

The Making of a Modern Saint
An Analysis of Grief, Charisma, and Community Identity in Transition

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for a Bachelor of Arts
Degree with Honors in Anthropology

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2016

Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without the permission of both Kyle Lake's family and the leadership at University Baptist Church. Their cooperation and support have been invaluable. Recognizing the sensitive nature of the topic and sometimes-traumatic memories dredged up during interviews, I must also thank the many men and women who took the time to discuss their experiences with me. They provided me the very foundation upon which this study stands. Again, without them, it is unlikely I would ever have made it past preliminary investigations. Finally, I am immensely grateful to the Sociology & Anthropology Department at Washington and Lee University. Their support of student research is unparalleled. In addition to being provided every possible resource, the encouragement I received about undertaking such a personal and unique project was crucial to my success. Specifically, many thanks to my readers, Alison Bell and Sascha Goluboff, and my advisor, David Novack.

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Live. And live well.
Breathe in and breathe deeply.
Be present. Do not be past. Do not be future. Be now.

On a crystal clear, breezy 70-degree day, roll down the windows and feel the wind against your skin. Feel the warmth of the sun.
If you run then allow those first few breaths on a cool autumn day to freeze your lungs and do not just be alarmed, be alive.

Get knee deep in a novel and lose track of time.
If you bike, pedal hard... and if you crash, then crash well.
Feel the satisfaction of a job well done – a paper well written, a project thoroughly completed, a play well performed.

If you must wipe the snot from your 3-year-old's nose, don't be disgusted if the Kleenex doesn't catch it all... because soon he'll be wiping his own.

If you've recently experienced loss, then grieve. And grieve well.

At the table with friends and family, laugh. If you're eating and laughing at the same time, then might as well laugh until you puke. And if you eat, then smell. The aromas are not impediments to your day. Steak on the grill, coffee beans freshly ground, cookies in the oven. And taste.

Taste every ounce of flavor.
Taste every ounce of friendship.
Taste every ounce of life.
Because it is most definitely a gift.

-- Kyle Lake
October 30, 2005

Preface

In the interest of full disclosure, it is worth noting that my life experience has been intricately tied to the events described in this thesis. I joined University Baptist Church at the age of 10 in November of 2005, about a month after the very unexpected passing of Pastor Kyle Lake. My family had recently moved to Waco, Texas and was searching for a church. Before our move, UBC had been on our radar because of its unique position in the church community of Waco as well as in the larger Emergent Church movement. However, having lost my own father in 2003 to a similarly shocking accident and not wanting to thrust us into another grief spiral, my mother was initially hesitant to bring us to the church after the death of Kyle. Despite this reluctance, just three weeks after our move, we found ourselves at UBC. I could write a completely separate and lengthy analysis about the reasons behind our personal draw to the community, but of course, that is not relevant to the parameters of this study. Rather, what is most important is an acknowledgement that my family was quickly pulled into the center of the UBC community and its collective loss. As such, I have participated in a substantial portion of the mourning of Kyle Lake over the years.

My family found a place at UBC in the midst of one of the most unexpected but pivotal points in the community's history, and as such, the community seemed to find a place in one of the most pivotal points in my own history as well. In many ways I grew up at UBC, and inherently this affects my research of, and return to, the people in this group. It is thus to be expected that I use my own experience as a way to contextualize and understand the interviews and further research I have collected. I formed many relationships while in the community that influenced my personal life on a broad scale as well as my ability to undertake such a project on a more specific scale. Ultimately, I see my presence in the UBC community as a strength and an

aid both to my research and my critical analysis. In the history of anthropology, the precedent for this strength has long been established, with many accounts coming from native ethnographers. It is my hope that I have placed myself within this legacy and will be able to offer insights into the workings of the community that a full outsider might overlook.

I should also note, however, that I did eventually leave UBC – a fact that I view as another strength. The church today is very different (as am I) than it was at the time of my membership. This is by no means intended as a value judgment, but only stated to clarify that I have acquired some distance over the years. With the aid of this distance and time, I believe my own experiences have been placed into perspective. Consequently, what follows is a combination of outsider research and insider self-ethnography – a distinctive pairing made possible through the unique kind of participant observation evident in having been an observer and a member throughout the years. The duality of my perspective on this topic is certainly one of the inspirations that led me to my project. However, I must also be honest about a second and related impetus: despite never having met him, Kyle Lake has stood as an influential figure in my own life. As I have become able to critically evaluate my own experiences against academic criteria, I have often wondered why this is true. How has one man's identity become so entrenched in the identity of the group that countless people point to him as an influence even a decade after his demise? What social dynamics and trends could have not only allowed but also encouraged such an occurrence in a community ostensibly against the use of figureheads in this way?

Introduction

“Why is it that certain objects are infused with the capacity to endure time, persisting and rejuvenating in memory, whereas others are constrained in their temporal reach as ephemera, as only memories, barely present as fading traces that may be cut adrift by the passing away of certain generations or individuals?”

(Hallam and Hockey 2001:8)

Communities, by their very nature, are often plagued with a variety of strange dynamics, dilemmas, and crises. The experiences endured by groups of individuals are multifaceted workings, to say the least. Though this tends to apply to most instances and groups, there are some examples that, presenting circumstances so intricate and unique, inspire deeper analysis of such dynamics. Such events may occur as moments or processes in the collective history of a group that are so significant as to alter the temporal trajectory, structural organization, or even the shared identity of a community. Often, events of this kind are most clearly manifested in crisis. The loss of Kyle Lake and the subsequent response to that loss by the community at University Baptist Church is one event of this kind.

University Baptist Church is located in Waco, Texas and for some time was one of the most prominent churches in the Emergent Church and Passion movements. Kyle Lake had been the pastor of the community for nearly seven years when he passed away in October 2005. Many aspects of the community and its relationship to the leader make these events worthy of investigation. First, UBC has historically been organized in a community structure that is unique amongst its contemporaries, due to its orientation as a church for college students and young adults. This characteristic of collective identity has been

shifting over recent years, but at the time of Kyle¹ it was undoubtedly a primary feature. Second, UBC's position in the larger context of "the church"² is an interesting one. The questions that UBC was asking over a decade ago were in part revolutionary. They defined the course of the church and greatly impacted how it navigated through larger communities of Waco, the nation, and Protestantism in general. Third, Kyle was an impressively influential character despite being so young. His legacy is certainly part of what makes this study both interesting and intricate. Lastly, the circumstances of Kyle's death were not only truly horrific, but also impossibly unexpected and unfortunately public.

With this combination of factors, the death of Kyle Lake was the ultimate rupture in the community of UBC. Members of the church were so unprepared for the events as to call the very continuation of the group into question. When the community finally decided that it did not wish to dissolve, they were thrust into a process amounting to a rite of passage within the community, establishing the grief over Kyle as a profoundly liminal period ultimately resulting in the reintegration of both Kyle and community. Through a combination of individual and communal processes and structures contained in UBC's liminality, transformation in the group took place on three different levels: individual community members, the church as a whole, and Kyle himself. By looking at aspects of grief in the group, as well as the pivotal influences of charisma and group dynamics, the rite of passage model help us understand the uniqueness and magnitude of the events at

¹ Kyle is noticeably referred to by his first name, rather than the conventional last name format. This serves a dual purpose: (1) to establish him in all of his charismatic dimensions within the context of the church and its loss by showing how close individuals felt to him, and (2) to make the discussion feel more personal to the reader as well.

² When we speak of "the church" here, it is important to denote where the boundaries of the community we are discussing fall. When theologians and religious laypeople say "the church" in a generalized context it means the greater workings and presence of the religious group, the community of all believers – or at least those believers who follow similar beliefs and practices, in this case Protestantism.

UBC, as well as provide an explanation of the ultimate result of the community's experience with loss, liminality, and reintegration: the modern sanctification of Kyle Lake.

In order to contextualize this model and my further arguments, I will provide a background section for those readers unfamiliar with the intricacies of this event. The background chapter is divided into three sections: the Emergent Church, University Baptist Church, and Kyle Lake. Details of each of these subjects are essential to recognizing and understanding some of the phenomena of Kyle's death and UBC's response. Though much more could be said about all three of these topics, I will offer only the information I view as necessary and relevant.

After presenting sufficient background on UBC and the events in its history, I will briefly explain my methodology. In conducting this research, I have used a variety of data, from interviewed individuals to primary sources such as recordings and news articles. I additionally have used some of my own experience to contextualize the event. My methods articulate well with my theoretical model. Much of my analysis has attempted to engage the ethnographic work guiding this thesis in hopes that it will remain relevant to and reflective of the lives of affected individuals.

A description of the theoretical model follows the methodology chapter. It begins with presenting the rites of passage and liminality model at large. Anthropologists have long used the rite of passage model to understand transitions between statuses and identities. As stated previously, the transformations at UBC are seen on three levels. At each of these, we can trace patterns of rupture, liminality, and creative (re)incorporation. After looking more deeply at the model itself, the chapter is then further divided into three sections: death and mourning, charisma and personhood, and group dynamics. These

divisions are necessary for illuminating all the varied aspects of Kyle's death and UBC's response to it. By integrating views from these areas, we can better understand *why* UBC underwent a rite of passage – why the death of a single person stimulated a move between states. Each of these factors is thus important either for understanding a pivotal piece of the experience at UBC or for expanding the application of the theoretical model.

Furthermore, each of these theoretical sections introduces a slightly different view on “society” itself. Apart from their relevance to the theoretical model, these ideas tell us more about theories themselves and about different lenses through which to analyze the accounts of UBC members. By engaging with each of these, different aspects of UBC's community boundaries and social experience are illuminated. I begin with theorists who view society as an all-encompassing “thing” – something that can be studied objectively and scientifically (Malinowski 1940; Hertz 1960[1907]). I move to those who toss such an idea aside, affirming that “society” as a reified entity cannot truly exist. It is a process that at certain influential points in time is snapshotted and assumed to be “real” and static (Bloch and Parry 1982). From this point, many other theorists operate not with the idea of society at all but with an idea of “the social.” Contained within the social are a variety of relations, behaviors (both group and individual), articulations and experiences external to social structures themselves.

After integrating these various theories, I ultimately see the rites of passage model as dependent on a web of connections and exchanges between social actors. Though their ideas are pivotal to beginning discussions of Kyle's death (particularly since they are articulated by UBC members themselves), Malinowski and Hertz's analyses of society as an entity are flawed. Rather the social relational system is a product of the relationships

between individuals as well as their collective actions and identity behaviors, including group work, creation, and the assignment of roles and statuses. These factors create an experience for group members that appears to the insider to be evidence of a real and external society – perhaps explaining why so many people identify with ideas of a reified society.

The analysis chapters are an extension of the model itself. Each of the three chapters is designed to represent and expand on one stage of the rite of passage. The first, “Losing Kyle,” looks at this breach in the community of UBC that Kyle’s death represented. Furthermore, it explains Kyle’s death as more than a moment – engaging with the various themes, interpretations, and processes that quickly manifested in the time immediately following his passing. The second analysis chapter, “Grieving Kyle,” looks at the periods of bereavement, struggle, and healing within the UBC community as liminal events. Here, Victor Turner’s vast expansion of theories on the liminal period helps us to see why and how so many aspects of communal life were relevant to the experience of grief at UBC. The chapter looks at different theoretical perspectives in turn to showcase various elements of the liminal period and expand on relevant factors within the collective experience. Each person’s grappling with the death of Kyle was profoundly unique and individually significant. Yet, there are many patterns that emerged over time and have maintained their significance within the greater event. Both of these facts are considered within the context of the chapter by engaging thoroughly with the model of communal transformation as well as caveats to the model provided by other literature. Finally, I move to the final stage of this rite: reintegration. Reintegration for the individuals of UBC and their identity as a group has been largely defined by the redefinition of Kyle within the

communal context. Thus, the chapter “Commemorating Kyle” looks at individuals’ memories of Kyle, the group’s continued use of Kyle as an orientation device for the church itself, and the posthumous change in Kyle’s own social identity. The culmination of the three transformations in question ultimately leads to the sanctification in question.

In concluding this research, I will briefly recount the analytical progress that has been made. Such concluding remarks reaffirm the theoretical model. Primarily, however, my conclusion will engage with this very idea of sanctification. The presence of Kyle as a modern saint in the ongoing iterations of the UBC community is the ultimate assertion. It is an assertion that is paramount for both individual and collective identity constructions; indeed, it is the assertion that has made this work intriguing for some time. However, the assertion is also a loaded one. As such, in concluding I hope to pose – and attempt to at least partially answer – two questions: What does this sanctification mean for the community? Is Kyle’s sanctification problematic? Should my opinions and proposals not suffice, I believe these questions leave vast opportunity for continued research into the power of personality and community in modern groups.

Background

The Emergent Church

Before communicating the breadth of my research, it is necessary to set this information in the context of both University Baptist Church and the post-modern Emergent Church Movement of the late 1990s and early 2000s. UBC was founded in January of 1995 at the center of a large-scale disillusionment with “traditional” church in the collective religious mind of America’s Christian youth (Browning 2015). Collegiate and young professional men and women were leaving the faith in droves, pushed away by the rigidity they had observed in the churches of their parents. This trend was most common in Protestant sects reacting to conservative evangelicalism, primarily including but not limited to historically Baptist churches.

Not all shared the same inspiration to leave the faith entirely, however. Those who chose to stay, though still drained by the idea of traditional church, looked for new ways to grapple with the disillusionment. Out of this disillusionment came the desire to “do” church differently, and so the Emergent Church was born. “Transformations began being talked about on an institutional level as well as an almost ethereal level. We wrestled with these questions of how to be in and interact with the world” (Nash 2015). By doing church differently, the founders of emergent theology hoped to open up space for questions, debates, and new modes of faith. However, this shared desire served purely as a minimal starting point from which many manifestations and divisions of emergent theology grew. As time passed and the people who first started questioning their faith evolved, the disillusionment continued to grow and reshape. This growth and reshaping took many

forms. As such, the more expansive and multifaceted origins of the Emergent Church are scattered at best, nearly impossible to define at worst.

It is striking how ambiguous the foundations of emergent theology appear to be upon deeper investigation. As the movement has grown – and now waned – relatively few ideas have held a supposed “emergent community” together. “It is notoriously hard to describe what we mean when we say ‘emergent.’ I think at this point it has just become a catch-all phrase to encompass contemporary Protestantism” (Nash 2015). The one grounding line of “emergence” or emergent theology was new leaders’ desire to provide a church home and belief complex for the “doubters,” people wounded by church, and perhaps even those whose experiences in traditional church had been so positive as to leave them stagnant in their faith (Nash 2015). Leaders of the movement aimed for new ways both to understand and contextualize the gospel. Where services had grown cumbersome, they sought to be inventive. Where sermons had grown condemning, they sought to be open to interpretation. Perhaps most saliently, where congregations had begun to rely on easy answers, they sought to formulate new doubts and questions. One definition offered to clarify this role posits that emergent churches were – or *are*, depending on one’s conception of the movement’s success – uniquely positioned in this way to

practice the way of Jesus within postmodern cultures. This definition encompasses nine practices. Emerging churches (1) identify with the life of Jesus, (2) transform the secular realm, and (3) live highly communal lives. Because of these three activities, they (4) welcome the stranger, (5) serve with generosity, (6) participate as producers, (7) create as created beings, (8) lead as a body, and (9) take part in spiritual activities (Gibbs and Bolger 2005).

This definition and the main underlying goal of emergent theology (to find a “new” way to do church and community) were inextricably linked with notions of postmodernism in religion and its associated revision of theology. Interestingly, these notions of revision

and repurposing were not anything new. In fact, was there really a fresh and unique revision at all? Christian author Phyllis Tickle references Anglican³ Bishop Mark Dyer when she says that “the only way to understand what [was] happening to us as twenty-first-century Christians in North America [was] to first understand that about every five hundred years the Church feels compelled to hold a giant rummage sale” (2008). These “rummage sales” involve a valuation of every major movement or belief within the church⁴ for the last segment of history. During these rummage sales, religious communities decide what elements to keep and what to toss out. The proponents of emergent theology then were not aspiring church creators or revolutionary changers, but rather the most recent actors in a long history of broader efforts at cleaning house.

What elements the “Emergents” decided to keep from history actually went back much further than their traditional, 20th century, Protestant roots. The liturgical focus, concerned with bridging the gap between sacred and secular, and willingness to ask the difficult questions (even if no answers were to be found) in fact took on a much older flair, harkening back to the early church and its efforts to establish itself, around the 600s, as well as its expansion and solidification from the 1200s to 1400s. At the time of its original conception, what is now known as the Orthodox Church built its foundation on dedication to a liturgical and ceremonial calendar that provided tangible substance in the midst of

³ It is worth noting here the implicit irony that a theologian studying the Emergent Church, which imagines itself as profoundly innovative but still markedly Protestant, should reference an Anglican bishop. I believe this points to the power of the rummage sale analogy, showing that nothing is really new in the end. Additionally, this reference introduces another, though arguably lesser, characteristic of the Emergent Church: it includes to many liturgical styles from older traditions, an interesting switch from the trajectory of Baptist churches, particularly those in the South.

⁴ Many Christian churches have remained largely the same throughout space and time, for instance sects of Eastern Orthodoxy and the Catholic Church to a lesser extent. It is thus primarily Protestant movements that have taken stock of their beliefs and traditions in order to alter them throughout history. In the rummage sale that brought about the beginnings of the Emergent Church, dissenting voices came primarily out of Protestant, charismatic sects of Christianity in America.

other mysteries. Just as the early church sought to be a rich feature of everyday life, so too did the theologians of emergence. Emergent theology hopes to open up avenues for discussing doubts and mysteries, as well as bridge the gap between sacred and secular that has been expanding in Protestant churches for so long.

What seems to have set this particular emergence apart from the Great Emergences of history, such as the Reformation, is the contradiction between many of its stated stances and adherents' actual behavior, particularly concerning powerful personalities. The Emergent Church aimed to reimagine Christianity in a modern 21st century community. It was supposed to be driven by the people. Church communities were no longer to be driven and controlled by the passionate, aging, pastor in the pulpit. Yet, in the world's ever-present irony, this became a movement consumed by powerful personalities – Terry Esau, Brian McLaren, Tony Jones, Rob Bell, Chris Seay, just to name a few – all larger-than-life figures who gave their voices to a movement and changed many Protestant notions of church for an entire generation. McLaren and Jones gained prominence as pastors of “postmodern” churches. They became increasingly well known after the publication of popular books addressing issues of the emergent faith. Esau is primarily known for his literary and public speaking accomplishments. These three are arguably the most popular names in the emergent movement. However, their cause has been bolstered through the years by other names such as Bell, known for his video series on questions of faith, and Seay, known for his church planting and ties to musician and brother Rob Seay.

Certainly more could be said about the roots and characteristics of the Emergent Church in general. Indeed, many theologians have written full books⁵ and case studies on

⁵ Bell, Rob. *Velvet Elvis*.
Esau, Terry. *Surprise Me*.

important topics within Emergent theology and discussion, as well as on the intricacies of this movement itself. The essential element for my discussion however is establishing the Emergent Church as the backdrop against which University Baptist Church flourished.

University Baptist Church

UBC was founded in January of 1995 by Chris Seay and David Crowder. Realizing that young people were disappearing from the church, they set out to create a church community that was the antithesis of their upbringings. Seay preached a new message; Crowder wrote and produced original music; and they started from small beginnings in a tiny building by Baylor University's campus. Assisted by a team of Baylor students and a few young Wacoans, the church steadily grew. "I got involved because I loved the ideas of UBC. They were doing something different and I got to be a kind of 'lay leader' in getting that process to take off" (Browning 2015). The first week that UBC opened its doors, 250 people came. Five hundred came the next week, drawn by the directions of the church. Kyle came on staff as a community pastor in 1997 and became teaching pastor shortly thereafter. Kyle replaced Seay, who had moved to Houston to form another church of his own, and quickly left his own mark on the congregation.

The mission of the church has always been an interesting one, attempting to strike a nearly impossible balance between extremes. From the beginning, they sought to be an organization somehow outside of the normative framework required for a business or structured community. "UBC had a complicated relationship with leadership and structure.

Jones, Tony. *The New Christians*.

Jones, Tony. *Emergent Manifesto of Hope*.

McLaren, Brian. *A New Kind of Christian*.

Seay, Chris. *The Gospel Reloaded: Exploring Spirituality and Faith in the Matrix*.

Tickle, Phyllis. *The Great Emergence*.

It actually seemed to have started partially in reaction to personality-driven ministries and strict leadership and theological ideologies” (Nash 2015). Because of this, UBC had a flat leadership structure for many years, particularly under the direction of Kyle, accompanied by committees drawn from the congregation itself. Additionally, the church founders sought to bridge a gap between the extremes of theology. UBC was intricately tied both to the Emergent Movement and its ideas, as well as to the intensity of the Passion Movement⁶ – two ideas potentially seen as opposed, but ultimately “mutually beneficial” (Nash 2015). Despite many changes – and indeed increases in bureaucracy – at UBC, this general sentiment remains the same. In many of their efforts, plans, and beliefs, the community finds itself in the midst of intentional contradiction. For instance, the current UBC website asserts this in a section entitled *What We Believe*:

Jaroslav Pelikan said that, ‘Traditionalism is the dead faith of the living and Tradition is the living faith of the dead.’ Creeds and ‘creedalism’ have tended to scare Protestants and especially Baptists. Our tradition has taught us that we find truth in the person of Christ who is communicated to us through Scripture. While holding this to be true we also believe that the historical church has given us a gift by having difficult conversations and confessing the truths that affirm the tenets of Christian faith (ubcwaco.org, accessed 10 October 2015).

Such ideologies of UBC and the growing popularity of David Crowder Band attracted many young Baylor students, as well as people within the larger Waco community. The church eventually left its small building close to the college campus and moved into a renovated grocery store in the middle of what most would consider a disadvantaged part of town. This gave the church an opportunity to expand its theological

⁶ The Passion Movement was occurring at the same time as the Emergent Movement. By different theorists and at different times, they have been seen as both opposed and linked. Passion was primarily driven by Louis Giglio in an effort to engage with youth around the nation through conferences and charismatic gatherings. It was founded at Baylor University in Waco, hence its relevance to UBC. David Crowder was also affiliated with Passion through his records. Despite this, the ideology of UBC correlates more directly with Emergence.

and volunteer focus to include the poor neighborhoods and housing projects of Waco in addition to the original university youth.

