Social Factors that Influence Religious Motivation of College-Age LDS Young Adults to Read Religious Texts: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Social Factors that Influence Religious Motivation of College-Age LDS Young Adults to Read Religious Texts: A Qualitative Study

by

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Utah State University, 2011

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This qualitative study investigated the religious motivation of college-age LDS young single adults. In particular, this study sought to answer the following question: “What are the contexts and social factors that influence religious motivation of college-age LDS young adults to study religious texts?” To examine this question, a phenomenological approach was used to explore what participants had in common with feeling motivated to read religious texts. The primary sources of data came from one-on-one interviews that describe the personal experiences and perspectives of 10 college-age LDS young single adults. Sociocultural theory guided the analysis and interpretation of data and findings. Findings indicated the following: (a) regardless of the context, it appeared that involvement in discussions about the scriptures increased the likelihood of an individual feeling motivated to read, (b) even when other contexts included elements that encouraged scripture reading, it appeared that friends strongly influenced whether or
not individuals felt motivated to read scriptures, (c) it appeared that environments of
expectation influenced motivation to read, and (d) it appeared that individuals who spent
time marking and writing in their scriptures felt motivated to read. Based on these
findings, it is recommended that further research be done to explore the following: (a)
What types of discussions influence motivation to read religious texts? (b) What other
religious practices are influenced by friends? (c) How should expectations be
communicated and maintained? (d) Is there a difference in motivation between marking
(coloring) things in the scriptures and writing (journaling) in the scriptures? It is also
important to examine these findings to see if they hold true within other religious
contexts and denominations.

(219 pages)
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to my friends, colleagues, professors, children, parents, wife, and my God.

Dustin R. West
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In seminary they tell you to read 10 minutes a night.
Charlie

I read because...I want to be able to know what [my friends] are talking about.
Marcie

My mom tells me “Maybe you should go read your scriptures.”
Paul

I read because...I want to stay caught up with the people around me.
Bonnie

As I talked to Charlie, Marcie, Paul, and Bonnie, all college-age young adults, about their motivation to study scriptures, it was evident that their motivation to read religious texts was significantly influenced by their social context and relationships. Because of my position as a religious educator and writer for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), I have sought to better understand what motivates young people to participate in personal reading of religious texts. In order to better understand this phenomenon, I have conducted both informal surveys and two pilot studies.

During the pilot studies, I asked participants to describe what motivated them to participate in reading religious texts. The data that emerged in these pilot studies revealed that social contexts and relationships were a significant influence on religious motivation. Participants almost always responded to religious motivation questions with some reference to social environment, or social relationships, as key elements of motivation. I noticed in particular that relationships with others like family, friends, and God emerged
as themes that strongly influenced religious motivation. These findings led me to wonder, what social contexts and relationships influence religious motivation?

**Statement of the Problem**

All people are motivated to some degree or another to perform certain actions. Approximately 26% of people living in the United States report that they are motivated to perform religious tasks or rituals on a regular basis (Harris Poll, 2006). Because people report they feel motivated to perform religious acts or rituals, some have classified this as religious motivation. This logic has led several researchers to assume that religious motivation can be defined using conventional motivation theories and assumptions.

However, studies have shown that religious motivation cannot be explained using current motivation theories (Brown & Cullen, 2006; Byrd, Hageman, & Isle, 2007; Donahue, 1985; Gorsuch, 1994; Jackson & Coursey, 1988; Lazar & Kravetz, 2005). Therefore, separate research has been conducted to discover what factors influence religious motivation. These studies have been able to identify social contexts and relationships as significant factors affecting religious motivation (Baring, 2008; Barrett, Pearson, Muller, & Frank, 2007; Lazar, 2004; Lazar & Kravetz, 2005; Lazar, Kravetz, & Fredrich-Kedem, 2002; Welch & Barrish, 1982).

While researchers have identified social contexts and relationships as significant factors influencing religious motivation, no studies exist that explore what social contexts and relationships influence religious motivation (Yamane, 2000). Therefore, this study explored social contexts and relationships that influence religious motivation.
Particularly, this study explored those social contexts and relationships that influence motivation to perform a specific religious task: reading religious texts.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to understand what social factors influence motivation of college-age students, who are members of the LDS church, to participate in personal reading of religious texts. As part of that purpose, this study fills a gap in the literature regarding religious motivation. Currently, no studies exist that examine the contexts and situations that influence religious motivation to read religious texts. While some studies contend that social influences do affect religious motivation, none of these studies have examined what social contexts influence religious motivation.

Therefore, this exploration followed Yamane’s (2000) suggestion to develop a study designed to provide an open narrative and rich description that allows the emergence of what social interactions and contexts influence religious motivation. A qualitative approach will help provide understanding to religious motivation from the perspectives of those involved and to contextualize issues in their particular social and political environment (Glesne, 2006). Such an approach is rarely seen in the religious motivation literature.

An additional purpose of this study was to allow the researcher and others to more clearly understand the phenomenon or “essence” of what social interactions and contexts influence young people to be motivated to read religious texts (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, from an ontological perspective, an additional purpose of this study is to
understand better what it is like for someone to experience social influence that motivates them to read religious texts (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Finally, from a practical purpose standpoint, understanding the relationship between religious motivation and social factors could supply valuable knowledge to help teachers, leaders, and parents understand how social and environmental interactions influence religious motivation. Having such knowledge could lead to implementations of policies, procedures, and practices designed to create environments and interactions conducive to increasing motivation. In addition, this research study provides valuable themes, descriptions, and interpretations which may lead to additional research questions and studies.

**Research Questions**

The main question of this research is to understand “What are the contexts and social factors that influence religious motivation of college-age LDS young adults to study religious texts?” In order to acquire more information-rich understanding of this phenomenon, data was collected from ten college-age LDS persons who are experiencing motivation to study religious texts (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2006). These questions are designed to understand both the textural and structural descriptions of this phenomenon, which allows description of the “lived experience” of the participants and convey an overall “essence” of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas explained that two general questions should guide research in phenomenology: (a) What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? and (b) What contexts or situations
have typically influenced or affected your experiences with the phenomenon? Therefore the main questions for this research were as follows.

1. What are the experiences of people who are motivated to study religious texts?

2. How have contexts or situations typically influenced or affected experiences with scripture study motivation?

Limitations

The qualitative methodological approach of this study was designed to describe the essence of the phenomenon of individual’s motivation to read religious texts. As such, this study approach did not lend itself to generalizations or descriptions of causal relationships. The nature of this qualitative study was to explore a richer and deeper meaning into the hermeneutical phenomenology of the lived experience of the participants (van Manen, 1990). Hermeneutical phenomenology is an interpretive process that seeks to bring understanding and disclosure of phenomena through language (Laverty, 2003). This type of research focuses on meaning that arises through interpretive interaction with the text (Allen, 1995). It places a unique emphasis upon the concrete experiences of the subjects and an epistemology closely linked to a philosophy of perception (Ihde, 1971).

Therefore, this study examined people’s perceptions about what social contexts and relationships affect their religious motivation (Cohen, Kahn, & Steeves, 2000). These descriptions along with other research can be appropriately used to help inform and
increase the overall understanding of the complex and varied aspects of the social influence on religious motivation to read religious texts. It does not however assert that the body of knowledge gleaned from this individual qualitative study is indicative of the outcomes or conclusions of such research in either religious or other motivational contexts.

All of the data, analysis, and conclusions of this study were based within the context of 10 college-age LDS participants currently living in Utah. The motivational experiences studied were unique to the context of each of the participants’ lived experience. Therefore, this data and any of its descriptions and recommendations may not reflect the motivation of those within different social environs and lived experiences.

In all of this, it must be understood that the researcher is situated in the context of this research as an interpreter of descriptions (Creswell, 2007). In other words, the researcher functions as the research tool mediating between different meanings of the participants lived experiences (Glesne, 2006; van Manen, 1990). Assuming this position is at the heart of effective qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1995).

**Delimitations**

Some may wonder why a study on religious motivation does not explore more deeply psychological and sociological motivational theories within the literature. This study does not address those theories because research indicates that religious motivation is a unique form of motivation that does not “fit” within psychological or sociological motivational theories (Beck & Miller, 2000; Brown & Cullen, 2006; Byrd et al., 2007;
Gorsuch, 1994; Lazar et al., 2002; Schaefer & Gorsuch, 1991). On the other hand, research does indicate that religious motivation is strongly influenced by social factors such as environments, experiences, and social interactions (Baring, 2008; Barret et al., 2007; Lazar, 2004; Lazar & Kravetz, 2005; Lazar et al., 2002; Sheldon, 2006; Welch & Barrish, 1982). Therefore, instead of focusing on psychological and sociological theories of motivation, this study focuses on sociocultural theory to help describe the phenomenon of motivation to read religious texts within the social texts of the participants (Vygotsky, 1981).

This research was also conducted without using established religious motivation surveys, scales, and other measurements to determine religious motivation of participants. Research has shown these surveys, scales, and measurements can be unreliable and biased to unique religions or contexts (Byrd et al., 2007; Cohen, Hall, Koeing, & Meador, 2005; Jackson & Coursey, 1988; Sheldon, 2006; Yamane, 2000). Donahue (1985) argued that the intrinsic and extrinsic topology of these surveys and measurements may not adequately describe the ontology of religious motivation. In other words, the dichotomous nature of these surveys and measurements cannot fully describe the complex nature of religious motivation.

This study also focused exclusively on an LDS sample of participants. It may be argued that including participants of other faiths may add depth and credibility to the study, but that may not necessarily be true. First, an exploration to describe religious motivation to read religious texts within an LDS context allows the researcher to describe the textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon within that particular milieu.
This allows the researcher to develop clusters of meaning within a specific context (Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, the LDS culture is unique and the purpose of this study is to understand how social contexts and relationships affect religious motivation in this particular environment. Thus a homogenous sample is appropriate in pursuit of a better understanding of this unique culture (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, by limiting participants to those of the LDS faith the researcher can understand better what it is like for someone of the LDS faith to be motivated to read religious texts (Polkinghorne, 1989).

**Definitions**

The unique context and setting of this qualitative study of college-age young adult members of the LDS church requires the use of language and terms that may be unfamiliar to readers who are foreign to the setting, context, and culture of the LDS faith and community. Therefore, the following definitions are given to help readers understand this unique setting and context. The definitions were taken from statements posted on the official website of the LDS Church and can be found on lds.org.

**Scriptures:** When holy men of God write or speak by the power of the Holy Ghost, their words shall be scripture. The official, canonized scriptures of the Church, often called the standard works, are the *Bible*, the *Book of Mormon*, the *Doctrine and Covenants*, and the *Pearl of Great Price*. This definition is unique to this context and may change when exploring other faiths or religions.

**Scripture Study:** Scripture study generally refers to the time spent by an individual
reading religious text.

_Seminary:_ Throughout the world, Latter-day Saints ages 14-18 participate in seminary, which provides weekday instruction from the scriptures. Note: seminary within the LDS faith is not an institution designed to prepare professional clergy; rather, it is a religion class designed for young members of the LDS faith.

_Institute of Religion:_ Institutes of religion provide weekday courses in a variety of gospel subjects for Latter-day Saints ages 18 through 30.

_Wards:_ Members of the Church are organized into congregations that meet together frequently for spiritual and social enrichment. Large congregations are called wards. Each ward is presided over by a bishop, assisted by two counselors.

_Stake:_ A group of congregations or wards, generally about 3,000 to 5,000 members in 5-10 congregations.

_Bishop:_ A man who has been ordained and set apart as the presiding high priest for a ward or congregation. He has overall responsibility for ministering the temporal and spiritual affairs of the congregation.

_Stake President:_ Each stake is presided over by a stake president, assisted by two counselors.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Motivation is a complex topic that has been debated and studied for hundreds of years. In this review of literature, motivation is defined and a broad description of its historical roots as understood from both sociological and psychological perspectives will be presented. This review also explores how these motivational theories have been shown to be inadequate tools to describe religious motivation. An investigation of the evolution of religious motivation studies is also presented. This evolution shows that current studies are beginning to recognize the influence of social contexts on religious motivation. While the literature now recognizes the importance of social context it does not seek to explain what social contexts or situations influence religious motivation. To conclude this review, a case is made to describe how this study seeks to expand the religious motivation literature by examining what social contexts influence religious motivation through sociocultural theory.

Motivation

Because motivation is such a complex topic, a multiplicity of definitions for motivation has emerged. While many of these definitions are appropriate, this study will use the following definition for motivation because it can also apply to the context of religious motivation: motivation is the processes that determine whether someone will engage in a task, the amount of effort they will expend, the length of time they will persevere, and the persistence they show when obstacles are encountered (Jenkins, Breen,
& Lindsay, 2003).

Even back during the time of 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} centuries, people were curious about motivation (Cooper, 1999). During this era, Socrates and Plato theorized motivation. They argued that at least one of the three following elements needed to be present in order for a person to be motivated: (a) reason, (b) appetite, and (c) spirit (Cooper, 1999). Much later in the 1800s, Freud introduced the idea that motivation was based on innate predispositions (Vecchio, 1995). In his view, humans can be motivated at times by internal reasons that are not always readily apparent. In other words, things beyond a person’s control motivate his or her actions (Saunders, 2005).

In the twentieth century, many other researchers and scholars began to study and theorize motivation. For example, Maslow (1954) proposed that motivation originates from the needs of individuals to be self-actualized. This refers to the constant drive some experience to reach the potential within themselves and to develop their individual inherent talents and capabilities (Saunders, 2005). Patterson (2001) described this motivation as man striving to develop an adequate self. Maslow (1956) studied the phenomena of motivation extensively and found that motivated people often were those who had developed deep interpersonal relationships, but who also enjoyed solitude and privacy.

Rogers’ (1969) findings have expanded the ideas and findings of Maslow. He proposed that motivation grows out of the need to be more fully functioning (Saunders, 2005). His extensive experience in psychotherapy led him to the conviction that each individual manifests a forward moving tendency (Patterson, 2001). In other words,
motivation comes as a person strives to become an “optimal person.” Rogers also contended that people who are motivated have an internal locus of control that propels them to move forward and seek improvement.

Glasser (1968) began his work on motivation about the same time as Rogers. He also focused on the needs of individuals as the impetus for motivation. However, he argued that there exist only two basic needs: the need for love (to love and be loved) and the need for self-worth (to feel worthwhile to others and to ourselves; Saunders, 2005). Glasser found that most people will go to great lengths to fulfill these two basic needs. Interestingly, he found that measurable differences in motivation were not an indication of differences of needs, but rather were indications of the differences in people’s abilities to fulfill those two basic needs (Saunders, 2005).

More recent studies in motivation have led to the conclusion that motivation originates from self-concept (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985). This idea stems from earlier research from Bandura (1977), which postulates motivation as a manifestation of an individual’s belief in their abilities to accomplish certain tasks. If a person has confidence they can accomplish certain tasks, then they will be motivated to complete that specific task (Saunders, 2005). This type of self-efficacy considers motivation as an internally regulated stimulus.

Current motivational studies also extol internally regulated stimulus. The self-determination theory was designed to describe how motivation is fluid and can change from external motivation to internally regulated stimulus (Deci & Ryan, 2002). This theory focuses on the degree to which an individual’s behavior is self-endorsed and self-
determined. According to Deci and Gagne (2005) this type of autonomous behavior is synonymous with intrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation, according to self-determination theory, is important because it tends to lead to greater long-term persistence in life goals which generally have to do with personal development (Deci & Ryan, 2008). In addition, self-determination theory suggests intrinsically motivated actions provide vitalizing power to the individual. According to the theory, intrinsic motivation represents the prototypic instance of self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Self-determination theory is concerned with the individual’s processes required to reach intrinsic motivation, or autonomous action (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The theory illustrates these processes using a continuum describing levels of motivation organized by the degree to which the motivations emanate from the self. Self-determination theory posits a controlled to autonomous continuum to describe the degree to which an external regulation has been internalized (Gagne & Deci, 2005). While this process may occur in stages, the theory does not suggest that it is a developmental continuum in the sense that people must progress through each stage in order to reach the next stage (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Behavioral motivation can be placed at any point along the continuum depending on prior experiences and current situational factors.

However, self-determination theory also assumes that behavioral motivation is based on natural growth patterns (Ryan & Deci, 2000). For example, according to the theory, behavioral motivation will move toward intrinsic motivation simply because cognitive capacities increase and ego development is enhanced as a person matures.
Furthermore, Ryan and Deci argued there is evidence that children’s general regulatory style tends to become more internalized or self-regulated over time. Therefore, this theory focuses on the regulatory styles of motivation and how the ability to internalize influences that motivation.

In summary, it is clear that many researchers have sought and are seeking to better understand motivation. While these theories may describe motivation in some contexts, they may not hold true in all contexts. This is particularly true with religious motivation. The following section uses literature to illustrate how motivational theories are not sufficient to describe religious motivation.

**Motivation and Religious Motivation**

As religious motivation became a more studied phenomenon in the mid-twentieth century, many researchers and scholars have sought to employ motivational theories to describe religious motivation. For example, Allport and Ross’s (1967) cardinal study on religious motivation introduced an extrinsic/intrinsic motivation scale to provide a model of explanation for religious motivation. This scale has been used in the majority of religious motivation studies since that time. In fact, just from 1967-1985, more than seventy religious motivation religious studies were conducted using Allport and Ross’ religious extrinsic/intrinsic motivation scale (Donahue, 1985). Donahue’s meta-analysis of these studies showed that while a majority of religion motivation studies used this scale the intrinsic and extrinsic paradigm cannot adequately describe the multifaceted complexity of religious motivation.
After Donahue’s (1985) meta-analysis of studies that used Allport and Ross’ (1967) religious motivation scale, numerous other scales and measurement techniques began to be developed in a quest to adequately describe religious motivation (Batson & Flory, 1990; Brown & Cullen; 2006; O’Conner & Vallerand, 2001; Wong-McDonald & Gorsuch, 2004). Most, if not all of these measurements, rely on some form of the intrinsic/extrinsic model. Recently, Watson, Hood, and Morris (2003) claimed they had developed a “universal version of the intrinsic-extrinsic scale.”

Gorsuch (1994) conducted significant research to evaluate the usefulness of measuring religious motivation using an extrinsic/intrinsic theory model. He found that this approach was severely limited because it does not address the influence of mystical or spiritual experiences. These limitations led him to question the viability of the self-determination theory to describe religious motivation. Additionally, Gorsuch hypothesized the need for a different theory to describe religious motivation because of the complex nature and variableness found therein. Lazar and Kravetz (2005) also challenged the notion that religious motivation could be described using the dichotomous nature of the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Their findings indicate that religious motivation is not measurable using this dichotomous schema, because each religious context values private and public religious practices differently. Despite Lazar and Kravetz’s and Gorsuch’s findings and hypothesis, many religious motivation studies are still based on the intrinsic/extrinsic model.

Others have examined additional motivational theories in the context of religious motivation. Recently Brown and Cullen (2006) examined religious motivation using
Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Their findings indicate that Maslow’s motivation theory falls short because of the following three significant conclusions: (a) Maslow’s hierarchy does not adequately describe religious motivation, (b) religious motivation is not tied into a particular psychological need, and (c) self-actualization may not accurately describe the highest level of religious motivation. This means that motivational needs theories may not adequately describe religious motivation.

Wenger (2007) also examined motivational needs theories in the context of religious motivation. His findings indicate that self-efficacy may affect performance of public religious rituals, but it may not necessarily describe religious motivation. Thus, motivational theories that rely on self-efficacy claims may also be debunked.

While some researchers continue to try to “fit” motivational theories with religious motivation, others have begun to question this leap from psychological or sociological motivation theories to religious motivation theories (Jackson & Coursey, 1988). Jackson and Coursey found that established motivation theories and tools were not consistent when applied in differing religious contexts. Sheldon (2006) also found that these theories weren’t sufficient to describe religious motivation because there were significant differences in measurements of motivation between those of different faiths.

In summary, clearly some religious motivation researchers have begun to question whether motivation theories and models are adequate enough to describe religious motivation. Byrd and colleagues (2007) argued that religious motivation phenomenon will require theory and investigation that is outside the realm of current social and psychological models. Their findings indicate that aside from social contexts and
interactions, religious motivation had virtually no relationship with other types of motivation. This means two things: (a) religious motivation is unique and (b) social contexts and interactions are important influences in both religious and nonreligious motivation.

