an integral part of LDS pedagogy. The methods that progressive educators and LDS pedagogues utilize are very similar and both seek to localize the pedagogical moment in either the bodies or the language that emanates from the bodies of the participants. Both see the process by which knowledge being gained as stemming from countless interactions that stretch much farther than the walls of the classroom into the students' personal lives and levels of development, and therefore seek to create an atmosphere in which students can be put in uncomfortable situations safely and, by navigating through and dealing with the bodily feelings they have in these situations, learn deeply meaningful truths that will serve the students in situations outside of the classroom.

I hope it should be more clear now how I found comfort and belonging in these theories. The testimony meetings I described above are a regularly occurring part of LDS worship, and so to see a theory of knowledge represented in the Alex Reid's academic descriptions of pedagogy that closely resembled what I was so familiar with helped me to find a place in the academic world. It seemed like the more progressive and radical the books I was reading became, the more familiar they became.

## NOTES

1. This is why I agreed with Downs before. By the Church advocating staying away from these kinds of materials, many members see anything that is not church-related as taking away from their testimony and therefore unwanted and potentially evil. It is probably for this reason that many members enact the Discourse of Affirmation. Again however, this is a misunderstanding on the part of the member in which they conflate any idea that is not directly related to what they already know to be an idea *in opposition* to what they know to be true.

## CHAPTER V

### HUMILITY AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF KNOWLEDGE CREATION

Much like the distributed nature of knowledge creation described above in the metaphor of Rip/Mix/Burn, in today's digitally mediated society, new media are making the distributed quality of all creation much more obvious. This in turn creates an atmosphere where many feel safe to relinquish control over their creations and engage their audiences in a spirit of participation rather than a transfer of knowledge or a display of expertise. In a collection on the topic of new literacies, Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel describe how our interaction with and dependence on new media for communication has changed our mindset from one of industrial capitalism to one of cyberspatial sharing and participation (11). Within the old industrial mindset, value is/was determined economically as an interplay between cost, supply and demand; a lack of supply increases both cost and demand, etc. In this mindset, which Knobel and Lankshear call a "scarcity model" there is a finite number of goods that can be distributed to a finite number of recipients or buyers, and if one person has an item, another does not have it. By contrast, in the new cyberspatial mindset, everyone has access to much information immediately and mostly for free at the point of delivery. When a file is shared, or a YouTube video is viewed, the original file is still available and the quantity of the item has in no way diminished. Knobel and Lankshear point out that conflating the two mindsets leads to undesirable circumstances.

“People who bring a scarcity model of value with them to cyberspace will act in ways that diminish rather than expand its potential” (11). In other words, as we depend on and use digital media more frequently, we must rethink what we know about the economics of information, property and knowledge; relying on our old ideas will limit our potential, especially, I will argue, when we apply this idea of scarcity to the epistemologies that inform our pedagogies.

Those who thrive in cyberspace have already begun figuring out how we must create and share information in ways that expand its potential rather than diminish it. Among these methods of interaction is creating what Knobel and Lankshear call the “new ethos,” or a more humble way of presenting oneself in the digital community that rejects a scarcity model and expertise, and focuses on creating a culture of sharing and participation. This new ethos envisions expertise, and therefore error, differently, and creates an environment where all feel free to create and share without fear or pressure or without feeling like they are stealing scarce goods. Rather than creating an ethos based on stores of knowledge and the ability to recall facts or elaborate on certain subjects, the new ethos is created by displaying the ability and willingness to share and to interact, and puts little or no emphasis on being right or correct. In this chapter I hope to show how the roles of teachers and students within the LDS paradigm of knowledge creation through discussion and bodily interaction in classroom ecologies already benefit from Knobel and Lankshear’s idea of the new ethos and then discuss how this affects LDS classroom practices. I will do this by examining a case study of YouTube stars the Gregory Brothers to see how their implementation of the new ethos has garnered them great success in the digital community.

### **Meet the Gregory Brothers**

Since 2008, the Gregory Brothers, who are Andrew, Michael, Evan, and Evan’s wife Sarah, have been producing segments on YouTube that take spoken word segments from videos available online, including segments of congressional debates, viral videos popularized on