Throughout these periods of growth and movement, many aspects of UBC remained steady. Current and former members have described the church most as being a place that was “different.” It was different in thought: “UBC was an amalgamation of all these new ideas and it really embraced creativity and questioning when trying to formulate those ideas together” (Nash 2015). UBC was different in community: “We really promoted ideas of living life together in fresh ways. It seemed cutting edge at the time” (Browning 2015). Furthermore, the church seemed different in its level of awareness. Where other churches seemed to move along predetermined, hardly noticed paths, striving continually towards a put-on image of togetherness and structure, UBC aimed for a different tune: “Everything was very intentional and present. UBC strove to be authentic and to be okay with sitting in the mess” (Kelley 2015). Lastly, UBC as a group was uniquely positioned within the larger community. The leaders formed the church around the same time that two other churches in Waco, Dayspring and Antioch, were starting. These two churches represented opposite ends of a spectrum of organizations attempting to do something different; UBC found itself in the middle. Pivotal people within the church also attempted to expand beyond Waco. Kyle participated in a small group of pastors from around Texas who met twice a month to “really explore new methods of leadership and community” (Tsang 2015).

In recent years, UBC has moved away from some of the tenets of its beginnings. It is no longer targeted primarily at university students. Many young people stayed in Waco and at UBC, drawing in more families as they have aged. Other very prominent members

have opted to leave the church, looking for different aspects important to their faith. Staff has cycled through, and many aims of the church have altered, such as an increased desire to “live missionally.” At the same time, however, a surprising number of characteristics have remained the same. The Emergent philosophy is still largely accepted, though it is less innovative today than it was ten years ago. The most important consistency to this thesis, however, is the continued presence of Kyle. Even a decade after his death, he continues to be referenced and honored by countless members of the UBC community.

Kyle Lake

During the early 2000s, and as Kyle’s leadership became more central to the life of the church, he became known not only as a university mentor and church pastor, but also as a neighborhood soccer player and community outreach spokesperson. Between these various roles, as well as a “talent at making people feel they were the only ones in the room,” Kyle found an important place in the hearts and minds of many (Browning 2015; Nash 2015). Known for being a childishly happy, slightly mischievous, and deeply caring man, Kyle became the very center of the core UBC community soon after the onset of his leadership position (Bates 2015; Bechtol 2015; Browning 2015; Carney 2015; Dudley 2015; Lake 2015).

Although I will delve more into the character and influence of Kyle in later sections, I mention these facts here only briefly. It is important to at least minimally understand the strong hold that Kyle had on the community if we are to truly place his death in the proper context. He was the guy that everyone loved or wanted to be. Despite his flaws, which certainly had to exist, it was the rare person who actually witnessed their existence. His charisma heavily impacted the degree of loss felt by the community at the

time of his death. However, his charisma did not act alone; the circumstances of his death certainly elevated the social phenomena surrounding it to another level. The death of Kyle Lake has been called shocking, sensational, and even transcendent. Although the loss of a leader may always be tragic, communities are generally more prepared for a loss that takes place under expected or normalized circumstances, for example illness, car accidents, or cancer. What UBC was not prepared for was for “a new antagonist [to] enter [the] story. Electricity” (Crowder and Hogan 2006).

On October 30, 2005 – after the worship, but before the sermon – Kyle Lake stepped into the baptistery in front of the crowd at University Baptist Church. It was a unique Sunday in many respects. First, as a church comprised primarily of university students and young adults, baptisms were very rare in the community. The baptism planned for that morning therefore had been talked about with much excitement. Second, it was Homecoming weekend at Baylor, which drew many alumni and parents to the church, bringing the congregation to approximately 800 people on that morning. Extra chairs had been pulled into the back of the sanctuary, the aisles, and some of the additional rooms in order to accommodate the visitors. Finally, Kyle had introduced a new book and accompanying challenge to the community. Inspired by Terry Esau’s book *Surprise Me, God* (2005) and Esau’s presence at UBC that morning, Kyle had encouraged the people on that morning to begin anew in a life searching for the opportunities God lays out for us. He hoped the men and women listening to his proposition would be open and ready for the chance to engage with their faith and ask God to surprise them.

The plan was to have the UBC community individually pray the [Surprise Me] prayer at the beginning of every day, and to keep our eyes open to God’s work in our lives... The end of [his] prayer was simply ‘Surprise me, God.’ And what happened next is the burden we’ve all been carrying (Nash 2006).

In the time following Kyle's death, the irony of this request was certainly not lost on the people, though few placed any weight in an actual correlation.

As Kyle stood in the water and reached for the microphone, faulty wiring reacted with a natural charge in the water. The current found its grounding in Kyle's body; he was electrocuted and killed almost instantly. What followed can only be called a frenzy. One member of the band onstage at the time (the band Dutton, as David Crowder Band was on tour at the time) ripped the microphone cord out of the wall, while two others pulled Kyle out of the water. An acquaintance of Kyle's, and a trained EMT, was the first to jump onstage and attempt CPR. "I think a lot of people knew something major had happened, but didn't quite realize how bad it was. But I knew. Working on ambulances, I've seen this kind of thing before. I know what death looks like, and it's something I won't be able to forget" (Angeleri 2015). As other church leaders recognized the gravity of the situation, they called 911 and ushered the congregation out through the back doors to make room for the stretcher. Kyle was carried out of the church for the last time.

Many people went home in confusion, but countless others made their way to the hospital hoping to receive some news. In the moments immediately following the accident, it seemed that most people could not wrap their heads around what was happening. A young leader in the church explained, "I think there was a lot of fear, but there was also this sense that somehow he would be alright. I mean, it was Kyle. He had to be alright" (Singleton 2015). A small group waited inside the hospital for the news no one wanted to admit was possible: Kyle had been dead on arrival. Jen Lake, his wife and now widow, collapsed on the floor. Families were called. David Crowder and the other members of the band boarded a private plane bound for home and heartache. Church leadership broke the

news to the crowd accumulated outside of the hospital. One member recalled, “It was like time stopped. The thing I remember most vividly is laying down in the grass next to Ben [the community pastor] and just sobbing” (Walters 2015).

One might easily argue that had either Kyle’s intense charisma or his nearly supernatural death not existed, we would not have witnessed the same events at UBC – indeed, it would not have been possible. But of course, this type of reasoning leads us nowhere, for these two factors were present, did necessarily play off each other, and thus the ensuing analysis is no doubt possible, if not required. The community was forced not only to recover from the simple loss of their pastor, but from the horrific, unexpected tragedy of their leader and role model. Both of these facts informed the way that the community chose to grieve. They informed the way that the community moved forward, changed, and grew. The unlikely circumstances shaped the identity of individuals, the church as a whole, and even the ongoing social life of Kyle. It has been put simply by more than a few – for UBC, and many of its members past and present, “Kyle is our saint” (Nash 2006).

Methodology

Having arrived at UBC only a month after the death of Kyle and subsequently spending the majority of my youth in the community, it would have been easy to rely heavily on my own memories and experiences for much of my analysis. Of course this would have created two very significant problems. First and foremost, though my own experience in the community is valuable, I must take specific measures to eliminate personal bias or reductive analysis. Second, memory can be a tenuous justification for practical arguments. As such, in my data collection I have attempted to gain a quality understanding not just of individual memory, but of collective memory and experience. In order to do this, I spent two months during the summer of 2015 interviewing people who have been significant in the life of Kyle or of UBC.

Being privy to the situations at the church, I used theoretical non-probability sampling⁷ to select and track down the informants I felt would be most beneficial to my study. This included, but was not limited to, Kyle's widow, his closest friends, a few of his mentees, and current and past church leadership. After talking with these men and women I asked them for additional sources. They pointed me in the direction of other people present during and after the time of Kyle's death who would have interesting or important perspectives. Through these connections and references, I eventually compiled a collection of twenty-four interviews, which were then analyzed and coded for various themes and responses. The interviews asked questions concerning the informant's impression of Kyle, experience in the UBC community, memory of Kyle's death, memory of the mourning

⁷ Theoretical Non-Probability Sampling: a method of sampling largely influenced by the theoretical structures of research and the personal judgment of the researcher. Rather than taking a random sample of current and past church members, in this study people were purposely selected based on their position in the church and/or their relationship to Kyle Lake.

process, and recognition of Kyle posthumously. Based on the analysis of these interviews, I confirmed my original impressions of the importance of Kyle's unique and valued personality to the unfolding of events at UBC. I also was able to combine the collected perspectives from these interviews with my own observations in the community in order to conceive an explanation that took account of literature on both grief and charisma. These writings seemed to offer strong explanations of phenomena discernable at UBC.

After discerning the strength of these ideas from my interviews, I hoped to show their application more broadly within the community. If the characteristics of Kyle and UBC were as salient as the interviews suggested, then by extension of such an interpretation, there should still have been evidence of the life of Kyle in the current identity of UBC. To test this, I submitted a written interview questionnaire to the present-day UBC community. This questionnaire asked about a respondent's length of affiliation with UBC as well as their knowledge of Kyle. Using a sample size of fifty-four responses, I identified response patterns and calculated a few percentages to determine whether knowledge and recognition of Kyle continues even with new members of the church who have no personal memory of Kyle or his leadership. The data from these questionnaires was used to supplement interviews in my analysis and guide my overall conclusions. However, the questionnaires are never quoted.

Using the interviews, questionnaires, and participant observation from recent interactions and my own memory, I have attempted to gain a series of ethnographic insights into life at UBC in relation to Kyle Lake's life and death. I chose to divide the analysis both temporally and theoretically, because I feel that this gives the most accurate and encompassing depiction possible of the social processes at play in the church

community for the last decade. I additionally chose to orient the paper around Kyle rather than the church itself because my interviews and surveys showed a unique positioning of Kyle as a figurehead that equated to modern day sanctification.

This methodology gives me the best opportunity to gather the deepest understanding conceivable within the confines of the study. The theories and sections moving forward are a clear extension of the methods chosen for my work. My ultimate goal has been to integrate individuals from the community as much as possible. This is why I have chosen to reference members so heavily throughout my work. Their voices should carry through; they thus have guided much of the analysis in an attempt to keep my work “close to the ground” per Clifford Geertz’s theories on thick description (1973). In this way, I intend to create not only my own interpretation of what occurred at UBC, but also to represent to the best of my ability the interpretations of those who lived it.

Theory

In the wake of Kyle's death, University Baptist Church faced a crossroads: to find a way to move forward despite the pain of the loss, or to dissolve the church in the face of such a shocking and all-consuming tragedy. According to community members, the loss of Kyle seemed somehow graver than any other imaginable death, including that of a less central community member or even a leader on the level of Kyle but whose death was less shocking. Indeed, in the weeks following the event, his death seemed capable of tearing the community apart if something profound was not done. People's interpretations of this event and their subsequent responses existed as individual experiences, yet within a context of community and shared experience. Each member of UBC took part in both communal loss and communal creativity while also experiencing individual struggle on some level.

These poles of experience created a tension between the individual experience and the community experience that ultimately became characteristic of the processes of losing, grieving and reintegrating Kyle. I mention this tension in order to better understand these processes that can seem extraordinarily unique on the surface and yet fit into a larger human experience often described by social researchers: "The universality of death is constitutive of a common humanity... This relationship between commonality and singularity is reflected in the desire to 'know' what death [and, subsequently, grief] is" (Conway 2011). In the attempt to then "know" the experience of UBC through this period, I seek to understand the social patterns, conceptions, and structures that inform both the individual and the community experience.

The death of Kyle Lake –in its full processual form, not simply the instantaneous event – took place in three stages: the physical and emotional loss, the grief process, and the reintegration of the UBC community, including Kyle’s place in it. This three-fold process can be understood in terms of cultural anthropologist Victor Turner’s 1964 discussions of rites of passage and liminality⁸: Rites of passage are “found in all societies” and “indicate and constitute transitions between states” (Turner 1964:234). Turner sees the “state” as applicable to many things, but usually indicated by some kind of social role. Within a ritual breach, the first state of a person or group is attacked or called into question by the “detachment... from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions” (Turner 1964:235). This detachment spurs a necessary response from the community as it navigates its way through mounting crisis to a new status for the individual or the group within the social structure:

Neophytes [or those in transition] are withdrawn from their structural positions and consequently from values, norms, sentiments and techniques... They are also divested of their previous habits of thought, feeling, and action... alternately forced and encouraged to think about their society, their cosmos and the powers that generate and sustain them. Liminality may be partly described as a stage of reflection (Turner 1964:240).

During this time, the members in transition cannot be fully characterized by aspects of the past state or the state to come, lending way to Turner’s repeated assertion that they are “betwixt and between.” While in this liminal state, Turner claims that people are marked

⁸ The idea of rites of passage originally comes from Arnold van Gennep, who delineates three “distinct moments in ritual time: separation, margin, and aggregation” (Turner 1964: 234) in his 1909 study. Though van Gennep has been highly influential, and is certainly the father of these ideas, I have chosen to focus on Turner because of his interest in and expansion of the middle period. Van Gennep considers this a mostly ambiguous phase and gives it little attention. Turner, however, gives more credit and detail to this period – extending the limen to its processual equivalent, liminality. He clarifies its characteristics and gives it a greater potency within the rites of passage framework. This is pivotal for my analysis because of the extensive grief process at UBC.

by ongoing transformation, symbolism, and the elimination of previous roles and social differences through comradeship: “among neophytes there is often complete equality” (Turner 1964:237).

Though Turner’s model and its application to UBC may seem overly simplified, its structural situation is often accompanied by other aspects and characteristics, which enhance the model with “cultural complexity” (Turner 1964:239). These characteristics provide certain caveats and illumination to the model itself. Turner’s acknowledgement of such “anti-structure,” as he names these altered states during the liminal period, ultimately strengthens the model of rites of passage by showing its versatility, room for abnormal phenomena, and applicability to non-regular but still transformational events. This anti-structure within the liminal period characterizes *communitas*, an important aspect of the experience at UBC. Turner, while indicating a reference to Florian Znaniecki (1936), explains that *communitas* is a primary type of social anti-structure uniting and defining people in crisis or transition by “constitut[ing] a social bond uniting these people over and above any formal social bonds” (Turner 1974:45). Anti-structures at UBC were a salient piece of the experience in a grieving community that by traditional standards was floundering. Despite this sense of unease and incongruity, the people within in the liminal phase found a unity in such disarray that ultimately enabled their future reintegration and transition into new formal structures.

Kyle’s death, particularly because of its shocking circumstances, represents an intense breach within society. Just as Turner’s classic examples of separation and liminality predict, the social roles and identities of the people involved with UBC were immediately assaulted, by virtue of a seeming severance from the figure of Kyle. The

traditional structures of the church were no longer viable. As such, the resulting process of grief – an obviously liminal period – gave the community active methods and steps towards a new social identity. It was also decidedly ambiguous and multifaceted. Within this liminal period, aspects of the identities of UBC members were questioned repeatedly; elements of the group structure were questioned; and individuals undertook challenges together, which strengthened their bonds and sense of collective personhood through *communitas*.

Thus by passing through the liminality of grief, UBC as a community was able to reach a period of reintegration, the last stage during which the identities of once liminal members are again understood and solidified. The process of reintegration after Kyle's death involved a necessary restructuring of the church, healing of individual members, and commemoration of Kyle as a social figure ever-present in the church, even after his death. This shows the presence of three separate transformations, or rites, within the church. Certainly the group itself had to change statuses, but so too did individual members, and the figure of Kyle himself. Through this reintegration and the ongoing commemoration of the event and Kyle in the life of the church, the state of the relevant members has been necessarily altered and affirmed.

Looking more deeply at the model's application to the UBC community, however, there is an interesting modification in framing. When Turner speaks of rites of passage, he says that they are not restrictive, and thus may be conceptualized within many situations. Any time a society encounters a social crisis or ritual drama, it may be rightfully dubbed a rite of passage. Despite this acknowledgement, Turner chooses to focus primarily on very specific and regularly-repeated rituals of small-scale societies. These are continual

processes within such societies. Recognizing the model's applicability to such continuous processes, I am interested in the extension of the model to a single crisis event. This period of study at UBC was marked not by an iteration of ongoing patterns, but an unexpected, and thus all encompassing, one-time occurrence.

Rather than orienting the process around established and consistent rituals within the community, the process was therefore oriented almost solely around Kyle Lake both as figurehead and symbol – losing Kyle, grieving Kyle, commemorating Kyle. In a sense, Kyle himself – and the very idea of him – centered the ritual. Because Kyle was the primary orientation device for the church community, there are many supplementary aspects of the story that must be investigated and explained. These aspects fit into the model of a rite of passage and expand the understanding of each stage of transition. Each of these stages in some way was determined and influenced by a variety of factors – including the experiential aspect of death itself, grief and its various configurations, aspects of group management and creation, and the very character and charisma of Kyle Lake. I will look at each of these factors so as to develop an understanding of loss, liminal grief, and reintegration that more fully addresses the experiences and struggles of the UBC community.

Death and Grief

In order to understand the processes of losing and grieving Kyle, the obvious starting point is the actual event. At the core of many ideas to come is an agreement that death itself is much more than the expiration of a physical life. This foundational agreement lends to them a certain shared identity and base for analysis: death is an inherently social activity and phenomenon. “The very recognition and naming of such

biologically locatable events as ‘death’ occur as social activities: social in that they require special achieved competence, in that the propriety of the names given is determined by a cultural tradition, in that the correctness or incorrectness of a designation is a matter of immense practical concern to others” (Sudnow 1967). The social nature of death has been accepted and reaffirmed countless times. What changes from case to case is what this social process entails. Moving forward from the second of expiration, an extensive process necessarily begins which influences the whole community and determines how society will respond and heal. For if death is indeed a social activity, how is it enacted by both the individual survivors and the group? Each theorist will have a slightly different answer, though, as one builds on the other, we will see both the importance and relevance of constructing a working argument founded – at least partially – on all.

One interpretation of death, grief, and reintegration comes from cultural anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski. His work attempted to show how various sociocultural phenomena functioned to serve basic human needs, fitting into a school of thought rightfully dubbed “functionalism,” though his particular brand was further specified as psycho-biological functionalism⁹. In this conceptualization, death is a communal experience of violence and the grief process brings about the basic human need for stability in the wake of such an act. He was one of the first to introduce the idea that death may be considered an assault on a social relational system.¹⁰ Speaking from his experience with the Trobrianders, he stated “a small community bereft of a member,

⁹ Psycho-biological functionalism assumed that not only did phenomena fulfill specific functions for society, but also that society’s cultural institutions filled the psychological, physiological, and emotional needs of individuals.

¹⁰ In the view proposed by Malinowski, the social relational system is the society itself. Society is itself a being. Under this conception, we can study society as a thing, viewing it as the product of the web of relations between individuals, groups, and institutions. When something within society is attacked, it thus reverberates through everything and affects the society’s assumed equilibrium.

especially if he be important, is severely mutilated. The whole event breaks the normal course of life and shakes the moral foundations of society” (1940:34). This is because the social system is composed of the relations and interactions between people.

According to Malinowski, this web of relations is essential to the way individuals move through and understand themselves within their world. In many smaller groups, there is a core of people – or in some cases, of just one leader – that serves as the primary orientation point from which the rest of the group extends. Additionally, many people without solid connections on their own are connected through this central core. Thus when the core is harmed or removed, many connections falter not only those tied directly to the leader him or herself. Thereby, “death... is much more than the removal of a member. By setting in motion on part of the deep forces of the instinct of self-preservation, it threatens the very cohesion and solidarity of the group, and upon this depends the organization of that society its tradition, and finally the whole culture” (Malinowski 1940:35).

The similarities between Malinowski’s model and the described experiences at UBC are immediately obvious. UBC is a small community, brought together by common values in the midst of larger society. Part of the basis for these shared values lies in the teachings of the leadership; at the time under discussion, Kyle was a central leader with a prominent voice, thus ascribing great importance to his position within the community. He bonded with many individual members and became a role model for many others. Upon losing Kyle, therefore, the center of the social web at UBC was gravely altered. His death was at most an instrument of heavy destruction to the group, at least a disturbance to the structure of roles and the social order. His loss thus inherently destabilized the entire community of UBC. By this destabilization, his death then rendered the continuation of

simple social life and functions at UBC impossible and even undesirable according to Malinowski's interpretations. This affected the very existence of the group itself. Under Malinowski's frame, UBC (and other groups) are relatively stable, independent beings. Furthermore, they often exist as entities with a certain level of independence and equilibrium. Such equilibrium is held in check by the careful balance of roles, functions, and rituals.

In response to an upset in equilibrium, a society endorses structured behaviors in order to remedy the disturbance and return to a semblance of social stability. Thus, if death is a successful attack on society, the grief process is the defensive reaction to the attack and conquering of such a disturbance. We can thus recognize the process of grief essentially as a process of identity affirmation and societal restructuring. This occurs in two primary ways: first, by using rituals to express collective pain and the social nature of experience; and second, by transferring these rituals into a means for reestablishing group solidarity.

To prevent the immediate dissolution of society, the group first expresses their collective pain through some "more or less conventionalized and dramatized" social performance of grief (Malinowski 1940: 31). The use of regulated group actions and systematic rituals brings about a return of the stability that formerly defined the group in Malinowski's understanding. At UBC, specific ceremonies and group procedures were used to order the grief process and lend a sense of guidance to the community. Malinowski discusses that many of these ritualized behaviors occur in the context of religion, an idea that clearly holds true in the faith community of UBC. By placing their mourning in the context of their faith, religion played a key role in prescribing the behaviors deemed by group members as most likely to heal the group and return the social system to its former

state. The return of stability and the process of reaching this stability as a collective are what allowed the community to assert its shared identity. The need for and expression of group sorrow thus prevents the fracturing of the society into its many individual parts and promotes the revitalization of the society as an independent entity in equilibrium. “The ritual despair, the obsequies, the acts of mourning, express the emotion of the bereaved and the loss of the whole group. They endorse and they duplicate the natural feelings of the survivors; they create a social event out of a natural fact” (Malinowski 1940:34).