**Evolution in Religious Motivation Studies**

Even as some have begun to question the viability of using established motivation theories and models to describe religious motivation, others have begun to change the focus of their studies. While some studies still focus on individual attributes of religiously motivated people, others have begun to find a significant connection between social interaction and religious motivation. Religious motivation research has begun to show that religious motivation is strongly influenced by ethnic identity, social activity, family activity, and upbringing (Lazar & Kravetz, 2005). Welch and Barrish’s (1982) findings similarly show that these social influences are strongly influenced by life-cycle variations. In other words, as individuals mature they encounter various and changing environments that influence their religious motivation. For example, Barret and colleagues’ (2007) findings indicated the significant influence friends have on both public and private religious practice of adolescents. Later in college, social influences affect religious motivation differently. Results show that college students generally attribute their religious motivation with a desire to serve others and a desire to develop a relationship with God and because they want to become a part of and contribute to their community (Baring, 2008; Welch & Barrish, 1982).
Lazar and colleagues (2002) findings substantiate the role of social contexts with religious motivation. They found that religious motivation could be sorted in five distinct categories: belief in a divine order, ethnic identity, social activity, family activity, and upbringing. Four of their five categories focus on social contexts. Lazar’s (2004) findings indicate that differences in social activity of individuals within the same religious group were associated with differences in religious motivation. In more recent work, Lazar and Kravetz (2005) findings corroborate earlier findings that show that family and ethnic practices significantly influence religious motivation.

Clearly, religious motivation research has begun to focus on the influence of social context. Paradoxically however, most of this research is still conducted using closed-ended surveys or questionnaires. While this enables quantitative evaluation and offers ease in running statistical applications, such an approach only allows researchers to provide causal explanations about some social phenomena (Glesne, 2006). It does not allow them to explore the social contexts and interactions that affect religious motivation.

Yamane (2000) argued that such an approach to study religious motivation is flawed because religious motivation or experience does not necessarily conform with statistical operations. He argued that differing social experiences can lead to a diversity of experiences that make it difficult to designate normality. Others hypothesize that religious motivation must be viewed not only through multiple variables but also through different conditional contexts (Gorsuch, 1994). For example, Gorsuch’s findings show that those who grew up within a religion have substantially different religious motivation than those who came into that same religion later in life.
Furthermore, Yamane (2000) argued that religious experiences could mean different things to different people depending on their cultural and social environments. In fact, Jackson and Coursey (1988) found that generalizations of long standing beliefs about religious motivation were inaccurate when applied to different religions. Other research studies indicate that while religious motivation is strongly connected to belief in divine order and religious identity, religious motivation is also strongly influenced by social and family factors (Lazar et al., 2002). For example, Lazar’s (2004) findings show that individuals of the same faith who grew up in different countries score differently on religious motivation scales.

Even as researchers are beginning to recognize the social context in religious motivation, many are still using quantitative approaches to explain religious motivation (Yamane, 2000). Maclean, Walker, and Matsuba (2004) argued that quantitative measurements of religious motivation may not in actuality measure religious motivation, but rather illustrate manifestations of other phenomenon like personality or psychological traits. No wonder Byrd and colleagues (2007) claimed that religious motivation phenomenon could not be adequately described within current statistical or theoretical models.

Yamane (2000) also discounted current models used in quantifying religious experience. He argues that such an approach tells nothing about the meaning of the experience for the person involved. Furthermore, such an approach to religious motivation is inadequate because survey research cannot describe the meaning of human feelings and existence (Yamane, 2000). Additional studies indicated the complexity of
understanding the feelings of religious motivation because these motivations are strongly connected to multiple variables (Wong-McDonald & Gorsuch, 2004). As an example, feelings of belonging influence religious motivation of both the public and private religious practices of adolescents (Barret et al., 2007). Feelings of fear also influence religious motivation (Lazar, 2006; O’Conner & Vallerand, 2001) Religious motivation has also been found to be influenced by feelings of social morality, meaning, and accomplishment (Gorsuch, Mylyaganam, & Gorsuch, 1997; Wenger, 2007).

In summary then, while current religious research does show a connection between social influence and religious motivation, it does not clearly show the relationship between the two. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to expand the current literature and seek to describe what social contexts influence religious motivation. Qualitative methods are appropriate to study this influence, because these methods are used to understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved and to contextualize issues in their particular setting (Glesne, 2006). Sociocultural theory will be used to provide the lens to describe the influence of social contexts or situations on religious motivation.

**Theoretical Framework**

Because qualitative methodology abandons any notion people are abstract self-contained entities (Brown, Collins, & Dugiud, 1989), and in order to examine the relationship of religious motivation and social influence, this study will examine what social contexts influence religious motivation of reading religious texts using Vygotsky’s
(1981) sociocultural theory. Sociocultural theory is based on the idea that people acquire the content of their thinking through culture and that social environment accounts almost entirely for the development of higher-level cognitive processes such as language, memory, and abstract thinking (Vygotsky, 1981).

In the context of this theory, Tudge and Scrimsher (2003) defined culture as the product of person’s social life and public activity, and people change by virtue of the experiences that they previously had with their culture, as well as the meaning those experiences have had for them. Lave (1991) called this change in people cultural transmission, which implies that culture is a body of knowledge to be transmitted. Brown and colleagues (1989) explained that this transmission of meaning and purpose are socially constructed through negotiations among present and past members. This transmission can happen both consciously and/or unconsciously.

Tudge and Scrimsher (2003) argued that these conscious or unconscious transmissions take place in every environment not just in particular contexts. Within those different environments, people transform the internalized interaction on the basis of their own characteristics, experiences and existing knowledge. This process of internalization, or learning, is reciprocal and is created in the course of interaction where both partners change. Vygotsky (1981) claimed such internalization and interaction comes as a direct result of cultural tools. Tudge and Scrimsher explained how cultural tools do not simply facilitate processes that would have developed regardless, but utterly transforms mental functioning. Vygotsky stated that it is through others that we develop into ourselves. Tudge and Scrimsher’s explanation sums up the basic idea of
sociocultural theory: development is created in the course of interaction between people and the environment.

Because sociocultural theory seeks to explain how people develop through interactions and environment, this theory is used to help provide a framework for understanding the phenomenological relationship between social contexts and religious motivation. This framework will allow the researcher to develop themes for discussion as well as interpretation of data. The next chapter describes this methodological approach.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the qualitative approach to this study. The first section of this chapter briefly describes the pilot studies that led to the creation of this study. The second section explains why a phenomenological approach is justified in this instance. The third section discusses why sociocultural theory is an appropriate lens for this study. Following Creswell’s (2007) advice, the fourth section of this study is designated to describe the role of the researcher. The fifth section provides an explanation of the methodological approach of this phenomenological study including: sampling, data collection, analysis and interpretation, textural and structural descriptions, and the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Finally, issues of trustworthiness of this study are addressed.

Pilot Studies

Because this current study is the product of two pilot studies conducted by the researcher, a brief review of those studies is presented here. Both of the studies were qualitative in nature and used small sample sizes of two and three participants, respectively. The first study was a novice approach at qualitative research, but the findings led to the refined exploration of the second pilot study. The second study was IRB approved and conducted to field test the possibility of expanding it into a dissertation study. The conclusion of the second pilot study is contained in Appendix A because it serves as the springboard to this study.
The first study was conducted with the help of another graduate student and professor at Utah State University. After many lengthy discussions, a study was designed to determine why college-age students participate in study of religious texts. Two participants were purposely chosen to participate in this research because they regularly studied religious texts. Each participant was interviewed and asked the following questions.

1. Why do you frequently study your scriptures?
2. What’s motivating you to do this?
3. Has this always been a motivating factor?
4. How has your motivation changed over time?
5. What do you get out of scripture study?

The purpose of the pilot study was to explore why college-age young adults read religious texts. The findings indicated that participants were motivated to read religious texts because of relationships and/or social contexts. Both participants explained that friends, church leaders, and parents influenced their desire to study religious texts.

Because of these findings a second pilot study was developed to examine more closely what social factors influenced college-age young adults to study religious texts. For this study, the researcher worked closely with qualitative methodologist Sherry Marx to develop questions and a format that would provide for a greater exploration into this subject. Three participants, who were chosen because of their motivation to read religious texts regularly, participated in a one-on-one in-depth interview with the researcher. The following questions were refined both from the first pilot study and based on
recommendations from Sherry Marx (personal communication, December 28, 2009):

1. Why do you frequently study the scriptures?
2. What is motivating you to do this?
3. How has your motivation changed over time?
4. How have other people influenced your desire to study scriptures?
5. What experiences have influenced your desire to read scriptures?
6. How has your family influenced your desire to read scriptures?
7. How have your friends influenced your desire to read scriptures?
8. How has your relationship with God influenced your desire to read scriptures?

The results of this study indicated that social context did have a significant effect on religious motivation of participants. In fact, participants described being particularly influenced by friends and family members. Because these findings were based on such a small number of participants over such a short period of time, a larger more intense study was needed to explore this phenomenon.

**Phenomenology**

In order to understand what social contexts influence the motivation of college-age LDS young adults to read religious texts, this study used a qualitative approach known as phenomenology. This type of study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences as they have felt motivated by social contexts to study religious texts (Creswell, 2007). As a phenomenologist, the researcher’s task is to describe what all participants have in common as they experience this phenomenon of
motivation to study religious texts. Thus, the basic purpose of this type of study is to reduce individual experiences with scripture study motivation to a description of the universal essence of the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990).

Certain philosophical assumptions of phenomenology are important in this discussion. In fact, Creswell (2007) argued that any study using phenomenology should include some discussion about philosophical presuppositions. At the philosophical core are the assumptions that (a) the study focuses on lived experiences, (b) those lived experiences are conscious experiences, and (c) a phenomenological approach develops descriptions of those experiences and makes interpretations (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990).

Along with the philosophical presuppositions, it is also important to describe the type of phenomenology that is used in this study. Generally speaking there are two types to choose from: hermeneutical and empirical (Creswell, 2007). Empirical phenomenology requires that the researcher bracket their experience and provide only descriptions of a phenomenon with no interpretation (Moustakas, 1994). Such an empirical approach does not align with the purposes of this study. Therefore, a hermeneutical approach is used because it focuses on lived experiences and on interpreting human interactions with culture (Laverty, 2003; van Manen, 1990).

Furthermore, hermeneutical phenomenology is appropriate for this study because it involves research exploring how people go about understanding the world in which they live (Cohen et al., 2000). What this means in practical terms is that this study explores how people interpret their religious motivation and make meaning of their
experiences. Laverty (2003) contended that this interpretation and meaning making is indelibly related to cultural, social, and historical contexts.

This interpretive experience places emphasis on both concrete experiences and on participant perceptions (Ihde, 1971). Using this approach the researcher becomes the research tool through which interpretation is performed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Glesne, 2006). The interpretation of human interactions with culture is quintessential to understanding the motivation for reading religious texts (Laverty, 2003).

**Sociocultural Theory and Hermeneutical Phenomenology**

Choosing to take a hermeneutical approach complements the choice to use sociocultural theory as the theoretical underpinning of this study. Themes used in the descriptions and analysis of this study are based on the theoretical tenets of sociocultural theory. Thus, this study seeks to explore the “texts of life” in hermeneutical phenomenology (Creswell, 2007) by interpreting those texts within the context and discourse of sociocultural theory (van Manen, 1990). van Manen (1994) contended that phenomenology’s basic philosophical assumption is that it is the study of the lived experiences of persons.

The premises of sociocultural theory match this basic philosophical underpinning of phenomenology. For example, DavyDov (1995) contends that sociocultural theory demonstrates that human personality and behaviors have specific historical character, content, and form. In other words, people acquire their cognitive processes through the lived experience of their culture and social environment (Vygotsky, 1981). Tudge and
Scrimsher (2003) also contend that sociocultural theory describes how people develop meaning of their lived experiences as they assimilate new experiences in the context of their previous experiences. Furthermore, they argue that people are a product of their lived experiences.

According to phenomenological assumptions, those lived experience must also be conscious ones. Stewart and Mickunas (1990) called this the intentionality of consciousness. In other words, reality is inextricably related to one’s consciousness of it. This matches the ontological belief that accompanies qualitative research which portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing (Glesne, 2006). Glesne further explained that in this context what is “real” is relative to the specific location and people involved. The idea of context is again mirrored in the tenets of the philosophical assumptions of phenomenological research. Stewart and Mickunas state that reality is only perceived within the meaning of the experience of the individual.

Interestingly, sociocultural theory contends that this “reality” results from cultural assimilation of the lived experience which occurs consciously and/or unconsciously (Brown et al., 1989; Lave, 1991). This may seem paradoxical with the phenomenological assumption that the lived experiences are consciousness ones (van Manen, 1990). However, Glesne (2006) contended that the qualitative epistemology holds that one comes to know realities through interactions and subjectivist explorations with participants about their perceptions. Therefore, not only does this phenomenological study give voice to participants, it allows them to be reflective and consciously represent their lived experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).
This conscious representation again adheres to the tenets of sociocultural theory. DavyDov (1995) explained that culture is internalized and assimilated through systems of signs and symbols created by culture. As people seek to describe their lived experiences and make them “conscious,” they mediate their experiences similarly through cultural signs and symbols (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003). In so doing, the researcher acknowledges and understands that his interactions with participants also influences the way they create meaning of their lived experiences (DavyDov, 1995; Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003; Vygotsky, 1981).

**Role of the Researcher**

Not only are participant realities influenced by researcher interactions, sociocultural theory also contends that their interactions with the researcher influences his understanding and his reality (DavyDov, 1995; Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003). This is an important admission by the researcher in qualitative research and within the paradigm of hermeneutical phenomenology. Thus while performing interpretations of the descriptions as van Manen (1990) suggested, this research process is influenced not only by the lens of sociocultural theory but by the personal lens of the researcher as well. It should also be clear that researcher rapport, subjectivity, and reflexivity influences interpretations of participants’ descriptions (Glesne, 2006; van Manen).

**Rapport**

In this study, rapport is defined as a distance-reducing, anxiety-quieting, trust building mechanism (Glesne, 2006). To build such rapport, the researcher sought to
interact with participants in a very kind and open manner (Marx, 2006). Marx suggested that researchers who are respectful and candid about their own experiences can engender a healthy rapport with participants. This candidness allows the researcher to get the type of data required by the study (Freilich, 1977).

**Subjectivity**

While some discourses in research view subjectivity in negative contexts, qualitative researchers assert that subjectivity, once recognized, can contribute to research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Wolcott, 1995). In this study, being attuned to emotions enabled the researcher to identify when subjectivity is being engaged (Glesne, 2006). The researcher used his feelings to inquire into his perspectives and interpretations and to shape new questions through re-examining assumptions. By doing this the researcher was able to discern more readily the cues that ultimately helped him understand those he studied (Kleinman & Copp, 1993). It should also be made clear that monitoring subjectivity is not the same as controlling for subjectivity (Glesne, 2006). While the researcher did not try to keep subjectivity out of this research he monitored it, which increased awareness to how it strengthens the study.

In order to monitor subjectivity the researcher used a field journal to record and analyze his feelings and thoughts as he conducts, describes, and interprets descriptions. In addition, in Appendix B, “Background of the Researcher,” a bracketing interview is included that provides for additional understanding of his subjectivity and research perspective.

The researcher also used intersubjectivity to help monitor his own subjectivity.
Intersubjectivity is defined as a combination of the subjective input of all people involved in the research project. This combined subjectivity guided the research process and content (Glesne, 2006). In particular, participants used their subjectivity as they viewed transcripts, descriptions, and interpretations of the collected data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Myeroff, 1979). This allowed the researcher’s subjectivity to be verifiable by others (Glesne, 2006). Glesne contends that negotiation of subjectivities is ongoing with the option for values, attitudes, and understandings of both researcher and participants to be changed through the research process.

**Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is also an important step to monitor subjectivity. Patton (2002) describes reflexivity as self-awareness, political/cultural consciousness, and ownership of one’s perspective. Reflexivity is more than just being reflective; rather it means that the researcher is just as concerned with the research process as he is about the data he is obtained (Glesne, 2006). The researcher also followed Glesne’s suggestion to ask questions of the process all along the path of research. The researcher asked questions of himself and others along the way and recorded questions and responses in the research journal. Reason (1994) explained that this type of reflexivity means the researcher conducts research both on the topic and on himself. Patton’s (2002) list of reflexive questions were used to guide the type of questions asked in this process. Patton’s questions are listed in Appendix C.
Methodological Approach

The phenomenological research paradigm guided the methodological approach used in this study. The eight major procedural steps of phenomenology are as follows: (a) determine whether the research problem is best examined in a phenomenological approach, (b) identify a phenomenon of interest to study, (c) recognize and specify philosophical assumptions, (d) collect data from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon, (e) ask participants two broad questions as well as other open-ended questions, (f) analyze and interpret data, (g) write textural and structural descriptions, and (h) write a description or the essence of the phenomenon (Dukes, 1984; Giorgi, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989; Tesch, 1990). The first three procedural steps have been outlined in prior sections of this proposal, so this section focuses on steps four through eight.

Sampling

Having come thus far, the next methodological step in this study was to determine an appropriate sample. In order to understand what social contexts influence some college-age young people to feel motivated to read religious texts, those who are currently motivated to read were selected as participants for this study. The researcher determined a strategy to purposefully sample individuals that best informed him about the phenomenon of motivation to read religious texts. Such a selection constituted a “criterion sampling” (Creswell, 2007). In other words, because the study described a phenomenon, individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon and can articulate their lived experiences were selected.
Typically, in phenomenological research, a sample size of 5 to 25 participants is required to provide sufficient data to develop themes and create both a textural and structural description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Boyd (2001) suggested that 2-10 participants would make a sufficient sample size in phenomenological research. Morse (1994) suggested that six participants constitute an appropriate sample size. Creswell suggests using ten participants. It has been argued, however, that using a small sample size of less than ten in phenomenological research could lead to unstable findings (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 1998). Thus, in selecting the number of participants for this study, the researcher followed Creswell’s advice and selected ten participants.

According to Creswell, ten is sufficient to describe the essence of a phenomenon. However, due to the complexity of phenomenological research, the researcher examined the data from the ten participants to determine whether the data is saturated. Data was saturated because no new information could be found that added to the researcher’s understanding of a particular theme or category in the findings (Creswell, 2007). Because the researcher found the data was saturated after interviews with the ten participants, he conducted two more interviews with two new participants and found that no new data appeared. Because no new data appeared, the researcher considered the data saturated.

In order to determine those who engage in personal reading of religious texts, the researcher asked bishops from Northern Utah to identify undergraduates in their congregation who read religious texts at least five days per week. A bishop is an ecclesiastical leader who oversees a large number of LDS members in a particular geographical region. Because a bishop may not have regular personal contact with these
undergraduates, the researcher also contacted previous seminary teachers of the identified undergraduates. Seminary teachers were asked to verify whether those undergraduates identified by bishops are those who read religious texts at least five days per week. After potential participants were identified, the researcher contacted individual undergraduates to determine their willingness to participate in the study (see Appendix D for letter of information). The individuals chosen to participate confirmed that they are currently participating in reading religious texts and expressed a willingness to participate. The participants represent an extreme case sampling (Glesne, 2006) for religious motivation because they are currently motivated to read religious texts at least 5 days per week.

**Data Collection**

Polkinghorne (1989) asserted that data collection in phenomenology is centered in personal one-on-one in-depth interviews. Therefore, each participant was interviewed twice for about one hour each time. The first interview was designed to allow the participant to describe their lived experience as they have felt motivated to study religious texts. After the first interview, participants were sent a copy of the transcripts for review. Participants were asked to read the transcripts and make any corrections or comments about the first interview. During the second interview, the researcher discussed the transcripts from the first interview with the participants. This allowed participants time to provide any additional information or clarifications to the data. It also allowed the researcher to ask any additional questions that emerged from review of the first interview. Interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and dependability in data collection (van Manen, 1990). The researcher transcribed the audio-recorded interviews, which are
stored on a password protected computer file (Creswell, 2007). The researcher also took field notes during and after each interview and recorded the subjective elements of the interview.

To ensure confidentiality, the researcher is the only one with access to the audio recording, field journal, and transcripts. Transcripts are kept on a password protected computer in a locked room. Audio tapes and field journals are kept in a locked room in a locked desk. Pseudonyms are used in both transcription and reporting processes. Audio tapes were destroyed when the writing process was complete.

As mentioned earlier, participants were asked two general questions. These questions are designed to understand both the textural and structural descriptions of this phenomenon, which allowed the researcher to describe the “lived experience” of the participants and convey an overall “essence” of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas explained that two general questions should guide research in phenomenology.