YouTube, and others, and “songify” them (to use their vocabulary) using widely available software referred to as auto-tune. This software imposes a melody on the spoken voices which can then be set to music. As Evan Gregory puts it, they are “creating songs where no song was before.” These videos usually find absurd or ridiculous quotes or stories, and amplify the silliness by setting it to music, usually repeating embarrassing phrases over and over. They also film themselves as backup singers in Viking or Gorilla costumes and sing phrases like “The rent is too damn high!” in harmony with the “unintentional singers.” But the silliness covers up some very solid song writing abilities. The songs the Gregory Brothers produce are not merely passed through an auto-tuning program, and covered up with delay, reverb, and compression and uploaded to YouTube, as some auto-tuned remixes are. The songs are tightly crafted. They choose the song’s key purposefully, trying out different ones and choosing what fits best with the content of the songs. They divide the songs artfully into verses, bridges, and choruses and sing along with them in complicated four part harmonies. With their incisive skill in identifying and exploiting the intentions and failures of popular and political figures, they satirize and lampoon in meaningful ways. By borrowing, tweaking, and remixing online video clips, they create what Eliot Van Buskirk of Wired Magazine calls “perhaps *the* music of our time” (emphasis in original). However, I want to argue that they are not successful only because of this talent, but also because of the new ethos they try to establish with the YouTube audience.

Although Evan Gregory describes the band’s success as merely “a drop in the bucket” when compared to videos produced by wealthy studios, based on statistics alone, the Gregory Brothers have attained a level of success that few achieve. On an admittedly shoe-string budget, and without the backing of a major record label or studio, they have produced at least 65 videos which together have been viewed well over 405 million times. Most of their videos have over one million views, and their most viewed video, “Bed Intruder Song” had about 100 million views at the time of writing, and that number is sure to increase. Their newest video segments consistently

reach one million views in around a week's time. Also, the Gregory Brothers earn enough money through ad revenue and corporate sponsorship that they can devote all their energy to creating these videos instead of working day jobs (Gregory). They also enjoy the promise of their own forthcoming television series on Comedy Central (Van Buskirk). However, the statistics listed above (number of views, money earned, etc.) are based on a scarcity model of value. The only reason 45 million views is important is because there is a finite amount of time that people spend watching YouTube videos and if they are watching a Gregory Brothers video, they are not watching any other video and therefore generating ad revenue for someone else. Also, there are only a finite number of time slots in Comedy Central's programming docket, and that the Gregory Brother's have warranted a spot and someone else has not is a success because they have achieved something very high in demand and very low in supply. If Knobel and Lankshear are right, however, if we depend solely on numbers of views and numbers of dollars earned to judge the Gregory Brother's success, we are "[diminishing] rather than [expanding]" their potential. By relegating the Gregory Brother's success merely to the cold world of statistics and dollars and cents, we miss out on some great lessons on what success in new media means and how it is achieved in our digital world.

Understanding why what the Gregory Brother's do is qualified as new media will be helpful in establishing how they have implemented this new ethos to become successful, because simply being on YouTube does not automatically make something new media. There are many who use the medium of the YouTube video much like they would use any other "old" media, i.e. selling cars, advertising for their business, displaying home movies of their children, playing a favorite song. A YouTube video, aside from just being on YouTube, needs a few qualities to make it new media. When Knobel and Lankshear describe the new mindset in the digital world, they also give us three distinguishing characteristics to help us make that distinction: new media are participatory, collaborative and distributed, and less "expert-dominated."

When a person places a video of their car displaying a price and a phone number on YouTube, for example, they are not looking for their viewers to participate in the video's creation or in the creation of similar videos and therefore are not new media. They are simply displaying information in the hopes that someone will see it and purchase the car. The video has little value for them once the item has been sold. By approaching the video with a scarcity model in mind, (I have one car to sell and I need one person to buy it) they have diminished the potential of the YouTube medium.

The Gregory Brother's by contrast are aware of the ways that YouTube audiences interact with and participate in the creation of more content. In many of the videos they have posted, they have given away the lyrics and the chords to the song and challenged the viewers to cover the song or write their own version of it. Rather than seeing the songs they produce as a finite item that they own, they encourage their audience to sing along with them. They do this by providing the lyrics of the songs along with the chord changes and other basics, sometimes even including detailed four-part harmony music charts and tutorials on how to sing each part. They also personally appear in the videos and directly petition this interaction from the audience by speaking into the camera and asking for covers to be made with the promise that all viewers will have easy access to view what their fans have made. They do all of this in an effort to engage their audience through encouraging their participation. In a personal interview with Evan Gregory, the oldest brother of the group, he expressed this participatory sentiment of the audience:

There's just untold numbers of people singing Lady Gaga's songs on YouTube. So we kind of honed in on that sentiment or that inclination of YouTube culture. Rather than saying, this is our piece and we'd prefer it if there was only our version and trying to exert ownership over the music or something like that, instead, we took the angle of encouragement. [...] The more people that want to play their own version of the song, it

further legitimizes the music. They are expressing fanship in the same way that they express it about Lady Gaga.