By standardizing the grief and communally experiencing the tragedy, groups are able to replace the role of the dead with the role of the mortuary ritual. Where the individual served as a connecting piece or identifying figure between other members, the shared ritual now brings the community together in similar ways. The “violent and complex outburst” created by the loss of a figure in the society is subsequently replaced by various “manifestations” of the society’s crisis that ultimately serve to reintegrate the group in the face of loss. This is primarily possible because such manifestations reaffirm the presence or supposed realness of the group despite the loss. Connections are strengthened along old pathways and may even grow along new ones. When Kyle died, many connections made through him were necessarily severed. He was no longer present to be the glue of the community. However, in order for the group to continue, a new sense of solidarity was required. If connections were no longer available through Kyle, Malinowski’s lens highlights the community’s need for other options. UBC searched – whether consciously or not – for a system of behaviors that might fill the role left empty by their leader’s death. This functionalist approach is indeed all about mending the gap that has been created by a loss so that basic human needs may continue to be met. Therefore,

through this replacement, the mutilation of the community is repaired, and the tear in the social fabric is effectively patched.

Malinowski's perspective is bolstered and expanded by sociologist Robert Hertz. Hertz also sees death as more than simply a biological fact. In his widely regarded 1907 essay "A Contribution to the Study of the Collective Representation of Death," he looks at death not so much as it applies to the deceased individual only, but to the group as a whole and the phenomenon itself on a social level. In this view – like Malinowski's – society is its own being. The patterns, behaviors, and institutions within a group function as more than elements of the people's lives; they are also the very structures that keep the independent, existence of society present. Death must be understood in this context as a "social phenomenon consist[ing] in a dual and painful process of mental disintegration and synthesis" (Hertz 1960[1907]:212). Again this is very similar to Malinowski's ideas of group reintegration and stability through grief.

However, Hertz goes further than Malinowski in trying to determine and explain potential reasons for the large-scale phenomena of death and grief. Where Malinowski asserts that death can be detrimental to the social system because it leaves a void in the relational web, Hertz goes one step further and asserts that the event of death itself is not only problematic but by their very nature are irreconcilable within the greater social schema: "Indeed, society imparts its own character of permanence to the individuals who compose it: because it feels itself immortal and wants to be so, it cannot normally believe that its members... should be fated to die" (Hertz 1960[1907]:208). The loss is a sacrilege felt through all levels of the social order and existence. A negative, natural or spiritual power has intervened in the course of the uniquely individual and collective life and, in

effect, overwhelmed the power of the social. This intervention destroys any semblance of omnipotence previously ascribed to the supposedly sovereign society. “Thus, when a man dies, society... is stricken in the very principle of its life, in the faith it has in itself” (Hertz 1960[1907]:208). This is perhaps the most central issue at the time of a death and the most important subject for reconciliation.

Given these observations by Hertz, in the structure of a society that is both in equilibrium and somehow cognizant of its existence outside of the minds of individuals, the loss of a member is an event for which it is simply not prepared. As such, the death itself is a problematic and unexpected assault against not only the relational web but against society itself, reified by Hertz as an entity, and the very viability of collective social identity. The subsequent mourning is therefore a method of active problem solving and stabilizing, rather than a simple filling of a gap to return to equilibrium per Malinowski, though admittedly this is a subtle variation and extension more than it is a separate argument.

Having thus established an expanded reasoning behind the assertion of death as assault, Hertz explicitly realigns again with Malinowski in his focus on ritual and the reestablishment of solidarity. Community members must find a way to reaffirm their collective legitimacy in the face of crisis. No matter the assault then, if the collective conscience mourns as it should – following the established role of ritual – the society becomes properly reintegrated and healed, lending way to what Hertz deems a stable and unified society. “To the organic event is added a complex mass of beliefs, emotions, and activities which give it its distinct character... Thus death has a specific meaning for the social consciousness; it is the object of a collective representation” (Hertz

1960[1907]:197). The desire for and value of this notion of a continuous society in equilibrium is the driving force behind socialized death and grief, for it is only within this process that society “can triumph over death” (Hertz 1960[1907]:212).

The rituals and beliefs described above – at UBC, those characterized by the community’s faith, prayers, and collective events of remembrance – introduce grief as a transformative process. A society once in balance and now undergoing extreme assault must find a way to transform itself back into an integrated entity. “Society cannot admit that an individual... shall be lost forever. The last word must remain with life: the deceased will rise from the grip of death and will return, in one form or another, to the peace of human association” (Hertz 1960[1907]: 208). Again, this epitomizes a small difference between Malinowski and Hertz. While they both see grief as a process of healing and stabilization, Malinowski assumes that the hole left by a loss can be filled in kind and return the society almost precisely to its former state. The rites of grief perform “exactly the same function... with regard to the whole group [as the deceased]... and provides the most powerful means of reintegration of the group’s shaken solidarity and of the re-establishment of its morale” (Malinowski 1940: 35). Hertz, on the other hand, believes that some transformation must occur – an idea that is strongly reminiscent of the rites of passage model. Because of the deeply felt agitations of society and individual identity, the deceased and the bereaved must both be reintegrated back into slightly redefined roles in society.

Members of UBC, both as individuals and as a group, had to be reestablished within a strengthened iteration of the social web in order to conquer the death of Kyle. This incorporation through grief allows for the continuity of the social realm. Per Turner and

van Gennep, Hertz calls the death an “initiation” into new identity roles, and this is ultimately where the comprehensive mourning and grief process comes into play. “The group requires actions that will focus the attention of its members... and which will inspire the belief in everybody” (Hertz 1960[1907]:210). The function of this process is two-fold: grieving allows community members to deal with their loss and strengthen their own collective identity, and the specific rituals or rites of grief place the deceased in a new light, giving them continued social relevance and being – both for the sake of the deceased and those left behind. In accomplishing this, the society strengthens its own group identity and solidarity; reestablishes equilibrium and the continuity of the society as an independent, agentic being; and gives a new status marker to the deceased – hence the idea of transformation. “Death enables him, regenerated, to enter the community of the Saints, the invisible church... in rejoining his forefathers, the deceased is reborn transfigured and raised to a superior power and dignity” (Hertz 1960[1907]:209). Such a transformation underscores the importance of status and religion in the grief process, both particularly salient aspects of the experience at UBC.

Though Malinowski and Hertz both point to important understandings of the need for stability and social health at UBC, their theories cannot explain certain aspects of the experience of losing and grieving Kyle. They remain in a functionalist perspective that reifies society as a primarily independent and ideally static being in addition to conceptualizing social functions as specifically structured and largely unchanging. As such, they seek for explanations of how society in crisis is eventually led back to a fully functioning state. Thus they neglect two primary aspects of grief. First, society is not best conceptualized as an independent being because it is the individual within society that has

much of the agency. Second, these agentic individuals have the capacity not necessarily to monitor a group's return to its supposed former state but to actually create an idea or interpretation of their society. Ultimately, the reification of society by Malinowski and Hertz poses a problem for ongoing analysis. Critiques of these approaches in recent decades have focused on this problem, encouraging us to refrain from describing society as if it were an organic, independent entity. In many ways, UBC as a "society" was not merely healed and returned to equilibrium. Instead, the community was undeniably generated through dynamic processes, including chaos and social change, and affected by individual agency and relationships outside of the boundaries of some "thing" known as "society." What Malinowski and Hertz thus fail to shed light on is the creative power of this rite of passage in the community.

Anthropologists Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry develop the creative power of death and mourning in their 1982 edited volume *Death and the Regeneration of Life*, which has remained an important milestone in the development of a body of work in death, mourning and resolution. Where Malinowski and Hertz leave us questioning some of the behaviors and consequences at UBC, Bloch and Parry provide us with potential explanations in their seminal introduction to the volume. Instead of viewing the death and reintegration of Kyle and UBC within a functionalist frame, this new lens attempts to highlight the potential for social change, human agency, and active creation in an idea of society that is no longer reified.

Using case studies, Bloch and Parry defend the assertion put forth in their introduction – that the rituals and symbols of death represent in many ways a social phenomenon of regeneration mirroring the patterns present at a birth or creation ritual. By

sharpening this focus, Bloch and Parry are much more upfront in identifying the striking similarities between grief and Turner's rites of passage than the theorists before them. Using these theoretical conversations as reference points in their introduction, Bloch and Parry offer an alternative to Hertz's ideas that "the reestablishment of society require[s] a reallocation of the roles the deceased once occupied" (Bloch and Parry 1982:5). This emphasis on reallocation was the primary means by which Hertz identified the reintegration of society that takes place after a death. Instead, Bloch and Parry propose that mortuary rituals are not evidence of "Hertz's reified society responding to the sacrilege of death, [but] of the rituals themselves being an occasion for *creating* that society as an apparently external force" [emphasis original] (Bloch and Parry 1982:6).

This alternative theory of social creation allows Bloch and Parry to facilitate further discussions on the relationships among rites, symbolism, and social organization, which is necessary for a deeper understanding of the social creation present in death and ritual. But precisely how does this social creation come about? First and foremost, Bloch and Parry argue "death is a source of life. Every death makes available a new potentiality for life, and one creature's loss is another gain" (1982:8). This is evident on two fronts. On purely logistical grounds, a death in the society opens up space and resources for another person. With Kyle's passing, UBC had an opportunity to bring in new leaders, create new stories, and reorganize the structure of roles within the community.

According to Bloch and Parry's ideas about "society," death is an opportunity to bring together many social members in mourning and thereby promote the life of the community through tangible acts. These tangible acts may be completely new to the group or they may be reinterpretations of old patterns. Either way, they tend to be a response to

the unpredictability of death – which of course translates to the unpredictability of grieving – and thus provide a way for the group to respond collectively to irregularity. Because of the expansive power of death, the people feel compelled to create these rituals and responses through which society is further created and changed. The goal for new aspects of society and social relationships to be created as an “endeavor to control the contingency of death” (Bloch & Parry 1982:7).

It is this control which is fought for throughout the liminal grieving process and ultimately gained within the process of reintegration. Control of ritual, emotion, and social creation allowed the community of UBC to control the felt effects of loss and to promise “a rebirth” for Kyle while also ensuring a “renewal” of group experiences and worldview of those church members left behind after Kyle’s death (Bloch and Parry 1982) – both significant changes that substantially affect the appearance of “society” in ways clearly much deeper than a mere restructuring or reassignment of roles. Crucially, this creative lens to the experiences at UBC is crucial to understanding and justifying the continuation and adaptability of communal organization. A “society” that is created in the face of destruction legitimates its changing social order as well as prepares itself for future crises.

The consistent placement of “society” into quotes is pivotal for understanding the creative arguments of Bloch and Parry. In looking at how individuals within a community or group create themselves after a death, they are actually arguing against the existence of a “real” or reified society, like the ones argued by Malinowski and Hertz. Rather than an explicit society existing that is assaulted by loss, the individuals affected by loss create an idea of “society” through their rituals and responses to death. These creations represent manifestations based off of a pause in the “process” of “society” – a snapshot in time of

what the group thinks their society is or should be more than it is an actualized entity. The new creations or alterations to the organization and ideology of the group in the wake of death are evidence of the ideas that the group has about their own society. As they work to redefine and reintegrate themselves, these ideas – “true” or not – come to the forefront as a means of legitimacy of the group. This creation ideology fits into the liminal model as an amplification of the ambiguity of liminality and the camaraderie and *communitas* of neophytes trying to establish an idea of a new social role or grouping.

Between the functionalist perspectives of Malinowski and Hertz and the creative perspectives of Bloch and Parry, it may seem that a substantial theoretical base has been put forth on death and mourning. Though these theorists certainly provide strong insights into the processes of grief and the experience of loss, they only look at these phenomena at the social or institutional levels. While it is certainly true that loss is often experienced as a social fact, it would be remiss to disregard the very real aspect of individual pain. Certain elements of the experience at UBC would either go unrecognized or remain completely mystifying, if we did not give due analysis to the individual side of the equation. It is at the level of individual grief that rage, the cultural force of emotion, and necessary chaos take full form. Cultural anthropologist Renato Rosaldo makes this discovery during his work within the Ilongot people of the Philippines. This work has been well documented in his books *Culture and Truth* (1989) and *The Day of Shelly's Death: The Poetry and Ethnography of Grief* (2014).

When members of the Ilongot community experiences a loss and the pain that stems from it, their grief inspires rage – a rage that is often neglected in Western societies, making it difficult for us to understand these behaviors. This rage leads the Ilongot person

to kill as a way to “vent and throw away the anger of his bereavement... To him, grief, rage, and headhunting go together in a self-evident manner” (Rosaldo 1989:1). In first trying to understand this association, Rosaldo searched for some sort of deeper contextual meaning. He explored social structure and exchange theory. He attempted to apply existing theories of the social elements of death and grief, such as those of Malinowski, Hertz and Bloch and Parry, to explain the unique phenomenon. What he found, however, was that these theories missed the mark. Theories of the social nature and universality of death and grief offered no answers. The structural answer of death as a transformational assault against the system and grief as the repair mechanism could not explain headhunting. Similarly, the creative power of death did not seem to explain the powerful emotions and chaotic behaviors found within Rosaldo’s studies.

In a similar manner, these established theories cannot fully explain Kyle’s death and UBC’s response to it. Individuals at UBC experienced a large range of emotions, sometimes within a short period of time. After recognizing the power of emotion in the grief experience rather than just social structures, Rosaldo coined the term “emotional force” as it pertains to death and mourning. The emotional force of a death “derives less from an abstract brute fact than from a particular intimate relation’s permanent rupture... Rather than speaking of death in general, one must consider the subject’s position within a field of social relations in order to grasp one’s emotional experience” (1989:2). Contrary to many of the theories discussed previously, a death does not just bring about a necessary evaluation of the internal social structure. It is not always just about the community as a whole or its collective identity. While Rosaldo agrees with the theorists before him that a death is an event, “a violent irruption, or intervention, in an established world” (2014:101),

he is much more concerned with these personal emotions and behaviors that are inspired by loss and supported by the group than he is with large communal shifts or structural changes and creations.

In many instances, one of the most powerful forces of death is its emotional force that inspires us to look at what else is going on in the minds and psyches of individual members of society. In Rosaldo's analysis, a focus on only ritual and structure is not always the key answer or even the most prominent feature of death and grief.

“Ethnographies that [by focusing only on ritual] eliminate intense emotions not only distort their descriptions but also remove potentially key variables from their explanations”

(Rosaldo 1989:12). At UBC, and certainly in other small societies with similar loss experiences, extensive relationships between group dynamics and individual emotions exist. This warrants analytical attention to both features of experience. If individual pain is neglected in favor of the group structure and ritual, the grief process may never be fully comprehended. Further, certain aspects of the grief experience will fall to the background when they should actually be interpreted as central features – in part because they clearly inform the behaviors in experiences such as Kyle's death.

These potentially neglected aspects contribute to an overall pattern not accounted for by other perspectives, but which certainly existed at UBC in the time of grieving Kyle: chaos. Even in the event of something tragic or disruptive such as a death – particularly the death of the leader – previous theories discussed have found avenues of analysis that point towards a desire for or tendency toward social stability. Rosaldo, on the other hand, embraces the chaos. The Ilongot headhunters act on their rage and thus perpetuate chaos as a way of healing. What the emotional force of death accounts for in the literature, and

therefore in any situation it is applied to, is the ability to heal through nontraditional means. Ritualized group behaviors are not the only solution and order is not the only goal. Rather, accepting one's felt emotions allows an individual – and by extension, a community – to experience a grief that is full and complete in its chaotic expression. A lack of specific regulation or “deeper meaning” need not erase the validity of the behavior or the potential for symbolic significance.

In some ways then, Rosaldo's addition to earlier models shows some of the limitations of the paradigm. We cannot focus on the transformation of the group alone. The rite of passage for “society” – while clearly important for the conceptualization and experience of the grief process – is not the only rite of passage or transformation experience that is applicable. Rather, the idea of alteration must be extended to the individual within the communal context. The emotions expressed by the people of UBC were salient parts of their own bereavement, in addition to the group work that many described. Dealing with death is often a highly personal process and must be acknowledged as such. Interestingly, Rosaldo's theories – though he might personally oppose models of rites of passage – also seem to expand on one aspect already accounted for by Turner: anti-structure. Rosaldo's embracing of chaos is arguably similar to the presence of anti-structure during the liminal period, particularly because of the ambiguity associated with groups in transition.

Charisma and Personality

Literature on analyses of death and grief are clearly pivotal to establishing a foundation with which to build the argument around Kyle and UBC. However, there were other forces at play. The perspectives offered by the previous theorists may plausibly be

applied to any – or at least most – deaths. Kyle’s death, however, was both incredibly unique and extremely difficult to process because who he was as a man and a leader was entirely captivating. The circumstances of Kyle’s death thus displayed the frailty of human life in a way not usually seen. His position within the community made him seem almost invincible; the breaking of that illusion thus rocked the very foundation of the community and irrevocably affected the transformational experience. It seems quite obvious that, as Malinowski explained, the community will feel a tear in the center of the web more deeply and broadly than a loss on the fringes. Surely then, the pain of losing Kyle is at least partially because those positioned in the center of the social web have formed more connections to a wider array of people than the average person in the group. He had been integrated into the community not only as the center but also as an important identity marker and orientation device to nearly every member of UBC. They were, as a whole, attached to the very person, and even the idea, of Kyle Lake.

To fully understand the group’s intense attachment to Kyle both pre- and post-mortem, we must understand the power of his personality – and indeed the power of personality in general – and the depth of his leadership. I cannot believe that this attachment and subsequent bereavement is purely due to the amount or even the strength of relationships with Kyle. Many well-connected people may pass and leave much sadness in their wake without inspiring a marked communal restructuring. Indeed, if the whole of a society or significantly sized social group (such as a church community) was so extensively recreating itself in the vein of Bloch and Parry’s analysis after every death, that group could encounter serious problems of organization and continuity. What

characteristic then allows or encourages societies to change their response during bereavement according to the social position of the deceased?

The answer to this question lies in the anthropology of charisma. This quality is described in many ways within common vernacular – *an x-factor, that special something, a certain air about them*. These are all indirect ways of pointing at the same phenomenon: a charismatic figure inherently exerts a unique influence over a community or society at large. “The term charisma will be applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and endowed with... specifically exceptional powers... and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader” (Weber 1914:324). Charisma is partially about the person him or herself, and partially about what they possess – that heroic or ideal quality that legitimates the leadership position, and makes their behavior (and absence of it) strongly felt.

Sociologist Max Weber is typically known as the founder of charisma theory. He first included this discussion in his 1914 writings on “The Types of Legitimate Domination.” In this, he identifies three primary types of domination in society that he sees as legitimate and effective – if only for a time. These are legal or rational authority, traditional authority, and charismatic authority. Weber describes charismatic authority as primarily belonging to prophets, magical beings, personality-driven leaders, and heroes. Given Kyle’s identification as a modern day saint, the label seems appropriate.

The charismatic label is a “recognition” applied only when “freely given” by the community and “guaranteed by what is held to be a proof, originally always a miracle” (Weber 1914:325). By virtue of this appellation, the charismatic person is extraordinary within society. It is thus important to note that the power of charismatic authority does not

necessarily stem from the superhuman quality itself but from the recognition of that quality. The basis for a claim to legitimacy is this “conception” of duty “of those subject to charismatic authority to recognize its genuineness and to act accordingly” (Weber 1914:325). This makes charismatic authority a matter not of strict domination, as is often the case in traditional and rational authority, but of powerful devotion. A person may certainly exhibit charismatic traits, but if they are never recognized, his or her power must ultimately end. Conversely, a person’s actions may not seem necessarily supernatural or impressive to outsiders, but if recognized as such by a charismatic community that ascribes their full devotion and trust, the individual can be called charismatic. Kyle’s situation seems to be the latter.

As a charismatic leader, Kyle did not need to exert strict domination over the community of UBC. In fact, he was the person to initiate a flat leadership structure during his time at the church. Rather the constant exchange between Kyle and the body of the church inspired voluntary adoration. This adoration in many ways is seemingly irrational. According to Weber, however, part of the strength of this relationship – and therefore of the charismatic leader him or herself – lies in the irrationality of ascribing the charismatic label at all. “The charismatic leader believes and is believed in especially because it [charisma] goes against what we know” (Adair-Toteff 2005:195). This irrationality is both incredibly exciting and appealing to the community searching for features of collective identity and experience. Irrationality thus gives way to revolutionary force. “Charisma... effect[ing] a subjective or internal reorientation... may then result in a radical alteration of the central attitudes and directions of action with a completely new orientation of all attitudes towards the different problems of the ‘world’” (1914:326). Under the influence of

charismatic authority, people begin to think differently, act differently, use their resources differently. This revolutionary change is observable at UBC because of the inspiration of Kyle and the institutions he supported. What he supported and encouraged was taken up by the community.

Though Weber provides this very essential foundation for theories of charisma and charismatic communities, he does not provide a strong avenue for consistent application. Because of his often-strict focus on “pure charisma,” his work leaves gaps in the continued expansion of charismatic authority to modern eras. Though Weber’s definitions of charisma as a phenomenon clearly apply to Kyle’s life, under the notions of pure charisma,¹¹ two aspects of Kyle’s charismatic rise and current commemoration would be unlikely or impossible. The first of these is the interesting nature of Kyle’s charismatic rise in spite of UBC’s existence before his arrival, as well as the presence of another arguably charismatic figure, David Crowder. A pure charismatic figure is supposed to revitalize a group or create a group by his very nature. UBC, however, already existed and Kyle was brought on after the departure of the original pastor. In effect, he inherited the group. However, he brought it together in new ways making his charismatic effect, despite its departure from pure structures, all the more impressive. Additionally, by Weber’s arguments, two charismatic figures cannot exist in a community at one time. Yet, this clearly happened at UBC because the two figures fulfilled very different functions for the community, making a charismatic following around both possible and sustainable.

¹¹ Pure charisma is the undiluted, foundational level of charisma envisioned by Weber in his study of the three types of legitimate domination. Pure charisma looks at the figure alone rather than tradition or legal rules which might impact their charismatic leadership. Pure charisma is a rare phenomenon, and thus is not extensive in its application or study. This limitation warrants further investigation by other scholars who search for alternate or multivocal types of charisma.

The second of the inconsistencies with Weber's pure charisma is the idea that charisma dies with the person. This is because charisma "cannot remain stable, but becomes either traditionalized or rationalized, or a combination of both" (Weber 1914:326). Once the person is departed, there is nothing to keep the charismatic community together, unless charisma is developed into bureaucracy by these processes. While some elements of Kyle's teachings have certainly been traditionalized into specific patterns and beliefs at UBC, a certain mysticism surrounding his very person has also remained. Rather than being completely rationalized, the community has furthered his unique, and sometimes irrational, charismatic identity. In so doing, he has been sanctified by a branch of Christianity notoriously against the use of saints and personality, thus becoming the ultimate irrational contradiction.