Creswell (2007) explained that in addition to these two general questions other open-ended questions may also be asked as long as they help lead to a textural and structural description of the phenomenon. Therefore, the researcher developed a list of questions that fit this criterion. The questions were developed with the help of qualitative methodologist, Sherry Marx (personal communication, December 28, 2009). The two pilot studies mentioned earlier were crucial in determining the effectiveness of these questions. This process allowed the researcher to eliminate and/or refine questions to ensure that this list is appropriate for this phenomenological study. Participants were
asked these additional questions during the interview:

1. Why do you frequently study scriptures?
2. What is motivating you to do this?
3. How has your motivation changed over time?
4. How have other people influenced your desire to study scriptures?
5. What experiences have influenced your desire to read scriptures?
6. How has your family influenced your desire to read scriptures?
7. How have your friends influenced your desire to read scriptures?
8. How has your relationship with God influenced your desire to read scriptures?

Although interviews served as the primary data collection source, van Manen (1990) explained that other forms of data collection are appropriate. He mentions the appropriateness of observations, journals, and artifacts. Thus, in addition to in-depth interviews, the researcher recorded observations during the interviews as field notes and as additional sources of data. Observations also provided additional insights into themes and analysis. Observations of participants were recorded in the research journal (Glesne, 2006). This study followed Glesne’s suggestion that the researcher note who participants are in terms of age, gender, social class, and ethnicity as well as notice how they dress, what they do and say, and how they respond to questions.

Participants were also asked to describe an artifact or object that influences their motivation to study scriptures. This was particularly important because sociocultural theory contends that cultural tools mediate internalization (Vygotsky, 1981). These tools transform mental functioning and could be characterized by a number of things like
objects, symbols, or language (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003). Participants were also asked to supply some basic demographic information that provided additional data to be used in textural and structural descriptions (Creswell, 2007). They were asked to supply their age, family size, interests, year in school, years in seminary, and years in institute.

**Analysis and Interpretation**

The following analysis and interpretation section follows the guiding principles of phenomenological research (Creswell, 2007) and adapted from the method discussed by Moustakas (1994). These principles and methods were employed at the beginning, during, and after data collection. The first step in analysis performed by the researcher was to read and reread the data looking for statements that fit within Lantolf’s (2000) three main social categories: activities, artifacts, and concepts. The researcher marked these findings in transcripts and in the research journal by labeling them in the margins. Next, the researcher looked for specific statements from these sections about how individuals report experiencing motivation to read religious texts. These statements were color-coded and subdivisions within Lantolf’s categories emerged. The researcher listed these significant statements and developed a list of nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statements. These statements were treated as having equal worth to help describe the essence of the lived experience (van Manen, 1990).

Once the list of statements that are nonrepetitive and nonoverlapping was made, the researcher grouped them into larger units of information called themes. Themes were derived from the tenets of sociocultural theory. During this step the researcher also engaged in the interpretive process. The researcher mediated between the differences of
the meanings of the lived experiences and determined what themes are important and which ones accurately describe the essence of the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990; Creswell, 2007).

**Textural and Structural Descriptions**

Once themes were organized, the researcher wrote a description of “what” the participants have experienced with motivation to study religious texts. This is called a “textural description” of the experience and includes verbatim examples (Moustakas, 1994). Next, the researcher wrote a description of “how” the experience of motivation of scripture study happened. In this “structural description” the researcher reflected on the setting and context in which scripture study motivation was experienced (Creswell, 2007). The researcher also engaged in the interpretive process to describe how these descriptions fit within sociocultural theory. Figures are included in this section to illustrate the descriptions (Grisby & Megel, 1995).

**The Essence of the Phenomenon**

In the final step, the researcher wrote a description of the phenomenon incorporating both the textural and structural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). In this passage he wrote about the essence of the experience of motivation to study religious texts. This section represents the culminating aspect of a phenomenological study. This chapter tells the reader “what” the participants experienced and “how” they experienced it (Creswell, 2007).
Trustworthiness

To adequately address the issue of trustworthiness in this study, a discussion of how the eight verification procedures often used in qualitative research is outlined below (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After each respective procedure is stated, an explanation of the methods that were employed to deal with validity issues are addressed. By addressing the trustworthiness of this study, the questions of reliability, credibility, and validity are sufficiently attended to.

1. *Prolonged engagement and persistent observation is needed to develop trust, learn the culture, and check out hunches.* This issue was addressed by committing adequate time to observe and develop trust with each participant. Because of the researcher’s position as a religious educator, he is currently deeply entrenched in the culture. The researcher continued to check out hunches by keeping in contact with participants. He visited with them personally and followed up with emails and text messages.

2. *Triangulation or multiple data collection methods.* The foregoing sections describe how the researcher triangulated data during this study. Specifically, data was triangulated by using interviews, member checking, research journal, observations, participant’s artifacts, and demographic information.

3. *Peer review and debriefing provide external reflection and input on your work.* During each research step, the researcher worked closely with his doctoral committee to receive continual review and input on the study. This ongoing process provided adequate external reflection.
4. **Negative case analysis.** This procedure provided that the researcher consciously searched for negative cases and unconfirming evidence. While he worked with the criterion sample, which means they all had experienced the phenomenon, the researcher looked for cases that provided divergent textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon as he examined data. The researcher did not find any negative cases or unconfirming evidence.

5. **Clarification of researcher bias.** As mentioned earlier, a research journal was used both to record researcher’s biases and his reflections of those biases. A bracketing interview was also included to describe researcher biases.

6. **Member checking.** The researcher shared interview transcripts, analytical thoughts, and/or drafts of the final report with participants. Participants reviewed transcripts from the first interview prior to the second interview. During the second interview, participants were asked to share their perceptions of the transcripts. This process allowed them to share additional insights as well as to check for accuracy and clarification.

7. **Write in rich, thick description.** As the researcher illustrated in the introduction, he wrote using a narrative reflexive voice that allowed the reader to enter the research context.

8. **External audit.** The researcher provided transcripts, field notes, analyses, and descriptions to Casey Ashcroft, a colleague and fellow graduate student, who examined and determined the trustworthiness of the researcher’s interpretations and findings. This summary is contained in Appendix E.
CHAPTER IV
TEXTURAL DESCRIPTION

This chapter is designed to give a description of “what” the participants have experienced with motivation to study scriptural texts. The textural description for each of the participants in this study was developed by combining data from the participant interviews, from personal observations, and notations from the participant. These descriptions also contain biographical sketches because they allow exploration of participant motivation within their particular milieu. Building these sketches assists in blending the multiple sources of data into manageable and broadened textural descriptions of each of the participating young men and women. In the descriptions, the information is organized into six categories: (a) interactions with family, (b) interactions with friends, (c) interactions with God, (d) interactions with self, (e) interactions with objects, and (f) passive interactions. These six categories emerged as themes during the coding process of the gathered information.

Although they were not the initial codes, examination of sociocultural theory and the nature of this particular phenomenon sharpened the focus and these categories emerged. These emergent categories helped guide the writing of the textural descriptions. They also proved efficient in outlining key ideas and allowed a natural, logical presentation of the participants (Creswell, 2007). While most of the categories are self-explanatory, interactions with self may not be so obvious. In this study, interactions with self means the interactions a person consciously experiences with his or her feelings, desires, attitudes, and aspirations. It is a metacognitive process in which a person
examines him or herself and feels motivation from what he or she feels. Passive interactions also require further explanation. These interactions are those in which the participant receives some type of transmission, but does not actively interact with the source of the transmission. Listening to a teacher lecture in a classroom or listening to a church leader preach are examples of passive interactions.

The themes of motivation to read religious texts emerging from this study and their connection to sociocultural theory will be addressed in Chapter V. This chapter only presents the description of the phenomenon. In other words, this chapter describes what participants experienced as they feel motivated to study religious texts (Creswell, 2007). However, these same categories or themes were developed with the intent to lay the foundation for future analysis and discussion that will be presented in Chapter V.

In the following descriptions, the names of the participants have been changed. Each participant was allowed to choose his or her own pseudonym. Other identifying factors have also been adjusted to protect the identity of the participants. The textural descriptions within this chapter provide enough information to paint a picture of each of the participants’ past and present motivation to study religious texts. While the descriptions include some specific verbatim examples to give perspective, they cannot capture the totality of the participants’ experiences. Direct quotations are used throughout the textural descriptions to give voice to the participants, provide clarity to individual situations, and in some instances place emphasis upon varying aspects of motivation.
Lily

Background

Lily was a very mature and thoughtful 24-year-old young woman with brown shoulder-length hair and big green eyes. “Lily” was chosen as a pseudonym because it was the name of her late aunt. Lily is very eloquent and intelligent, and the interviews with her seemed like a relaxed conversation with a friend. She gave very detailed and in-depth responses that required very little prodding. She also has a level of intensity that gives one the impression that she will do anything to accomplish her goals. However, while she is serious about life and the tasks set before her, she is not serious about herself. Lily laughs easily, and is very easy to talk to. She credits her maturity and intensity in part to her full-time mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Switzerland.

Lily currently attended a university close to her parents’ home in Northern Utah. The proximity of the university allows her to live at home while attending school. She is a Junior and working toward a double major in French and Psychology. She also works full-time helping a trucking company maintain its logistical operations.

Even amid her busy life, scripture study is always “in the back of [her] mind.” She explained that even when life is hectic and extremely busy, she always takes time to read before going to bed no matter how long her days are. When her days are less hectic, she enjoys “spending time with family and friends…and running.” Interactions with family and friends play an integral part in Lily’s motivation to study religious texts. Other interactions also help motivate Lily to read her scriptures every day. These interactions
are explored below to describe what motivates Lily to read her scriptures.

**Interactions with Family**

Lily grew up in a home where family interactions motivate her to want to read her scriptures. Her mother “always made it a strong point to…make enough time for scripture study.” While her mother always gathered the family together for scripture study, Lily’s father provided an example that made Lily state: “I want to turn to the scriptures because of his example.” She explained her father’s example in this way:

Several years ago he fell off the roof and broke his leg really bad, and he was pretty much bedridden for a long time…going through different surgeries and things…. Then I remember all the time when I’d come home from school or come upstairs or whatever…because he would be in the chair a lot you’d think he’d just sit there and watch TV all day or something, but I remember he would just always be there reading the scriptures. I thought that was really cool that in such a hard time when maybe you’d turn more discouraged and things, he turned to the scriptures.

Seeing her dad’s example influenced Lily’s motivation to read her scriptures.

Lily’s interactions with her siblings also influenced her motivation to read religious texts. Her older brother “always brings up questions” that get Lily “really curious.” Lily said she wants to answer his questions, so it instills in her “a desire to search them out” in the scriptures. Her curiosity motivates her to study her scriptures.

The interactions with her little brother also motivate Lily to want to study the scriptures. She explained that she feels “really close” to her little brother and that he influenced her motivation in two different ways. First, he helped her feel motivated because he shared personal experiences that he had with the scriptures. Lily related, “We’ve had a couple of really cool experiences where he’s told me about things that he’s
Second, Lily’s little brother verbally reminded her to read her scriptures: She described this interaction when she said, “He makes little comments like ‘remember to read your scriptures today’ and I just think that is really cool because he is my younger brother.” These interactions with her family influenced her desire to study her scriptures.

**Interactions with Friends**

Lily’s motivation to read religious texts is also influenced by the interactions with her friends. Lily shares how the interactions with her friends began to influence her motivation to study scriptures when she was in junior high school. She says that “throughout junior high I had a really close group of friends,” but when they got into high school they “went their separate ways.” She explained that some of her friends went separate ways because they decided not to “do the little things” like reading their scriptures. This has had a profound effect on Lily’s scripture study motivation. She thoughtfully mused;

I could see a big difference between the friends that were making that [scripture study] a priority and the friends that weren’t. It became more apparent that I needed to spend more time with the ones that were so that I was sure that I was where I needed to be.

Lily related that she consciously decided to spend more time with friends who made scripture reading a priority, because she feels like they help motivate her to read her scriptures as well. As she talked about her friends who read their scriptures she related: “I think the people that are really trying…the ones that are really making an effort, they just have a different light about them.” That different light influences Lily’s motivation to continue to study her scriptures.
As Lily matured, interactions with friends continued to influence her desire to study scriptures. In fact, she talked about how every day conversations with friends influenced her desire to study. The following quotation describes how she enjoyed talking about scripture study with her friends.

I just think that it is a lot more worthwhile to talk about that kind of stuff than what movie we saw last week and things…. I really enjoy talking about those kinds of experiences because I think you can really grow from each other…that’s a topic that I really like to discuss…the different things we’ve learned in the scriptures.

Lily explained that these conversations with friends really motivated her to want to study her scriptures because it made her “curious to find the same thing or expound upon it.” She remembered that gospel discussions began with her friends while she was in high school and she continued to have them. In fact, Lily also related how she loved to talk about scriptures on dates.

Lily’s interactions with her friends as they “struggle” with problems in life or when they have questions also influence her motivation. She related that she likes to share scriptures with her friends and would share verses that helped her personally. She also said that seeing her friends struggle made her “want to be able to find answers to help them…but also to find answers for [herself] as well.” Her desire to help her friends manifested itself in a motivation to study the scriptures.

**Interactions with God**

Lily’s interactions with God also influenced her desire to study religious texts. She described an experience she had with God that made her commit to continue reading her scriptures.
I struggled a lot around age 19 as far as what I should do next. I had some…
decisions I was trying to make…the ones that I was making didn’t seem like the
right ones…. I just remember pondering a lot about what I should do…praying a
lot and I wasn’t getting the answer for some reason…. Then one night I went
downstairs to my room and I prayed for a long time and then I just felt like “open
your scriptures” and when I did every answered that I needed was there and it just
hit me. It was the strongest I had every felt the Spirit before…one of the strongest
times, and I just sat there on my bed just crying and I prayed again to thank
Heavenly Father for giving me those answers right when I really needed them.

Lily explained that this experience motivated her to read because she wanted to feel those
same feelings she felt that night.

Lily also described how her relationship with God influenced her motivation to
study. She believed that “the more you study, the more of a relationship you build with
Him.” Lily believed this was true because of an experience in her life when she felt like
her relationship with Jesus Christ seemed to be particularly strong. She attributed this
strong relationship to a regimen that included studying the scriptures for at least 2 hours
each day. She said, “I just feel like that was the strongest point of my life when I felt like
I was working closely beside Jesus Christ.” As Lily talked about her relationship with
God she teared up and said, “I just feel like the more you study, the more you learn about
Him and the closer you become to Him.” Lily explained that she loved feeling “close” to
God and therefore felt motivated to study.

Interactions with Self

Lily’s interactions with herself also influenced her motivation to study religious
texts. Lily’s reflected how she “can just tell a huge difference if [she] misses a day
reading scriptures.” She explained that she gets an empty sensation that makes her “feel
like [she] can’t do anything.” On the other hand, when Lily does read she has good
feelings. She related, “When I do read…it’s not like anything else [in life] has changed except for that…and I just have more comfort and strength throughout the day. I just feel like everything is going to be okay.” This conscious examination of feelings helped motivate Lily to want to read her scriptures more because she liked to feel comfort and strength.

Lily also felt motivated to read her scriptures when she struggled. She related that “when things get hard…I turn to the scriptures [and] I…remember and keep my focus on what was important.” Lily believed that reading her scriptures helped her focus on the things that bring happiness. She also explained that studying the scriptures helped her maintain her “values,” and helped her be prepared to interact with others who had those same values.

Lily also explained that she felt motivated to read because she wanted to be better. She felt like she needed to read because she’s “trying to build [her] own spirituality.” Her inner feelings of spirituality were influenced by her scripture study and she felt like her spirituality increased when she studied more. Thus, her desire for spirituality influenced her motivation. Lily believed that part of that spirituality came as she gained “spiritual knowledge” and that only came through scripture reading. She described how her spiritual knowledge increased as she wanted it to “continue to grow.”

Lily’s desire for her future also influenced her motivation. She explained, “Thinking about the future is a huge motivator because what I do now is going to determine…my future, so it’s a big motivator to make sure that I’m doing the things that I need to get on the right track.” Lily described how scripture study helped her make
“correct decisions” in her future. Studying her scriptures was a “huge motivator, because a lot of times my answers come from them, so I think trying to read them…will determine my future. That’s a huge motivator for me.”

Thinking of her future family also motivated Lily to study her scriptures. She believed that by reading her scriptures she would be more prepared to find someone to marry who had her “same values.” Her motivation for her future also revolved around helping her future children. She wanted to “be a really good example to them because [she] knows how important it is, especially for the youth.” She related that it will be important for her to show an example for her future children because she felt like they would be making hard decisions during “important times in their life.” Thinking of her future motivated Lily to study her scriptures.

**Interactions with Objects**

Lily’s interactions with objects also influenced her motivation to study religious texts. The scriptures themselves motivated Lily to want to read more. She explained that every time she saw her scriptures she had a desire to read. Her own words describe her experience: “I always leave my scriptures on my bed…so when I crawl in and it’s really late and I just have done some big paper or something and they are there and I just remember.” Seeing her scriptures helped her remember to read. She explained, “This has worked really well to just leave them always there on my bed [because] every time I walk into my room I can see them.”

Lily also explained that opening her scriptures also influenced her to want to read more often. She talked about it this way.
I don’t know why but every time I open my scriptures it just automatically opens to Enos and talks about his struggle with wanting to be forgiven and everything. I just think it was weird that they keep opening right there and so I think maybe I should read that a little bit more.

Lily also believed that opening her scriptures helped her receive answers. She talked about how just opening her scriptures at random has helped her several times. She explained this process when she said, “I’ve kind of just prayed about a question and then I’ll immediately just flip open the scriptures and find verses that I need to hear right then.” Thus, opening her scriptures influenced her to want to read more.

Interacting with her scriptures by marking and writing in them also influenced Lily to want to read her scriptures more. She explained that she did not have a particular marking format or pattern, but she did enjoy writing thoughts in the margins and using different colored-pencils to highlight the things that stood out to her. Lily emphasized that seeing her thoughts and marking influenced her to want to read more: “Looking back at those [markings] now it just really motivates me because I want to feel that again and have it come alive like it did before.” Her marking also motivated her because “you can go back and see where you were then and where you are now.” Thus, the interaction with her scriptures motivated her to want to read more frequently.

Her interaction with other books also influenced her desire to study the scriptures. Lily admitted that before her mission she would read a lot of novels and fun things, but now she did not have time for that so she just reads “books that are based on doctrinal topics.” These books talk about certain aspects of the gospel that influence Lily to want to go to her scriptures and read more about that topic. She said that reading these “important books” get her curious about things in the scriptures and help motivate her to want to read
Passive Interactions

Lily’s passive interactions also influence her desire to study religious texts. Even as early as her ninth-grade year in school she remembers how “receiving a challenge” in seminary made her want to read her scriptures more. She explained: “I know our teacher had us mark a chart” that required students to track their scripture study progress. Lily related how challenges she received from her seminary teachers help motivate her to read. She says they would try to “get you to read every single day…because they were trying to make it a habit.” Lily says that it was motivating “to have a goal.” Lily also explained that President Hinckley’s challenge to read the Book of Mormon in a few months time motivated her to want to read more.

Listening to those who are “really knowledgeable with the scriptures” also influences Lily to want to read her scriptures. She says, “There are certain people that you can tell just really, really know the scriptures very well, and I think because of their examples I’ve just want to be able to know them more also.” Specifically, she described how the members of her single ward meet every Wednesday with the bishop to discuss the scriptures. Lily really enjoys these sessions and related the following.

If you have any question about any topic…he knows exactly where to turn and that really motivates me. Like I just want to be able to go more into topics or chain and be able to find where things are easily and just know where to go [in the scriptures] a lot more and search out those scriptures we don’t go over all of the time.

She also related that when she listens to her bishop in church on Sunday he often will introduce topics or thoughts that motivate her to want to read more.
Lily also talks about how her teachers influence her desire to study. She explained that the teachers who motivate her most have done two things. First, they do not give her all the information about a certain gospel topic. They either give her “some” information or they admit to her that they “don’t know” what something means. She explained that this motivates her because it “leaves a desire to look for it herself.” Lily related that she likes this approach because “it just means so much more to have to go through it yourself.”

The second way teachers motivate Lily is by providing an example of working hard to study the scriptures. She related that she has had teachers who “spent so much time preparing and finding things from different books and different things that prophets have said…that it gave me a desire to want to find them as well and to search it out more.” These passive interactions influence Lily’s motivation to study her scriptures.