The levels of participation YouTube audiences have exhibited are often astonishing. “Covers” or viewer produced versions of “The Bed Intruder Song” alone number in the thousands and include anything from clips of young men in their college dorms crooning the song with the help of a guitar, to a father’s playing an impromptu version on the accordion while his daughter films, to ironic spoken word versions, to studio quality death metal band versions, to fully orchestrated arrangements, and even an entire college Marching Band. This is one marker of the success of the Gregory Brothers new ethos: it inspires others to create, share, and produce.

An interesting thing to note about encouraging audience participation is that as more people make their own versions of Gregory Brothers’ songs and share them with their social network, more people learn about the Gregory Brothers and the original videos that inspired them. This expanded audience then goes and watches the Gregory Brothers videos and generate more ad revenue for them. So, in essence, when a YouTube content creator uses their videos as they would old media, even if they achieve their goal of monetary gain or even numbers of views, they have achieved very little. However, when YouTube content creators give away information in order to encourage participation, they are successful in both inspiring others and increasing numbers of views and monetary gains. In short, the more one gives, the more one gets.

I will argue that one of the major reasons behind the Gregory Brothers establishing themselves under the new ethos is their own recognition of the distributed quality of their work. As a person understands that his or her creation is distributed among many others and did not come entirely from him or herself, he or she will feel differently about sharing it; and I call this feeling humility. In the case of the “Bed Intruder Song” Antoine Dodson’s lyrics were spoken during a newscast that aired on television which was then uploaded to YouTube. The Gregory

Brothers created the song using the footage from YouTube and contacted Dodson to complete the collaboration. The creation of the song was clearly distributed between Antoine Dodson and The Gregory Brothers. Evan Gregory had this to say:

We look at it as a classic music and lyrics partnership, the Rodgers and Hammerstein of old. You almost always had a guy that did the music and a guy that did the lyrics. That delineation isn't as sharp with, say, the "Bed Intruder Song" or with an Auto-Tune the News track, but there is a similarity there in the partnership between us and the unintentional singers.

The Gregory Brothers split the credit of the songs creation into a 50/50 partnership, and this carries through to profits as well; the Brothers shared 50 percent of the iTunes sales of the song with Dodson. Evan Gregory said, "With the bed intruder song... the melody was already naturally present, the rhythms were already there, the sound of the voice and the emotion was already there. So we just created music around what was already there."

The distribution of the creation of the "Bed Intruder Song," however, is much more complicated than the lyrics and music model Evan Gregory mentions. During the song writing process, creation is further distributed through the original newscast and other mediating technologies, especially the auto-tuning software. Michael Gregory, the brother that created the "Bed Intruder Song," described the process this way. "I ... [listened] to the contours of [Antoine Dodson's] voice, and the way that he was emoting. I've done this enough so that when I heard him talk, I could hear the melody, and that melody kind of changes connotation depending on what key I put it in" (Van Buskirk). Through the practice of creating these songs, he has learned how to distribute the creation of the melody through the software, which assigns fixed notes to the tones of the spoken voice. He mentions that different keys, or in other words, different software settings, change the connotations, or the feelings of the song. The software in some ways



directs the song writing process. Michael Gregory's expertise in listening to and using the software, applied to the edited footage of Dodson's speech, along with Michael Gregory's knowledge of music theory and song writing conventions, was what ultimately created the "Bed Intruder Song." This same distribution of creation is true for all content on YouTube (and I imagine some, like Alexander Reid, would argue the same for all content produced anywhere and all knowledge created). Although the Gregory Brothers and Antoine Dodson deservedly receive almost all of the credit, the creation of the "Bed Intruder Song" was not, as Reid writes, "an act of individual, internal, creative will" (155), but the conglomeration of the work of untold numbers.

Byron Hawk comments on the potential power that comes from recognizing this distribution. First he argues that we should never consider ourselves in control of the process of invention when we interact with digital technologies. "The assumption of autonomy, presence, and control ignores the ambient, unconscious, habitual elements of invention that emerge out of the complex technological systems that human bodies inhabit today" (169). Once we recognize this distribution, and give up the illusion of control, we begin to fully understand the process of invention. "Rather than technology causing effects or humans determining purposes, technology and humans combine with many other elements in the environment to create conditions of possibility that suggests potential futures" (172). I argue that the humility inherent in the "new ethos" stems from this recognition, and I believe this humility is key to creating these potential futures, and has been vital to the Gregory Brothers success. I will also argue that this humility should play a greater role in our own pedagogies if we want to connect to our students who have grown up recognizing this distribution as an integral part in their own knowledge creation.