Though these represent inconsistencies with Weber's pure charisma, sociologist and economist Arthur Schweitzer (1984) and anthropologist Charles Lindholm (1990), who study political charisma and religious charisma respectively, provide strong insights into these processes. Schweitzer's primary aim is to show that, despite Weber's assertion of the rarity of charisma, the 20th century has been an era dominated by charismatic figures in the political sphere. Moving forward from Weber's ideas of pure charisma, "Schweitzer's central thesis is that charisma is fundamentally synergistic. Right from the moment of its birth through crisis, charisma seeks to interact, to intertwine itself with established social elements" (Bradley 1985:242). By this logic, charisma within a political system mirrors the mutually beneficial relationship between leaders and community, rather than being the completely irrational phenomenon that Weber describes. This extension of

the charismatic model allows for a broader inclusion and a deeper understanding of who can be called a charismatic leader.

To expand this model, Schweitzer describes four different types of charismatic figures, thereby vastly increasing the applicability of the theory: charismatic giants, charismatic luminaries, charismatic failures, and charismatic aspirants. These types are based on their position within society and their level of success. Though Schweitzer analyzes this typology in terms of global leaders, it can be applied directly to the context of the Emergent Church. “Charismatic giants” would clearly be the primary national leaders such as Tony Jones and Terry Esau. Rob Bell, because of his quick climb to fame but ultimate demise and demonization, might be called a “charismatic failure.” Kyle is best classified as a “charismatic luminary,” a success story, but one relegated to “a small [group]” and at times “overshadowed by superpowers” (Schweitzer 1984). By Schweitzer’s analysis, luminaries are much more common than giants, as they are not required to meet the same levels of universal esteem, but instead are promoted primarily within their own communities. Though knowledge of Kyle, and particularly his death, certainly reaches outside the boundaries of UBC it is within that community that he is most highly praised and remembered.

Schweitzer additionally breaks these types down into two potential scenarios for charismatic behavior – dictatorial and democratic – both of which he extensively details in separate sections of the book. Again, this delineation is primarily assigned to political leaders; however, I find certain details from this analysis compelling, particularly with democratic charisma. It is clear that Kyle was no dictator, and so the democratic label is much more appropriate. As a leader’s charisma takes hold of a community, the group’s

inflation of his or her personality becomes even more essential, rather than relying only on the self-inflation of dictatorial charisma. A democratic charismatic leader must depend on the “grace of those who follow him” (Schweitzer 1984). As such, the “extraordinary quality surprises the leader himself. It is a calling that is independent and... recognized by followers on their own initiative” (Schweitzer 1984). Given the way that Kyle is spoken of even today, he was undoubtedly a democratic charismatic leader – an appellation that will become evident through the ethnographic data offered in upcoming chapters.

Though one label is clearly more appropriate than the other, both characterizations offered by Schweitzer show us how charisma can be integrated into a system without complete disruption and chaos or without the ultimate need to bureaucratize past charisma. The history of charismatic leaders in the 20th century, as well as the categories of such leadership, make it possible to combine rational deeds with irrational influence and esteem, rather than treat one as a stepping stone towards the other. Schweitzer’s analysis overall offers us a more practical and inclusive theory of charisma than Weber’s “pure charisma” approach. This conception allows us to see the extension of charisma to a variety of case studies and its existence even within our modern context. Schweitzer’s research efforts effectively ended any discussion of charismatic leaders as an unlikely breed. Rather, charismatic authority can now be seen as alive and well. This modified theory crucially finds that “successful charismatic leaders have been able to both exploit existing institutions and to create new bureaucratic instruments to extend and consolidate power, without diluting the energizing magnetism of personal charisma” (Bradley 1985:243). This takes away the tension between charisma and bureaucracy that Weber observed and that

makes charisma seem impossible by modern standards. Schweitzer's steps in the field that make the phenomenon of Kyle seem organizationally explainable.

Of course, there seems to be something more going on with the charisma of Kyle Lake than with that of political leaders. We cannot forget that UBC is first and foremost a religious institution. In this vein, Lindholm (1990) takes theories of charisma and constructs them in a pattern more conducive to an understanding of religious phenomena. Although Weber does account for the relationship between leader and follower as being one of intense emotional connection and devotion, Lindholm is more concerned with conceptualizing the whole of the charismatic phenomenon as an "emotionally grounded action" best seen within the dynamics of "collective energies and selfless communal fervor" (1990:5). Interestingly, this description of the charismatic phenomenon lines up clearly with the lens on emotion and chaos put forth by Rosaldo. It is Lindholm's hope that in expanding our understanding of the emotional experience of charisma as well, he will be able to put forth a model that displays the true transcendence of the theory.

In order to show such transcendence and gain the attention of the reader, Lindholm does turn to rather extreme cult examples. Despite his focus on excess, we need not restrict his theory to such cases. It is not my intention to imply in any way that UBC is a cult or Kyle its leader. In my application of Lindholm to the events at UBC, it is not my intention to construct a comparative argument, but rather to show how even moderate charismatic communities put on display the social processes and phenomena described. In the same way that the literature on death was not used to compare UBC to any other ethnographic context but rather to offer a potential explanation for occurrences, this literature on

charisma is represented merely to suggest a lens of viewing the social identity of Kyle Lake and his followers.

In religious groups, and certainly at UBC, the influence of religious passion or fervor can increase the influence of charismatic personalities. In discussing passions and the irrational, Lindholm illuminates the triumph of these qualities over reason throughout the history of society. Rational, naturalist notions of human reason and thought are “threatened by the phenomenon of the charismatic relationship, wherein the followers make exactly the claim that modern social thought denies... that membership in the charismatic group surrounding the leader offers a vitalizing *telos* in itself” (Lindholm 1990:11). *Telos* in this conceptualization refers to a sanctified model of humanity and its abilities. By bringing in the religious potential of God, saints, and followers, *telos* represents an appealing break from modern normative structures. The appeal of charisma as a variation from the norm is expanded by Lindholm’s thoughts on irrational attraction. Charismatic relations require a complete “consent-giving” that should logically go against the values of personal will and action classically held by the emergent church. Instead of being repulsed by this however, charismatic communities find a certain comfort in the ability to participate in “self-loss” that “offer[s] the felt truth of a better world to a humanity divided by... the exigencies of the struggle for survival in a harsh and isolating world” (Lindholm 1990:35).

A promise offered by religion – at least in the religious orientation of UBC – is the idea of a better humanity and thus a better world. When filtered through charismatic leaders, this promise bolsters their potential for communal influence by acting as the arbiters on earth of this assurance from God. Not surprisingly then, Kyle has often been

remembered as a messenger of God on earth, adding to the ease with which he became sanctified. Furthermore, religiously founded charismatic communities are more likely to participate in a deeply embedded shared set of values and norms than other charismatic communities. More than other bonding factors, religion thus inspires crowd psychology inspiring a deeper attachment to the charismatic figure both pre- and post-mortem.

Group Management and Identity

Often hanging over a given group's dealings with communal loss, individual grief, and personal identity is a need to reassert who they are collectively. Malinowski and Hertz both reference the group's need to establish enhanced solidarity after death, but little is said about the group dynamics positioned behind this need. Furthermore, the structure of their arguments tends to place the group on a strict spectrum: first they are a stable group; but then they experience a crisis and encounter trouble with their communal identity; finally, through social processes they are stable again. Certainly, there is credence to this kind of spectrum. Bloch and Parry additionally see the relevance of and need for some kind of response in the realm of the social or the group, while refraining from seeing society itself as something to be repaired. Even with both perspectives accounted for however, there is more going on – just as we saw with the influence of charisma on the events at UBC. Indeed, two other aspects must be acknowledged.

First, the structure and influence of the group has a substantial impact on the larger event and experience. Second, group members always working; they are in consistent identity construction, reconstruction, and affirmation – regardless of any unique circumstance or crisis. The relationship that arises between individual and group processes makes this continuous work necessary, rather than any supposed stasis. Despite the ideas

expressed previously of Kyle's death throwing UBC into disequilibrium, ideas of group structure and management may suggest in accordance with Bloch and Parry or Rosaldo that there was never any true 'equilibrium,' but instead that the crisis of losing and grieving Kyle imposed a new layer to the group identity and consistent transformation between states.

The structural identity of UBC must therefore be taken into account when considering the rite of passage presented by Kyle's death. "Here we come to [the] insight that the shared experience of society structures the internal consciousness of the private person to match that of the collectivity" (Douglas 1970:182). Such an acknowledgment casts further light on the power of collective actions, such as the recognition of charismatic leadership, within groups. How and why the collectivity exerts influence on the individual is dependent on the type of grouping cultivated by the community. Mary Douglas, in her 1970 book *Natural Symbols*, conceives of a typology of group structures and identities that allows us to see more clearly a group's organization and the possibility for effects on a community during crisis. The typology is conceived as having four divisions based on two dimensions: group and grid. These dimensions revolve around the relationship between "order" and "pressure" within the social context (Douglas 1970:81).

"Group" refers more to the aspect of pressure than of order because it is primarily oriented around community boundaries. Groups offer restrictions around the collective, identifying who is in and who is not. Thus, the group dimension is essentially representative of the uniting ties amongst individuals. Groupings can be weak or strong. Grid, on the other hand, looks at differentiations within a community rather than between a community and the other. It is "the scope and coherent articulation of a system of

classification as one social dimension in which any individual must find himself' (Douglas 1970:82). This internal structure or organization thus points to the level of differentiation and individuality between specific members. Grid answers questions of hierarchy and social roles. It too can be weak or strong.

The two dimensions of group and grid exist on a plane with each other where four combinations are possible: strong group/strong grid, strong group/weak grid, weak group/strong grid, and weak group/weak grid (Douglas 1970:84). Each of these combinations relates to a certain kind of social organization. UBC, given the data collected from informants and other primary sources, is a strong group/weak grid community. Despite lacking rigid structures, organizations, or hierarchical divisions of roles, UBC and people's identification with it was – and is – incredibly strong. A sense of difference, originality, and pride extended through the community of UBC in regards to group identity and positionality within the larger church context. These traits are characteristic of the enclave type within Douglas's spectrums. Enclaves are typically only sustainable as small groups (Douglas 1970), making the categorization of UBC into this type possible. People in these communities are held together by common values, a sense of equality, and idyllic yet fragile voluntary organizations and membership.

Because strict structures are not popular in the strong group/weak grid categorization, these types of communities are usually associated with a largely egalitarian base except for a decided upon cultural hero – a point clearly connected with the earlier discussion on charisma (Douglas 1970). Charismatic leadership is effective in small groups because it provides an orientation point for the group's identity in place of rigid structures. The linkage between this community type and charismatic leaders is of the utmost

importance because it points to larger patterns of communal organization at UBC. The symbolic system of a collective, here the strong group/weak grid, informs how groups maintain cohesion through events and how individuals perceive their world. Because UBC was a small-group enclave, Kyle's death was particularly salient in the context of their worldview

In... group without grid, we would expect to find the body an object of anxiety; fear of poisoning and debilitation would be dominant and ritual officiants much concerned with therapy, physical and social... [This] type exerts its own constraints on the perceptions and thus on the choices of individuals; each symbolic system has its own pre-coded stimuli and responses (Douglas 1970:193).

When Douglas says "the body," she actually references what she later calls "the two bodies" (1970:93). One body is the physical body – usually of the leader – which even in its physical nature is highly symbolic of the second body: society itself. The relations between these bodies may be tenuous or strong depending on the situation of the group at a certain time. Thus the body of the leader is meant to be valued and protected.

Understanding the "body" thus as an anxious category within the social organization of UBC, the importance of their group typology is evident: the death of Kyle and the community's subsequent liminality threatened their strong group boundaries and called into question the physical body which had served as leader and symbol for the collective social body. In sum, Kyle's death is the very worst that could have happened to a group of this kind.

It is interesting to consider Douglas's ideas of societal organization types in tandem with Bruno Latour's notions of the social (2005). Douglas considers society to be a classifiable thing, much like Malinowski and Hertz do. It is this conception that allows her to categorize and understand various groups. Latour, on the other hand, leaves behind any

notions of society as a thing or specific organization, instead suggesting that there is only the realm or network of the “social” in which individual and group agents create meaning for themselves. Though this may seem contradictory, these ideas can be used together to understand various aspects of UBC’s identity and experience. Latour developed actor-network theory as an explanation of social interactions, both in response to and as an extension of this idea of “the social.” In this framework, both people and even non-human objects are actors in an exchange network that lends meaning to objectively meaningless words and concepts. For Latour and other proponents of ANT, “infra-language” is “strictly meaningless” except within a determined “frame of reference” (2005:30). Much could be said for the overarching ANT model and its various aspects, but for the purposes of my theoretical model it is important to study primarily the feature of group-work.

Group work is one of the most salient features of our lives given nearly every actor’s experience of “being simultaneously seized by several possible and contradictory calls for regroupings” (2005:28). These calls represent the starting point for social theory in Latour’s mind, inspiring the analysis of basic societal “ingredients.” However, just as the infra-language of ANT is essentially meaningless, these calls for groupings and regroupings are similarly meaningless without the group-work of social actors. The word “group,” whatever one takes it to imply or determine, is “so empty that it sets neither the size nor the content” (2005:29). This means that groups themselves are not stable, independent things, but rather are social products of the constant forming and dismantling that occurs in network behaviors between actors. This is a substantial step away from traditional structural functionalism given the clear acceptance and embracing of change and actor agency. It takes modern theory one step further, however, by showing that

society – or even the more recently accepted idea of “the social” – is not a “real,” objective, or self-determining entity.

The actor-network is fluid and endowed with meaning only as its participants see fit. The work that is ever present in social networks and aggregates creates various frames of reference and generates actors’ conceptions of the social. This generation justifies the very existence of any given aggregate and its determined meaning and social contribution. The same goes for the group as Latour conceives it:

These are constantly at work, justifying the group’s existence, invoking rules and precedents and, as we shall see, measuring up one definition against all others. Groups are not silent things, but rather the provisional product of a constant uproar made by the millions of contradictory voices about what is a group and who pertains to what (2005:31).

This constant uproar described by Latour is proof of the assertion that groups do not – and indeed cannot – exist by themselves. Furthermore, they can hardly exist at all without continuous group work. Instead, actors absorb every relevant experience and use these to define group characteristics and dictate group behaviors. While specific definitions are often difficult to fully develop, participants in group work must still aim to create “boundaries [that] are marked, delineated, and rendered fixed and durable” (2005:33). Whether these group boundaries are truly fixed is not so much the goal as simply the appearance that they are so.

Group members, in particular group leaders and “spokespersons,” appeal to a variety of factors in network interactions that substantiate boundaries’ claims to legitimacy and durability. According to Latour, these include tradition and law, strategic essentialism, folk tradition, ideas of “blood and soil,” and custom. Perhaps most interesting about these claims, however, is not the appeal process itself, but the extent to which any of these traits

really say anything substantial about the group. Latour finds that group work is usually not a manifestation of what a group is so much as what it is not. “For every group to be defined, a list of *anti-groups* is set up as well” (2005:32). Anti-groups place every group and its members in a social context that is easier to define than the group itself. Thus, we could extend the idea that groups are meaningless without the work of the actors and their frame of reference to include the tenet that groups are meaningless without their anti-groups. In the midst of the crisis of grieving Kyle, one of UBC’s primary points of management was to draw strict separations between their own experience and the experience of others. Furthermore, their custom, law, folk tradition, et cetera describe the fuller picture only in comparison to another. One’s traditions are desirable because they are not the traditions of the other. Interestingly, UBC created Kyle as a tradition and a symbol throughout its rite of passage.

The relationship between claims to legitimate boundaries and anti-groups points to another important aspect of Latour’s theory – one that is even more significant in the context of UBC. Effort and agency are always necessary. Without effort, without the constant making and reworking of group dynamics, there can be no group bond. UBC may be able to be categorized as a strong group/weak grid community, but it cannot maintain this position without consistent work. Groups are performative entities and must continue as such in order to continue at all. Because there is no “reservoir of social forces” in the ANT model, actors can only participate in the movement that is the social (2005: 35). In times of crisis, the movement or “occasional spark” that is “the social” may seem utterly lost, placing the façade of group durability under direct attack (2005: 36). In these moments, group spokespersons must inspire additional group work to reaffirm traditions

and boundaries. This work may manifest as a defense against potential consequences of the crisis, or alternatively as an absorption of the crisis into the group's foundational features. Members of UBC as a group found themselves in such a crisis after the death of Kyle. Latour's ideas of group formation and definition prove significant in explaining this ongoing production of identity and the "social" at UBC, while also showcasing the relevance of previously discussed phenomena such as death and charisma to the life of the group.

Part of this group work involves cultivating the shared values and worldview of the group. Both Douglas and Latour point to this notion: Latour when he mentions the development of laws, customs, and folk traditions, and Douglas when she discusses the importance of symbolic structures to the way that individuals see themselves within groups and groups see themselves within society.¹² These structures may appear stable or unstable depending on the association, but either way they are often used to delineate between notions of us and them. A stable ethnoscape is reminiscent of Douglas's strong group; both help individuals to see the boundaries of their associations and conceptualize themselves accordingly. At UBC, the bounds of their structural experience were essential when closing boundaries to the outside world in order to recuperate from the loss of Kyle.

¹² We can go further with this analysis by turning to Arjun Appadurai, who conceives of a system of global cultural economy in which various "-scapes" created by one's particular group influence what and how one can understand events and patterns. He uses "terms with the common suffix scape to indicate first of all that these are not objectively given relations which look the same from every angle of vision, but rather that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected very much by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actors... even intimate face-to-face groups, such as villages, neighborhoods and families... these landscapes are eventually navigated by agents who both experience and constitute larger formations (Appadurai 1990:296). These various scapes serve to help an individual or a collective interpret, and even at times create, their surroundings. Appadurai likens his scapes to Benedict Anderson's imagined communities (1983) – a topic which needs less in-depth study for this research, but whose relevance does not go unnoticed.

Additionally, there was a sense that this trial could not properly be endured by outsiders – a fact that fits in well with ideas of neophytes in liminality.

Together, these ideas of group structure and management place the events of Kyle's death and reintegration into a more inclusive context of identity creation and positioning. These theories are essential for understanding how UBC as a group operated. While many individual actors had some highly unique experiences with the loss of Kyle, there was a striking consistency amongst members on certain key points of the experience. Certainly then, the collective must have some greater impact on the individuals and on the structural or symbolic system. By inserting this final piece into the model, we now have a much clearer image of the rite of passage at UBC. It does not suffice to speak only of one transformation. Indeed, we must acknowledge the presence of three distinct planes of experience and fit the ultimate sanctification of Kyle into these relationships and perspectives. Through this combination of analysis, we are able to gain the most comprehensive explanation possible of the loss, bereavement, and reintegration regarding Kyle Lake.

Losing Kyle: Social Separation and the Emotion of Collective Memory

I now return to the events described at the onset of this discussion. The death of Kyle Lake represents not only a noteworthy and shocking event, but also a pivotal moment of shared experience in the lives of UBC, Waco, and the Emergent Church. The term “event” carries with it substantial analytical weight. When I use it to discuss Kyle’s death, it is important to establish that I do not mean only the simple alignment of natural forces causing his life to cease. Rather, I mean event in its fullest form – the alignment of not only these natural forces, but of social ones as well. Any social event requires a deeper look than any event in the natural world because its causes and effects do not always fall along expected or even clearly intelligible lines. When an event is communally shared and defined, the ambiguity grows once again. “To the organic event is added a complex mass of beliefs, emotions, and activities which give it its distinct character... it is the object of a collective representation” (Hertz 1960:197). In order to understand this event, I will move through a number of analytical steps that help construct a critical reflection on losing Kyle.

I will first introduce and identify themes that appear in the loss of Kyle for UBC. These themes will guide the rest of the chapter. They serve as primary points of analysis, as well as important links to the theory of a social breach, crisis, or loss in a rite of passage. Each of these themes is illuminated well by various theorists brought up previously. Additionally, the informants I selected for inclusion in this section were chosen because of their orientation to or relationship with such themes. After mentioning these points of analysis, I will introduce these informants in order to give context to their statements and experience. Having provided the necessary background information, I will then turn to members’ own recollections of the event as a way to express the totality of the loss. These

recollections are integrated into the structure of the four themes and placed in relation to the relevant theoretical explanation.

Any death event, but particularly Kyle's, brings up complications of its own, apart from the preliminary social or communal aspects of the experience. There is a problem – for the individual, for those deeply affected, and for the society at large – held within a death that must be accounted for and mediated within the sphere of shared experience. The death of Kyle was more than merely the extermination of his life. It includes both the experience and performative responses of the entire community, which “break the normal course of life and shake the moral foundations of society” (Malinowski 1940:34). The event is considered along with its repercussions and experiential characteristics in order to better understand in the context of the community what Rosaldo (2014:101) calls an utterly “violent interruption.” The notion of losing Kyle as an interruption should remind us of the separation or rupture described in the rite of passage model.

Kyle's death, taken as an event of this kind, presents us with a variety of potential observations and themes. I have identified four themes evident in the event of Kyle's death¹³. The first, and I believe the appropriate starting point, is an overarching sense of imbalance, abruptness, and a disconcerting lack of logic. This idea can be further divided into two observations. First, the events of Kyle's death were bizarre; second, there exists a disturbing contradiction in the idea that someone so young, vibrant, and completely “full of life” could have their existence “ripped from them” in such a way as to appear “shockingly lifeless” within a second (Angeleri 2015). Recognition of the oddity of this event quickly

¹³ When I speak to Kyle's death as event it is important to conceptualize it as more than just the second of his final breath. Perhaps the more appropriate term is *dying* rather than *death* in order to shed light on the very processual face of this experience. Kyle's dying is the combination of the observable events on that Sunday morning, the trip to the hospital, and the eventual dissemination of the news that caused Kyle to die in the minds and conceptual schemas of all UBC members.

spread throughout the community and had the power of impacting the early reactions of affected individuals. I mention this aspect of losing Kyle first because the interviews led me to assert that this was the most salient part of the experience.

This leads to my second identified aspect of this death – that of intense emotional responses and the inevitable questions stemming from them. In the vein of Rosaldo, the people of UBC dealt with intense emotions immediately following Kyle’s death. The loss of him as a friend, a pastor, and a leader shook many people to their core and inspired extreme responses. The emotional force of his death was linked to a time of doubt and questioning for many of the community members. These questions primarily dealt with faith-based doubts, but also extended into more existential dilemmas at times.

