Fall 10-2018

Christmas

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Christmas

Holiday Customs

Informant:

My name is Lily Ward. I am 20 years old and a sophomore at Utah State University. I was born and raised in Logan, Utah. Both my parents grew up in Bountiful, Utah and moved here as young adults. My family is unlike the majority of Utahan families. My parents became inactive when they were sixteen—thus, I was not raised L.D.S. Being from a non-religious family, I find the holiday traditions that my extended family practices to be normal, yet strange. “The Connelly Clan,” my mother’s family, consists of 45 extended family members of mine. My mother is the only non-LDS believer in her family which contributes to some of the customs that I have and haven’t witnessed growing up.

Context:

The Church of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) is considered by its members to be established by the Savior Jesus Christ. To members, the Savior is the principle of Mormonism. Because of this, members of the LDS church often believe that their Savior Jesus Christ is the beginning, middle, and end of all things, places, and time. In relation to Christmas, LDS members celebrate December 25th as the birth of Jesus Christ. Every Christmas my extended family and my immediate family get together to celebrate and exchange gifts to our relatives. Their way of celebrating Christmas is much different than that of my immediate family. Because of this, I have slowly gained the knowledge and maturity to understand the intent of their religious customs and rituals during this time. One of the yearly traditions the Connelly’s practice is to put on a nativity play by reenacting the birth of Jesus Christ.

Text:

The nativity play consists of all the young children of the family. It requires them to dress up like Joseph, Mary, baby Jesus, angels, shepherds, and wise men, which are religious figures in the LDS church. Typically, older siblings or cousins help the young children put on their costume and rehearse their assigned lines. In the past, the kids playing these various roles have been too young to memorize their lines or know their cues for entering and leaving the living room (used as a stage). In the past, my involvement in the production is very minimal. I feel this is because I
didn’t grow up as a member of the church and am not active. I am okay with this, as I don’t have to embarrass myself in front of my large family.

**Texture:**

The nativity play reenactment causes a lot of stress, laughter, and joy amongst the adults of the family. Dressing the children and practicing their lines and cues can be stressful and challenging. Once all said is done, the children are embarrassed and confused as to what they should do and what they should say. Meanwhile, the parents are laughing hysterically at the awkward silence of Mary and Joseph, who are intended to relay love and affection. Depending on the year and who is ‘fit’ to fill these rolls, some years go more smoothly, as a few members of the family are avid performers.