The distributed quality of their creations also allows the Gregory Brothers to use one other aspect of the new ethos that relates to humility, that of trying to not appear as experts. The Gregory Brothers have also found success because the world of new media is, as Knobel and Lankshear describe it, "less expert-dominated" (9). A large part of the Gregory Brothers' identity

revolves around their homegrown, zero budget production (Gregory). After the booming success of the “Bed Intruder Song” the brothers appeared in a New York Times article and the photograph accompanying the article tells much of this ethos (see Figure 2). The photograph, taken by Daniel Barry, portrays the brothers and Sarah working as they normally would to create a video. Michael Gregory wears a suit jacket and tie on top with tattered jeans and no shoes, and performs sitting on a stool in front of a green bed sheet tacked to the wall (the green fabric is used to create the visual effects of the segments). They are in their living room in Brooklyn and the scene is illuminated by house lamps. Sarah Gregory holds an old laptop playing sound and displaying lyrics for Michael, and Evan operates a consumer grade video camera while Andrew leans against the wall to observe. The Brothers chose to portray themselves this way, and many sections of the videos highlight this low-cost production. When asked why the group makes such an effort to display the behind the scenes of their videos, Evan Gregory responded that they want to send an empowering message to their audience:

You can do some fun and interesting things with tools that are available to you, and you don't have to be in a glamorous setting to do it. That's definitely a message that we would like to share, but also in addition to that, on a personal level, we want our fans and friends to be able to identify with us. It would be tougher to identify with us as creators or writers or whatever if it felt like we were on this unattainable level-- having all this capital and tons of equipment and cool stuff. (Gregory)

The brothers do not want their audience to see them as experts because it would impose limits on their fans' ability to participate with them in the creation of content. They regularly emphasize that they only have tools that are easily available to most of the YouTube audience, and by doing so democratize and empower their audience to not only participate with their videos, but to produce their own. They do not see themselves as experts and in many interviews modestly downplay their level of talent. Not only that, but many aspects of their production that



Figure 2

could be considered errors to the “experts” such bad color keying (the removal of the green screen), distracting artifacts and other visual evidence of poor compositing of images, or the even the scotch tape used to hold on a character’s fake mustache being visible, are an integral part of their encourage their viewers to produce and interact with the segments they have produced. I believe that this is one of the key elements of their success. Evan Gregory explains, however, that they didn’t make the conscious choice to encourage participation in order to be successful:

[Emphasizing the homegrown nature of our production] is certainly not essential to be well known or to be a successful artist... It just felt right.... The medium in which we’ve become known, YouTube and small-time internet videos, [is] largely conducted on a person to person basis.... All of the stuff that has come to be successful solely on YouTube... exclusively act within that paradigm, being very relatable with a lot of speaking direct to camera. It’s my feeling and our feeling that that’s a major factor of why they got popular. The audience can relate to them, and it feels like they are speaking directly to them. Not that they are just watching a well produced story, but that they are actually talking direct to camera and therefore direct to the audience. (Gregory)

As Evan Gregory points out, the most successful bloggers and vloggers and other popular new media content producers rely heavily on making personal connections with their audiences to become successful. The Gregory Brothers have tapped into the humility required to enact the new ethos and use it to their advantage to win over fans in an environment where it has come to be expected.

The Gregory Brothers are a case study for new media success. They have achieved success not only on the standards of earning amounts of money and views, but also by creating humorous, intelligent, and creative videos that understand and take advantage of the new media audience's expectations and survive the unrelentingly fast pace of the new media environment. They have achieved this success, at least in part, by humbly recognizing the distributed quality of the work they produce, allowing others to freely distribute and replicate, and also by making an effort to portray themselves not as experts, but as typical YouTube users.

### **The New Ethos in the LDS tradition**

On the title page of the *Book of Mormon*, written around 420 A.D., a prophet named Mormon humbly concedes that, at the very least, there is the possibility of error in the sacred document. "If there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ." So, before the Book even starts, it already acknowledges the limits of the authority of the text itself and the men who wrote it. Moroni does not even pretend that the book descended whole and perfect from Heaven. Just like the bible, it was written by a collection of men; inspired men, but fallible, imperfect men none the less and is thus capable of error. In the LDS Church's Article of Faith, which outline many key principles of the Church, Joseph Smith wrote "We believe the Bible to be the word of God, *so far as it is translated correctly*" (emphasis mine). In other words, according to LDS theology, the truths in the Bible and Book of Mormon do not exist because they are written, but

rather the truths exist independent of any sacred text, and the texts are mere representations or attempts at capturing those eternal truths, and the creation of the documents has been distributed among so many other parties, all of whom are capable of failure, that to try to claim the sacred text as incapable of error would be absurd. Much like the Gregory Brothers, the prophets who have taken part in the creation of the Book of Mormon, recognize its distributed origins and ask the reader to judge for themselves and find the good it contains. Thus, in this way, readers are invited to participate in the creation or discovery of the truth that the *Book of Mormon* contains.