The next theme or characteristic of Kyle’s death that should be mentioned is an impressive degree of collective memory associated with the event. The salience of the emotional responses and psychological effects contributed to a powerful increase in communal sharing and discussion. Members of the community remember Kyle’s death with striking clarity and consistency. The collective memory sprouting from this experience equates both an important identity marker for the group as a whole as well as an important turning point in the history of the church.

Having recognized the power and lasting memory of this communal experience, the leaders of the church were left with a single important question: “What now?” Acknowledgement of this question and its import represents the final aspect of losing Kyle. In the wake of this tragedy, it seemed that there were two options for the church: either cease to exist as a result of such a foundational upset or find a way to move forward in crisis. This question hung over the loss of Kyle and heavily influenced the actions to

come. I conceptualize this as the last theme because it directly plays into the consequences and actual bereavement within the community, which I will analyze later as a liminal period. This question marks both the end of the actual process of losing Kyle and the beginning of the processes of liminal grieving and efforts towards eventual reintegration.

In order to construct the arguments for and analyses of these themes, I employ the literature from previous chapters as well as first-hand accounts from various UBC members. These accounts provide both context of the event and foundations for my argument. In doing so, I have carefully selected those community members whose interviews seem the most relevant to the thematic structure. Although there will be some small excerpts from a variety of interviews, the bulk of the quotations will come from a few primary sources. So as not to disrupt the flow of argumentation in later writing, I will take the time to introduce them all here.

Certainly figures are relevant because of their close personal ties to Kyle himself. Jen Lake is the widow of Kyle Lake. She and Kyle were married in 1998 and had three children together before he passed away in October 2005. She was in the crowd that Sunday morning and was the first to be brought to the hospital. Her account is representative of the experience of those closest to Kyle and the subsequent tragedy. In the time immediately following the event, much of the community's focus was on reaching out to Jen in some way. She stayed in the UBC community until she remarried and relocated to California.

Craig Nash was a member of UBC and one of Kyle's closest friends. He was both at UBC for the actual event as well as a central reference point for many other community members. After Kyle's death, he went on to be one of the community pastors at UBC for

some time before leaving the church in 2014. Nash documented his experience and later process fully through a series of blogs and reflections (2006). Jeff Walter, along with his wife Teri, has had a consistent and important presence at the church. He first moved to the church because his son, Logan, had begun attending as one of the worship leaders and Kyle's mentees. As one of the few post-collegiate members of the church, Walter quickly fell into a position of leadership and served as a resource for many other leaders in the church.

Pivotal for understanding the process of losing Kyle are those people who were part of or somehow linked to the leadership of the church. Ben Dudley was the community pastor at the time of Kyle's passing. He was therefore one piece of the primary tri-partite leadership structure at UBC, which had also consisted of Kyle, teaching pastor, and David Crowder, worship pastor and church founder. Throughout the time of losing and grieving Kyle, Dudley played an important leadership role for the entire church community. Blair Browning was present at the church's beginnings and remained a leader at UBC for many years. He held a variety of positions on the leadership team, staff, and the financial team. Close with Kyle through the church and a couples' supper club, he was both heavily affected by the loss as well as influential in leading the church through it. Immediately following Kyle's death, Browning served as a media spokesperson and spearheaded community outreach and interactions. Josh Carney, a seminary student at the time, was a friend of Kyle and member of the church's leadership team. His insights into the emotions felt at the church proved profound. Two years after Kyle's death, Carney was made the official teaching pastor and continues in this role today. Gideon Tsang, pastor of his own church in Austin, Texas, served as the interim teaching pastor in the wake of Kyle's death.

Other individuals provided important insights into losing Kyle, though they were not as closely associated with the central leadership and staff structure. These include Matt Singleton, who has since founded his own church inspired by many of the tenets of community at UBC, and was a young member of what some might have called the “core group” at UBC. This group was a select cluster of people who stuck around despite the large fluctuation in membership usually seen at the church. Singleton took on more responsibility after the loss of Kyle by organizing community events and encouraging constructive dialogues. Shea Reyenga was a Baylor student at the time of the death. He had gotten to know Kyle through church and a soccer group and was active in the daily life of UBC. Matt Bates, though an off and on attendee for some time, became more active in UBC and grew close with Kyle through this as well as a mentor-mentee program set up by a religion class at Baylor. As the brother-in-law of Dudley, Bates often found himself privy to the emotions and experiences of the core group at the church. Paola Angeleri and Anthony Angeleri (though not married at the time of Kyle’s death) were both members of the UBC community. As college students at the time, they serve as a representation of the largest proportion of the church. I use their accounts as an indication of the salience and continuity of the narrative to individuals who might have been more appropriately dubbed young or rising leaders.

The first theme of strangeness and illogical abruptness was undoubtedly mentioned most by the above informants when discussing the loss of Kyle. “Strange,” “unreal,” and “crazy” were the most used words when recounting the event, and extensive evidence from these informants exists on the topic. It was this sense of strangeness that jarred the community and sent them into the first stage of the rite of passage. This aspect is best

explained by a combination of theory on losing a leader in general, Kyle's individual presence specifically, and group identity. Malinowski and Hertz have clear relevance to the disconcerting assault resulting from the loss of the leader. All of these ideas represent the model's beginnings with dislocation from a former state. These points will be further mentioned next to extensive material from UBC members. However, I also must point out an additional fact affecting other this theme. All of the interviews point to the very public nature of the event. Present throughout the experience of losing Kyle, particularly in the very beginning, was a sense that UBC was being watched. This perhaps added to the peculiarity and absurdity that already saturated the experience. Thus, it is here that we must truly begin.

On the morning of October 30, 2005, the crowd at UBC had easily surged over 800 people. It was Homecoming weekend at Baylor University, and thus many visitors, alumni and parents had been drawn to the popular college church. The sanctuary was full; the foyer and hallways were full; every Sunday school room equipped with a TV had been set up to broadcast video footage of the central stage. The community of UBC, old and young, first-time visitors and long-time mainstays, looked on as an up-and-coming, deeply loved, and charismatic leader expelled his last breath.

It seems that in an "oddly transcendent" moment, Kyle's body became the grounding for an electric charge set in motion in the water, merely looking for its target (Carney 2015). It was a wholly unexpected and appalling thing to witness. Upon being electrocuted, Kyle fell into the water, bringing people around him to action, while others froze. "I was in the front row. He reached to tap the microphone and it shocked him back. I tried to go over there, but no one would let me... I still to this day wish they had" (Lake

2015). Nathan Jennings, the drummer of the backup band playing that day ripped the microphone cord from the wall before the guitarist, who happened to be Jeff Walter's son, was able to join him and pull Kyle out of the water.

Logan was diving over the baptism wall trying to get to Kyle who had asked for help. I won't ever be able to forget learning what my son said to my wife on the way to the hospital: 'I know he's gone. I felt him die in my arms.' I knew what he meant. There's this extra exhale that leaves the body on their final expiration. It's something that only happens on their last time (Walter 2015).

In the "surreal" moments of his dying, however, not everyone shared, or could even conceptualize, this sentiment (Peel 2015). Anthony Angeleri administered CPR and yelled for 911 to be called before a doctor in the church congregation that morning took over. People prayed in groups in the church; a visiting mother called for members to join hands. Most assumed that this would be a passing crisis. "I just kept thinking it was going to be okay" (Lake 2015).

From the time of pulling him out of the water until the ambulance arrived, the scene was "very surreal. I remember Ben getting on stage and directing people to exit through the back of the church, but then I was escorted to the office out of sight of everything happening. I don't think I was really processing anything" (Lake 2015). Though many members of the church, still seemed to think the events of the morning would resolve themselves, others in the crowd felt their fears grow. EMTs eventually made it through the crowd and placed Kyle in an ambulance. He was taken to the hospital where, despite their greatest efforts, he was soon pronounced dead. Jen was taken in to see him: "I was trying to be completely rational at the time... It was strange, all so weird, like I was looking at a shell of a person. It wasn't even him" (Lake 2015). By the time of the announcement, a crowd had gathered anticipating news and anxious to support the family.

I got there and they said ‘He’s gone...’ It was a moment where you just get weak in the knees at the news. You just have to sit down; I sat down next to Ben Dudley and we just cried like babies. I mean we just laid down in the grass and just cried, loud crying (Walter 2015).

People left the hospital in what can best be described as a haze. For most, it took days for the reality of his death to sink in, especially those that were more distanced. “I wasn’t in the room at the time. I didn’t have ‘the PTSD’ of it. And I think that helped in the long run, but, immediately after, it all just seemed impossible” (Nash 2015).

This seeming impossibility is what is arguably remembered most about the early periods following Kyle’s death. “The whole day felt out of body. I went to sleep and hoped I would wake up and it all would have been a bad dream. But then you do, and it wasn’t” (Lake 2015). The dreamscape of Kyle and the power of the community’s loss are evident in the above accounts. From the publicity and unique circumstances to the disarray and pain, the described events aligned perfectly to create an unbelievable story. Knowing these details, it is not difficult to understand why it might have felt like a dream to so many involved as it abruptly ushered them into a new status.

The foregoing literature discussions help us understand why the unexpected move in social states was so jolting. Three primary explanations exist. First, the loss of any leader is completely disruptive. On some level the loss of any charismatic leader is damaging to a community’s psyche. Given Malinowski and Hertz’s ideas about the loss of a social leader, we should not be surprised by the apparent hopelessness of attempts at rationalizing Kyle’s death. The community of UBC “impart[ed] its own character of permanence to the individuals who compose[d] it: because it feels itself immortal and wants to be so, it cannot normally believe that its members, above all those in whom it incarnates itself and with whom it identifies itself, should be fated to die” (Hertz

1960:208). Kyle's passing thus destabilized the entire group, threatening the personal identities of countless individuals and the group identity of UBC with its effect.

Considering the level of Kyle's connection to his congregation, as well as his use as a springboard for people's own identities, his death "set in motion... the deep forces of the instinct of self-preservation, threaten[ing] the very cohesion and solidarity of the group" (Malinowski 1940:35). These had been characteristics that seemed immutable to the community and to have them threatened increased again the sentiment that there was something very wrong and unfathomable contained in the fact of Kyle's death.

Certainly, another primary reason for the consensus that Kyle's death was unequivocally bizarre was his unique character. He was a social member so valued as to be "one who do[es] not seem to deserve such heavy sacrifice" (Hertz 1960:198). Kyle was not just the leader of the community, but also a well-loved and vivacious leader – one who "really identified with his congregation and made you glad to be around him" (Reyenga 2015).

Kyle had a way of making everyone feel like they were the most important person in the room. People wanted to be with him and they wanted to be like him. It was like each person reflected a bit of themselves onto Kyle, and with him gone, the bits of ourselves were too (Nash 2015).

His democratic, luminous charisma contributed to the disconcerting and contradictory nature of Kyle's death. To think that a figure who seemed personally connected to hundreds of people could be ripped out of the world in such a way was bizarrely unexpected for most, unbearable for some. "Kyle especially, he had seemed so vibrant, almost immortal even" (Carney 2015). This idea is intricately linked to the literature on charisma. Kyle's vibrancy was "considered extraordinary and endowed [him] with... specifically exceptional powers" (Weber 1914:324). Because he was so extraordinary, an

aura existed around him that made him influential beyond his actual social reach. It seemed to many that his charisma should not or could not die, and so to watch his physical life end was an experience impossible to reasonably conceptualize. Looking at Lindholm's ideas on religious charisma, we see that this general charismatic trend was only furthered by Kyle's association with spirituality and God.

We may further understand the sense of strangeness in the event of losing Kyle by placing the event itself in social context – or perhaps more appropriately, the lack thereof. Certain beliefs and community structures inherently impact the ways in which an event is categorized. Part of the purpose of group work and boundary definition is to determine what the group is and what the group is not, what it perceives as normal, and what it is prepared to handle as a collective. UBC determined itself as a group intricately wrapped up with the identity of its own leader. Kyle was not only the charismatic leader, but also the very symbol of the community itself – a representation of the “intimate relationship which exists between the human body and human society” (Dillistone 1974:548). Because the ‘society’ of UBC defined itself in the body of Kyle, it was not prepared to handle his demise, which was parallel to the disintegration of group structures and ideologies (Douglas 1970). Because of UBC's position within the group-grid typology, the community was in fact least equipped to deal with the death of Kyle of all possible crises. This was the worst cosmic offense to a group structured in this way.

In response to the unnerving circumstances of Kyle's death and the community's initial reckoning with a sense of cosmic imbalance and pain, intense emotions reverberated through the members of UBC. Whereas the first recognition of the odd circumstances of his death, led members to ask “Why Kyle?” the questions and experiences spurred by the

intense emotions of his loss took on a more existential face. These included questions that fundamentally challenged the basis for the church community, such as: is God still “good,” how does one reconcile these emotions with faith, and where does such an event fit into a Christian notion of spiritual order (Carney 2015)? Accompanying these questions, and characterizing the force of many people’s emotions, was an overwhelming feeling of anger.

It is this anger and the subsequent questions that I wish to further investigate as the second primary experience of losing Kyle. Where the three ideas discussed above could clearly offer rationale for the feelings of shock and abnormality within the group, they fall short in providing a deeper understanding of the community’s full range of emotions at this time. Instead, this aspect of losing Kyle requires a turn to the theoretical orientation of Rosaldo. The early unsettling feelings of realization within the community were certainly important moving forward, but it is the anger and passionate, questioning emotions that carry the true “force” in future events and the structuring of the grief to come (Rosaldo 1989:3).

For the community at UBC, losing Kyle was an all encompassing and “cosmically strange” experience that left the community in “disarray... We were just completely confused and lost in the emotional pain immediately after losing him. There were a lot of questions” (Reyenga 2015). These questions stemmed from a greater sense of personal loss more than any other aspect of the tragedy. Each person interviewed found himself or herself battling against their own anger and doubt. Within the anger and the doubt manifested in the initial onset of crisis is the start of the individual transformation to come through UBC’s ultimate rite of passage.

According to Rosaldo, the most powerful force of death is its emotional force that inspires us to look at what else is going on in the minds and psyches of individual members of society rather than at the “visibly bounded arenas where one can observe formal and repetitive events, such as ceremonies, rituals, and games” (1989:12). What then was an example of this psyche? “I think for me part of realizing he was gone was this very real anger and disappointment that my journey with him had been cut off” (Bates 2015). The shock of Kyle’s death quickly dissolved into this kind of anger over the idea that God, or the universe, or mere circumstance, had interfered in the trajectory of budding relationships. Not only had Kyle’s life been unnecessarily cut short, but people’s own lives through and with Kyle were also terminated. This seemed another loss in itself. By understanding the process of losing Kyle in the context of these individual relationships, the need for investigating Rosaldo’s cultural force of individual emotion rather than just communal ritual is made even clearer. “Everyone was almost ferociously trying to protect their own relationship with him and that looked different for different people” (Nash 2015).

The intensity and individuality of these emotions led to the chaos described by Rosaldo. “People couldn’t really figure themselves out in the wake of it. Kyle had been such a figure to so many people, not just the group as a whole. There was a lot of difficulty, a lot of sensitivity. Identities I think came into question” (Nash 2015). Various people’s anger clashed with that of other church members, while also clashing with the community and its values as a whole. Thus, a clear example of the tension between the individual and the community, which became characteristic in many ways of this experience, emerges within this aspect of losing Kyle. While each person had to deal with

the individual emotion of coming to terms with Kyle's loss, the community as a grouping and an entity had to respond to the distress disseminating through its members. "People were really struggling, but I wanted to somehow keep us from going to pieces" (Dudley 2015). Dudley's assessment of the situation is consistent with Hertz's analyses of a community robbed of a pivotal and influential individual.

What is truly fascinating is that even with these individual outbursts and pains, the shared experience of Kyle's loss was enough to spark a deep sense of collective memory – the third important aspect of losing Kyle. Collective memory will be best explained by theories of group management in order to understand how shared experiences are relived and reaffirmed over time. This notion rightly follows the recognition of anger, emotion, and doubt because it is this collective memory that helped to alleviate some of those tensions rising in the community. As everyone tried to protect themselves, recognize the loss in their own terms, and even clash over some points, many members of the church community also worked to simultaneously characterize the experience in shared terms. "There had obviously been total chaos, but leaders sort of gave instructions and we found a way to gather" (Singleton 2015). This gathering happened through a conscious effort to understand the event of Kyle's death within the setting of the UBC community.

The active combining and merging of stories strengthened the sense that a shared experience had truly occurred. Without this kind of effort, it is likely that members could have closed off from each other and become only involved with their individual emotions, as described above. However, because spaces were opened up to legitimize each person's feelings, a sense of one story and one thought began to emerge. "This need to be with others really grew in that first week – to be with someone else who had seen it, like 'oh

you were there, you get it” (Angeleri 2015). Young leaders in the church, such as Matt Singleton and Harris Bechtol, encouraged this kind of assembly, thereby acting in many ways as stewards of the UBC community’s collective memory. “We constantly held these impromptu gatherings and encouraged people to live in togetherness. I didn’t really know what I was doing but I knew people needed to come together, not break apart” (Singleton 2015). Even in the chaos of each person’s process to understanding, the tension with and pull towards community at the church held strong. A strong, consistent, and single story grew out of the choice by many members to prevent being alone in the midst of crisis. The loss of Kyle is now told and retold with striking consistency.

Latour’s notions of group work explain this consistency even in the midst of intense crisis. Essentially, the gathering of people at UBC to tell their stories was an evidence of “re-grouping” in response to crisis and of the group work necessitated therein. Group work is one of the most salient features of our lives given nearly every actor’s experience of “being simultaneously seized by several possible and contradictory calls for regroupings” (Latour 2005:28). The potential regroupings in response to losing Kyle were likely endless, with only some ending positively for the future structure of UBC. Group work in the rites of passage model is also linked to Bloch and Parry’s notion of death throwing responsibility on members to create their group ritually in the face of crisis. In order to create the group in the first phase, work focused primarily on collective recognition of tragedy and altered status. Initially therefore, group work was aimed at coming to terms with the fact of Kyle’s loss not yet with the terms of reintegration.

It was only by coming together in this form of group work that UBC and perhaps its individual members as well were able to survive. Because groups themselves are not

stable, independent things, but rather are social products of the constant work, elements to ground the community in a shared identity must be created. Therefore, the creation of a collective memory of losing Kyle at UBC dictated a significant boundary in the group identity. Ultimately, it was necessary for members to consolidate their experiences in this way. Apart from other aspects of individual identity, each member took a portion of his or her self-identity from their association with Kyle and with UBC. Given the loss of Kyle, a new association was drawn through the group's work. The loss of Kyle became a specific piece of history and tradition for every person present at UBC on that fateful morning and after.

Confirming this push towards a communally shared narrative as an important facet of losing Kyle helps us to understand the dynamics of the community at the time and the trajectory of the church even today. This unified group memory solidifies Kyle's loss as an event in the life of the church and the individuals. By endowing the story of Kyle's death with group significance, the UBC community in 2005 ensured that a collective memory would live on long past the timeline of the actual event had expired. Never was this more evident than during my interviews; even ten years later, the recollections of Kyle's death were strikingly consistent.

Collective memory and Latour's group work make sense within a more complete image of the rites of passage that UBC began to undergo after losing Kyle. Breaches against society become ritualized and standardized during the liminal period in order for the society and the individual to react against them. This cannot occur unless a narrative of the loss or crisis is disseminated through the group as some specific form of narrative. The integration of this into the overall model brings us to the fourth and final aspect of losing

Kyle. The final aspect of the experience was perhaps the greatest question of all: “what now?” Where does the loss of a leader leave a community? What does a group – and the individuals in it – do? How do we grieve? “We were suspicious of easy answers so there wasn’t a lot of script provided for what we should do and how we should handle it” (Carney 2015). The event itself was a nearly unanswerable thing; clear responses to it seemed impossible. Losing Kyle thus brought with it looming fears about the future – a future in which Kyle would have to be accepted as completely gone (at least from the physical realm). “The whole event was shrouded in ambiguity... We needed to understand where we were but we couldn’t” (Browning 2015).

This characteristic is not so much explained by extensive theoretical application as it is by the presence of the model itself. The final aspect of losing Kyle is thus the logical response and stepping stone towards the liminal period and reintegration within the rite of passage. The questions listed above are those questions that became the primary grappling points within the extensive grief experience. Additionally, the ambiguity mentioned by Browning was recognized and extended to the next stage – a fact representative of the transitions from breach to liminality. This stems from a need to understand where the loss of Kyle left the community. Such a need influenced early discussions about the future path of the church and its members. Many members of the community voiced that determining how to handle and accept the loss of their leader seemed incredibly daunting. “There was no script for the community to walk through and that made it very hard and unique. I think most people just tried to figure out day by day how to keep the community together” (Tsang 2015). Though no one wanted to see the demise of UBC, in the moments

immediately following Kyle's death it seemed to many individuals that the fate of the church had been sealed.

The changing factor was the agency of the people themselves. Though demise had seemed likely, the people themselves chose to act – an important step in moving towards the liminal second stage of the rites of passage model. “Ultimately we wanted to overcome in this experience. We needed to resolve ourselves to be an affirmation of the legacy and life of Kyle and UBC, so we found ways to cope” (Browning 2015). Methods of coping immediately manifested through statements to the larger community of Waco, support from fellow church organizations, and a temporary departure from the physical building that had played host to Kyle's expiration. “We may not have had a specific plan, but I knew that more than anything I wanted to find a way to lead us into the next chapter” (Dudley 2015). For UBC, the loss of Kyle brought up the “what now?” question, but his legacy helped to answer it: press on. It was with their collective mind on this agenda that the community began to truly open up spaces for grieving, healing, and eventual reintegration.

Grieving Kyle: An Experience in Collective Liminality

Having reconciled themselves to the fact of his death, the community at UBC was tasked with finding and supporting various manifestations of individual and shared bereavement. Using Turner's model as our lens, the UBC community had moved squarely into the liminal period. The group's status as a continuing church was still unclear but quite obviously in transition, while the character of Kyle and his place within the congregation were also necessarily taking on a different face. The process of actively grieving the loss of their leader created a "necessarily ambiguous" experience on three planes (Turner 1969:359). The first plane of course was that of individual experience, spoken of in all the interviews I conducted. The second plane was the communal experience, the conglomeration of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors into a shared sphere where the largest portion of liminal rites played out within UBC's collective worldview. The third was Kyle himself. His new place within the group was yet to be determined, and the community was still trying to standardize how they would approach the identity and legacy left behind after the death of an extremely charismatic leader. These three planes exist both in tension and cohesion at various points throughout the grief experience, given its unique position as both a diverse, individual process and a social activity.