Jack

Background

Jack was a very verbose and glib 22-year-old young man with short blonde hair and a scruffy goatee. “Jack” was chosen as a pseudonym because it is the last name of one of his favorite mission companions. Jack was very upfront and honest with his feelings and opinions. His nature was very disarming especially when he was so free about sharing personal triumphs and failures. Jack’s responses also revealed his personal desire that things go according to his plans. It bothered him when things did not go how he planned. In fact, he talked about how “frustrated” he got when things did not go his
way. While he readily acknowledged this as a fault, he was quick to add that his mission to Madagascar had tempered him some. Jack also readily admitted that his life had been tough because he had not always made the “right” choices.

Jack commuted to a community college in Northern Utah. He chose the community college because it was close to his workplace. Jack worked as a computer programmer during the day and attends school full-time in the evening. He was a sophomore working toward a degree in journalism. Particularly, he wanted to become a sports broadcaster. He readily admitted that much of his life revolved around sports. In fact, he missed an interview for this project because he was attending a sporting event.

A few months ago Jack was engaged to be married. However, his finance got cold feet and ended the whole thing just as they were in the planning stages. This experience has been hard for Jack, but he believed it has made him stronger and has given him a new focus on life. He also believed his scriptures have helped him through this difficult time and have helped him be “happy” even when things are hard. Jack reads his scriptures every day and the sections below explore how his interactions influence his motivation to read.

**Interactions with Family**

Jack’s first introduction to reading scriptures began while he was a very young boy living with his family in Alabama. His parents would gather the family together and read from the scriptures. Jack did not enjoy the experience and related that they “made me do it, and I felt like I had to.” While his parents worked to read scriptures together as a family, Jack says “they never forced me to read it by myself.” Jack appreciates the
freedom his parents gave him because he “hates when people preach.” His family did
however help motivate Jack to personally read scriptures as he grew older. His own
words describe the interaction: “My mom kept plugging away teaching me the right
things and my dad kept trying his best to be a good example and eventually I came
around and I started making right choices.” The rest of this section explores in more
detail how his family helps motivate him to read his scriptures.

Jack explained that his dad experienced some “setbacks” when Jack was in his
late teens. He explained that seeing his dad’s example during those tough times motivated
him to want to read more. Jack’s voice fills with emotion when he related the experience.

He says,

I never really saw my dad read the scriptures by himself until my junior year of
high school when certain things happened to him. When he needed it the most he
turned to the scriptures and he was always kind of my example. At the time he
and I didn’t have the best relationship but I saw that...I saw that from afar and
decided I’m going to try it.

His father’s example plays an integral part in Jack’s motivation, but according to Jack his
father is still unaware of his influence.

Jack’s only sibling, a younger sister, also helps motivate Jack to read his
scriptures. He related that he thinks it is “odd” that his sister who is 7 years younger than
him “could be an example.” Jack explained that when he would come home late from
partying with his friends he would find his sister “sitting on the couch...reading her
scriptures.” He related that it struck him odd that such a young girl would be up so late.
Normally she would have the TV on, but she would “just completely tune it out and read
her scriptures.” The actions of his sister really amazes Jack, so one day he asked her why
she stays up late and read her scriptures. She responded to Jack by saying, “Because the church is true.” That simple statement was “all she ever said” about her reading, but it made Jack want to study the scriptures.

Jack also explained that his parents’ unconditional love motivates him to want to study. His parents love that “never changed” helped him come back to church activity and reading the scriptures. Jack attributes his ability and desire to get back into personal scripture study is because “they loved [him] even when [he] was at the worst of times…and their love never changed.” Jack feels like his family’s love and example motivate him to want to read scriptures.

**Interactions with Friends**

Jack’s interactions with his friends have a great influence upon his desire to study religious texts. He readily admits that “girls were obviously a big factor” in helping him be motivated to study the scriptures. In fact, he related two experiences when two different young ladies influenced his desire to read. One of his experiences took place his senior year in high school. He related the following:

I met a girl…and she knew what she wanted. She wanted to be a part of the Church and so I did too…. I hung out with her and it just helped a lot and it helped me see the grand scheme of things.

Jack admits that at first he only read to impress his girlfriend, but he continues to read because he likes how the scriptures help him.

On a separate occasion, while he was struggling with depression, another young lady gave him some advice that helped his scripture study motivation. This interaction occurred over the phone. He related, “I was just talking to a friend of mine and she said
‘you know just read the scriptures.’” At first, Jack “mocked her” for thinking that scriptures could really help. In fact his words to the young lady were “Yah, read this book and it’s gonna help?! Whatever!” Jack said as he hung up the phone that he sat down and really “thought about” what she said and decided to read his scriptures and that his experience in the scriptures that day changed his life.

Jack’s friends also do a lot to motivate him to read religious texts because they pique his curiosity. Jack admits that he has two kinds of friends: the type who are the “go to Vegas and party every weekend” and the type who “were happy” to do church things. He explained that the churchy friends help him feel motivated to read.

They were happy to read their scriptures. They were happy to go to church and it was just something that made me curious really. They never had to say much other than just invite me to come [with them] and give me a little bit of encouragement here and there but it just made me curious to figure out what the heck they were so happy about and so I just followed them and figured it out for myself.

Jack’s desire to follow their example helps him feel motivated to study his scriptures.

Jack also talked about how interacting with a friend he made while serving a mission in Madagascar motivated him to read. He said that he and this friend “made a game” out of finding new things from the scriptures. They would test each other’s knowledge and search to the scriptures in a quest to stump the other person. Jack also says that watching his friend’s life change because of scriptures motivated him to want to read. When he talks about this friend he says “the light that he found and the complete 180 in his life after he stared reading just inspires me to keep going.” So Jack continues to feel motivated to read.
Interactions with God

Jack’s interactions with God also motivate him to read scriptures. When Jack was “really down,” he decided to interact with God through prayer. The following account described how his interactions with God motivate him to want to read his scriptures:

I said “Heavenly Father, I’m down and I don’t feel good and I’m unhappy…help me.” And I dropped the scriptures open just kind of hoping for a miracle and then the scripture came up and I remember the first line that I saw. It read: “I am He. Yea, I am He that comforteth you.” And it was kind of a real…it hit me like a truck that it was all of a sudden someone was comforting me in the time of…in my despair. There was somebody saying He was there and He was going to be the one that helps me and I didn’t really understand it at the time…but over time I’ve really felt that he is the one who comforts me…I changed my ways that day.

Jack related how changing his ways included studying his scriptures daily.

He also explained how another interaction with God strengthens his desire to continue reading scriptures. While on his mission, he had an experience teaching a woman named Eileen. Jack related that “she was an awesome lady and her husband was in jail.” Apparently Eileen’s life was mired in turmoil and filled with confusion and Jack and his mission companion “didn’t know what to teach her.” Jack said that he just randomly opened the scriptures and asked her to read. As she began to read “her countenance just changed and light filled the room and she just got really happy and she knew that everything would be okay.” Jack explained that this divine manifestation from God motivated him to read scriptures.

Jack’s continuous interaction with God through prayer and scriptures also motivates him to study religious texts. He related the following very personal example to show how these interactions influence him:

I pray a lot. It’s a childish prayer, but I pray a lot for hugs and I just pray for a hug from my Heavenly Father. I find it most when I read the scriptures…then I can
literally feel my Heavenly Father’s arms around me…. The fact that He’ll take the
time out of His busy schedule to give me a hug and make me feel good makes me
want to read the scriptures every day.

Along with helping Jack feel good, he also said that his “biggest motivation” now comes
from making a promise with God that he will continue to read his scriptures. Jack says “I
kind of promised…that I would read the scriptures and do what He asks and I don’t want
to let Him down.” That promise helps Jack stay motivated to study his scriptures.

**Interactions with Self**

Jack’s interactions with his inner self also influence his motivation to study. He
says that he is able to think deeply about himself when he is by himself studying the
scriptures. He explained his feelings when he says, “I feel happier when I read them, and
just getting good feelings, when I read [scriptures], it makes me want to read it more and
study more and learn more.” These good feelings are particularly important to Jack
especially when he’s “feeling down” or “feeling sad.” Jack says that he finds the “most
help through the scriptures.” Having those good feelings help Jack feel motivated to
study. In fact, Jack related a time in his life when his lack of good feelings turned him
back to the scriptures:

> I tried life without the gospel, without reading the scriptures and without doing
> those things that the scriptures teach me. And I wasn’t as happy! I didn’t [read]
> for a while and I just didn’t enjoy it. I tried it the other way [by reading] and I was
> happier and so that kind of is what got me started I guess.

Jack says that this happiness is the “pulling factor” that helps him have a desire to
continue to read his scriptures. His feelings are a very important motivating factor in his
desire to study the scriptures.
He also feels that his “spirituality” hinges on his scripture study. Jack said that the “top reason” he studies the scriptures is to “feel the Spirit.” He explained that that feeling also “helps him remember” his mission feelings. So Jack feels motivated to study the scriptures so he can feel the Spirit and remember his past experiences. Jack also says he likes to read because he likes to learn new things, so the quest for learning helps him stay motivated.

Thinking of his future also motivates Jack to read his scriptures. In fact Jack says that “one of the biggest reasons” he studies is for his future family. He explained why it is so important to study now for his family later:

I kind of study for my family and my future family…like I don’t know when and I hope it is still a long time away…but I study because I want to be like my parents were for me…when my kids come up to me with a problem I want to be able to turn to the scriptures and help them.

Jack’s future family motivates him to continue to read.

Thinking of his future in other ways also motivates him to read his scriptures. Jack also believed that reading the scriptures will prepare him for whatever the future brings. Jack says, “What motivates me the most is probably the future…probably just getting ready for everything that’s coming.” In addition to preparing to “become a father,” Jack also believed scriptures will help him through hard times he will encounter. He believed that scriptures will help him because they talk about people who went “through the same trials and the same problems we have.” Knowing how they solved their problems Jack’s motivation to study scriptures stems from a belief that they will help him solve his problems and help him feel “prepared” for his future.
Interactions with Objects

Jack’s interactions with objects also influence his motivation to study his scriptures. When he discusses how objects influence his motivation to read, he is quick to point out that “prayer rocks” and other gimmicks do not work for him. Using his typical sarcastic humor, Jack related the following about prayer rocks: “I tried to do that but … if I don’t feel like reading the scriptures and I hit my head on a rock, I’m still not going to want to read my scriptures. I’m just going to get mad.” Even though prayer rocks do not help motivate Jack, the scriptures themselves do. In fact, Jack has a special set of “scriptures in Malagasy” that help remind him to read. He says that when he sees it he has a desire to “read it out loud.”

Jack’s markings in his scriptures also motivate him to want to read more. He described that he has used many different ways to mark different sets of scriptures. In one set of scriptures he “used a red pen and highlighted every time it talked about Christ.” In a different set of scriptures he “got five colored-pencils and color coded everything to the lessons in Preach My Gospel.” In the set he’s using now, he says “now I just sort of mark what I like and there’s no real organization to it.” He related that he “likes to mark them” because he likes the satisfaction of seeing that he has “read a lot of scriptures.” He also likes the idea of having other people admire his markings as well. “Public admiration” of Jack’s markings influence his desire to want to read more.

Passive Interactions

Passive interactions also influence Jack’s desire to study religious texts. Jack explained that he had a church leader who would continually challenge his youth group to
read their scriptures. According to Jack, this church leader “talked about scripture…in a way that nobody else had.” Jack related that his leader would not challenge the group by saying “Go home and read your scriptures.” Rather this leader would say “You can do it if you want to.” He also told the class “that it would make them happy” if they read their scriptures. Jack explained that “at first he ignored him,” but later he did read because he did not want his leader to “feel bad.”

Jack also feels motivated to read because of a challenge his mission president gave to the missionaries. He related that challenges really motivate him because he is “competitive…and likes to win.” He described his mission president’s challenge this way:

My mission president made a promise that anytime I ever have a problem…no matter what the problem is… I should write it down on a piece of paper and stick it in Moroni 10 at the end of the Book of Mormon. [Then] I should start reading 1st Nephi [at the beginning of the Book of Mormon] and read through [to the end]. By the time I get to the end, the problem is going to be resolved. Whether it takes me a year to get through the Book of Mormon or a week that solution will be there. That was his promise.

This promise influences Jack’s motivation. He says “I think I’ve put it to the test three or four times and without fail every time it’s worked and the problem has been gone.” Jack also explained that this challenge really motivates him when he’s working through a difficult challenge in his life.

Jack also related that he feels motivated when others relate experiences they have had studying the scriptures. He says “personal experiences from other people kind of sparked my curiosity a little bit and I wanted to find out for myself.” Jack believed that most people, like him, “don’t like people telling [them] what to do.” He insists that
motivation comes when others are willing to share “their experiences.” He has also found that when he “saw the affect [scripture study] had on other people’s lives” he wanted to find out for himself. These passive interactions of hearing other people’s experiences and watching their lives change help Jack feel motivated to study his scriptures.

Charlie

**Background**

Charlie was a very flamboyant 18-year-old young woman who was filled with a lot of energy and zest for life. Even though Charlie likes to laugh and talk a lot, she is not shallow. Her depth is evident when she talks about her innermost feelings. She weeps easily when she talks about the things that are important to her. She chose the pseudonym “Charlie” because it is an endearing nickname her family gave her many years ago.

Charlie attends a university in Northern Utah during the day and works at a local pizza joint in the evening. She is also actively involved in her singles ward for worship services on Sunday and activities on Wednesday night. She enjoys hanging out with her friends and her older sister. Charlie has a very close relationship with her older sister. She attributes it to the fact that they are so close in age. Lately, however, she spends most of her free time with her boyfriend who will be leaving soon for a mission. In fact, Charlie purposely signed up for the same college courses as her boyfriend so they could be together more often.

Charlie enjoys school and has always done well. She receives high grades and is on an academic scholarship. English is her favorite subject, but she also enjoys her math
class. She does not know yet what she wants to be when she “grows up,” but she is following her parents’ advice to just go to school and see where it leads her. Charlie also reads her scriptures every day. The following sections explore how interactions influence Charlie’s motivation to read religious texts.

**Interactions with Family**

Charlie’s interactions with her family influence her motivation to read scriptures. She explained that in her family “we always have a set time of the day where we read [scriptures].” This practice does not necessarily motivate Charlie to read her scriptures on her own. However, her parents do other things that help motivate her. She related the following example to show how her mother helps motivate her to read her scriptures:

My mom…always talks about when she got baptized when she was a teenager and she always talks about how after she was baptized she read two chapters a night…she always read two chapters a night and…she still reads her two chapters a night…It’s just motivation to know that you’re not the only one reading and you’re not the only one trying to keep a goal.

While Charlie’s mom’s example helps her feel more motivated, so does her dad’s influence.

Charlie’s dad shares a lot of personal stories with her that helps her feel motivated to read. She related that “he feels inspired to share with us stuff that he thinks is interesting [about the scriptures] and that is kind of an inspiration to me.” Charlie says that her dad’s experiences help her want to study the scriptures. She wants to “know what he knows and feel what he feels.” Her dad also “checks up” on her “spirituality” by having monthly visits with her. During the visits her dad asks her if she is “praying and reading her scriptures.” Charlie says it “helps a lot” to motivate her to read more.
Charlie’s interactions with her older sisters also influence her motivation to read. She related that seeing one of her sisters reading her scriptures helps motivate her:

Recently, at night, I go into my sister’s room because I just want to talk to her or watch a movie or whatever and she’ll be praying or reading her scriptures…I don’t know…she just inspires me to be better at that.

Charlie related how seeing her sister “progress” by reading her scriptures makes her want to read so she can progress too.

She believed that her siblings’ examples are really powerful influences on her motivation because “they’re with you all the time.” Another powerful motivating influence from a different sister came at her brother-in-law’s baptism. Charlie explained through her tears that “it was really cool when my sister bore her testimony…it was really cool to hear her say her testimony of the scriptures.”

Charlie also said that being around her brother-in-law increases her motivation to read. She explained that her brother-in-law will always make comments like “well you know what the best book in the world is?…It’s the *Book of Mormon.*” These types of comments made Charlie wonder “How can he just go around saying stuff like that?” When she thinks about his comments she says “I want to be like that…. I just want to feel like that.” The interactions Charlie has with her family motivate her to want to read her scriptures.

**Interactions with Friends**

Charlie’s interactions with her friends also motivate her to want to study religious texts. She explained that right now she likes to read the scriptures with her boyfriend. Her goal is to help him “finish [the *Book of Mormon* before he goes on his mission.” She says
that she likes to read with him “every night” because it makes her want to do it on her own as well.

She also likes to do it because they talk about what they are reading and often her boyfriend will help her understand it better. She explained that “reading with someone else is kind of like exercising with someone else” because you are more willing to do it with another person. Charlie likes it when she can ask her boyfriend “what does this mean?” Often she feels motivated because of “his insight.” She also mentions that just being able to verbalize her questions help her feel motivated to want to read her scriptures.

This ritual of reading with a boyfriend is also practiced by one of Charlie’s good friends. She says that my friend “is dating someone in a different state and they call each other every night and read scriptures together.” Charlie likes that practice and explained that it’s “kind of cool that they’re doing that together to keep them spiritually better…to keep them safe.”

Charlie admitted she does not know for sure whether her other friends read their scriptures. She explained that “outside of seminary we don’t really talk about it that much.” Even though Charlie and her friends do not talk about their scripture reading much she believed that her friends do read the scriptures because you can tell “by the way people act that they are [reading].” She also said that having “good” friends who believe in Christ help her want to study her scriptures. She related how her friends in California “did not even believe in Christ or anything, so it’s helpful to be in an environment where people have the same standards.” These interactions with her friends help her feel
motivated to read her scriptures.

**Interactions with God**

Charlie’s interactions with God also influence her desire to read religious texts. A particular experience where she interacted with God really motivates her to want to read. She related her experience as follows:

I had an experience with repentance a little while ago and it was profound and it made me feel really close to my Savior through the Atonement… I knew that He directly was helping me and so that made me want to do things [so] that I could feel that again and again.

Charlie said things “like praying and reading the scriptures” help her feel that same feeling” and she “wants to feel that feeling all the time.”

Charlie also explained that she gets “little inspirations” while she reads that help her want to study the scriptures more. She also feels like “the Lord is there” in her life more when she reads the scriptures. In fact, she often will look for scriptures that allow her to “feel” the Lord in her life. These interactions with God increase her desire to study her scriptures.

**Interactions with Self**

Interactions with herself and her feelings also influence Charlie’s motivation to read religious texts. Charlie talks a lot about growing up and becoming “mature enough” to decide whether or not she would read. While she says that she used to read because she felt like she was “supposed to do it,” she now emphasizes that she reads for personal reasons. She emphatically states, “It’s for me. I’m going to read it to learn, not because I have to.”
Charlie compares her physical growth to her inner spiritual growth. She believed that when her physical body was immature she “just [went] through the motions” of scripture study, because her spirituality was also immature. She believed that because her physical body is now mature that her “spirituality has to grow” to match the physical growth. Charlie feels an ambience between her physical self and her spiritual self believing that she needs to become “more eloquent” spiritually as she matures physically.

Charlie states that she becomes aware of her immature spirituality when she attends her Singles Ward. Seeing the spiritual maturity of other ward members helps her evaluate her interact with her feelings and realize that she is not where she would like to be spiritually. She related the following:

I feel like there are a whole bunch of older people and I’m the youngest. I feel like I don’t know as much I want to know as much…so that’s a big motivation for me. [Having] knowledge and a greater testimony of the scriptures is motivation for me. [I] want to be able to go to church and participate in the lessons.

She also feels like she wants to “keep up” with the young men her age who will come back from their missions and be “so knowledgeable.” She says that she wants to “be able to “talk to these guys” when they come home and “be as knowledgeable as them.”

Charlie’s interactions with herself also motivate her to study her scriptures as she thinks deeply of her future. She related that “it’s so overwhelming thinking about your future.” Charlie realizes that she has to make many big decisions soon and that she “has to be prepared” for the things to come. Her aspirations and deep desires become apparent as she talks about why she feels motivated to read her scriptures now.

If you don’t have your roots in the scriptures now, you’re are not going to [do it] later…like this is a time when you make that pattern…and if you don’t read now, you are not going to read later and you’re not going to be able to teach your kids
and you’re not going to be able to…do the things you need to do.

Charlie’s focus on her future children provides a backdrop for her motivation now. She related that her future children are a “big part” of her motivation, because as a mother “you are a huge part of your children’s learning.” She takes her role as a future mother seriously as illustrated in the following comment about her role in nurturing her future children: “You basically teach them everything, so they learn the patterns of life through your patterns of life…It’s really important looking at your future…your kids are going to be looking up to you.” Thus, Charlie’s interaction with herself as she looks to the future helps her feel motivated to study religious texts.