The authors realize that the burden of knowledge creation ultimately rests on the individual as they search “by study and by faith” and interact with the Holy Ghost to learn that truth. In the last chapter of the *Book of Mormon*, the same prophet Moroni challenges the reader to read the writings, but not to take them at face value. Rather he encourages them to further inquire about their truthfulness:

Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, ... I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost (Moroni 10.3-4)

Thus the ideas that brought the Gregory Brothers success in the world of new media are deeply ingrained in the ideas of knowledge creation in LDS epistemology and doctrine. We reject the model of scarcity when it comes to truth, and humbly recognize that the creation of knowledge is distributed among many factors. Because of this, we should recognize that we shouldn't be afraid of error, but rather admit that it is an integral part of communication and knowledge creation.

Recognizing the distribution of the creation of a thing causes (or perhaps should cause) humility in the “creator.” For the Gregory Brothers, they recognize that the songs they produced were not created out of thin air or from their own personal efforts of creation, but rather are

remixes of available content. For the rest of us, the creation of knowledge is no different, when we learn something or come up with something, we would be foolish to give ourselves the entire credit for doing so as we collected, or ripped, many pieces of information from many sources at many times that eventually were burned into an idea as we enacted it through symbols. Therefore, we should feel the same humility toward the knowledge we “have” or make use of. LDS pedagogues recognize that, while they play an important part in the process, they will ultimately not be responsible for the learning that their students do, and the humility that comes from this recognition makes it easier for them to allow students to control the direction and outcomes of the class.

Progressive pedagogues who rely on group discussion and student-centered learning, must at some point realize that this same principle of relinquishing control applies to any classroom. If and when a progressive pedagogue who maybe making an effort to hold class discussions and run a student centered classroom does not relinquish control and allow and respect student voices, but rather only control discussions to predetermined ends, they are reverting back to current-traditional, lecture-based teaching strategies in which the teacher is an expert giver-of-names (see Brooks). The methods of LDS pedagogues can, in practice, appear very much like those of progressive pedagogues, however, by relinquishing the power of creating knowledge to the students themselves and to the Holy Ghost, they are hopefully humbled and might allow the students the chance to create and discover their own knowledge, instead of guiding them in a predetermined political end.<sup>1</sup>

## NOTES

1. This idea I have presented represents an ideal LDS teacher. However, in practice, many teachers are not humbled by the distributed nature of knowledge creation and still feel

that they personally hold the right answers that they are giving to their students. It is rather my hope that as any teacher, LDS or not, understands the principle of the distribution of knowledge creation, it will serve as added incentive to become humble, relinquish control, and as Ron Brooks says, “step out of the way of [their] students’ learning processes”

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

The practices within any pedagogy stem from the way truth is constructed and how knowledge is envisioned as being gained. In progressive pedagogies the objectives are clearly based in helping students become “citizens who are actively literate..., critical agents of change who are socially and politically engaged--in this way realizing some of the highest democratic ideals (*Rhetorics, Poetics, Cultures*, 112). In LDS pedagogy, as stated above, some of the same progressive classroom practices stem from the objective of helping the learners obtain salvation through creating learning experiences in which the students can actively become active receivers of messages from the Holy Ghost. When taken out of an overtly religious context and with this objective of salvation set aside, LDS pedagogy, while still resembling progressive pedagogies in practice, does not necessarily have to have the same politically motivated objectives and serves as witness that while methods can look similar in practice, they can come from completely different epistemological motivations. Even without concentrating on divine assistance or making reference to the teachings of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon and other exclusively LDS doctrines, the principles that LDS pedagogy espouses can translate to many teachers and classroom situations. In this chapter, I hope to show ways that the practices and beliefs of LDS pedagogy can and do (see figure 3).