In describing their grief experiences, the members of UBC were quite detailed and incredibly eloquent. Because of these interviews as well as cultural artifacts of grief created at the time, we have the impressive ability to combine in-the-moment thoughts with those reflections bolstered by the gift of hindsight. The picture that emerges is a multifaceted, distinctive expression of the relationships between individual and community experience; an illustration of the exemplary power of death and grief to be social; and a

testament to the legacy of the man being mourned by a movement. What emerges is a community's interpretation of their leader's words from the grave: "If you crash, then crash well... If you've recently experienced loss, then *grieve*. And grieve well" (Lake 2005).

In order to sketch the parameters of this experience, this chapter will relay the tenets of grief referenced most by interviewees and members of UBC. These include a variety of emotions, instances, and efforts. There are necessarily distinctive interpretations set against the larger picture of an emerging pattern. I will attempt to briefly communicate what it meant to live in the community of UBC at this time and grieve well. Having garnered at least a preliminary understanding of this experience, I will return to the literature. There exists a plethora of perspectives that might reasonably apply to grieving Kyle, but the theorists outlined previously offer I see as the most important rhetoric for diving more deeply into the community's structures and practices. I will move chronologically through publications by Malinowski and Hertz, Bloch and Parry, Rosaldo, and Latour. In addition to this chronological orientation, a thematic movement also clearly emerges. By using each of these theories as a lens with which to view the social activity of grief at UBC, we begin to see elements which otherwise would remain invisible. Together, the combination of these elements creates a more dynamic understanding in our minds of the many facets of grief during the liminal phase at UBC, including the balance of individual to community experience and structure.

Before beginning too heavily with the data, I would like to introduce those speakers who weigh in for the upcoming analyses that have not yet been cited. This chapter will utilize the words of a variety of UBC members, community professionals, and group

leaders/spokespersons. Their testimonies will be scattered throughout the various theoretical sections. We will hear again from Matt Singleton, Gideon Tsang, Ben Dudley, Craig Nash, and Jen Lake, though more members will now be incorporated. Jordan Browning, the wife of Blair Browning, is a close friend of Jen Lake and a longtime member in the community, before changing churches for her children a few years ago. Robyn Panayoton, a widow herself, joined the UBC community shortly after the death of Kyle and was integrated into an active role in the process. Jana Parker, also a friend of the Lakes, is married to former David Crowder Band member Jack Parker and was very active within the core UBC community. She and her family continue to attend UBC today. Harris Bechtol was a mentee of Kyle's and was very active within the young leadership of the church. He is now married to Jen Lake. Shea Reyenga was a Baylor student and young leader at UBC at the time of Kyle's death. He eventually went to seminary, partly inspired by the legacy of Kyle.

Tracey Kelley was a prominent member of the core group at UBC. Close friends with both Kyle and Jen Lake and David Crowder and his wife, Toni, she had been a staple of the community since the church's beginnings. During the community's grieving process she attempted to provide various resources for community members. Although she has since left UBC, she sits on the board of the Kyle Lake Foundation. Kelley called in Helen Harris, a staff member at the Baylor School of Social Work, to provide grief resources to church volunteers. Genevieve Peel attended UBC for many years until her attendance gradually faded out in the years after Kyle's death. She identified, as many others did, with the mission of UBC and Kyle's ideology. Through her time at UBC, she became close with Kyle and many other pivotal members.

The members, past and present, of UBC represent living links to the decade-old events of Kyle's death and the subsequent communal bereavement. What they communicated to me in a series of conversations puts on display a strikingly powerful, individualistic and shared recollection of grieving within the church's walls. Throughout these conversations, a variety of expressions and ideas were used to describe the grief process of the UBC community. Each various element, however, was described with a substantial degree of consistency throughout interviewees and across time. What emerged is a multifaceted – though most likely still incomplete – estimation of the predominant emotions and experiences manifested in this charismatic community.

The most prominent piece of the liminal grief phase according to members of the community at the time was a striking degree of “togetherness” (Panayoton 2015). “Part of the grief process – at least for myself and my close friends – was a sense that we were all looking out for each other” (Dodd 2015). There was not a single contributor to this study who did not mention the encompassing need to find a haven for themselves within the confines of the larger group. “There was an onslaught of reactions and ripple effects and it was clear the only way we would survive was together” (Bechtol 2015). The process of bereavement quickly became defined by the quick lunches shared to prevent a bad day and the long evenings spent hammering out personal emotions amongst a horde of friends, confidantes, and fellow mourners. “Everybody gathered. I was always with some UBC group or another... From the beginning UBC had been a real community, not just a church product... we affirmed that together... I remember I think Dave saying, ‘Death doesn't win.’ And being around people with the same trauma made sure it didn't” (Singleton 2015). Recalling the camaraderie that emerges between neophytes during liminality as well

as Douglas's descriptions of strong group/weak grid communities, quotes of this kind are to be largely expected.

Secondary to this togetherness was an interesting relationship between explicit facilitation by group spokespersons and an overall organic quality to the process of bereavement within the community. "We really went into 'work to do' mode for the community after it all... but a lot of those communal structures also seemed to happen naturally" (Singleton 2015). Various members described specific events intended to open up spaces for active mourning. "That was such a time of struggling... actions taken helped to give us permission to be angry with God, then find a way to cope with that" (Dodd 2015). In addition, the presence of grief counselors and overarching community objectives of healing helped to reintegrate the community and define the members' grieving. "It was such a trying time... so I brought in Helen Harris, from the Baylor School of Social Work, to talk to people at the church, especially those that worked with the children's ministry" (Kelley 2015). Outside of these strictly structured events, however, the community found space to open up about its loss and its pain naturally and emotionally. "It was sort of beautiful the way... we could really balance the process with these unplanned moments of raw community" (Parker 2015). "Raw community" here is strikingly reminiscent of Turner's discussions of liminality and *communitas*.

Perhaps the most difficult part of grieving for UBC as described by interviewees was the necessary decision making required even in spite of the catastrophic events. "Institutional directives were sometimes unclear, but there were all of these frustrations and collective trends amongst individuals" (Nash 2015). Of course, these frustrations and decisions spanned a variety of topics from what to do with the church to how to approach

the topic of Kyle's death with the larger Waco community, as well as churches across the country. Should we alter the sanctuary? Should the structure of leadership at UBC change? How much assistance should be taken from other churches? How should negative responses be handled? Different members have mentioned all of these topics as pivotal to the bereavement process at UBC; indeed, some of these questions have even had to be revisited throughout the last decade.

However, most salient in this question set – and most telling of the charismatic draw Kyle held within the UBC community – was the ever-present question in the individual minds of members and the collective mind of the social group: what is the appropriate amount to speak of and reference Kyle? “There seemed to be a lot of disagreement about how much we should talk about him... I never wanted to push it out of the way” (Nash 2015). At the individual level, it seemed to many community members that every person was trying to maintain their own relationship with Kyle that could manage to transcend the grave. In order to do this, discussion of Kyle, his life, and his legacy was necessary. Many individuals referenced their own relational emotions in conversations about Kyle throughout the grief process. “I appreciated the stories, the reminders... I wanted to be able to honor him and our friendship... so I see the role of narrative in the whole process” (Reyenga 2015). Acknowledging the narrative consistently undoubtedly aided many individuals' personal struggles with bereavement and acceptance: “Even today I really love talking about Kyle. It's good to remember and heal” (Walter 2015).

At the institutional level, however, discussions were slightly more contained. Immediately following Kyle's death and the initiation of the bereavement process at the church, the pain of the narrative seemed capable of consuming the community. Grief for

the body of the church as a whole, rather than its unique pieces and sections, focused infinitely more on reaching a new norm and semblance of health. In order to streamline this focus, the subject of how much to talk about Kyle was repeatedly broached. “I always tried to remember that we weren’t at UBC to honor Kyle. It seemed unhealthy to let grieving be completely defined by bringing it up again and again in every context” (Dudley 2015). In order to move forward, various leaders within the church felt that the goal should be to “keep the spirit going” by acknowledging that “life has to go on” (Bates 2015). By balancing discussions of Kyle with discussions of formation, reconstruction, and progress, many hoped that the church would heal in a way that gave credit to the life of Kyle and the community. “I never wanted to be insensitive to people’s desire to talk about the event, though I probably was at many points, but I was mainly focused on pushing us forward” (Dudley 2015). By this reasoning, people like Dudley seem to be primary enforcers of the rite of passage by encouraging steady, healthy movements through the stages. As such, they serve as a somewhat opposing voice to the power of charisma and “irrational” emotion as described by Rosaldo that extended through the experience for many others.

As the community did indeed push forward and wade through its grief, a final characteristic hung as a shadow over the process. Bereavement at UBC – with all of its togetherness, fluidity v. structure dichotomy, and pain mingled with fond memory – was public. “I think there was a sense that we needed to put our best face forward publicly... people were watching” (Nash 2015). Accounts point to a shared feeling of “Malinowskian” pressure to return to stasis and normality. The position of Kyle and UBC within both the Waco community and the Emergent Church movement almost required that it be so. “Word spread so quickly; it became national news... [so] we had to figure out how to

handle that and craft statements” (Browning 2015). Such statements sparked responses from other church communities around the country. Indeed, UBC saw an outpouring of financial support in the year after Kyle’s death and emotional support throughout the grief process.

This publicity did not only apply to the community as a whole. Rather, it extended through vast social connections to many individual experiences. This was the era of social media growth and the explosion of bloggers. “I wasn’t unique in this, but I grieved very publicly on my blog” (Nash 2015). The public platform served as a sounding board for shared experience and understanding. Those who needed the conversation could analyze their own thoughts and place them on display for others to view, grapple with, and respond to. Those who were not so driven to write could still find solace in the public displays of their fellow mourners. Many discovered a better sense of where others were in their grief and used it to guide their own. “The whole presentation of everything on social media was probably good and bad in various ways, but either way it helped [us] to stay close to him and each other” (Nash 2015). Nash’s comments here point again to the significance of Kyle within the group’s identity and members’ need to maintain him as a symbol of the group itself and the relationship between these two bodies (Douglas 1970). For better or for worse, the events and processes of grief at UBC and their public, communal context created an immensely varied and deeply impactful experience for members and the community as a whole.

In many ways, Malinowski and Hertz can be used in tandem to view the events at UBC. Though separated by a few years and a methodological difference, both view society as ultimately and ideally in equilibrium. According to their frameworks, certain traumatic

events have the power of disrupting the normative flow of social relations and thus spiraling the community out of its ideal balanced state. Thus, for both Malinowski and Hertz, death and grieving are highly communal activities. The death itself leaves the community “severely mutilated” (Malinowski 1940:34). The grief process is therefore seen as the defense against and response to the destruction of community and the web of social roles that the death initiates. Understandably then, UBC began to truly grapple with the loss of Kyle when it stepped forward as a community to address the pain. “At the time that I entered UBC, I think there had begun to be a realization that the closed community of the church as a whole needed to carry on... forge its way... After that, I began to see efforts at facilitation” (Panayoton 2015).

This observation of facilitation is essential to understanding the grief events of UBC in light of Malinowski and Hertz. The loss of Kyle – being an assault, a rupture, ultimately an event that transcended the planned for social schema – was irreconcilable if not handled with the appropriate determination to return the structures of the community to their original strength. Appropriate determination in this context requires facilitation of specific acts and emotions in the entire group by smaller sections or leaders of the community. Malinowski and Hertz both view the objective goal of grief and bereavement as this concerted and communal effort to bring society back into equilibrium. Of course the grief act that immediately seems most evident is Kyle’s funeral.

However, the funeral – as discussed in the last chapter – holds a unique position in the timeline of the liminal rites undergone by both the community and the social identity of UBC. It is the first vibrant expression of the community’s pain, but is unequivocally still a period of reconciling with the loss itself. Therefore, rather than using the funeral as the true

starting point of grief, I find it most appropriate to begin with the services and behaviors more removed from the death event, both in history and in experience. Once the loss has been adequately acknowledged and publicly proclaimed, the liminal process of bereavement – “mourning, [which] at its origin is the necessary participation of the living in the mortuary state of their relative” – can begin (Hertz 1960:212). At UBC, multiple events and practices within the community shaped this participatory process of grief, including but not limited to mourning services, group reflections, and community engagement. Such functionalist perspectives on these rituals as detailed above are helpful for understanding certain experiences but are overall insufficient for understanding emotionally driven processes and for fully informing liminality at UBC.

Community engagement branched out in the group on a variety of other levels, which may be better understood through these different lenses. “There seemed to be a sort of tiered arrangement to how everyone dealt with it... some things took place on a massive church-wide scale; from there it broke off into small groups, community groups, Sunday school classes...” (Panayoton 2015). These two levels to the community’s bereavement created a more diverse and expansive grief experience for members of the church. They were able to collectively participate in the altered existence of Kyle through large-scale church events. “I remember a prayer service we had at one point. It was supposed to be a commemorative and reflective time. There were candles and it was close and quiet... You could speak if so inclined. A lot of people, myself included, sat there and cried, but it was very cathartic for the group as a whole” (Panayoton 2015).

Other references were also made to Kyle’s life, the group’s loss of him, and the place of grief within the community. Nearly all interviewees discussed that talk of Kyle

was not discouraged, but in fact spaces for grief in context were consciously opened and facilitated. These events were planned and promoted within the ordinary state of UBC life. Such events within the community served as a way to reaffirm the status of UBC as a coherent collective of like-minded individuals in spite of the loss of their leader. This affirmation expressed and validated the emotions of the bereaved and their collective loss ultimately helping to expand the experience of ritual and pain within the church (Rosaldo 1989). Simultaneously, these events and specific grief acts ensured that mourning had an affirmed time and place within the church. As such, community structures subtly dictated that grief have boundaries. Within those boundaries, the task of mourning Kyle not only appeared much more manageable, but also refrained from controlling all aspects of group life.

For those members who did not feel comfortable in community-wide settings, participation in the liminal state was orchestrated through evening small groups and Sunday morning classes. “People became very invested in UBC. There were so many different groups – classes, weeknight community groups – to bond people together. They wanted to be together in their grief I think” (Browning 2015). The presence of togetherness on a smaller scale more intimately expressed a shared identity, like the *communitas* described by Turner (1964). The shared bereavement of the group became possible in more extensive patterns and even throughout greater dispersions. “The efforts at grieving together were all about filling voids. I think we were all really trying to fill what was now missing. I was trying to do that for Jen [Lake]... So my own grieving for Kyle was kind of via hers as well” (Browning 2015). Placing personal grief in relation to others’ experiences was not an uncommon reflection. This pattern presented itself multiple times throughout

grief events and interactions as a manifestation of the commonality of grief in group behavior.

The plethora of small groups touched more people than might otherwise have been included in the grieving process. “For a lot of people, those groups were their only place for expression. They really wrestled out their grief” (Panayoton 2015). Some of these groups met to actively encourage discourse about Kyle. They discussed his influence in their lives and the pain and uncertainty inherent in losing such a figure. In other groups, no words were needed. These people met simply to be together through this ambiguous period. Still for plenty more the agenda focused on affirming Kyle’s own identity and the shared grief over his loss through participation and liveliness as he saw it. “There were a lot of tears, but there was also a lot of laughter” (Singleton 2015). They attempted to “live and live well” (Lake 2005). Ultimately, this encouraged group work by promoting increased familiarity with select members who then branched out into other webs and connections within the community.

In the midst of these carefully planned and orchestrated actions within the community, the specific typology of the UBC community should not be forgotten. It is first and foremost a religiously founded population, a social type about which both Malinowski and Hertz speak – and, more importantly, find deep significance. With this, they offer a final insight into the grief experience at UBC. The religiosity of the group plays a rather large role in the structuring of the grief process and the expected expression of a community in transition. The presence and awareness of the group’s faith took place in two forms. UBC’s sense of God’s presence could potentially be understood both as a hurdle and a blessing in the grief process.

Their faith was necessarily threatened by the loss and grieving of Kyle. To lose a charismatic leader to such a public and shocking end would certainly be trying for any community, but to place this in the context of a community based on the faith and goodness of a deity necessarily amplifies the experience and its consequences. Within the religious boundaries of the community, Kyle's death was "tantamount to a sacrilege, implying that... God's handiwork can be undone" (Hertz 1960: 207). A community oriented around faith in God, such as UBC, needs to see or at least believe in some semblance of stability and good will. "The trauma of it certainly left the church reeling from disbelief... theological questions necessarily arose, like what it means to be Christian now and how, as Christians, they should deal with this" (Harris 2015). When this is called into question by life events, it can also threaten the very legitimacy of the group's foundations and continued workings. "After Kyle's death, UBC had to change, but a lot of fundamental things remained the same. We grew, but with scars... It really was a test on our faith" (Parker 2015). Throughout this liminal period and upset in UBC's social web and culture, their obvious religious orientation was also an integral part of reconciling the community to the shifting existence of the luminous charismatic leader they had lost.

Their faith as a community was necessarily tied to the constructive aspects of the grief process as well. Indeed, in many ways it was this religious bent that made the communal grief process both necessary and possible in such a large context. "Every factor taken together made it seemingly transcendent... God was present in those moments" (Carney 2015). In spite of any threats to their faith, the community ultimately rallied behind it and used the tenuous boundaries of the grief experience to seek and rely on God. Indeed just as Bloch and Parry would have predicted, people in the church used ritual and

faith to forge a new status and create their social world. Layering this assertion over the reflections of church members, their faith seems a likely explanation for the depth of the wounds felt throughout the community and the rituals of their responses to these wounds throughout the liminal period. Their religion amplified their pain, and yet their faith prevented the assault from being entirely catastrophic:

The beliefs in the existence of the spirit... in the duties of a series of commemorative or sacrificial ceremonies – in all this religion counteracts the centrifugal forces of fear, dismay, demoralization, and provides the most powerful means of reintegration of the group's shaken solidarity and of the re-establishment of its morale (Malinowski 1954:53).

According to multiple UBC members and leadership as well, the group's religious foundation and these questions of faith were also the group's saving grace. "I think a lot of people found comfort in using our faith authentically to seek counsel and wisdom. The experience of grieving Kyle gave us some of our core beliefs" (Parker 2015).

While Malinowski points out the relevance of the faith experience and other communal orientations to the grief experience, Hertz broadens the scope to include efforts at specifically transforming the roles previously played by the deceased. By his conception, this is a pivotal piece of the liminal experience, which ultimately allows for reintegration. In meeting the threat to the community posed by the loss of Kyle, Hertz assures us that the people must "recuperate from the deceased what it had given of itself and regraft it onto another host" (Bloch and Parry 1982:4). In order to recuperate and regraft, the processes are required to match the level of prominence of the deceased as well as the circumstances of their departure from the world. This is the only way to achieve again the equilibrium that is theorized by both Malinowski and Hertz. Indeed, the elements

of the grief process illuminated by the two scholars allow society, “its peace recovered, [to] triumph over death” (Hertz 1960:212).

Though these notions of a society returning to equilibrium are certainly helpful in illuminating various aspects of the grief experience at UBC, it is not enough to stop here. It would be foolish to deny that some communal structures are necessarily stable forces, and when disrupted seek to be restored. However, to speak of this pattern as representative of the entire social identity of the group is to make a serious misjudgment. Additionally, it must be recognized that even those forces which are seemingly stable will always be dependent on some level of human agency. Stemming from such an assertion is the fact that a society may not be capable of completely returning to its former state after a crisis or traumatic loss. A presumably more likely trajectory is for society to recreate itself in a number of ways. Bloch and Parry enable us to see how UBC attempted to create new social experiences and communal ideals as a way of dealing with Kyle’s death.

Rather than asking the question of how society becomes “reified by responding to the ‘sacrilege’ of death,” certain aspects of the grief process beg the question of how “mortuary rituals themselves [can be] an occasion for *creating* that ‘society’ as an apparently external force” (Bloch and Parry 1982:6). Thus we do not wonder how UBC remedied its pain, but instead how UBC changed and developed through the creative forces of its own collective despair. Even just at first glance, this is a decidedly more in-depth question than the perspective presented by Malinowski and Hertz. This second lens illuminates a variety of factors that previous analysis simply could not highlight.

Instead of lending the primary power of grief and healing to the society itself – as its own independent being no less – the creative forces of loss point to the agency of

individuals and groups. While much of the facilitation aimed at healing the existing structures and reifying the “body” of the church may have occurred, one of the most striking experiences within the grief process was actually the ability for both leaders and members to initiate the construction and subsequent reproduction of new beliefs, opportunities, and organizations within the community. In order to see these social creations as explained by Bloch and Parry, we must ask ourselves a few important questions regarding the life of UBC. How did the community actively change? What was done to create new structures in place of simply repairing the old? What new connections in the social fabric were formed and how were they cultivated?

The most obvious and immediate change within the UBC community was the decision to move locations and alter the original church building. In recognition of both the physical attention the building now needed as well as the emotional distance required for the church, leaders brought their community first to Truett Seminary at Baylor University, and ultimately to the Waco Hippodrome Theater. In terms of creating a new social identity – or at least new properties within the community’s identity or structure – the move to the Hippodrome represented multiple important trends and discoveries for UBC. First, the move created a physical break from the location where tragedy had struck the community. “The place represented a physical wound that we needed to move away from for a time, remodel, and return to later” (Angeleri 2015). In an interesting paradox, this break saved the community from the pain of constant, aggressive reminders, while at the same time lending a “new perspective that kept people together” (Reyenga 2015).

Perhaps most importantly, the move to a new location indicated that the community of UBC existed outside of the church walls; the proof that it could continue without its

building for a time seemed to hint to the congregation that it would also continue without its primary leader. The move was a very conscious decision to facilitate an “endeavor to control the contingency of death” (Bloch and Parry 1982). While the community gathered in an alternative location, UBC’s home building remained locked and underwent renovations, including the removal of the baptistry. The decision to move specifically to the Hippodrome should also be noted for its nonreligious context. The church easily could have kept meeting at the seminary or even another chapel. Instead, the new and atypical setting provided by a secular theater contributed to the liminality and creative power of the grief process. The significance of this physical separation in the overall bereavement of the community was particularly noticeable once it was over. “We spent so much time just trying to understand it... the move back into our building felt like such a moment of healing after that” (Duke 2015).