**Interactions with Objects**

Charlie’s interactions with objects also help motivate her to have a desire to study her scriptures. The interactions with the scriptures themselves help motivate Charlie to want to read more. She says that often she will read and “come across a verse” that she does not remember ever seeing before. When that happens it makes her say to herself “that was not there the last time I read.” These types of experiences help motivate her to “want to keep reading and see what else I haven’t noticed.” She likes to keep “reading the things [she] has already read before” because it often leads [her] to an “ah-ha” experience where she feels like she learns something new.

Charlie says she tried to use a “prayer rock” to help motivate her to read and pray, but it “didn’t work.” She says seeing her scriptures sitting on her nightstand help her remember to read before she goes to bed. Just seeing her own set of scriptures helps her feel motivated to read.
She also believed that interacting with the scriptures in book form is more important than reading them on an I-phone or other technical device. Charlie says that “physically having your scriptures and being able to mark them and go back and see what your thoughts were is a lot more helpful than actually just having it on the phone.” She believed that interacting with her scriptures through marking is a motivating practice. Charlie described how marking helps motivate her when she says “When I go back and read things that have been marked, I’m like ‘Oh that’s kind of cool that I thought about that back then.’” Presently, Charlie likes to mark “the comforting scriptures” she finds because it helps her find comfort to know that “God is there.” She also related how using the footnotes are “really helpful” because they help her “understand it better” and that makes her have a desire to continue reading.

Charlie also “marks” her scriptures by leaving “handouts” from seminary and church classes in her pages. She related that these handouts help increase her motivation to read because leaving “stuff in the pages of [her] scriptures” help her to “wonder” why that scripture is so important. She adds “it’s kind of cool just leaving stuff in [the scriptures] because they’re like memories.” Charlie shares that she has lots of objects in her scriptures that help her remember past experiences with her scriptures. Her favorite object is a “blow-pop wrapper in the front of [her] scriptures.” She says that seeing these objects help her remember her “experiences in the church” and the “little things” that matter.

Interacting with other objects also influences Charlie’s motivation to read scriptures. Charlie described how interacting with the booklet called “Personal Progress”
helps her feel more motivated to read. She explained that the booklet contains a challenge to read certain scriptures in order to qualify for an award. She related how she noticed that “[reading] is part of the new virtue and the project is to read the Book of Mormon and pray about [it].” Charlie explained that this project became “the foundation” for her motivation to read scriptures.

**Passive Interactions**

Charlie’s passive interactions also influenced her motivation to read religious texts. Her first experience with feeling motivated to read came because “in seminary they tell you to read ten minutes a night.” She also says throughout her seminary experience that part of the motivation is the “chart you have to fill in” and “because teachers ask you” to read.

Her interactions with seminary teachers influence her motivation to read her scriptures in other ways as well. She talks about how her teachers helped her learn “scripture mastery” verses which motivate her to want to read and learn more. In particular, one teacher helped her learn certain scriptures “to songs [that] he wrote.” She considers it “really helpful because those scriptures are going to be with you forever.” Remembering those songs helps increase her desire to read those scriptures again.

Charlie’s passive interactions with church leaders also influence her motivation to read religious texts. She related that she feels motivated to listen to church leaders in general conference because “it’s probably more relevant…because they are talking about what’s happening now.” She believed that the words that she hears in general conference are also scripture and feels motivated to read those words as well.
Charlie’s passive interactions with teachers at a youth camp called “Especially for Youth” also influence her motivation to study scriptures. She explained that one teacher helped the group create a “scripture chain” that contains verses that helps her feel comfort in her life. She says that this chain of scriptures not only provides “motivation for scripture reading, but also motivation for life.” Charlie related how this list of scriptures helps motivate her. She related the following: “When I’m down I can just go look at any of those scriptures...and it helps a lot.”

Passive interactions with other people at church also influence her motivation to study religious texts. When Charlie hears people “say stuff” about the gospel that she has never heard before she usually thinks “That is not true!” But she says that those statements motivate her to look for the answers in the scriptures. She says that frequently she finds the answer in the scriptures and says to herself “That’s so true!” Charlie sums up her experience this way.

There’s just like a ton of stuff I don’t know and so when people…talk about stuff in church or just at home and it’s new [to me]…I’m like “how much other stuff do I not know?” Like it’s interesting…and that curiosity really gets you and you want to read more.

Thus, her passive interaction with others’ influences her motivation to read her scriptures.

Randall

Background

Randall was a 19-year-old handsome young man with short dark brown hair and a strong athletic build. He dresses very nicely and usually has his hair perfectly styled. He is generally quiet, but he is also quite thoughtful. Randall is a freshman at a local
university in Northern Utah and when he is not busy with school and his part-time job at a fast-food restaurant, he enjoys spending time on the golf course. He is an amateur golfer who helped lead his high school team to a state championship. Randall also participated on the high school basketball team.

Randall still lives at home and is pretty much an “only child.” His only sibling, an older sister, married a number of years ago, so Randall is the only one home with his parents. He feels close to his parents and likes to do things with them, especially when it has to do with golf. Randall attends church services with his parents and likes to spend time with them or with his girlfriend’s family. He admits that he and his girlfriend spend a lot of free time together.

Randall is planning on serving a mission for the LDS Church in Peru during the upcoming year, so he is busy trying to prepare himself. He says that watching his friends go on their missions has been a good thing for him to see. Randall has a special connection with these friends because he served as one of their leaders in a youth camp over the summer. The following sections explore how interactions influence Randall’s motivation to read religious texts.

Interactions with Family

Interactions with family influence Randall’s motivation to study religious texts. Randall related that his family has “always” read the scriptures together. He said, “I can’t remember not reading the scriptures with my family.” Randall explained that the scriptures were “like a bedtime” story when he was really little. When he was younger, his father used to read to him from the scripture readers so it was “easier” to understand.
While this practice introduced Randall to the scriptures, it did not do much to motivate him to read on his own.

Randall related, however, that as he got older he began to try to read on his own because of his parents’ example. In fact, Randall explained that seeing his parents read influenced him to want to read on his own. He stated, “My parents...throughout my life they’ve influenced me and if they weren’t reading, I don’t think I would…I mean, they set the example.”

In particular, Randall shared how his father’s example helps him feel motivated to study his scriptures. He admitted that his father “didn’t really read his scriptures as often as he would have liked to” when Randall was younger. However, Randall related that “once he was put into the stake [presidency] with President Spackman, he really got motivated to read his scriptures.” Randall recounted how his father’s example and motivation provides a strong influence to his motivation as well as the entire family:

He was excited and he was talking to me about them [the scriptures] and you know he was happy…and I’m like “I want to do this too. I want to be able to exclaim to the people I love and say ‘Oh, you’ve got to read this.’” So seeing my dad excited...seeing my mom excited...seeing my sister excited...it makes it that much easier to...read your scriptures. Seeing the excitement and seeing the love they have is helpful.

While Randall’s motivation is influenced by his father’s excitement to read and share, other interactions with his father also affect his motivation.

Randall related that when he and his dad go golfing, they spend a lot of time talking about “church and scriptures.” He explained that golfing is his “chance to talk” with his dad and that they would talk about important things like Randall’s upcoming mission. Randall also related that his dad would “talk to him about scriptures and prayer”
and ask him how he was “feeling about those things.” These moments are important to Randall because as he said, “You know that’s motivation for me to keep reading my scriptures and keep studying.” Clearly, Randall’s interactions with his family influence his motivation to read religious texts.

**Interactions with Friends**

Randall’s interactions with his friends also influence his motivation to read his scriptures. These interactions started affecting his motivation to read when he entered junior high school. Randall related that he was “kind of innocent” in elementary school, but when he got to junior high he “started seeing…the bad things that are happening.” He said seeing the “bad things” some of his friends were doing in junior high motivated him to want to study the scriptures. He talks about his thoughts during this time and how these things affected his motivation. He said, “When you see those bad things happening you’re like ‘Whoa, I don’t want that to happen to me,’ and so you start reading your scriptures…and praying and making sure you’re doing the right things so that you don’t fall into the trap of the world.” Randall related that seeing some of his other friends do the “right things” made reading scriptures “a lot easier.”

The “right things” included knowing that his “steadfast” friends read the scriptures. Randall’s own words describe how his friends influence his motivation. “I’ve known that they’ve read their scriptures and I see the ones that have gone on their missions…and I know they were reading and that they were prepared to go…and I want to be like them.” He also explained that he feels motivated to read his scriptures when he was around those friends because he did not want to “be the one who brings them down.”
He said that it is a lot easier to be motivated when you “focus on the people that really make you better.”

Therefore, Randall believed that his friends are a “big influence” on his scripture reading motivation. He said he feels this is especially true when he sees his really good friends read their scriptures. He explained how seeing his girlfriend read her scriptures really affects his motivation as well: “I mean if I see [her] and I know that she is reading her scriptures, it makes me want to because I want to progress as she is progressing. So that makes me more motivated.” Thus, Randall’s interactions with his friends influence his motivation to read his scriptures.

**Interactions with God**

Randall’s interactions with God also influence his motivation to read religious texts. He explained that his relationship with God is contingent upon his scripture study. He related that reading his scriptures helped him understand his relationship with God. He said, “When I’m reading my scriptures I feel the Spirit and it makes it easier to think about my Savior and Heavenly Father…it helps me figure out what my relationship really is with them.” Randall related that it is during his scripture reading that he interacts with God. He observed that “the scriptures are all focused on Jesus Christ and His teachings.” He also believed that when you don’t read your scriptures you “don’t know your Savior very well.”

Randall shares how he feels “a gap” between himself and God when he does not read. On the other hand, when he does read he feels closer to God. His own words capture the essence of his interactions with God when he reads his scriptures: “Once I
start to [read]...I feel like I can talk to my Heavenly Father like He’s my own father instead of being a stranger.” This feeling comes because Randall feels like God is “helping” him instead of “being on his own.” Randall explained that feeling close to God makes him “have a desire to actually want to read instead of just doing it to do it.” He also felt like he could “find answers” from God when he read the scriptures.

Randall had an experience, or an interaction, with God a few years ago that helps him remain motivated to study religious texts. He says that when he was in a church meeting he “kept thinking: ‘I need to read my scriptures. I need to read my scriptures.’” Randall related that those speaking in the meeting did not mention anything about reading the scriptures. He feels that this thought was communication between him and God through the “Spirit.” He explained that “the Spirit was telling me that, so I knew I needed to do it. Otherwise, bad things were going to happen.”

Randall also explained that he wants to read so he can come to know Christ better. He admits that he did not feel that motivated to read the New Testament in seminary because it was an assignment. Now, he related that he loves to read “about the life of Christ” and try to understand His teachings better. Clearly, Randall’s interactions with God influence his motivation to read religious texts.

**Interactions with Self**

Randall’s interactions with himself also influence his desire to read religious texts. He says that his scripture reading got him motivated because of how it affects him personally. He related: “I noticed that they [the scriptures] helped in my life and so it just made me want to do it more.” Randall points out that when he does not read he “can see
the change” in himself. As he reflects about this change, he points out that it feels like he is “falling down” when he does not read. On the other hand, when he does read his scriptures he says, “I can see that I’m happier…once I start doing that [reading scriptures] I’m happier.” He also observes that “things are a lot easier” in life when he reads his scriptures. He believed that he is happier and things go better in his life because scripture reading help him to “have the Spirit.”

Randall also explained how thinking about his future motivates him to want to study his scriptures. He expressed how his upcoming mission influences his desire to study the scriptures. He explained that he wants to be “prepared as possible” before he goes so that he can be an effective missionary who can “teach out of the scriptures.” As part of his mission preparation, he wants “to get the Book of Mormon done as many times and [he] can before his mission.” He also wants to read the entire New Testament because he has “never really read it completely.” Randall also believed that because he is planning on serving a mission that some evil forces are “against him” more at this point in his life. He explained that reading his scriptures helps him “focus on the spiritual things more” and overcome the evil forces. This ability to overcome helps Randall feel more motivated to study his scriptures.

Thinking about his future family also influences his desire to study religious texts. He puts it this way: “I’m getting older and I want to be able to…I want to be able to teach my kids and so starting [reading] now helps.” He explained further that he feels “responsible” to teach his children so they will “know [the scriptures] and not leave the church.” He says that the “fear” of having his children not believe is a “big motivator.”
He related how this fear makes him want to “figure it out…and to know it and be able to teach it later.”

Randall also related how thinking about his “future job” motivates him to want to study his scriptures. He believed there will be people at his workplace who “don’t know anything about the church,” and they will “start asking questions.” Randall stated that “I want to be able to answer them and to be able to be confident in what I have to say.”

Randall’s interactions with himself influence his motivation to read religious texts.

Interactions with Objects

Randall’s interactions with objects also influence his motivation to read his scriptures. He explained how seeing the book of scriptures helps motivate him to want to read. His own humorous account best described how seeing the scriptures influence his motivation.

In our house, we have scriptures sprawled out all over the place…and I think they are teasing me. They’re like “why aren’t you grabbing me? We’re just laying here.” And so every time I look at them I get this guilty feeling. “Why in the heck are you watching TV instead of reading me?”…and so actually seeing them laying there I think kind of motivates me to think about what I need to be doing.

Randall explained that seeing “the actual scriptures lying there…not being used” make him feel motivated to read and makes him feel like he’s “got to use them.”

Randall also suggested that marking in his scriptures motivates him to want to read more. He explained that “when I go back in my scriptures and see what I wrote…it brings back memories” which help him remember previous experiences he had with his scriptures. He also believed that the process of “reading and annotating” helps motivate him because he feels like he learns so much more. Randall also shared how marking in
his scriptures turns his scriptures from simple stories into “lessons.” These lessons help “bring out specifics…of what we need and what we can apply in our lives.” He said that the ability to apply scriptures into his life helps him feel motivated to read more so that he can find more that is applicable to him.

Randall also explained that marking scriptures is motivating because it helps with understanding. He said, “When you understand it, you want to keep reading. I mean you get frustrated when you don’t understand it and marking helps.” He shared how he marks parts of the verse of scripture “that go together” so he can “get the gist of what the verse is talking about.” Randall believed that this process helps with understanding and “when you understand it, you want to do it instead of being so frustrated.”

He also feels like scripture marking motivates him because it helps him want to find other things “exciting” enough to mark. He shared that “when you open your scriptures and you see a verse marked, you automatically go to it.” Randall explained that seeing something already marked in his scriptures piques his curiosity. He says when he looks at those things that are marked in his scriptures, it makes him “want to find more.” He related how this motivates him to want to “keep going to try to find more things that are exciting…things that are going to help in your life.”

Randall also explained how his scripture marking becomes a tool for personal assessment. He says that he reads his scriptures looking for “teachings” that he could use in his own life. After he finds a “teaching,” he then writes in the margins of his scriptures “the things that I need to do…that I need to work on.” He explained that he likes to see what he’s written in his margins and it motivates him to read his scriptures so he can find
more things to write. Therefore, he believed that reading scriptures on his “I-phone” limits his ability to write and so it does not motivate him in the same way as scriptures in book form. These interactions with objects influence Randall’s motivation to read religious texts.

**Passive Interactions**

Randall’s passive interactions also influence his motivation to read his scriptures. He explained that challenges from church leaders and prophets help motivate him to read. In particular he related that “a prophet has asked us to read and you always want to follow what they say.” He also talks about how challenges from his seminary teachers help motivate him to read.

Randall further explained that his seminary and church teachers have helped him want to study the scriptures because they helped to “bring them to life.” He shared how their teaching styles help him to “picture” the scripture stories in his mind and it helps him want to keep reading to add to the picture. Randall also explained how his peers in both seminary and church influence his motivation to read. He talks about how in a church setting someone will say something profound that would make him think “I didn’t know that. How did they figure that out?” Not knowing what someone else knows influences Randall to read it because it makes him “want to go figure it out.”

Seeing others’ vast knowledge of the scriptures really motivates Randall to read his scriptures so he can keep up. He sums up how this influences his motivation by sharing an incident from earlier in his life that still motivates him to want to read. The following statement from Randall highlights how this affects his motivation:
I look back when I first started seminary and kids were coming up [to the front of class] to give their little devotional and they knew so much. I was like “how do they know all this?” So seeing others know this stuff…I’m like, “I want to be able to know it and I want to be able to do what they do.”

These passive interactions influence Randall’s motivation to read his scriptures.

**Marcie**

**Background**

Marcie was a 19-year-old young woman with tight curly brown hair and a tall slender build. Because she could not think of a pseudonym, “Marcie” was chosen arbitrarily. Marcie is a very energetic person who is determined to succeed in everything she does. Unlike many her age, she already knows what she wants to be when she “grows up” and she works hard to accomplish her goals.

One of her goals is to become an early-education elementary teacher. To reach her goals, she registers for as many education classes as she can, and she also works part-time at the on-campus early childhood center. She explained that she “loves little kids” and enjoys learning how to help them learn. Marcie also works part-time for a recreation department helping teach students athletic and team-building skills.

Marcie believed her desire to help kids came because both her mom and dad work at schools. She explained that her dad spends a lot of time helping kids learn both in the classroom and in sports. Her mom’s desire to always help out in the classroom also influences Marcie’s desire to become a teacher. Marcie’s younger siblings also influence her desire to help children. She related that she likes to teach her younger brothers and sisters and help them in any way she can. Marcie has an older brother and four younger
siblings and enjoys spending time with each of them.

It became evident during the interviews with Marcie that she not only likes to spend time with her family, but she also likes to use her time efficiently. She usually “ran” from some big project to get to the interviews, and then when the interview was over she “ran” to another project. Her responses during the interviews also reveal her desire to get things done. Most of her responses were very direct and without much extra detail. Even though her responses were direct, they still paint a very vivid picture of Marcie’s motivation to read religious texts. The following sections explore what social factors influence Marcie to read her scriptures.

**Interactions with Family**

Marcie’s interactions with her family influence her desire to read scriptures. She explained that seeing examples from family members have really influenced her motivation. She related that when she would see her older brother “reading his scriptures” as she passed his room made her think “Oh, yah, I need to do that.” Marcie also explained that “seeing [her] parents reading their scriptures” motivates her to want to read. In fact, she often sees her mom “reading her scriptures during sacrament” and it makes her want to “pull [her] scriptures out too.” She says her family’s “great example” really helps her want to read more.

Marcie also says she feels motivated to read so she can provide a good example for her younger siblings. She described her feelings about being a role-model when she says:

I know setting the example for my siblings has been a big thing for me cause I
want them to see that I read the scriptures so that they’re motivated to read the scriptures so they can gain a testimony of their own.

Not only does Marcie want to provide a good example to her siblings, she also feels motivated to read so she can help them answer their questions. She explained that if they have a question or if something happens she “wants to be able to answer [them] using [her] scriptures.” Marcie’s believed her interactions with her family help her feel motivated to continue to read religious texts.

**Interactions with Friends**

Marcie’s interactions with her friends also influence her motivation to read her scriptures. Marcie explained that she has always had good friends who read their scriptures and that she probably would not “hang out” with them unless they did.

Interactions with her friends at sleepovers especially influenced her desire to read. She recounts the following about her interactions during sleepovers: “I’ve had friends when I’d go to sleepovers at their house…they’d be like ‘oh, I’ve got to read my scriptures.’” Marcie explained that during other sleepovers no one would mention scriptures and they would “just go to sleep.” However, she related that when she had sleepovers at certain friends’ houses she could tell that reading scriptures was a priority. She explained that “following their example we’d get out our scriptures and both read our scriptures before we went to sleep.” Marcie believed that the examples set by these “really good friends” dramatically influence her desire to study scriptures.

In addition to seeing the good examples of her friends, she also feels motivated by her friends who talk to her about scriptures. She remembers having some friends who
would see her in the hall and ask “Did you read?” Marcie explained that such a direct question about her reading made her want to do it more. She also related that she would “check” on her friends to see if they read their scriptures too.

Marcie explained that now that she is older, she does not check on her friends’ reading, but she still likes to talk about scriptures with them. She related how when she talks with her friends they will “bring up conversations and just talk about [scriptures].” She says she really enjoys the conversations when someone says something like, “You know I read this scripture last night… because it makes the conversation better.” Marcie explained that she feels motivated to read because she wants to “have input on the conversation too.” She wants to “be able to know what they are talking about” so it motivates her to want to read her scriptures.