First, however, I would like to provide some history. The question of how LDS pedagogy can function in the secular world has been a struggle for LDS teachers since around 1870 when the Transcontinental Railroad met at Promontory Point and the isolation of the saints in the Salt Lake Valley ended (Buchanan 440). Until that time, church members, who fled to the west to escape religious persecution, were free to teach Mormon doctrines in public schools because “the public” was comprised almost entirely of members of the Church. As different peoples began living in Utah, tensions between them and Mormons began to rise. In 1877, when the time came to elect a new Territorial Superintendent of District Schools, a position that had unquestioningly gone to the prophet/president of the Church (John Taylor at that time), the “Liberal Party” put forward a candidate for the position, M.W. Ashbrook, a dissident of the LDS Church who referred to Brigham Young as a “theocratic leper.” While Ashbrook lost the election to the superintendent position almost three to one, his letter of acceptance to the Liberal Party when first appointed to run outlines what an LDS pedagogy functioning in a secular setting would need. “We demand a free public school system for Utah,” Ashbrook wrote, “wherein sectarianism shall be wholly eliminated, and teachers in numbers and competent to impart knowledge to all and every child of our territory. These teachers must have the art of teaching and a fund of knowledge commensurate with the demands of youth in this enlightened age” (qtd. in Buchanan 441). This “art of teaching” Ashbrook demands would have to include the techniques, formats and strategies of what the LDS teachers were (and are) used to, without any trace of gospel teaching, or “sectarianism” as he called it. I hope this thesis can begin to deliver what Ashbrook asked for so long ago.

Principle of LDS Pedagogy	Secular Equivalent
Role of Holy Ghost in learning	Embodied cognition
Student risk taking through learning experiences	Zone of Proximal Development
Accepting the role of the Holy Ghost	Recognizing the distributed nature of knowledge creation/learning
Humility	New Ethos
Gaining a Testimony	Rip/Mix/Burn, and public, interpretive, situated views of writing
Acceptance of error	Less expert dominated new media

Table 1

Now I would like to run through some of the connections I have established and posit how they might be put into practice. First, as I hope I have made clear in the previous chapters, the LDS idea of learning as occurring through the interposition and bodily manifestation of the Holy Ghost is closely allied with Hawk's and Reids' ideas of embodied cognition. A teacher trying to put into practice LDS pedagogical principles without incorporating any of the aspects of divine intervention would do well to concentrate on recognizing that the students' bodies and his or her body are just as important as a part of the learning process as their minds are. A teacher must be able to recognize when his or her students are tired, bored, uncomfortable, irritated, etc. and be willing to make adjustments to his or her teaching strategies and possibly even curriculum in order to meet students where they are. Pedagogical decisions must be made because of the local moment and a teacher should remain flexible enough to meet the bodily needs of his or her students. Also, the teacher would do well to recognize that the role he or she plays is only a small part in the classroom ecology. Therefore, a teacher should envision his or herself as a co-participant with the students in the learning process and enter class discussion with the same intent to learn from his or her students as the students are to learn from him or her. One phrase I repeat to myself as I prepare lesson plans is, "never ask a question I already know the answer to."

I do this because the students, possibly due to years of lecture based teaching, are already primed to see me as the source of the “right answer.” If I go into a discussion with a question that I either think I know the answer to or feel confident that I could answer, the students will be reticent to join a discussion because my authority as a teacher already imposes an illusion of correctness on the things I say.

Also, as I argued above, as a teacher recognizes that the learning processes are massively distributed among many factors, the teacher can begin to understand his or her role in the classroom better, and hopefully will be humbled when he or she discovers that he or she is not the source of knowledge. In practice, a teacher that recognizes this distribution will not need to beat him or herself up when the class doesn’t improve exactly how he or she would like or if the class doesn’t participate in class as much as he or she would like. Studies have shown that the characteristics of the teacher have much less to do with how students participate in class than many teachers give themselves credit for (Fassinger, Weaver). Instead, a teacher should give up on trying to appear as an expert who always has the right answers and knows everything about everything. We should admit to ourselves and our students that writing is always difficult, and we are still learning just like they are. If a student asks a question that a teacher doesn’t know the answer to, a teacher shouldn’t feel embarrassed that he or she doesn’t know the answer, but rather should see it as an opportunity to learn alongside the student and by finding the answer with the student, they not only answer the question, but also demonstrate methods for the student to locate the answers to similar questions in the future. As a teacher does this, they will be building an ethos that their digital-native students will be more familiar with, the new ethos of Web 2.0 and new media. For these students, the encouragement of participation is more likely to create an ethos that they will trust than an authoritarian expert ever will.

As I pointed out above, the pedagogical tactic of creating learning experiences instead of lecturing students, and creating a safe environment and encouraging student risk taking, are