People who suffered and healed together like this felt called to reach out to each other in a variety of both structured and nonstructured ways. They participated in small group discussions, communal grief practices, and a publicly discussed emotional disturbance. They shared a special status within the larger society simply by being a participant in a group trauma. This special status and identity conferred “this comradeship, with its familiarity, ease, and mutual outspokenness... the product of interstructural liminality... there is a mystical solidarity” (Turner 1954:238,243). Such comradeship created and encouraged through the shared experience of grieving Kyle was a gain for members of the UBC community. Moving forward it has defined the life stories of countless individuals while also contributing to the ever-evolving social identity of UBC. “We [and UBC] have become known for what we’ve been through... that gives us an

understanding between each other” (Angeleri 2015). This understanding, which caused such changes in the social web at this time, legitimated UBC as a community even in spite of crisis and enhanced its strength and capacity for dealing with future evolution.

These shared aspects of grief obviously carry great significance, particularly in the structural realm, for the community’s continuity and growth. However, they cannot illuminate all dimensions of the experience. Even with Bloch and Parry’s important addition of the creative power of death in society, the theorists employed up to this point do not specifically speak to other important aspects; individual emotions, their tension with larger community trends, and the element of necessary chaos have been skirted around up to this point. Yet these are clearly important thematic elements extending from the loss of Kyle and evident throughout the firsthand accounts. Without negating the importance of the rituals discussed at UBC, it is important to recognize that this elimination of “intense emotions not only distort[s] the descriptions but also remove[s] potentially key variables from the explanations” (Rosaldo 1989:12). Individual emotions were an unmistakably key part of the grief process at UBC. For every effort at communal contemplation and healing, there was an equally potent reaction on the personal level.

Just as Rosaldo suggests, intense personal grief and emotional turmoil were easily visible at UBC in the year or two after Kyle’s death. Unsurprisingly, this was most evident in the psyches of those people closest to Kyle. His widow, Jen, struggled with painful memories for perhaps the longest time. “People were sensitive... grief was expressive... it had to be because there was this void, that’s the best word I know to describe it” (Lake 2015). She described this void as manifesting in a variety of nuanced ways, including forgetfulness, dependency and an almost insistent attempt to keep him alive for a long

period after his death. Of course Jen was not the only person suffering with this kind of intense pain. Certainly Kyle's family was feeling similar emotional distress, as well as other members of the church particularly close to him, such as Tracey Kelley, Craig Nash, and a variety of church leadership. For these individuals, and undoubtedly for many others, the most salient characteristic of grieving the "violent interruption" of Kyle's death was the emotional force of his passing and the community's response to the same (Rosaldo 2014).

A striking representation of this observation presented itself in most interviews even a decade later. Despite the community being far removed in time from the trauma, discussions of Kyle and UBC brought tears to the eyes of 57% of interviewees. As we sat together in offices, coffee shops, and homes now removed in space and time for the horror of losing and grieving Kyle, the emotional force of the process still could not be denied. Rosaldo offers the best insight into such a phenomenon by fully accepting that grief is at time unexplainable. Were we to only accept the completely reified society of Hertz or the created social bonds of Bloch and Parry, this type of reaction might seem out of place – even perhaps unnecessary. An entire section of the experience of members of UBC would be eliminated as inconsequential. However, passionate actions even years later are readily accepted by a perspective that recognizes how pain, emotions, and forceful individual behaviors may fall together. Indeed, they justify the presence and need for this perspective even more. Rather than categorizing personal experiences and pain as outlier responses or insignificant for the strength of the group, Rosaldo's lens shows us instead that they were pivotal pieces to the overall process. Additionally, these seem in keeping with important characteristics of the liminal period as a whole.

Particularly throughout his book dealing with the death of his own wife, Rosaldo is particularly cognizant of how personal, often seemingly unexplainable, emotions contribute to the ambiguity and multifaceted nature of the liminal grief experience. Just as the concept of the liminal period itself can be difficult to define, so too can the intricate workings of bereavement. While other theorists search for strict and nearly universal explanations of the group at large, Rosaldo reminds us that collective transformation is not the only relevant experience. Recalling this aspect to the overall rite of passage is important if we are to give credence to the events as they were described by UBC members themselves. In essence, the model needs Rosaldo and an idea of individual pain and chaos in order to justly represent and understand the bereavement process at UBC.

Recognizing the significance of individual planes of experience as well as communal ones illuminates inconsistencies between these two categories within the church. Such inconsistencies, tensions, and emotions produced the chaos that Rosaldo alone embraces. Just as Kyle's death had been nearly nonsensical, so too was the grieving process at times. "I was, I guess you could call it 'gun-shy,' for a very long time. I had to learn that grief isn't linear" (Lake 2015). This was not only necessary for the natural healing of individuals, but also for the group at large. Despite the analysis of the relationship between individual and group grief put on display by the ideas above – as well as the understanding of the larger patterns and structural forces at play provided by such – there remain a few elements to be investigated throughout the grief process. Certainly in any process of bereavement, there are smaller details that do not fit into the general landscape of primary grief or do not represent greater scale organizational aspects of the experience. Because grief is so incredibly multifaceted, nonlinear, and at times chaotic,

even these details deserve further attention. In fact, seemingly less significant details often point to important underlying themes and characteristics of social phenomena and the group at large. At UBC, apart from the overall dynamics of communal and individual mourning, there were a few pivotal details that influenced the experience as a whole, particularly specific timelines of the grief process and shared sentiments or unspoken acknowledgements throughout the community.

There are two details, above others, that substantially affected the grief process at UBC: the orientation of group work within the community and the charismatic foundation of Kyle's relation to the church. From these characteristics stem two primary questions. First, how were the structural focuses of grief at UBC influenced by group work and creation of myth? And second, what were the implications of Kyle's charisma for the community mourning his loss? Discussions of these questions, though not representative of the complete liminal phase of grief for the group and individuals at UBC, are necessary for creating a full understanding of the process.

Though the grief process of UBC has been looked at in full as both a struggle for a return to equilibrium and a creative process, we must recognize the group mechanisms underlying both interpretations and the consequences of both processes in light of such mechanisms. The language of these processes could remain "strictly meaningless" if not understood within the unique "frame of reference" of UBC, its countless regroupings, and associations (Latour 2005:30). Aspects of both reification and creation might seem to indicate the group was at least relatively stable. However, according to Latour, it would be a mistake to take this at face value given the inherent instability and constant upheaval of social groupings. Latour's notion of groups as the "provisional product of a constant

uproar made by millions of contradictory voices” provides us with a parallel notion of chaos originally introduced by Rosaldo’s analyses at the individual level (2005:31). Indeed, Latour integrates such notions of individual emotion and agency with group sentiment and effort.

In order to sustain the group and heed the uproar of voices, UBC necessarily engaged in constant but varied group work intended to determine the bounds of the group given its new experience during this liminality. “The follow up time is almost hazy... like we were drunk or concussed... because there were so many questions and so many ideas of how to move forward” (Peel 2015). In order to give credence to these ideas, numerous outlets for the community developed which both affirmed and questioned the stability and durability of the group at varying times. These outlets have been discussed previously, as they were certainly integral pieces to the reification or creation of community, as well as to the emotional experience of individuals. However, ascribing the label of group work to these phenomena clarifies that the grieving process at UBC, the cacophony of voices and ideas, and the attempts at healing were all part of an underlying need to reassert and reform the collective identity of the group in crisis. Per Latour, groups are performative things, and they must constantly shift and change – in other words, keep up the performance – in order to remain feasible and dynamic.

In line with keeping up the performance, Latour’s actor network model better illuminates two pivotal pieces of the experience at UBC: a seeming closure of the borders of the church community, and the move to the forefront of the community by certain particularly vocal members. UBC became an “insulated community,” presumably to absorb specific public responses deemed as harmful (Singleton 2015). Support was offered

from many outside groups, including other churches across the country and many Waco groups, but often “some people who wanted to help really weren’t allowed to” (Kelley 2015). Instead of heeding all of the advice offered from the outside and following the example of other communities, UBC chose – whether it was consciously or subconsciously is unclear – to define its own path and stress more strongly its boundaries, which separated it from others. According to Latour, this type of border closure is evidence of a common tactic within group work intended to strengthen the bonds within the community: the delineation of “anti-groups” (2005:32). Anti-groups – consisting of other churches, Waco community groups, and Emergent Church leaders in the case of UBC – serve to exemplify what one group is not, usually an easier description than describing what it actually is.

The closure of UBC’s borders and the categorization of anti-groups were led, at least in part, by a few prominent members of the community. In the chaos of many voices within group work, it is necessary for certain “spokespersons” to come forward and legitimate the efforts undertaken by the group at large. Spokespersons serve as the first line of defense against group crisis and often create the discourse of group work that substantiates the group’s claims to legitimacy (Latour 2005). At UBC, spokespersons led the way in the grief process, again highlighting the potential for tension between community goals and individual feelings. They also coordinated many group discussions, which ultimately led to the close of the grief process by appealing to the new myths and “folk tradition” circulating around Kyle and his death.

In order to contextualize the grief behaviors and group work of the community, it is ultimately necessary to give credit to the charismatic personality of Kyle, particularly in the context of a small, relatively bounded and egalitarian community (Douglas 1970). The

discourse of Kyle as a figure requiring both intense communal bereavement and incorporation into the shared mythic history of the church clearly stems from the force of his personhood at UBC. “Kyle drew people in” (Lake 2015). “He was so dynamic, and was really able to be influential because of that and because he formed personal connections with everyone” (Duke 2015). Memories of Kyle depict a young, goofy, passionate man – a true charismatic figure replete with the unexplainable “superhuman” quality necessary to “devotion and absolute trust” in the communities (Weber 1914:325). In its attachment and devotion to Kyle, we can see that UBC was a true charismatic community.

As a charismatic community, Kyle’s death was taken understandably much harder than it might otherwise have been. Kyle’s charismatic relationship to the community “effecting a subjective or internal reorientation... then result[ed] in a radical alteration of the central attitudes and directions of action...” for the people of UBC (Weber 1914:326). In other words, Kyle served as a very specific orientation device for the members of the UBC community. They pieced together part of their identity as people who learned from Kyle Lake. When that reference point of identity was brutally ripped away, they floundered in ways that would have been impossible if not for the charismatic – sometimes “irrational” – connection (Adair-Toteff 2005:195). An important aspect of the grief process then was the recognition of this charismatic tie and its unfortunate break, followed by the necessary response to such a crisis of collective identity. Without recognizing this kind of foundation, the other aspects of grief at UBC – reification, creation, group work, emotion – seem wholly out of proportion.

Commemorating Kyle: Reintegration and Sanctification

The loss and subsequent grieving of Kyle Lake undoubtedly represented intense and formative experiences for the community at UBC. However, they left the community in an interesting and unstable position, as shown by the previous two chapters. Following the conclusion of the social breach and liminal period, it became necessary for the group to leave behind the ambiguity of the grieving process and move towards a process of reintegration. The passage through trauma for UBC having been completed, this period of reintegration was “consummated. The ritual subject, individual or corporate, [was] in a stable state once more and, by virtue of this, [had] rights and obligations of a clearly defined type” (Turner 1954:235). This stable state necessarily took on a new form than what had defined UBC in the past. The community’s journey through such pain could not be neglected, but to live in the liminal period forever would have signaled the eventual demise of the group.

Turner mentions that the ritual subject of transformation may be individual or corporate given the situation, but it is very important for the analysis of life at UBC to recognize that it was actually both. This brings us back to the notion that there were actually three transformations. First, the identity of the collective group entered a new state: “We finally pieced our narrative together around the person of Kyle. Our story – of us, of the church, of Kyle – is important. We celebrate it, a bit like the language of Israel, a mixture of memory and hope” (Carney 2015). This ongoing narrative became possible and distinguished because of the ultimate consummation of the liminal journey. Second, individuals reached new states of being by their relation to loss and healing. Members of the community were reintegrated into new roles as either survivors of the intense trauma of

losing Kyle or new members, group residents after the fact. It might seem that a break between these two identities could occur, that reconciling such different experiences into a cohesive shared status would be impossible. However, this concern was negated by the final transformation – the formal reintegration of Kyle himself into the life of the community. “Kyle is almost a saint. His story continues to play out in our own... like there’s a residue of his gift in the everyday life of the community” (Carney 2015). Despite whether individual members today personally knew Kyle or were actually present for the event, the rite of passage undergone by the group as a whole – and the new statuses emerging from this rite – create a space for all members today to reaffirm Kyle’s sainthood and UBC’s collectivity.

I begin with the latter transformation, the ritual conclusion of the rite of passage regarding Kyle, for a few reasons. First, all of the processes described previously in this analysis have ultimately combined to lead to Kyle’s reintegration and sanctification. Second, the transformation of Kyle into the modern saint of UBC influences how the transformations of other actors were completed. Finally, the transformation and commemoration of Kyle is undoubtedly the most substantial and significant of the reintegration stage at large. Though Kyle has been commemorated in many ways since the reintegration of the UBC community, his ostensible “sainthood” is the defining feature of his post-mortem social identity within the community, as well as a primary orientation device for both current and former members of the church. As such, it deserves a great deal of attention, not only for its place within the reintegration of the UBC community post-tragedy, but also for its impressive staying power. The members of UBC reference the

sanctification and powerful influence of Kyle in a variety of articulate ways that I believe are due direct mention.

“I remember thinking, ‘holy cow, Kyle wrote his last sermon and delivered it from his grave. It was almost transcendent... And then Burt Bursleson, who followed the church calendar more than most, pointed out that the day Kyle died had been All Saints’ Day... So almost immediately in those moments and then moving forward we had permission – and it was so vivid at least to me – to begin thinking of Kyle as a saint... His memory eventually became elevated in a way that normal deaths aren’t” (Carney 2015).

“Just his name itself has become a legacy. Whether a person was part of UBC or not, his name is a legacy of ‘Lov[ing] God, embrac[ing] beauty, and liv[ing] life to the fullest” (Angeleri 2015).

“We all had this sneaking suspicion of ‘Did Kyle know he was going to die?’ You look at everything in the moment and after and can only say ‘holy shit.’ But I would almost still describe it as having an intensive quality to it that was utterly excessive... It was almost profoundly immanent... Theologians, and mystics especially, describe experiences with God as being blinding, but not because of darkness, because of light... Excessive blinding light that is very here and now... So our experience with Kyle, his death, and his memory have this intensive quality that immanently touched people... that’s why it’s been so easy to tilt towards idolization I think” (Bechtol 2015).

“He’s still present in the community. He immortalized himself, but he also lives throughout all these other people... His life and words transcended his physical being here with us... He had a special ability to do that” (Angeleri 2015).

“His spirit really gave way to this forever legacy... we could see Christ through Kyle” (Parker 2015).

“Kyle was definitely a ‘spiritual authority’... We never really rebuilt an identity without him... We never could have replaced the space he filled in our community... so the closest thing I can describe it as is sainthood (wow that’s the first time I got choked up, sorry)... yeah, with a very different understanding of saints I guess. He was a person, but you know, with everything, who he was and how it happened, words he left us... it’s all continued to be valued in the midst of this very large theological and existential problem. We couldn’t really reconcile it any other way” (Singleton 2015).

Each member of the church community created their own interpretation of the sanctity of Kyle, as evidenced by the quotes above. These reflections are a manifestation of their personal grief experience as well as the extension of their relationships with Kyle into their future lives. However, they point to a larger pattern of response within the UBC community. It is quite obvious that something greater than individual acceptance of new circumstances was happening throughout the group. As they became reintegrated as a community, members of the church were obviously uncomfortable with letting the figure of Kyle be eliminated in full from their group dynamics. An overarching collective need to include the deceased into their new communal identity settled over the church.

Though the sanctification of Kyle by so many individuals – particularly given the context of Protestantism and the Emergent Church – may seem out of place, this pattern is not without theoretical precedent:

Exclusion is always followed by a new integration... [the deceased] is reunited with those who, like himself and those before him, have left this world and gone to the ancestors. He enters this mythical society of the souls, which each society constructs in its own image... Death enables him, regenerated, to enter the

community of Saints, the invisible church which in heaven is worthy of being about the Lord from whom it proceeds (Hertz 1960[1907]:208-209).

It is nearly impossible for a community, particularly one as close-knit as UBC, to allow the total demise of one of their most central members. Post-liminal reintegration at UBC never could have looked like an elimination of Kyle due to the circumstances of his death and, more importantly, his centrality to the social body of the church as a whole. Instead, his memory was kept very much alive – and indeed, still is today – in a way that reflects the words of Hertz. Even Hertz, however, acknowledges that this is not the case for all deceased members of society. Not every piece of the social web is consecrated into the realm of sanctified ancestors. The questions thus remain: what about Kyle made him worthy of commemoration in the collective mind of UBC, and what processes or characteristics made such a sanctification possible? In sum, how is it that Kyle Lake has managed to stay “alive” even ten years after his death?

It seems that the first observation which should be made in light of such questions is a recognition of the separation made in the literature between the physical and the social bodies. During certain experiences, a semblance of unity between these bodies is lost, and the “physical body... is polarized against the social body” (Douglas 1970:101). Recalling that the two bodies are the self and society, we see how the split between the two threatened the very existence of UBC as a society. Thus, in order to preserve society, Kyle as a symbol of the group needed to be saved in some way. In order to explain this, Douglas refers us to the common phrase “The King is dead! Long live the King!” Though the individual physical body of the leader ended, the necessity of encouraging the continuation of society could not be overstated. The idea of Kyle, the office and position he held, thus had to continue – and so his sanctification is understandable. This polarization sets up the

group for the potential continuation of its member's social identity and its group identity even in the face of cessation of the physical. Were the two bodies to remain perpetually fused, UBC would have been forced to reconcile itself to the eternal loss of Kyle. Instead, because identity and personhood exists on many planes, Kyle was able to exist as a social being and a symbol of the community even after his death. Through this, the group salvaged the continuation of the social over the termination of the physical.

Douglas's idea of the two bodies is therefore capable of showing us how the sanctification of Kyle was not only *possible*, but also *preferable* for the continued life of the group. Therein lies the essence of his sanctification: Kyle was a vibrant leader. He was incredibly charismatic. The notion of such a leader, particularly a charismatic one, is fundamental to the life of the community. "The leader is both an individual and an embodiment of the [community]" (Davies 2001:100). There is inherently a symbiotic relationship present in the exchange between the leader and the community – the leader endowing the society with his own personality and identity and the community defining the leader as an essential representation of the shared social identity and valued characteristics. Both the leader and their followers take a pivotal piece of their social position purely from the existence of the other.

Just as Kyle was partly defined by his association with UBC, so UBC was defined by its position to Kyle and his leadership. This is the nature of a charismatic community, another pivotal reason which has allowed for the continuity of Kyle. Weber describes charismatic authority as primarily belonging to prophets, magical beings, personality-driven leaders, and heroes. These types of charismatic figures inspire "devotion... [and] absolute trust" from the members of their "charismatic communities." For Weber, the

charismatic label is a “recognition” applied only when “freely given” by the community and “guaranteed by what is held to be a proof, originally always a miracle” (1914:325). By virtue of this appellation, the charismatic person is extraordinary within society. Kyle was undeniably extraordinary within the UBC community. Out of twenty-five interviewees, seventeen explicitly used the word “charismatic” to describe Kyle. Others used terms such as “vibrant,” “compelling,” “inspiring,” and “admirable” (Panayoton 2015; Parker 2015; Carney 2015; Dodd 2015). Indeed, “there was something about Kyle’s personality that made him seem almost immortal” (Carney 2015).

Charismatic relationships are typically founded in emotional ties, of which there was no shortage at UBC. Charles Lindholm concludes that the charismatic phenomenon is an “emotionally grounded action” best seen within the dynamics of “collective energies and selfless communal fervor” (1990:5). As has been expressed in previous chapters, the community of UBC was so affected by the loss of Kyle because there was a deep sense of love and appreciation between the members of the church and their leader. “Kyle was so easy to be around. People immediately loved him... I remember a guy visiting the church who was so taken with him that the next week he showed up dressed exactly like Kyle... things like that were what made it so hard to be without him. We lost this really impressive person and everyone wanted to hold onto him” (Nash 2015). Devotion such as what Nash describes is perhaps the most important characteristic of a charismatic community. This devotion inspires claims to prestige on the part of the charismatic figure; in many instances, these claims do not end with death.

Instead, charismatic claims are amplified by tragedy or loss. Though further amplifying the status of someone now lost may seem irrational, it is precisely this

“irrationality” that is desirable. “The charismatic leader believes and is believed in especially because it goes against what we know” (Adair-Toteff 2005:195). This irrationality is both incredibly exciting and appealing to the community searching for features of collective identity and experience. Under the influence of charismatic authority, people begin to think differently, act differently, use their resources differently. This revolutionary change is observable at UBC because of the inspiration of Kyle and the institutions he supported.

Losing Kyle meant that UBC had lost this appealing tie to a larger than life character – someone through whom many felt more tied to their faith and to God. The irrationality of his position, however, made his replacement impossible. At UBC, losing Kyle thus elevated his character. “We have a tendency to place dead people on a throne... his story can be used however you want” (Dudley 2015). Rather than attempting to replace his charisma and fail, it therefore seemed to the community that reincorporating his legacy and charisma was not merely the only way, but the preferable way to continue a piece of their collective identity. Charisma from beyond the grave ties communities together and makes them feel grounded in their legacy. Saints are glorified; personalities are aspired to even when the model is gone. Thus, what Lindholm offers us is arguably the single most important quality of charisma and its power potential for the purposes of this study: charisma both inspires sanctification and is amplified by it.

Further pushing the argument that sanctification was logical for the community at UBC is the obvious religious orientation of the group. Nearly every person interviewed constructed their discussion of Kyle in terms of how he influenced – and indeed, continues to influence – their faith. “I lead a church today, and part of its foundation is undeniably

Kyle. We talk about him every few weeks” (Singleton 2015). In his sanctification, Kyle has become a historical figure for the life of the church. He is seen as founder, inspiration, and honorary symbol. This phenomenon is not uncommon in religious communities. Looking back to Lindholm, it is religious charisma that often finds greater strength in communities than political charisma. Kyle was not merely linked with an institution; he was linked with God. “I felt like I could experience God’s love through Kyle” (Parker 2015). To the charismatic legacy, religious fervor is thus tied. Such religious fervor is shared by communities, leading to a collective value structure that is often impossible to establish in larger or more political groups.