**Interactions with God**

Marcie’s interactions with God also influence her desire to study religious texts. She explained that she loves “feeling close” to God and she knows when she reads her scriptures she gets a “spiritual feeling” and does indeed feel closer to God. She recounts an experience of when she felt like she was not as close to God as she wanted to be. She says, “I hadn’t felt the Spirit in a while and I needed to feel it again, so I prayed and read my scriptures.” She explained that as she was reading she “felt like [she] should turn on an Especially for Youth music CD.” When the music began she explained that she heard a particular song that was “perfect for what [she] needed.” Marcie tells how she continued to read her scriptures and “found things in there and then it was just like a spiritual experience cause the Spirit just struck me.” Marcie believed that this spiritual
feeling came because she studies her scriptures. These feelings influence her desire to want to read her scriptures.

In addition to spiritual feelings, Marcie feels motivated to read her scriptures because they help her get answers from God. In her own words, she recounts the following: “I’ve just had little experiences where I’ve asked questions or prayed about it or have been wondering about something for a while and I’ve gone through and just read and I’ve found an answer.” Marcie also believed that these answers only come when she has put forth work to get them. She believed she has to do what God “expects” her to do so she can get her answers. She explained, “I can’t just sit there and expect God to give it to me…I have to work for my answers.” Marcie feels like she has to interact with God through the scriptures, so that he will interact with her. “I feel like I’m expected to read,” she says, “God expects me to do it…it’s His work and…it’s His teachings and I should know it.” Clearly, Marcie feels motivated to study her scriptures to maintain her relationship with God.

In fact, Marcie contends that her relationship with God is the biggest reason she feels motivated to read. She says, “If you don’t have a relationship with God, then…you have no motivation to read your scriptures.” Marcie feels that if you just read scriptures to “get through them” then you miss out on improving your relationship with God.

**Interactions with Self**

Marcie’s interactions with herself also influence her desire to read religious texts. She explained that she enjoys feeling “really peaceful” when she reads her scriptures. On the other hand, she explained that when she does not read her scriptures it “bothers” her
and she cannot sleep well. In addition to enjoying the peaceful feelings and avoiding uncomfortable feelings, Marcie also feels motivated to read her scriptures because they help her “feel prepared” for life’s challenges and opportunities. She also believed that reading scriptures regularly help her “find scriptures that apply to [her] life” and helps her find “answers” to her questions.

Thinking about her future also motivates Marcie to want to continue to study her scriptures. She explained that reading the scriptures will help her “be good enough for the person [she] wants to marry.” Not only does Marcie believe that scripture reading will help her be good enough for the person she wants to marry, she also expects her future spouse to be a frequent reader of the scriptures. She feels like if she has an expectation that her future spouse reads his scriptures then she “needs to be doing it too.”

Marcie also feels motivated to read her scriptures so she can help her future children. She related that she wants to be able to answer her children’s questions they have about the scriptures and to “help answer the questions” they have about life. Because Marcie wants to be “a good mom,” she feels motivated to read.

Currently, Marcie also feels motivated to study her scriptures because she wants to feel confident in her spiritual knowledge. She explained that if she hears something or reads something about the scriptures that is unfamiliar to her, she feels like she needs to “look it up” in her scriptures so she can know what “other people are talking about.” She related that sometimes she gets “worried” about things she hears and she enjoys reading her scriptures to “figure it out so that [she’s] not worried…anymore.”

Marcie also feels like having a habit of scripture study helps her feel motivated
to read. She explained that following through with a commitment she made to herself helps her want to read more. Reading her scriptures every day helps her have “spiritual” feelings and makes her want to keep reading.

**Interactions with Objects**

Marcie’s interactions with objects also influence her desire to study religious texts. She related that as soon as she learned how to use “the footnotes” and other scripture study helps, she began to “figure things out” on her own and it made her want to read more. She explained the following epiphanic experience as she began to use the tools contained in her scriptures: “What!...What in the world! I can figure this out by going to other scriptures?!” This ability to use scripture study tools helps her want to keep reading the scriptures.

Physically seeing her personal set of scriptures also motivates Marcie to want to study more. In her own words, she related:

> I think my scriptures on my nightstand where I put my glasses and stuff before I go to sleep helps me remember to read…. I used to always forget…but having [the scriptures] on my nightstand, I’ll be like “Okay you just need to read them. They are right there. You don’t have to go get them. They are right on the night stand.” You can’t pass them up.

Seeing her scriptures next to her bed not only helps Marcie remember to read but it also helps her maintain a particular routine, which also motivates her to read.

Marcie also feels motivated to read because she marks in her scriptures and writes about them. She explained that seeing her markings in her scriptures helps her see that she has “read that before” and that she has “put forth work” to understand and interact with her scriptures. Seeing those markings makes Marcie “want to add” to the work she
has already done in the scriptures. She explained that she uses many different colors to make the important things “stand out.”

Marcie also likes to write about what she learns in her scriptures. She keeps a journal where she “writes the date and the scripture that struck” her as she read. This process helps Marcie “remember the things [she’s] learned in the scriptures,” and makes her want to find more she can add to her journal. She explained that she “really liked it [writing in her journal], so [she] goes through the scriptures looking for stuff that [she] can write in her journal.” This process helps Marcie “focus better on what [she’s] reading” and it motivates her to continue reading.

**Passive Interactions**

Passive interactions also influence Marcie’s motivation to read religious texts. She related that the first passive interactions that really motivated her to want to read were the challenges she received. Just knowing that her seminary teachers “wanted me to do it,” she says, made her want to do it more. She explained that one of her seminary teachers “challenged us to get up earlier to read our scriptures.” Marcie accepted the challenge and had a “good experience” waking up earlier to read her scriptures. Some of Marcie’s other seminary teachers also had special challenges to read scriptures that help motivate her as well. A challenge at a youth camp to read her scriptures for a longer period of time every day also influences her desire to study.

Marcie also explained that hearing others’ personal experiences about reading scriptures help motivate her to read her scriptures. She says, “Hearing people talk about things that they’ve found [in the scriptures] motivates me…they received answers and
I’m no different. I can receive answers myself if I read my scriptures like they did.” She related how hearing her church leaders “give talks on reading your scriptures” motivates her to want to read more. In particular, she explained how she enjoys listening to the counsel from General Conference about scripture study. She says, “I love the talks that are about scripture study and listening to the experiences they [the speakers] have had and the things they’ve found in the scriptures.” Marcie feels motivated to read when she hears these talks because she “knows that listening to what they have to say” will help her feel more motivated.

In addition to feeling motivated because of the talks she hears, Marcie also feels motivated to read so she can “keep up in [her] institute class.” She explained that she wants to be able to know what they’re talking about [in class],” so she’ll spend extra time reading her scriptures. Her institute class also piques her curiosity because her teacher will only “give them a little bit” in class and it motivates Marcie to want to “go home…and try to figure out the rest of what they were talking about.” These passive interactions influence Marcie’s motivation to read her scriptures.

**Paul**

**Background**

Paul was a very friendly 19-year-old young man with short, spiky blonde hair and a scraggly goatee. “Paul” was chosen as the pseudonym because it was “the first thing that popped into [his] head.” While Paul’s answers are very enlightening, he seems at times to be distracted and very stressed. Paul’s family life is difficult. He still lives at
home and tries his best to hold the family together. He works full-time as a stocker in a
grocery store to help his father and his mother pay the bills. His dad works occasionally
and his mom works two jobs, which pay slightly more than minimum wage. Paul works
hard to earn money for his family. He usually works 8 to 12 days in a row before he gets
a day off. Working so hard has contributed to his very strong, muscular appearance.
When Paul is not working, he likes to spend time with his girlfriend.

Paul’s dream job is to be a dentist or an orthodontist, but he admits that he has no
idea what he needs to do to get the job. He talks about going to school at some point in
life, but does not have any specific plans about when that will happen. He has worked in
a grocery store for over 5 years and does not really want to give it up to go to school
during these tough economic times. He talks a lot about his work.

Paul also talks a lot about his family. He is especially close to his mother and
really admires how hard she works for their family. He likes to go to church with his
family and likes to make sure his younger siblings are doing the “right things.” Paul
admits that while he enjoys doing spiritual things, he is not able to serve a mission for the
LDS Church. Within the next few months, he plans on getting married to his girlfriend
and starting life. The following sections describe how interactions influence Paul’s
motivation to study religious texts.

Interactions with Family

Paul’s interactions with his family influence his motivation to read religious texts.
Paul explained that when he was younger that his parents’ encouragement to read
scriptures “felt like nagging” but as he looks back on his past he is grateful for their
constant encouragement. His parents still encourage him to read his scriptures. Paul remembers that during a recent trial he went to his mother for advice and she said, “Maybe you should just go and read your scriptures.” He followed her advice and feels like he found the help he needed. Paul’s nine-year-old brother also helps him feel motivated to read scriptures because he will frequently ask Paul “Have you read your scriptures?” These words of encouragement influence Paul’s desire to study the scriptures.

Not only have words of encouragement influenced Paul’s motivation, but his motivation is also been influenced by the examples he sees from family members. Paul explained that during hard times in their family, he watches his mom and dad closely. He recounts how during a few particularly difficult trials he has seen examples from his mother that makes him want to read his scriptures more. He talks about the experiences this way:

I’d start walking around the house and I saw my mom reading scriptures by herself or I’d walk in on her and I’d see her scriptures sitting there and she’d be on the floor kneeling…praying. I could tell that she had just read her scriptures and you know that helped me out…and I know that when things go wrong that’s one of the things you can turn to.

Paul also explained that seeing his dad’s example helps him as well. He says seeing his dad’s scriptures help him want to read more as well. Paul feels motivated to read more when he sees how much his dad has marked his personal copy of the scriptures.

**Interactions with Friends**

Paul’s interactions with his friends also influence his desire to study scriptures. Paul explained that he has two types of friends that influence his motivation. He
described the first group as “super inactive.” Paul described this group as those who usually do not participate in any type of public or private religious rituals. However, Paul related that some of these friends influence his motivation because they share experiences with him of how the scriptures have helped them. They told Paul that when they were at “their worst” they had thoughts come to their mind that they should “pop em open” and read the scriptures. They told Paul that the scriptures helped them during their struggles. This motivates Paul to want to read scriptures more because in his own words “you know, there is still a possibility to get back on track and read your scriptures…you know, that’s one of the main things to help you.” Seeing how the scriptures help his friends help him feel motivated to read.

Paul described his second group of friends as “good kids” who are “just like” him. He explained that they are “so much alike” that they form a really close-knit group. Paul feels motivated to read his scriptures when he is around this group because they share a lot of personal stories that relate in some way to the scriptures. In Paul’s own words, he explained: “One of the main things in what most everybody tells me is…how they read their scriptures and pray.” These conversations about scriptures help Paul feel motivated to read his scriptures too.

Paul explained that these “good” friends also provide a good example of reading scriptures, which in turn helps him feel motivated to read. He described a time when he went camping with his friends. At first, the group joked about reading the scriptures together, but Paul says that the joking around eventually led everyone to “pull out their scriptures” and talk about them. Paul explained that it was not just camping when his
friends joked about scripture study. He says they joked all the time and would say to each other: “We’ve got to go read our scriptures.” Even though it is said in jest, it motivates Paul to want to read his scriptures.

Paul also explained that he and his friends really want to help each other. He related that when one of them is having a bad day, a friend will ask three questions. He says the three questions are: “Do you remember who you are?” “Did you remember to bring your smile?” and “Did you read your scriptures?” These three questions and his other interactions with his friends help motivate Paul to want to study his scriptures more.

**Interactions with God**

Paul’s interactions with God also influence his desire to study religious texts. He explained how one particular experience with God strongly influences his desire. While going through a very difficult time, Paul says he “sat down and started reading [scriptures].” He related that after a long period of time he read a scripture that answered his prayer and gave him a “very strong feeling” from God. This strong feeling brought Paul to tears and he says that “since then, I’ve always been able to find my answers in there [the scriptures].” That experience influences his desire to read.

Paul also explained that when he prays and reads his scriptures, he likes to envision himself “sitting there talking with God.” He says that envisioning yourself “having a one-on-one with God” helps him know that God will speak to him through the scriptures. Paul believed that the time he spends studying scriptures is the time God will use to interact with him and give him answers to his questions. He related that he has had many “past experiences” that have helped him know that God speaks with him during
scripture reading. In his words, “From past experiences I can sit there and I know I can find an answer if I just sit here and read…eventually it will come up.” These experiences motivate Paul to continue reading.

Paul shared this recent experience to illustrate how God interacts with him during scripture study. He explained the experience this way:

This experience lately…I opened up my scriptures one day and was about ready to give up [on life] I swear! I just like opened my scriptures and it [the answer] was right there and I was like “holy cow” that’s what I needed.

Paul explained that this experience helps him realize how important scripture study is because it is a time when God talks to him. These interactions with God influence his desire to study his scriptures.

Interactions with Self

Paul’s interactions with himself also influence his desire to study religious texts. He explained how his personal success seems to hinge on whether or not he reads the scriptures. He related how his “whole day seems to flip around” if he does not read. In particular, he believed that work “will go wrong” and his family will struggle if he does not read. On the other hand, Paul believed that when he reads he will have more success. He says he reads because he “wants to be able to have those good days everyday and not have things go wrong.” His motivation revolves around not “wanting to have a bad day at work.” Consequently, Paul says he likes to read “as soon as [he] gets up” so he can make sure the rest of the day goes well.

Paul also related that he enjoys reading the scriptures because they help him have “stronger” spiritual feelings. He says that “feeling the Spirit is the best thing ever,” and
that scripture reading is “one of the strongest ways to feel the spirit and make your day go better.” Paul also believed that feeling spiritual feelings more often help him be “more happy” and “more willing” to do church things. Because Paul believed there is a connection between reading scriptures and happy feelings, he feels motivated to read his scriptures.

Thinking about his future also influences Paul’s motivation to read religious texts. He explained that because he “wants the best for [his] future,” he reads his scriptures. He believed that reading his scriptures will help him “do as good as [he] can” and prepare him for whatever comes in the future. Paul shared how reading the scriptures will help him “stay good” and “keep his future bright.”

Paul also explained that because he has developed a habit of reading scriptures he feels incomplete if he does not read. He shared how “a lot of times” he just feels like he “needs to go read the scriptures.” These feelings come frequently when Paul is by himself and has time to think about his life. Paul’s interactions with himself help motivate him to want to study his scriptures.

**Interactions with Objects**

Paul’s interactions with objects also influence his motivation to study religious texts. He related how seeing his personal copy of the scriptures help motivate him to want to read more. Paul usually leaves his scriptures right next to his pillow where he can see it when he wakes up and when he goes to bed. He also sets his phone on top of his scriptures “to charge…so every time [he] puts down his phone the scriptures are right there to remind [him].” Seeing his scriptures influence his motivation because they help
remind him to read.

Paul explained that marking in his scriptures help motivate him as well. He says that he likes to write his name in certain scripture stories because it helps the scriptures “apply more to [his] life.” He shared how he likes to see the other things he has marked from seminary or church because it helps him remember the “cool stories” and experiences he has had with the scriptures. He also feels motivated when he looks at other peoples’ marked scriptures. Paul explained that when he sees the “hundreds of things written down and marked” in his dad’s scriptures it makes him want to read more and find the same things for himself.

Other objects also influence Paul’s desire to study his scriptures. He explained that the Mormon-ad posters help him feel motivated to read. Paul shared how he keeps a few of them in his car and in his room as reminders of what he should do in life. He related how one particular ad has a picture of a balloon with a needle close to it. The caption reads: “things could be worse.” Paul believed the needle represents making mistakes in life. He explained that by “reading my scriptures…there’s…a better chance for not making that mistake.” A separate Mormon-ad kept in Paul’s car explained that those who do not read the scriptures will be spiritually malnourished. Seeing both these ads help Paul feel motivated to continue reading his scriptures.

**Passive Interactions**

Passive interactions also influence Paul’s motivation to study religious texts. Paul really enjoys hearing the “power from the different stories” in seminary and church. He related how he loves to listen to teachers and leaders lecture and tell scripture stories
because it makes him want to read the stories on his own. He says he enjoys trying to figure out how these stories “relate to his life.”

Paul also feels motivated to study his scriptures because of challenges he has received about scripture reading. He related how one teacher challenged him “to read the Book of Mormon in one day.” He remembers thinking “I wonder if I could do that…so you go home and try it.” Challenges to finish reading books of scripture within certain timeframes also motivate him to want to study his scriptures more.

Paul also remembers feeling motivated to read scriptures when he heard other people talk about scriptures. He said he remembers someone telling him that “when you don’t feel like reading…that’s the time when you need to read the most.” This bit of advice helps Paul stay motivated to read his scriptures. These passive interactions have definitely influenced Paul’s motivation to study religious texts.

Susan

Background

Susan was a very bubbly 22-year-old young woman with shoulder-length brown hair. “Susan” was chosen as her pseudonym because her little brother randomly started calling her Susan one day. She says the name “Susan” is endearing to her now because it reflects the love she feels from her family. Even though laughter is part of Susan’s normal speech pattern, there is a depth to Susan that is quite striking. She thinks deeply about herself and assesses her thinking regularly. Her responses reflect her deep thought and deliberation. She really seems to want her responses to reflect her intended meaning.
Even though Susan is 22-years-old, she is just in her first semester as a freshman at a university in Northern Utah. She has not officially declared a major, but she thinks she might focus on business or finance. Fittingly, Susan works as a bank teller for a large regional bank. Up until recently, she worked for a small banking chain, but it dissolved and she found a job with this larger organization. She works about 30 hours per week, so she finds it challenging to fit school, work, and socializing into her schedule. Susan still lives at home so she can save money and continue to go to school. When she is not at work or studying, she enjoys reading, playing the piano, hanging out with friends, or hanging out with family.

Church activity is a big part of Susan’s life as well. She enjoys attending a single adult ward and has been asked to help plan some of the activities for her church group. Susan also likes to attend institute of religion classes held adjacent to the university. She enjoys learning about scriptures and interacting with her peers. Susan has considered going on a church mission for over a year, but she does not feel like it is the right time to go yet. She has a little brother who is leaving for his mission soon and she does not want to burden her parents. The following sections explore how certain interactions influence Susan’s motivation to study her scriptures.

**Interactions with Family**

Susan’s interactions with her family influence her motivation to read religious texts. She explained how the relationship with her dad is one of the “biggest motivating factors” that influence her desire to read scriptures. Susan related that she always goes to her dad when she has a problem or when she needs advice. These advice sessions always
revolve around scriptures. She says, “He would start off giving me advice, and then he would back it up with scripture.” What impresses Susan in these situations is that her dad “can quote scriptures” without even opening the book and reading to her. Susan thinks it would be “so cool” to have that type of knowledge of the scriptures and she feels motivated to read so she can “have her own knowledge.” Susan has similar experiences when she goes to her grandfather for advice.

Susan also related that family scripture study helps motivate her to want to read scriptures on her own. She explained that recently her family has been “a little bit better” at reading together. In her words she related, “I noticed a lot of changes in the spirit and attitude in our home as we read the scriptures…you know it seems to be a lot more peaceful and calm.” Susan says that these feelings motivate her to want to read more on her own so she can have the same feelings.

Watching the examples of her family members also motivate Susan to want to read her scriptures. She explained that she loves watching her 9-year-old brother read the Book of Mormon for the first time. “It’s really cool to see the experiences that he has as things click in his mind,” she related. Susan says that she feels really motivated to read as she watches her brother grow and understand the scriptures. She explained it this way: “If I can see my little 9-year-old brother having these experiences…that peace and calm…I know if I do it myself, I can get that for myself as well.” Susan’s desire to have experiences like her brother help influence her desire to read her scriptures.

Susan’s other brother also influences her desire to read. Because Susan and her 21-year-old brother are so close in age, they have always had a good relationship. She
explained that they talk about everything, including scriptures. When they were younger, they would help motivate each other by challenging one another to read certain scriptures. In particular, they had a challenge to see “who could read the Book of Mormon the fastest?” As they have grown older, they like to discuss the scriptures more regularly and share verses of scripture that mean a lot to them. These interactions with her family influence Susan’s desire to read her scriptures.

**Interactions with Friends**

Susan’s interactions with her friends also influence her desire to read religious texts. Susan explained that having friends who read the scriptures help her feel motivated to read hers as well. “My friends are a huge part in it, because if they are doing it, you know we all do it.” Susan believed that just being around friends who read help her feel like she should read her scriptures too.