closely related to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. In order to implement this principle into pedagogical practice, a teacher must create situations in which students can become aware of what knowledge they lack, and why it would be important for them to obtain that knowledge. If a student has not felt these two things, they will see little or no use for any information presented to them because they will see no need in learning it. For example, I give quizzes in my class, but I almost never do so in order to test what the students know or to test if they have learned what I have taught them. If I am going to teach passive voice for instance, I give a quiz on passive voice at the beginning of class, and ask questions ranging from basic recall, "what is passive voice?" to more complex, "what problems can arise from the use of passive voice in writing?" If a student does not know the answers to these questions they are left with a blank page, an uneasy feeling, and, hopefully, a desire to learn what passive voice is. However, I cannot always advocate using this activity in any other classroom. The feelings the students get when they don't know the answers to quiz questions only works within the culture I am teaching in. The students have taken standardized tests their whole lives, and they have been taught that poor performance on tests is a reflection on their poor intelligence. I found in my first few classes I taught that the students are emotionally invested in quizzes and tests. I use that to my advantage to help create a learning experience for them. However, if another teacher teaches in a culture where test taking has never been important, and the students do not carry emotional baggage attached to test taking, this activity will not be as effective as a learning experience for them. For this reason, I agree with Krista Ratcliffe when she says that "All pedagogy is local" (157). In creating learning experiences for our students we must take into account their motivations and incentives and figure out how to take advantage of them to create experiences for our students that will help them to determine their own zones of proximal development. It is only then that they can begin to know in what direction to start taking the leaps of faith necessary to create meaningful knowledge for themselves.

The role of the teacher who enacts the practices of LDS pedagogy without LDS doctrines, then, is as willing student and learner who engages in the process of learning along with the student, the creator of experiences that promote learning by all involved and, as James Berlin calls it, a “problem poser” for their students (*Rhetorics, Poetics, Cultures*, 112). The teacher should be humble, genuinely care for his or her students, and be open to being taught by them. The teachers should understand the cultural motivations and incentives that drive their students’ desires. I would now like to present three non-LDS teachers who represent what I see as LDS pedagogical practices.

The first example of a teacher who used these principles in his teaching is Robert Pirsig, author of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. In this book, Pirsig narrates his own teaching experience at Montana State University, and discusses how his pedagogy was affected as he sought to figure out what “quality” was. He grew tired of reading and teaching the same bland essays to his students, and began experimenting with his classes to figure out what the problem was. As he did so, he noticed that “a bad instructor can go through an entire quarter leaving absolutely nothing memorable in the minds of his class, curve out the scores on an irrelevant test, and leave the impression that some have learned and some have not” (200). He found that “when spontaneity and individuality and really good original stuff occurred in the classroom it was in spite of the instruction, not because of it” (201). As he grew tired of this hypocritical process, he found that “he wanted his students to become creative by deciding for themselves what was good writing instead of asking him all the time” (201). Through class discussions, he discovered that the students could already judge the difference between a quality essay and a poorly written one, even if they could not articulate why it was so, and that his own efforts to instruct the students were only a small and almost unimportant part of them learning how to write. As part of his classroom practice, then, he would construct a piece of persuasive writing

day by day, in front of and with the help of the class.... He felt that by exposing classes to

his own sentences as he made them, with all the misgivings and hang-ups and erasures, he would give a more honest picture of what writing was like than by spending class time picking nits in completed student work or holding up the completed work of masters for emulation. (193)

In many ways Pirsig's philosophies and techniques epitomize what LDS pedagogy aims for, even though Pirsig was not LDS. He realized the distributed qualities of the learning process and therefore humbled himself in front of his students, and allowed them to see his own imperfections in writing instead of trying to pass himself off as an expert. He created learning experiences in the classroom that could be infused with the energy of true discovery. He relinquished control of the classroom to the students and allowed them to dictate content. He urged his students to find meaningful truths for themselves and to pay close attention to their own feelings and bodies. He said that his classroom "wasn't one room, this was a thousand rooms, changing each day with the storms and snows and patterns of clouds on the mountains, with each class, and with each student. No two hours were ever alike, and it was always a mystery to him what the next one would bring" (178). In other words, he worked to localize the pedagogy in time and space in order to benefit from the body-mind feedback loops of each student.

Ken Macrorie is the second teacher that I feel demonstrates many of the qualities of LDS pedagogy in his books *Uptaught* and *A Vulnerable Teacher*. In *Uptaught*, he refers to days when he was unknowingly training students to write without feeling as his "dark night" and when he began really listening to them as his "awakening" (8). Much of this book conveys how he desired good things for his students and enjoyed interacting with them. He desired that his students write "as if they were on fire about something" (12), and declared, "I would get those kids to write live" (13). He sees his students' improvement as a personal goal, one that bothers him when not achieved. Macrorie even retrospectively mocks himself and his inflated ego when he was a young teacher, thinking "Surely they were learning great things from me" (11). But Macrorie opened

himself up to being taught by his students. He became, in his own words, a “vulnerable teacher.” It was while reading a student paper that came up with his now famous name for the dead language he had been reading from students, English. He found knowledge in his interactions with his students. When he let them, his students’ papers “moved” him (21).