Though the making of Kyle into a modern saint is certainly the most wholly representative of the pinnacle of the loss, grief, and reintegration processes, we should not forget that there have been other means of commemoration. We should also not forget that there are other aspects of the community experience and individuals’ movements into new states. Of course many of these aspects have been further integrated into the overarching theme of sanctification. Perhaps most prominent, Kyle’s benediction continues to be said every Sunday at the conclusion of services. “Love God, Embrace Beauty, Live Life to the Fullest” has indeed become the mantra of the UBC community, past and present. “There’s this dual language of the sacred and secular that Kyle encouraged and the constant use of his benediction keeps that in the community... It’s a way of [continually] rehearsing the drama of our story” (Carney 2015). The story of Kyle and UBC lives constantly through this spoken word. It can be found on the church website, tattooed across people’s arms, hanging on canvases in their homes.

We say his words a lot. Our blogs are peppered [with them]... I actually have two big fears about those words. One, that those on the outside of our community

would see the frequency with which we use them and come to the conclusion that we have turned them into a pseudo-canon, approaching the importance of Scripture in our lives. Or, worse, that our love for and remembrance of Kyle would start to look an awful lot like worship. If this is your concern, do not fear. Kyle is our Saint. He is not our God (Nash 2006).

Again through the use and repetition of Kyle's words is his social identity strengthened and his status reaffirmed. However, as we now find ourselves nine years past this original analysis by Craig Nash, it might be worth asking if those words have truly refrained from becoming pseudo-canon. As they have been repeated for the better part of a decade, it seems that they have only been further solidified as something nearing sacred wisdom. As sacred wisdom, they are now internalized into people's own identities, becoming pivotal pieces of the reintegrated state of members themselves.

It is not just his benediction that lives on today. The sermon he was never able to deliver has found prominence amongst the community. Almost every year on the anniversary of his death, the words are shared with the church and the larger society through readings and posts on social media. "Undeniably, we've kept using those words as a way to keep Kyle alive. When you read them, it's like he's still with us" (Reyenga 2015). Kyle's final sermon is even reprinted by people who never met the man. During research for this project, I found the sermon on no less than five blogs, all whose authors mentioned that they had never before heard the name Kyle Lake before reading the sermon. Nevertheless, the sermon and his story spoke to them. The text of this sermon was even made into a short film that was shared with the community and made available for purchase.

Kyle has been further commemorated in his very personhood, not just his words. He was very much alive in the memories of the community, the progressions of

individuals, and the faces of his children. “He lives on in his kids the most I think. You can’t look at them and not see Kyle” (Angeleri 2015). Furthermore, his words and deeds continued to be referenced throughout daily life at the church and within other community settings. Indeed, at times he was even spoken of in present tense. “Kyle still seems alive as this sort of presence that influences how I think and act. I attribute a lot of who I am to him” (Singleton 2015). This kind of social identity has much more fluidity than any physical form. After his death, Kyle was not constrained by the limits of physical personhood, but rather expanded so as to point to the very essence of the community. Each person who knew him – and even those who never knew him during his time, but knew only his identity post-mortem – was able to construct an image of his identity as leader and saint, and alter it so as to be personally valuable. Every personalized iteration and conceptualization of Kyle’s social identity thus served as compounding commemoration of his symbolic role, reintegrating him further into the new social statuses at UBC.

Furthermore, Kyle inspires many services led by Josh Carney even today at UBC. “I like to talk about him sometimes, so that people still remember. Whenever I use his ideas – like Mr. Rogers Sunday or God in the Movies – I reference him” (Carney 2015). The very memory of Kyle and his influence inspired a series of blogs from Craig Nash. He is commemorated in books by David Crowder (*Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven, but Nobody Wants to Die*) and his father, David Lake (*That’s Kyle: Living Life to the Fullest*). The Kyle Lake Foundation was founded in order to support his legacy and collect donations for church communities in need. Every year, the foundation puts on a golf tournament in his honor – which is “always funny because Kyle hated golf” (Bates 2015) – that takes time to celebrate Kyle as a person, a father, and a church leader. A scholarship in

Kyle's name was established at Baylor University. Some people have named their children after him. Others have created various dedications to him. Finally, UBC hosted a "Kyle Sunday" in October of 2015 to commemorate the ten-year anniversary of his death. Many former members came in from out of town to celebrate this event. Testimonies, stories, and commemorative words were shared. The community looked at how Kyle is kept alive and present at UBC today, further confirming the social identity of a charismatic leader now long gone bodily but kept present socially.

Of course, another side of reintegration after the liminality of grief is tied not merely to Kyle's own person, but to the collective group of UBC. In order to complete the reintegration process, it was necessary for the community to settle into new post-liminal roles. "We had to figure out who we were without Kyle at the forefront, and that took some time... We figured it out more I think as we started to bring on new leadership. Carney was hired, we brought in John Mark [Seelig]... And these were all people that had known Kyle, loved Kyle" (Singleton 2015). These new roles allowed for the community to see a new leadership structure without feeling that Kyle was being replaced or eliminated. Determining the bounds of the community and integrating into a new social structure without its charismatic center meant moving from the personal charisma of Kyle to a formalized charisma of his myth and memory. Kyle's charisma necessarily became "traditionalized or rationalized" when the teachings and beliefs of Kyle himself were made into the very philosophy of the institution and new figures were added to support this philosophy (Weber 1914).

This shift represented a transition away from a charismatic community. It was no longer possible to be oriented around a living charismatic leader. However, the group was

reintegrated as a collective in association with a sanctified version of Kyle. In a method similar to the orientation of Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox churches around specific saints, UBC became a church oriented around the idea of Kyle. This was incredibly salient for a few years after the reintegration. However, as more time has passed, the evolution of the community continues to be unique. Today, the group is less actively centered on the identity of Kyle; however, Kyle continues to be a piece of their story. Their new state is thus one focused on history and a shared sense of narrative. During the time of Kyle as charismatic pastor, there was a sense that they were still discovering who they were as a church community. After moving through the rupture and liminality of the rite of passage associated with the loss of Kyle, the final reintegration resulted in a community more sure in their foundations and core beliefs. Rather than being centered on grand questions led and championed by their leader, they had a sense of strong faith. Rather than participating in a sense of aimlessness, they found purpose. Furthermore, the idea of Kyle gave the community a shared history, a saint, an orienting beacon that brought them out of their early foundational period. In a sense, the greatest transformation of the communal identity at UBC was in its collective certainty.

The web of relationships within the community also underwent extensive changes during the period of grieving Kyle. Kyle's death within the social relational system of UBC was "a source of life. [It] made available a new potentiality for life, and one creature's loss [was] another's gain" (Bloch and Parry 1982:8). The created snapshot of their desired group identity served as an orientation device ultimately leading the group into the third stage of reintegration to come. This happened on two fronts. First, a plethora of existing relationships were strengthened through the collective experience of losing and

grieving Kyle. “Our grief was a reason to love and care for each other in new ways” (Carney 2015). Second, new relationships were formed with a unique understanding of shared trauma and loss as their foundation. “This suffering point formed a lot of lasting bonds. They were easily cultivated through that time” (Angeleri 2015).

Through these two primary changes, the church community created a transformed social identity and experience; they redefined and reproduced a substantial piece of what it meant to be an individual within UBC. “The experience created bonds with people that haven’t gone away... like a new club of people who understand and continue to understand even as UBC today changes” (Duke 2015). These bonds and identity orientation devices also represent the created idea of what the liminal group at that time thought UBC was and should be. They made their choices regarding response and ritual based on the snapshot taken of the community in the last moments of Kyle. It was ultimately this snapshot that led them to such a strong sense of camaraderie and group creation.

Though this has certainly been a much smaller aspect of my analysis, the transformation of individual members should not be forgotten. The crisis experienced by everyone present in those moments, as well as the potency of Kyle’s personality, left significant marks on the people of UBC. After the chaos of social upheaval and individual emotional pain, every person eventually moved into a new state – in some ways connected to and in some ways distinct from that of others. They are the people who knew Kyle, the survivors, a key role as the church ages and incorporates more and more members who will have no personal memories of the man behind the legend. This new status manifests itself in a variety of interesting ways throughout the community: “Kyle is like this voice inside my head, this memory that is so much a grounding force for my faith. He really was my

first saint, my first personal experience with the ‘cloud of witnesses.’ I carry that with me” (Reyenga 2015). Furthermore, people have marked their bodies physically with reminders of their rite of passage. They’ve named their children in ways reminiscent of the experience, written books, discussed their experiences through testimonials. In all, the experience of loss, grief, and ultimate reintegration at and with UBC has become one of the most salient markers of their individual identities.

The interesting flipside to this triad reintegration is not all positive according to many community members. Things have not merely moved between neutral states. Instead, they have created very charged environments and histories, which must be acknowledged. The sanctification and commemoration of Kyle has led often to an idyllic representation of his life and influence. As Kyle has been reintegrated into the community as a modern saint, some members have worried that he has been placed on an undeserved pedestal. Simultaneously, others have argued that if anyone was close to living up to the hype, Kyle came the closest.

This representation of Kyle as a saint has changed the historical progression of the UBC community. Furthermore, it is a representation that can be applied by individuals to their own lives when needed, as well as extended to a larger community. “There’s this picture of who we need Kyle to be, and that’s what has been agreed upon... [it] allows everyone to fulfill that need to own their relationship with him” (Kelley 2015). Part of reintegrating Kyle to the community was indeed reintegrating him to every person’s individual life. His sanctification to the group necessitated the same process in the minds of each community member. By moving from a group experience to an individual

experience as well, the sanctification of Kyle has been given continued legitimacy over the years, despite these concerns of many involved social actors.

Conclusion

“You know, I’ve called him Saint Kyle for years now, because everyone talks about him like he was so amazing. And he was! Don’t get me wrong. But he wasn’t perfect; he had flaws. That’s kind of the perk of having a dead guy though, right? You get to change the narrative” (Dudley 2015). This idea of the narrative has now become a central piece of the church’s experience. Indeed, the sanctification of Kyle Lake has proved to be a foundational process in the life of University Baptist Church. As they collectively experienced his untimely demise and shared in their deepest grief, this group of men and women crafted new ways of being in the world, new statuses and identities, and new development in group organization and definition.

By looking at crisis and disaster as breaches against the society or societal welfare, I have shown how the loss of Kyle was a rupture of the utmost degree within the community of UBC. In line with Turner’s discussion of social separations, we can clearly see why this became a significant process in the timeline of the church. His death sparked a necessary response within the group that was best conceptualized as a rite of passage through a painful and ambiguous liminal period, and culminating with the eventual reintegration of individual, group, and saint. This rite of passage is highlighted by theoretical explanations and implications of a variety of key aspects in the UBC experience: death, ritual, and mourning; charisma, personality, and charismatic community; and finally the intricacies of group structure, creation, and management.

Clearly, notions of loss and the ritual responses to it, are central to this ideology. Though there are many interpretations of what death and grief may mean within a communal context, there is no doubt that they necessitate extensive coping. This is

manifested particularly in the separation and liminal periods. Both Malinowski and Hertz show how society as an entity experiences death as an assault, which must be corrected. In order to correct such an offense, certain measures are necessary to bring society back into equilibrium.

On the other hand, Bloch and Parry elucidated creative aspects of UBC's loss. Where society does not really exist outside of people's imaginings of it, snapshots are taken at moments of rupture. These snapshots allow agentic individuals to employ rituals which create the group and the social as they would ideally have it be. This image is held up as a mirror through which members perceive their experience.

Rosaldo showed us another side to the rupture and liminal grief period. Not all experiences of death can be purely about the social structure. Rather, they are also intricately intertwined with individual and collective emotion. This emotional force guides responses to a loss and influences how and when new statuses may eventually be entered into by individuals and the group. The chaotic elements of this experience can therefore not be ignored.

The model employed to understand Kyle and UBC was further elucidated by the elements of charisma and group structure introduced in this model. Weber, Schweitzer, and Lindholm, though all focused on different variations of charisma and charismatic leadership, each point to the articulations between certain individuals and their communities. These create unique experiences of social realms "irrationally" centered on the special powers of a figurehead.

Kyle's personality – as well as the community's recognition of it and orientation around it – unequivocally affect the data presented in the three analytical chapters.

Ultimately, these elements were integrated and manifested in the stages I have put on display: losing Kyle, grieving Kyle, and commemorating Kyle. Though I have shown these transformations to be multifaceted and incredibly intricate, in sum they come down to one element: Kyle Lake – charismatic figure, ultimate social symbol, Emergent Saint.

It has been important to see precisely how this charismatic figure and these experiences are manifested collectively. Douglas, with her discussion not only of the two bodies but also of strong group/weak grid communities, illuminated how the body of the leader can be linked culturally to the social body of the group. These group dynamics make for an experience of death so totalizing that the entire rite of passage model is justified.

Finally, Latour can be seen as the final brick to the analysis. By looking not at society or even at typical networks, but an idea of the noisy, ever-fluctuating and reassembled “social,” he gave an understanding of Kyle and UBC that is centered on continuous group work and definition. Through Latour we were able to see the morphing of Kyle from charismatic leader to mythic saint as well as the change of UBC from one kind of group to another.

All of these strains elucidate parts of UBC’s rite of passage. With Kyle’s death there was intense chaos and emotion stimulating a rupture and feelings of assault. During the liminal phase, people continued to work through their grief – moving through ambiguous steps along the way. Lacking concrete senses of direction, they were thrust into a sort of “anti-structure” that yet was able to bond them together in a deep sense of connection and shared pain.

Furthermore, we see why Kyle’s death prompted such an intense rupture and liminal experience because of his charisma and his role as leader in the group/grid network

of UBC. Kyle as “king” was physically dead, but community members could not lose themselves in the tumble. Thus they had to salvage what was left of the “kingdom,” using Kyle as their symbolic base. In doing this, the community members crafted a new “social,” or a new understanding of themselves, of their group, and of Kyle’s role in it.

Through this analysis, the concluding statement and implication are clear: Kyle has been and continues to be conceptualized as a modern day saint, a link between secularity and spirituality for a substantial number of people who developed ties to his identity both pre- and post-mortem, a symbol of internalized value and collective identity. Of course, this leaves us with two questions regarding the results of this level of reintegration. First, what has this sanctification meant for the community of UBC, and what does it continue to mean? Second, what, if anything, about this sanctification is problematic?

The first is somewhat harder to answer than the second. In truth, the sanctification and commemoration of Kyle has meant many things to many people. He has been made permanent in memory: “On my part, I know that I will never be able to forget what happened and what we went through. It, and he, is part of who I am” (Angeleri 2015). He has been sanctified in influence: “I really try to model myself after Kyle in a lot of ways. I mean the church I started is really inspired by him” (Singleton 2015). He has been made unshakeable in position: “Kyle is this thing that will always be around at UBC. You can’t tell our story without talking about Kyle then and now. So as long as I’m here to remind people of that, I will” (Carney 2015). The variety of accounts speaks to the sheer capacity of Kyle’s sainthood. It has become so ingrained and substantiated within the UBC discourse that it takes on personalized forms within the minds of many. As ironic as the

results of the process may have been, it seems that they cannot be escaped within the collective narrative of University Baptist Church.

This brings me to my final point of concern. Though it is not my place as ethnographer to judge UBC for its foundational narrative devices, I feel compelled to at least briefly lend a critical eye and give a voice to those who have expressed anxiety over these new social roles. It is clear after this analysis that Kyle and UBC have certainly been left in interesting positions. The social processes leading to his sanctification are many. It is not so clear, however, whether this is the ideal situation for the members of UBC past and present. Therefore, this is arguably where I see the most room for further research.

During my own research, two details did immediately come forward regarding this question. First, the sanctification of a Baptist pastor – no matter how ‘emergent’ he may have been – is strikingly ironic, and perhaps even a little hypocritical. So much of Protestant theology and Emergence is a reaction against personalities who are given too much power. And yet, despite this, a community has banded together over the course of a decade to memorialize one man. Second, and perhaps more importantly, a moral dilemma arises in the glorification of a deceased individual. “We have a tendency to place the dead on a pedestal, and that can be so troublesome” (Nash 2015). In some ways, this may actually be harmful to the person’s legacy. “There’s always this question of ‘what would he do?’ and we try to answer that but we can’t really. So it ends up being a debate over what we want to do and he gets roped into it as our justification” (Kelley 2015).

Kyle is therefore used as a mirror for those who are still alive. His sainthood endows his name and his legacy with extreme power, but this power is warped and utilized as individuals see fit for their own ends. Certainly, some of these ends may be positive or

have admirable goals. However, some may veer from this course. Regardless of the direction, the observation remains that Kyle himself no longer has any power over his own identity. He lives only as a memory and a symbol, placed on a pedestal, glorified, and structured so as to provide justification for individual experience, collective identity, and group organization. The social state of the actors post-rite therefore inherently brings about contention. Though none would dare to question Kyle's importance, the degree of his application and the implications of it could potentially warrant deeper analysis and scrutiny. Cultural and charismatic hero though he may be, "Kyle would really hate to know that he's being remembered as perfect, as somehow above the people he so unfortunately left behind. He wouldn't want to be a saint" (Lake 2015).

Jen Lake's words, among others' opinions, on this matter are truly striking. They speak to one of the many implications of social processes such as the one investigated in this thesis. Regardless of such implications, however, the processes themselves are very clear. Through a variety of important aspects and influences, UBC formalized a rite of passage that has irrevocably altered the individual and collective existence of its members. In the same way that saints have been integrated into the structured doctrines of the Orthodox and Catholic faiths for centuries, so too has Kyle been integrated into the very belief system of University Baptist Church.

Like Paul, Nicholas, George, and Michael before him, Kyle operates as both figurehead and inspiration, encouraging the solidification of his words and dedications into foundational dogma. Indeed, it is the imagined spirit of his being, seemingly created and supported by the words he left behind, that has become so integral. Just as Saint Francis of Assisi left the world with the meditative power of his peace prayer, Kyle left UBC with his

now-famous final sermon and benediction, unintentionally inspiring a generation of followers and admirers – devotees to Kyle Lake, patron saint of “Loving God, Embracing Beauty, and Living Life to the Fullest,” modern iteration of our ever present need to establish ourselves, our groups, and our symbols in apparent perpetuity. The King is dead; long live the King.

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Appendices

List of Interviewees

Many thanks to all those involved with this process. Your insights and opinions were invaluable to this analysis. Your vulnerability was well-received and appreciated.

Anthony Angeleri – former UBC member
Paola Angeleri – former UBC member
Matthew Bates – former UBC member, Kyle’s mentee, brother-in-law to Ben Dudley
Harris Bechtol – former UBC member, Kyle’s mentee
Blair Browning – friend of Kyle, UBC lay founder
Jordan Browning – friend of Kyle, former UBC member
Joshua Carney – current UBC teaching pastor
Patrick Dodd – former UBC member
Benjamin Dudley – former UBC community pastor
Holly Duke – current UBC member
Helen Harris – counselor at Baylor University School of Social Work
Tracey Kelley – friend of Kyle, former UBC member, board of Kyle Lake Foundation
Jennifer Gornto Lake – Kyle’s widow, former UBC member
Craig Nash – friend of Kyle, former UBC community pastor
Robyn Panayoton – former UBC member
Jack Parker – current UBC member, former member of David Crowder Band
Jana Parker – current UBC member
Genevieve Peel – former UBC member
Shea Reyenga – former UBC member, Kyle’s mentee
Matthew Singleton – former UBC member, community leader, pastor of re:Church 210 in San Antonio
Gideon Tsang – colleague of Kyle, pastor of Vox Veniae Church in Austin
Jeffrey Walter – current UBC member, father of one of Kyle’s mentees

Ethnographic Interview Question Outline

*Note: These were semi-structured interviews. As such, I attempted to follow the flow of natural conversation. This scaffolding was used only as a guideline to orient the interview and ensure discussion of key points.

Question Set 1 – The first line of questioning will deal with the subject’s relation to University Baptist Church, including but not limited to:

- Years of affiliation with the church
- Nature of affiliation
- Experience within the UBC community

The goal of this line of questioning is to understand the interviewee’s place within the community in order to better contextualize the body of research to be developed.

Question Set 2 – The second line of questioning will deal with the subject’s relation to Kyle Lake and his death, including but not limited to:

- How the subject knew Kyle Lake
- The importance of Lake as a figure in the life of the subject
 - o Both pre- and post-mortem
- Position to and experience with the death event

The goal of the second set is to describe and understand Kyle Lake and his death from the perspective of the subject. It is expected that these conceptualizations will vary from person to person and will come together for a fuller picture of the topic at hand.

Question Set 3 – The third line of questioning will deal with the bereavement and healing process, including but not limited to:

- Subject’s relation to the communal grief structures
- Subject’s participation in the communal grief process
- Subject’s role in the public presentation of grief

The goal of the third set is to deconstruct the grief process into specific patterns and grieving events as witnessed by the subjects in order to delve more deeply into what traits characterized the communal grief.

Question Set 4 – The fourth question set will deal with the subject’s and the public’s understanding of Kyle Lake pre- and post-mortem, including but not limited to:

- How the subject’s view of Kyle Lake changed after his death
- How the public’s knowledge and reception of Kyle Lake changed after his death
- Positive responses in the public
- Negative responses in the public
- How the subject sees the continuation of Kyle Lake in the identity of UBC, if at all

The goal of the fourth set is to analyze more deeply the patterns of identity construction and reconstruction that occurred in the wake of the tragedy.

Written Interview Questionnaire

Age

Hometown

How long have you attended UBC?

How did you hear about UBC?

- Baylor Church Fair
- Social Media
- Friends/Family
- Other

What drew you to UBC?

Their mission
Their community
Their history
Other

Does the date October 30, 2005 hold any significance for you?

Yes No

Is the name Kyle Lake familiar to you? If yes, please continue to the next four questions. If no, please skip ahead to the last question.

Yes No

If yes, what do you know about Kyle Lake? Please be as specific as possible.

If yes, please rank the relevance of Kyle Lake in your perception of the daily life at UBC.

Not relevant at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very Relevant

If yes, please rank the relevance of Kyle Lake in your perception of the identity of UBC.

Not relevant at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very Relevant

If yes, please rank the relevance of Kyle Lake as a figure in your life.

Not relevant at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very Relevant

In your opinion, what characteristics of a person or a community create a powerful and lasting legacy?