She also explained that discussions with her friends about scriptures help motivate her to want to read. In her own words she related: “The friends I hang out with now, we have discussions about the scriptures and about the gospel and so it encourages me to keep reading and get more knowledge.” She particularly enjoys discussing gospel questions because the answers are always from the scriptures. Some of her friends meet on Sunday nights to discuss what they read in their scriptures. Susan likes this forum because “it prompts discussion” and “gets [her] brain flowing.” She says that this group is a really big influence on her and helps “encourage [her] to read” because “they have a lot of knowledge.” This group also regularly encourages Susan to read so she can be prepared for the next week’s discussion.
Susan also explained that studying her scriptures with a good friend influences her desire to study the scriptures. Both Susan and her friend have contemplated serving a mission, so the two of them get together and study scriptures. She explained that they read scriptures together and “share different stories” about when the scriptures have blessed their lives. They also work together and try to memorize certain scripture verses. Even though they meet to “help [prepare for] our missions” Susan says the greatest affect is a greater desire to study her scriptures. Interactions with friends “play a big role” in Susan’s desire to study her scriptures.

**Interactions with God**

Interactions with God also influence Susan’s motivation to read religious texts. Susan believed that “we can communicate verbally with God, but [the scriptures] are how He communicates with us.” She puts it another way when she says, “If I want to communicate with God, I just take out my scriptures and He’s right there.” Susan related that on “many occasions” she has found answers from God in her scripture study. She explained that while some people think “it is a coincidence” that she finds answers from her scripture study, she believed they are answers from God. She says that she has often read a scripture that answered an immediate need and “it was so personal to what I was going through that it couldn’t have been a coincidence.” On these occasions, Susan feels like the scriptures take on a personal feel, almost as if the scriptures were written to her personally and these experiences influence her to want to read more.

Susan also feels motivated to read her scriptures because she sees them as a gift from God. She explained that “because [God] knows everything…there’s obviously a big
reason He gave them [the scriptures] to us.” Susan believed that scriptures are the “cornerstone” of her relationship with God and that she relies heavily on her scriptures for her interaction with God. Susan feels like the scriptures are a gift because they “open the channels of communication” with God. Because the scriptures open the lines of communication, Susan feels like God will share new insights with her as she continues to read. In her own words she shared, “It amazes me how every time I read it, I get something new out of it.” That “something new” is how Susan described her interactions with God. She says that even when she “wasn’t expecting an answer” it came as she studied her scriptures.

In addition to getting answers and communicating with God, Susan believed she becomes more like God as she reads scriptures. She explained that “the more I read my scriptures, the more capable I am to love people.” Susan feels like she begins to love people like God loves people and she can “overlook their faults and their challenges.” She believed that reading her scriptures makes her less judgmental. These interactions with God influence Susan to want to read her scriptures more.

**Interactions with Self**

Susan’s interactions with herself also influence her motivation to read religious texts. She explained that reading the scriptures helps her to feel better inside. Susan says, “You know when I’m having a rough day, or any time in my life, I find comfort [from scriptures].” She also related that scripture study helps her “have peace of mind” and “become one” with herself. Reading the scriptures also helps Susan temper her negative feelings and feel an increase of love and forgiveness in her heart. She also explained that
she feels more spiritual feelings and inspiration when she reads her scriptures.

Susan also believed that her life goes better when she reads her scriptures and she is “afraid to not study them” because she doesn’t want her life to go badly. Susan says she has experience with the “bad days” because there have been times in her life when she stopped reading her scriptures. She related that “when I would start up again, I saw what it did for me and I realized that’s something I want in my life.” She also related that the scriptures “seem to fix [her] problems” and bring peace to her heart. Susan feels this is especially true when her life gets busy and feels like she “couldn’t have done school” without the help she gets from her scriptures.

Thinking about all the challenges and opportunities to come in her future also motivates Susan to read her scriptures. She explained it like this:

Well I think of where my life is now and the things that I’m going through and the decisions that I’m making and how much of my future still lies ahead…and the only way for me to really gain a knowledge of the future that I want is through the scriptures because that’s where it talks about how to obtain the future I’m looking for.

Susan believed that the scriptures will help her “see the things that [she] can have” and help her realize what she needs to do to obtain it. She explained that she will be able to make all the “big decisions…regarding school, and relationships, and marriage” because every answer is in the scriptures. Thus, Susan’s interactions with herself help her feel motivated to read her scriptures.

**Interactions with Objects**

Interactions with objects influence Susan’s motivation to read religious texts. She says that seeing her personal set of scriptures helps her want to read more. Susan
explained that she sees her scriptures at night when she sits down to write in her journal. She explained, “I write in my journal every day, so when I sit down to write in my journal…my scriptures are right there next to it, so they just go hand in hand.” The scriptures sitting next to her journal provides a visual reminder and helps her feel motivated to read. She also believed that having a routine of journal writing and scripture reading help her stay motivated to read.

Susan explained that interacting with her scriptures also helps her feel motivated to read. She interacts with her scriptures by reading the words and using the scripture study helps contained within the book of scripture. Scripture study helps include: footnotes, index, Topical Guide, Bible Dictionary, and Joseph Smith Translations. Her own words capture the essence of her experience with these tools. She says:

If I find a subject [while reading] that I don’t know a lot about or there’s a footnote or something that leads to another topic, I love to just go off on tangents of where I started…. A lot of times, I’ll just start reading a chapter and then it will just take me all over the place…. I’ve found some awesome things and answers to questions that I never…expected to find.

Interactions with words and scripture study helps in her scriptures help motivate Susan to want to read more. In fact, she explained that she is “utilizing the tools that the scriptures have” more than ever before. She says these tools help “make it easier to understand” when she reads. Being able to understand the scriptures helps Susan find things in the scriptures that help her in her life. This in turn increases her scripture reading motivation.

Marking her scriptures also influences Susan’s desire to read. Susan marks her scriptures by writing notes in the margins and by using a colored-pencil to make the things she likes “stand out.” She says that she really likes to read “what [she’s] written in
the past” because it helps her see “how a certain scripture has affected [her] life at one point and then seeing how it affects [her] life now.” Susan also likes to color particular scriptures that “pop out to [her].” She explained that even though her scriptures are quite marked up, she “can always find something new to mark” and she thinks it is “really cool” that as she goes “through all these scriptures there’s always something more to mark.” Susan believed that marking her scriptures helps her find meaning and connection to her own life. These interactions with her scriptures help influence her motivation to read her scriptures.

**Passive Interactions**

Susan’s passive interactions also influence her motivation to read religious texts. Challenges from seminary and church teachers and leaders influences Susan’s desire to read. In fact Susan believed that “the best way to…be motivated is to have a challenge.” She explained that she had teachers “that just challenged [her] to test it out on [her] own.” One particular teacher challenged the class to “read their scriptures before they did their homework.” The teacher then promised the class that if they read their scriptures first they would “do much better on their homework and tests.” Susan says that she took these challenges and found them to work in her life, which in turn influence her desire to read.

While Susan’s teachers influence her reading motivation through challenges, they also influence her by the way they teach the scriptures. She related how many of her teachers “bring the scripture stories to life.” Susan explained how this influences her when she says:

[They] really brought the characters to life and made it seem like I knew the
people who went through this...so that made it a lot easier...it wasn’t just some ancient book...[they] made it more modern and brought them to life.

This familiarity with scripture stories influences Susan to want to read more about the stories and become even more familiar with them.

Susan’s leaders and teachers also influence her motivation by quoting scriptures or sharing scripture references with the class or with the congregation. She remembers one time in particular she was “struggling” in life, and her seminary teacher quoted a scripture that helped her resolve her concern. She explained that witnessing her teachers’ knowledge of the scriptures influences her to want to read more.

Susan also feels motivated to read when a leader or teacher shared a scripture reference but does not quote it fully. She related experiences with her bishop that explained how this teaching technique helps motivate her:

The bishop...will just throw out a scripture...he won’t read it to us...but he’ll say go home and read this...so then you know you can take it on your own personal time and say “K, I’m going to read this”...so you know that curiosity of what he has in store or what he thought we might need at a certain time really helps me to go the next step and read it and find out what he was talking about.

Hearing scriptures and scripture references influence Susan to want to read more.

Examples Susan sees in church leaders and teachers also influence her desire to read her scriptures. Susan explained how her leaders and teachers “would give us personal examples of how scriptures worked in their lives.” She remembers one teacher just “talking about how the Book of Mormon had been a strength to her...but she wasn’t even telling us to read it...she was just saying that she’s been through similar situations.” Susan feels motivated to read so she can become like her leaders and teachers. These and other passive interactions influence Susan’s desire to study her scriptures.
Bruce

Background

Bruce was a 19-year-old young man with a short blond hair and a clean-cut appearance. “Bruce” was chosen as a pseudonym because it reminds him of Batman and as he says, “everybody likes Batman.” In some ways Bruce is like batman. He is a very quiet and private young man who does not talk much. His answers were very concise and brief. Like Batman, Bruce also spends a lot of time maintaining his physique by working out for many hours every day.

Bruce enjoys playing sports like soccer, basketball, and football whenever he gets the chance. He also likes to lift weights and enjoys feeling strong. Bruce played high school soccer for three years. While in school, Bruce was also liked to be involved in weight conditioning classes and music classes. He did well in school, but he admits that his main focus was on sports. Bruce also attended seminary, but he struggled with making it there on time.

Outside of school and sports, Bruce works full-time at a local fast-food restaurant. He really enjoys his work because the manager likes him and will let him take off any day he wants. He has worked at the same job for over three years. Bruce decided to continue working full-time and not to go to college. He says he does not want his grade point average to suffer while he is preparing to serve a mission in Hawaii. He plans on going to Brigham Young University to get his pre-med requirements done when he completes his mission.

When Bruce is not working or working out, he likes to spend time with his
family. Bruce has two sisters and two brothers and described his family as close. Bruce’s family always supports him in his many sports and church activities. They also enjoy going on trips together and just hanging out. Bruce also enjoys going to church with his family and learning from his parents and his siblings. The following sections explore what social contexts influence his motivation to read religious texts.

**Interactions with Family**

Bruce’s interactions with his family influence his motivation to read religious texts. Bruce explained that it was his father who taught him “how” to read the scriptures and highlight the important things. He also related that his parents always “encouraged” him to read his scriptures on his own. Bruce described their constant encouragement as a “big influence” on his desire to study.

While Bruce’s motivation is influenced by his parents’ encouragement, he feels like more influence came from seeing their examples. Bruce shared how he “saw how their lives were better” because they read the scriptures. Bruce sees his parents “reading their scriptures every night when [he] goes to his parents’ room to wish them good night.” He also sees his “mom reading her scriptures in her room” every morning. He explained, “I know they’ve been reading so…I learn from their experience.” Knowing his parents read influences Bruce’s motivation to read as well.

While Bruce’s parents influence his motivation to read scriptures, other family members influence his motivation as well. Bruce’s siblings greatly influence his desire to read. In particular, his older sister and his littlest brother influence his motivation. Bruce explained that his older sister has been “a big influence on my reading my scriptures.”
They have a “very close” relationship and enjoy being around each other. Frequently, Bruce and his sister will stay up late at night “catching up with each other” because it is the only time they can fit it into their busy schedules. During these late night chats, brother and sister will share “how their life is going” and what problems they are facing. Bruce explained that his sister “always brings scriptures into [the conversation].” She shared how scriptures “helped” her or “were comforting” when she needed help. This interaction influences Bruce to say the following: “Seeing that they have helped her out and that she has that strong testimony and faith in the scriptures…it has really influenced me.” Bruce says he feels motivated to read because he wants the scriptures to help him like they help his sister.

Bruce’s 10-year-old little brother also influences Bruce’s motivation because he constantly “reminds” him to read his scriptures. Bruce likes this interaction with his brother and tries to “remind” his brother to read before he mentions it. Bruce explained that seeing his brother’s example also influences him. In his words he related the following: “When I see him asking questions and wanting to know more about the scriptures…you know it makes me want to do it more.” The example of his little brother really influences Bruce who says, “When I see my little brother do it, I want to do it too.” Bruce’s interactions with his family definitely influence his desire to read his scriptures.

Interactions with Friends

Bruce’s interactions with his friends also influence his desire to read religious texts. Bruce explained that half of his friends are good influences on him and the other half are not. He believed his good friends help motivate him to read because he can “ask
them questions” about the scriptures and about their beliefs. He also explained that he enjoys listening to the “experiences they have had with the scriptures,” because it gives him “encouragement to try it” himself. Specifically, he says that his friends will talk about how they “found” scriptures that helped them overcome some problem they were facing. This type of interaction helps Bruce desire to search his scriptures looking for answers to his problems.

Bruce explained also that when he is around his “good” friends he feels motivated to read. His own words illustrate why he feels motivated: “When I’m with my good friends…the gospel comes up more, so we talk about the scriptures or kind of have a gospel-based discussion about different topics…you know we always bring up scriptures that might help.” Bruce shared how the friends “usually know what’s going on in each other’s lives,” so they try to help each other through their problems by giving each other scriptures to read. This motivates Bruce to feel like he should read his scriptures.

Bruce explained that for a time he did not associate with his “good” friends and he did not feel motivated to read his scriptures. However, he related that “when he started talking to them again” and “hanging out with them more” he started feeling motivated to read his scriptures. He says that seeing their good example helps him feel like he wants to read. He puts it this way, “You know getting back with those friends helped me realize that I needed to do better.” Therefore, just being around these good friends helps Bruce feel motivated to read, but he also admits that it helps to be around those types of friends who are not afraid to “tell him to do it.” These and other interactions with his friends influence Bruce’s desire to study religious texts.
Interactions with God

Bruce’s interactions with God also influence his motivation to read religious texts. Bruce admits that he went through a time recently when he did not try to interact with God through prayer or scripture reading. He feels that this lack of interaction made him “wonder if it was true.” He shared how a particular experience with God helped him interact with God and feel motivated to read his scriptures again. In his own words, he related: “About a year ago I was having a lot of questions and not sure about my testimony…after going through a lot of hard times, I finally got back and started reading my scriptures.” Bruce explained that when turned to “Moroni’s promise” in the Book of Mormon that he felt impelled to pray and ask God “if the scriptures were true.” He related that after his prayer “the Holy Ghost touched [him] very strongly.” Bruce explained the Holy Ghost as a “very strong feeling” that comes from God and it became a “strong testimony builder” to him. Bruce believed that this “strong feeling” is God’s way of interacting with him. Because of this interaction, Bruce feels a desire to read his scriptures.

Other interactions with God have also influenced his desire to read religious texts. Even more recently, Bruce explained that he was reading Joseph Smith–History. He related that after he read about Joseph Smith he went “hiking to Ben Lomond Peak.” When Bruce was alone in the mountains, he began “thinking about what [he] had been reading.” He decided that he wanted to find “a little grove of trees…and have the same kind of experience” as Joseph Smith. So Bruce prayed and asked God more questions. He says that he “felt the Spirit testify that it was true.” This “neat experience” helps Bruce
feel motivated to read his scriptures because he wants to have more interactions with God.

Bruce also explained that reading his scriptures helps him interact more with God, and the more he interacts with God the more he wants to read his scriptures. He believed that “to build a relationship” with God you “need to learn more about him.” In his words he says, “Learning more about Christ’s life gets you closer to Him so your relationship grows.” Bruce also shared that the more he reads the “more [he’s] in tune with the Spirit,” and “you feel God’s love” and the relationship with God grows. Thus, Bruce feels motivated to read his scriptures so he can continue to improve his relationship with God and feel His love.

**Interactions with Self**

Bruce’s interaction with himself also influences his motivation to read religious texts. He explained that he likes to read his scriptures because “life seems to go by easier” and it seems like he is “able to cope better.” Reading the scriptures also helps Bruce feel like he can “figure out the problems” he has in life. Specifically, Bruce believed that he “always seems to do better” at school when he reads his scriptures, and he believed “work stresses are lessened” when he reads. He related that “when you read your scriptures everything just goes better.”

Bruce also feels motivated to read when he “takes an inventory of [his] life” and realizes how many blessings he sees come into his life from scripture reading. He explained that one of the biggest blessings he sees from scripture study is his own personal growth. He feels that his scriptures help him “progress” and become a better
person. He believed that “when you read your scriptures, you kind of see where you have been and how much you’ve progressed.” He says that he likes to “look back” and see how much the scriptures help him grow.

Bruce also feels like reading his scriptures helps him prepare for the future. Because he wants to “get ready for a mission” he feels like he should read his scriptures more often and more in depth. He explained that he “needs to know the scriptures really well” so he can help someone with their problems by “knowing where to go in the scriptures.” He believed that “any questions that come up can be answered by the scriptures,” so he feels like he needs to know them better. This desire to “know the answers” influences Bruce’s motivation to read.

Thinking about the future beyond his mission also influences Bruce’s desire to read his scriptures. The following statement explained how the future effects Bruce’s motivation: “I need to be reading my scriptures…so that I know where my life is supposed to go.” Bruce believed that “there’s a certain path” that God wants him to take in the future and by reading his scriptures he will be able to recognize that path. He related that by reading his scriptures he will be entitled to God’s help as he pursues his desire to become a doctor. In addition, Bruce feels motivated to read his scriptures so he can learn to become “more righteous.” He says, “I’m going to be a more worthy priesthood holder and a better father and husband if I read.” Therefore, Bruce feels like the more he reads his scriptures “the better all of that will be.” These interactions with himself influence his desire to read religious texts.
Interactions with Objects

Bruce’s interactions with objects also influence his motivation to read his scriptures. Bruce explained that interacting with the scripture study tools in his own set of scriptures helps him understand more which in turn helps him feel a desire to continue reading. He mentions that he likes to use the Bible Dictionary and Topical guide to “look for scripture references” that help him understand a particular subject better. He also says that he uses “the footnotes to find other scriptures…to help tie everything together.” He enjoys feeling like he is learning from his scriptures and that feeling of learning influences his desire to study the scriptures.

Seeing his personal set of scriptures also influences his motivation to read. He says, “I always put my scriptures on my bed, so before I can go to bed, I grab my scriptures and that reminds me to read.” He believed that “putting them in view” helps him not only remember to read but feel motivated to do it. Bruce also says that seeing others use their copy of the scriptures during worship services and other church meetings helps him feel a desire to read them more often.

Bruce also believed that seeing his marked up scriptures influences his motivation. He explained that he uses “a multi-colored highlighter pen” to mark certain things in his scriptures. He uses a different color to highlight “different types of stuff” in his scriptures such as “scripture mastery, the atonement, and spiritual gifts.” Bruce feels that when he sees these different colors it helps him have a desire to know more about subject they represent. He also says that when he sees these marking it makes him feel like he “wants to read more.” In addition, Bruce feels like his scripture marking makes
the scriptures “easier to understand.” Understanding the scriptures influences Bruce to want to read more so he can mark and understand more. These interactions with his scriptures influence his desire to read his scriptures.

**Passive Interactions**

Passive interactions also influence Bruce’s motivation to study religious texts. He explained that he first started reading because he knew he needed to do it for his grade in seminary. Later, Bruce explained that as his seminary teachers talked about certain scriptures in his seminary class, it made him want to go home and “learn more about it on [his] own, and read the scriptures to go more in depth.” He also related that his seminary teachers “put a lot of emphasis on reading your scriptures and finding out for yourself.” Bruce says that these direct challenges really influence his desire to read.

Other church leaders also influence Bruce’s desire to read his scriptures. He related that “one of the really big influences is Elder Holland.” Elder Holland gave a talk entitled “Safety for the Soul” that Bruce “listens to quite frequently to learn more about the Book of Mormon.” He shared how listening to his “very powerful testimony” encourages him to want to continue reading.

Recently, Bruce’s passive interactions in his Institute of Religion class also influence his desire to study his scriptures. He explained that it is nice to “learn from someone who understands the scriptures.” Listening to this knowledgeable teacher motivates Bruce to read because he feels curious. He talks about how the teacher helps him realize that he misses a lot when he reads on his own. “There’s a lot of things I didn’t pick out that were in [the scriptures], so it made me curious,” he related. This curiosity
led him to ask “what else can I find?” So Bruce “went back and read through [the scriptures] again and found new things or different things” that he had never really thought about. Bruce feels this same type of curiosity when his church leaders or teachers say something that he “had never heard before” or that “wasn’t familiar.” These moments influence Bruce to read his scriptures to become more familiar with these scriptures.

Bruce also shared that seeing the examples of others helps him feel motivated to read his scriptures. He talks about how the example of his seminary teachers really helps him. He says, “You know just seeing how happy they were were…you know you can see that in part it was from scripture study and living the gospel.” Bruce explained that seeing his teachers help him feel motivated to read because he “could have the same happiness” if he read his scriptures. These passive experiences as well as others influence Bruce’s motivation to read his scriptures.