Macrorie represents a teacher who realized his role as co-participant in the learning process with the students. As he listened to his students and joined them in the learning process, he began to understand them and the difficulties they faced, and learned how to reach them. He reflectively implemented what he learned from the students and felt free to experiment and be spontaneous with different experiences for his students. He paid attention to the physical surroundings of a classroom and realized that they affected what his students learned. He was aware of how the classroom can feel restrictive, and held class outside when the weather was nice (21); he let students run the class and decide what to write about (13). And let the atmosphere dictate what he did in class. Hopefully, many teachers can attest that feelings of inspiration come often during class proceedings. If the teacher is open and receptive to these sparks of interest from their students, as Macrorie was, there is the possibility for a lively spontaneous atmosphere that can help a classroom be engaging and exciting for students.

Lastly, I will show how William Lutz created learning experiences for his students much like what LDS pedagogues might attempt to do. In his 1971 *College English* essay “Making Freshman English a Happening” Lutz describes how the classroom ecology greatly influenced the students’ ability to learn and create. He describes the starkness of the philosophy that shaped the current-traditional classroom. “Physically, the room insists on order and authoritarianism, the enemies of creativity: the teacher as ultimate authority in front of the room and the students as passive receptacles at his feet. The unbridgeable gap (generation and otherwise) is physically emphasized” (35). As the antidote, Lutz wants his students to “respond directly to [their] own experience and not someone else’s” (36). In the spirit of “Happenings,” a genre of performance

art for the late 60s and early 70s in which the audience became participants and sought to create fresh experiences for all involved, he created situations that fostered a spontaneous atmosphere. For example, he gave each student an index card with a different directive on it such as “Go to the front of the room and face the class. Count to yourself and each time you reach five say, ‘If I had the wings of an angel,’” and “Sit in your seat and watch the person facing you from the front of the room. Each time he says ‘Angel’ you clap. Don't look anywhere else.” among others (37). After a set period of time, the activity ended and students wrote about the experience.

Through activities such as these, teacher and students interacted in fresh and engaging ways. For a teacher to have these kinds of activities in class, he or she must, in a way, humble him or herself and realize that the knowledge students will gain is not going to come from him or her. The teacher relinquishes control in these happenings and he or she must co-participate with the student, allowing his or her body and the student's bodies to be a part of the learning process, having faith that he or she and the students will learn and benefit from the activity.

When teachers allow themselves to be flexible, give their students control over the direction of learning, incorporate bodily activities and consciousness of classroom space, and foster an environment of spontaneity, they are teaching as the LDS pedagogues are expected to teach. Not only will the students benefit by learning in a low-risk, supportive environment, but the teacher will benefit by constantly learning and adapting his or her teaching style. The spontaneity will keep the classroom environment fresh, foster creativity, and create unique learning experiences for all involved. The principles of LDS pedagogy, even devoid of “sectarianism,” can indeed give teachers, “the art of teaching and a fund of knowledge commensurate with the demands of youth in this enlightened age.” As each of us strives to improve our own teaching practices and attempts to find ways to connect with our students and bring the energy of learning to our classroom, let us remember that we must listen to our students, ourselves, our bodies, and the immediate classroom environment. If we are truly listening, we



might be surprised that we will learn from our students.

My academic identity and my pedagogy have been created through countless experiences, and I have named and enumerated a few of them here. I present my pedagogical practices and the pedagogical practices of others here not because I see them as the best possible pedagogical practices for everyone, but because they are mine, and the best possible for me. As I stated at the beginning, I hope that my narrative and my findings can help someone, especially other faithful academics, else as they struggle to create their own identity.

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Scope and Methods: This thesis begins as a creative non-fiction essay about the author's experiences in graduate-level English as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the struggles he faced to reconcile the theories of knowledge he was learning as a student with the seemingly contradictory truths he knew as a person of faith. The author found that the key to becoming a faithful academic, and his key to formulating his own pedagogy, was in the role the body plays in cognition as found in the works of Byron Hawk and Alex Reid. The author outlines what he believes to be a Latter-day Saint Pedagogy and the doctrines of the LDS Church from which this pedagogy emanates. He then compares it to contemporary pedagogical theories using James Berlin's cartographies and explains LDS pedagogy's connection to Byron Hawk's Complex Vitalism. Finally, the author connects the idea of "new ethos" from New Literacy Studies to the humility a teacher might feel as he or she recognizes the distributed quality of knowledge creation.

Findings and Conclusions: Progressive pedagogical methods can be separated from progressive politics, and pedagogy must be focused on the local moment of learning and must include the bodily feelings of the students. However, teachers must be humble and be willing to relinquish some of the control of their classroom to the students or else they will not be student-centered, even though they are using what appear to be student-centered pedagogical practices.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Ronald Clark Brooks

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