**Bonnie**

**Background**

Bonnie was a very quiet 21-year-old young woman with short modern-styled hair highlighted dark violet. She dresses in dramatic colors and fits the stereotype of an artist. Bonnie is in fact a budding artist who loves to work in photography and modern art. She is currently a sophomore at a university in Idaho working toward a major in photography. “Bonnie” was chosen as the pseudonym because it was the first name that came to her mind.

Bonnie’s quiet nature at first limited the depth and quality of her responses, but as
soon as she began to feel comfortable in the interviews, her responses were very thoughtful and provocative. As the interview progressed, it became apparent that scripture study was near to her heart. Thus, the nature of the subject seemed to draw her out of her shell and she felt more and more comfortable sharing. She also seemed to open up when she knew the interview posed no threat to her. Once she felt comfortable she gave great insights about scripture study motivation.

For the past few years, Bonnie has felt like she has been lost. Since high school she really has not had much of a direction. She did attend a university in Utah and worked part-time at a movie theater, but she did not feel like she was going anywhere. She talked a lot to her dad about her feelings and he suggested that she look at attending other universities. She found a small university in Idaho and her dad felt like it would be a good fit for her. Bonnie still is not quite sure of her direction in life, but is excited to try attending a new university even though it is far from home.

Bonnie has never really been away from home. She grew up in California and then moved to Utah with her family when she was thirteen. Her junior high and high school were both within a few blocks of her parents’ home and the university she attended in Utah was within fifteen miles. Even though Bonnie is far away from her family, she still calls home frequently to ask for advice and to stay connected. She also drives home whenever she gets the chance. Bonnie is an avid reader of the scriptures and the following sections describes the interactions that influence her desire to read.

**Interactions with Family**

Bonnie’s interactions with her family influence her motivation to read religious
texts. She explained that the example of her family members help her feel motivated to read. Bonnie talks in particular about how her dad influences her motivation. She says, “My dad is a really good example and he just shows that there are so many benefits from [reading]…He’s such a good person from reading his scriptures.” Seeing her dad read and the effect the scriptures have on her dad influences Bonnie’s motivation to read.

Bonnie also sees her dad’s commitment to the scriptures because he takes time to read with her little brother. She says that this motivates her for many reasons. First, she explained that when she sees her brother learning in the scriptures she can see the influence in his life. In her own words she reports that seeing her brother read, “motivates me to do it more cause if my brother can do it then so can I.” Second, she says that she feels motivated because when she sees her brother reading, she “feels like he might know more” about the scriptures than she does. Thus, Bonnie feels like she needs to read because “she wants to catch up with him” and be “as smart” as he is.

Not only does Bonnie’s dad provide an example of scripture reading, he also uses family gatherings to teach his children about how the scriptures can help. Bonnie explained that her dad “tells a lot of stories about how he’s looked in the scriptures and it helped with something in his life.” She related how her dad usually “on a Sunday or during dinner…he’ll say something like ‘I want to share something with you that I experienced.’” Bonnie says that these little experiences really help her feel motivated because his experiences are “really cool” and she believed that he “gets blessings” for reading the scriptures.

In addition to her dad, Bonnie’s siblings also share “experiences with scriptures
and how it helps them.” This makes Bonnie feel like she “wants to have those experiences with the scriptures too,” so she feels motivated to read in order to have those same types of experiences. Bonnie also feels motivated to read her scriptures so she can “show an example to my younger brother and sister.” She feels responsible for showing them how the scriptures can help them in their life. These family interactions influence Bonnie’s motivation to read scriptures.

**Interactions with Friends**

Interactions with friends also influence Bonnie’s desire to study religious texts. Bonnie related that she has friends who went to seminary and “asked questions” or “had experiences to share” or shared “what they thought about the scriptures.” She says that having people around her who are trying to learn more about the gospel by reading their scriptures helps motivate her to want to read.

Bonnie also related how some experiences with her friends influence her motivation. The following account, in Bonnie’s own words, illustrates how her interactions with her friends influence her motivation:

Well I just remember having sleepovers and stuff and I was always surprised when someone brought their scriptures and they were like “let’s study our scriptures before we do anything else or [before we] go to bed.” I just really admired that.

Seeing her friends’ commitment to read the scriptures every day helps Bonnie want to read her scriptures as well. One particular friend shared her commitment to scripture study in a way that profoundly influences Bonnie. In her own words she related, “My friend has scripture study every night at a certain time and we have to go to her house and
drop her off because she has to have scripture study.” Bonnie explained that seeing her dedication to scripture study really motivates her to read as well.

Even though Bonnie says that she and her friends normally only talk about scriptures in church or seminary, she believed that her friends read their scriptures regularly. Bonnie explained that she can “just tell that they read.” She clarifies why she is confident that her friends read scriptures when she says, “They are obviously reading their scriptures because they go to seminary and go to church and they act like good people.” She says that seeing their “goodness” helps her feel motivated to read scriptures. Her friends’ examples of goodness help Bonnie feel motivated to read. The following statement reveals how their examples influence Bonnie. She says, “I want to become a better person and I want to know as much as my friends do.” These interactions with her friends motivate Bonnie to want to read her scriptures.

**Interactions with God**

Bonnie’s interactions with God also influence her desire to read religious texts. Bonnie explained that one of her top reasons for studying the scriptures is so that she can “get closer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.” She believed that when she does not read her scriptures she cannot interact with God like she wants to. Her own words describe her feelings about the interaction she experiences during scripture reading: “When I don’t study, I feel like I am not as connected with Him and I don’t have His Spirit with me as much.” On the other hand, Bonnie related that when she does read “it helps…bring you closer to Heavenly Father.” Bonnie believed that by reading her scriptures it gives her an opportunity for God to interact with her and “give [her] answers
to her questions."

Bonnie explained that when she reads her scriptures she feels God interact with her through the Spirit. She says, “If I want to feel the spirit more I need to study my scriptures more…then I’ll become closer to God.” Thus, Bonnie believed that scriptures are a direct link to interact with God through the medium of the Spirit. She feels like the scriptures are essential to that connection. She explained that “you need your scriptures to have that closeness to Heavenly Father.”

Because of Bonnie’s belief, she says that she “feels guilty” when she does not read the scriptures. She related that if she misses a day reading her scriptures she “feels like [she] has to make up for it.” Bonnie explained that she feels her connection with God getting weaker and it makes her want to read more. She described how these guilt feelings help her when she says, “I think it’s a good thing to have the guilt” because it helps motivate her to read the next day.

Not only does Bonnie believe that the scriptures allow God to communicate with her through the Spirit, she also feels that she receives “blessings for doing good things” like reading the scriptures. These blessings, Bonnie contends, are God’s way of interacting with her. In particular, she believed that “you receive answers when you read your scriptures…and that’s a blessing.” These interactions with God influence Bonnie’s desire to read her scriptures.

**Interactions with Self**

Bonnie’s interactions with herself also influence her motivation to read religious texts. Bonnie admits that she reads because she wants to “have greater knowledge of the
“scriptures.” She explained that as she grew “more mature and older [she] wanted to know the deeper stuff and increase [her] knowledge.” In addition to having more knowledge, Bonnie says that she enjoys having “good thoughts” in her mind that come as she reads. In fact, she related that there are times when she “doesn’t want to stop reading” because she wants to keep those thoughts in her mind.

Bonnie also believed that reading the scriptures is important because they contain “a lot of stuff you need to know to help you in your life.” In particular, Bonnie believed that the scriptures help her life because they “can affect your life and guide you through trials and everything.” She also contends that “you’re just going to feel better when you read your scriptures.” This good feeling influences Bonnie’s motivation to read. She says, “Why not do something that’s going to make you feel better and make your life better?” She explained that she gets those good feelings and life goes better because she feels the Spirit as she reads. These reasons influence Bonnie’s desire to read her scriptures.

Bonnie’s desire for a good future also influences her desire to study the scriptures. She feels like she needs to read her scriptures so she can be ready for her future spouse. Her own words illustrate her feelings:

Well it’s kind of intimidating that if I don’t go on a mission…I mean I hope my husband will be a returned missionary…but it’s kind of intimidating because they’ve had two years to really study the scriptures and spend all their time on the gospel, so I want to be up to date with all of that.

Bonnie also explained that she wants to know the scriptures well in case she decides to serve a mission herself. In addition to these motivating reasons, Bonnie wants to be able to “teach [her] kids about the scriptures and to be able to answer their questions.” Above all, Bonnie says she wants to be a good example for her children to follow. These
interactions with herself influence her motivation to read religious texts.

**Interactions with Objects**

Bonnie’s interactions with objects also influence her desire to read her scriptures. She remembers that when she “received [her] first big set of scriptures” she felt more motivated to read. Because they were “her” scriptures and because “they were nice,” she felt like they were more important. She explained that seeing those scriptures “always sitting on [her] desk” helps remind her and motivate her to read. Bonnie also believed that seeing her “Book of Mormon institute manual” influences her motivation to read her scriptures because it reminds her to study every day. She says she enjoys using the institute manual because it helps her understand more of the Book of Mormon because it “explained the scriptures” and “asks questions” that make her think and search the scriptures more. Bonnie believed that understanding the scriptures help her feel motivated to read.

Bonnie explained that marking her scriptures also helps her understand the scriptures and thus feel motivated to read more. Bonnie shared that she marks her scriptures in a few different ways. One of the ways she marks is by coloring “just the scriptures that she likes.” Another way she marks her scriptures is by “writing down” what scriptures mean. She explained that she likes to write down her ideas if she thinks she will not remember what it means in the future. Bonnie admits that when she finds a scripture she has colored or words she has written in her scriptures she “wants to see if there are more of those” scriptures that she stand out to her. She says these markings motivate her to read more because she wants to find more scriptures to “expand” her
understanding.

Recently, Bonnie has “started to listen to the scriptures on her I-pod.” She says that she really likes listening because how the narrator reads it “makes it easier to understand and easier to listen to.” Making it easier to understand motivates Bonnie to want to listen more often. In fact, she related that she started the Book of Mormon over because she understands so much more when she listens to scriptures. Therefore, Bonnie’s interactions with objects influence her motivation to read religious texts.

**Passive Interactions**

Bonnie’s passive interactions also influence her desire to read her scriptures. She explained that seeing the example of her church leaders helps motivate her to want to read. Bonnie shared that she “wants to become like [her] church leaders because they seem like they have everything figured out.” She also related that because “they teach so well and know what to do and say and they seem like they have such great families…you want to become like them.” Bonnie believed her church leaders are so good because they study their scriptures. She says seeing her leaders makes “[her] want to study [her] scriptures” so she can teach like them and be like them.

Challenges also motivate Bonnie to read her scriptures. She explained that she had a seminary teacher who told her class about “his experience reading the Book of Mormon all in one day.” The teacher explained that “it was such a good experience” and then challenged his students to try the same thing. Bonnie says that this challenge was motivating and she read to try to “learn” new things like he did.

Seminary and institute of religion classes also help motivate Bonnie to read her
scriptures. She believed that “memorizing scriptures” and “having activities” help her feel motivated to continue to read. Bonnie feels like participating in memorizing and other activities “helps you learn them and understand them and know why they are important.” Understanding her scriptures and understanding their importance helps Bonnie feel motivated to read.

Bonnie also believed that those in her church congregation influence her motivation to read her scriptures. She described her singles ward as a place where “the people who teach you are your peers and when they teach about the scriptures you just want to learn like them and become like them.” Bonnie explained that those in her ward “seem like they know so much” it makes her “want to know more” and so she feels motivated to read her scriptures. Thus, these passive interactions influence Bonnie’s motivation to study religious texts.

Jason

Background

Jason was an 18-year-old young man with a tall slender build and short blonde hair. “Jason” was chosen as the pseudonym randomly by the researcher because Jason did not submit a name. Jason speaks in a very relaxed conversational manner, which is very disarming. Despite his relaxed manner, it is quickly evident that Jason is an extremely intelligent young man who gives very thoughtful responses. He enjoys intelligent conversation, especially when it is about something he likes to talk about.

Jason, a freshman, lives away from home while attending a university in northern
Utah. Because of his perfect ACT score and near perfect high school GPA, Jason’s university scholarship pays for everything except room and board. To defer some of that cost, he shared an apartment with his older brother. He explained that his brother is a “social butterfly” so he is not around much. Jason chooses not to socialize like his brother; rather he prefers to focus his time on his studies.

Jason is studying mathematics and hopes one day to be an engineer or a mathematics teacher. His first semester has been intense because he chose to join the honors program. This program placed Jason in difficult and rigorous courses filled with classmates who “are serious about their education.” He seems to enjoy school and likes the challenge of these difficult courses.

When Jason is not in school, he likes to come home and spend time with his family. Even though Jason considers himself as anything but athletic, he still enjoys participating in athletic contests with his siblings and his dad. He also enjoys playing games with his family and having conversations with them. He especially likes to have church discussions with his brothers and his dad. Religion is a very big part of Jason’s life. In fact, he not only participates in worship services every week while away at school, he also helps teach his peers in Sunday school using the New Testament as his text. The following sections describe how Jason’s interactions affect another aspect of his religiousness, namely his motivation to study religious texts.

**Interactions with Family**

Jason’s interactions with his family influence his motivation to read his scriptures. He explained that he always remembers his family having scripture study when he lived
at home. While Jason admits that he did not always want to participate, he did “enjoy when we were together as a family.” Jason related that as he got older he began to enjoy having “conversations with [his] family as scripture things come up.” He explained that someone in the family usually “will ask a question,” and “we’ll go to the scriptures to find answers.” Jason enjoys this interaction with his family members and it makes help want to read his scriptures.

Jason particularly enjoys asking his dad questions about church things. He explained that he likes to talk to his dad because he is “so knowledgeable.” When Jason described his dad he says, “Gosh…he knows everything.” Jason admits that he “wishes” he could answer people’s questions using the scriptures the way his dad does. Seeing his dad’s example, Jason related that “it’s cool to be able to go to the scriptures and find an answer.” In fact, Jason says that he will often call his dad and ask him to tell him more about a particular scripture topic that he finds interesting.

Jason’s dad not only helps answer his questions, he also spends time teaching him how to find answers on his own by using the scriptures. Jason related that his “dad has tried to teach the family good ideas for how to study the scriptures and not just read scriptures.” During family scripture study, Jason’s dad takes time to ask questions to help his children learn how to study the scriptures. Jason related:

In our family scripture study we’ll stop every couple of verses, every ten verses even and he’ll just say “What did you learn from this? What are some principles you’ve learned? What was cool about this that you would like to talk about some more? And if someone has an idea, they’ll just bring it up.

Jason explained that this strategy has “transferred” to his personal scripture study and he feels like he is able to use his scriptures as a tool for personal scripture study. He says, “If
I have a question, I am able to go find my answer.” These interactions with his family influence Jason’s motivation to study religious texts.

**Interactions with Friends**

Jason’s interactions with his friends also influence his motivation to read his scriptures. Jason shared that he and his friends will frequently get into conversations where scriptures “come up” and they talk about how the scriptures have helped them. In addition, he related that some friends will come to him to ask him questions about church things. In particular, he related that he has “one friend who…if she ever has a gospel question, she’ll ask me.” Jason shared that most of the time he “won’t know” the answer, so he will “go to the scriptures” to try to find her answer.

Jason also has a group of friends attending the same university who “all live in the same apartment building.” This group of friends gathers together and “reads the scriptures every night as an apartment.” Jason wishes he could be involved in the same practice with his own roommates because he thinks it is “way cool.” Jason admits that their example motivates him to want to read his scriptures more. He explained that “they like it so much and they’re so into it…there’s obviously something there for me.” Seeing his friends’ desire to read influences his motivation to read as well.

While seeing his friends’ desire to read does influence Jason’s motivation, he explained that hearing friends talk about the scriptures helps him want to read as well. Jason feels motivated when friends share their convictions about the gospel. He says, “When a friend testifies of something to me with great conviction, it makes me want to know of that truth myself. So I turn to the scriptures to learn for myself what they already
know.” Jason is motivated to read so he can “know” what his friends know. He adds that he also feels motivated to read because he “sees the strength” his friends gain from studying the scriptures. In fact, Jason admits that seeing the strength of his friends “leads [him] to a deep study of the scriptures” so he can gain the same strength. These interactions with his friends influence Jason’s motivation to read his scriptures.

**Interactions with God**

Jason’s interactions with God also influence his motivation to read his scriptures. Jason believed that reading the scriptures is one way to interact with God because it “is the way to invite the Spirit into your life.” Jason explained that “feeling the Spirit” is God’s way of interacting with him. When he reads the scriptures, he feels like “it allows [him] to have the Spirit more fully which brings [him] closer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.” Jason related that he feels the “Spirit with” him more when he reads his scriptures more. He believed this helps his relationship with God “increase,” and that gives him a “stronger desire to study the scriptures.” Jason explained it as a cyclical process. He believed the more he reads, the stronger his relationship is with God; and the stronger his relationship to God he feels a “stronger desire to study the scriptures.” He related that reading the scriptures “just draws me closer to my Heavenly Father [and] helps me understand Him better and grow closer to Him.”

Jason also feels motivated to read his scriptures because he can “feel God’s love more in [his] life” when he reads. He says, “As I get in the scriptures, I can feel Him around me.” He also reads because he believed “it makes [God] happy.” Jason explained that when he does what God wants him to do, like read his scriptures, it makes God
happy. It also makes Jason happy knowing he can receive answers from God through his scriptures.

One particular interaction with God stands out to Jason. He related how this event helped him “appreciate the scriptures in a way [he] hadn’t before.” The following are his words as he described the event:

I’d gotten into a car accident earlier in the evening, and I was upset from the experience. My mind was racing. I was even breathing hard. I couldn’t calm down. So I picked up the Book of Mormon and started reading. Pretty soon, I was completely calm and totally in control of myself again. As I started to focus, I felt the peace that can only come from Christ, and I knew that everything was going to be okay.

Jason attributes his feelings of peace to reading the scriptures. This interaction, as well as many others with God influence Jason’s desire to study his scriptures.

**Interactions with Self**

Jason’s interactions with himself also influence his motivation to read religious texts. Jason explained that he reads because he “feels good doing it.” He shared that “you get a good feeling” after you read and “you just feel happier.” He also explained that he likes to read to “learn cool things and to be uplifted.” Because Jason wants these good and happy feelings to uplift him in his life, he feels motivated to study his scriptures.

Jason also wants to read because he likes to find things that are “actually applicable” to his life. He feels like the scriptures mean something to him personally and “there is something for [him] to learn and gain from it.” He likes to think that the scriptures “greatly benefit” him and he learns things he “can improve upon.” Jason reads so he can become the “best” person he can possibly be. He also feels motivated to read so
he can add to his gospel knowledge. “I want to know more, I want to read more,” he related. He also feels like reading and studying his scriptures more helps him feel adequate in his gospel knowledge as he teaches Sunday school and interacts with his peers and his family.

Thinking of the future also influences Jason’s motivation to read. Because Jason is planning on serving a mission soon, he feels like he “does not know the gospel well enough.” These feelings of inadequacy inspire him to “keep studying and learning and hoping that it will help [him] as [he] prepares to serve a full-time mission.” He explained that he wants to be able to answer people’s questions by telling them to “look at the scriptures.” He feels a desire to read so he “can share these wonderful things with everyone else.”

Thinking of his future family also influences Jason’s motivation to read his scriptures. He says that he wants to have his kids go to him when they have questions just like he “goes to [his] dad if [he] has a question.” Jason also wants to “have family scripture study with [his] family and…motivate them to read their scriptures too.” Thus, thinking of the future and other interactions with himself influence Jason’s motivation to read his scriptures.

**Interactions with Objects**

Jason’s interactions with objects also influence his desire to study religious texts. He explained that seeing his scriptures helps motivate him to read. Keeping his scriptures “in plain sight” helps him want to read. He says, “You know I keep my scriptures in my room…I see them…down at the foot of my bed.” Jason keeps his scriptures on his bed.
because “the door faces the foot of [his] bed so [he] can see them every time [he] comes in.” Jason related that regardless of the time of day or night, seeing his scriptures helps him feel motivated to read.

Marking his scriptures also influences Jason’s motivation to read. He explained that he reads his scriptures looking for “if/then statements.” He says that he uses a red pencil to underline those statements he finds in his scriptures. Jason related that he likes to look for “promises attached” to the if/then statement, because he wants to see how he can get those promises in his own life. He also explained that he likes to “box things that stand out…that are important.” Jason also “circles” things that stand out to him when he reads, especially if they are about Christ. He also tries to “find lists” when he reads and marks them so they stand out too.

While Jason admits that his marking strategies are not very organized, he does feel like it influences his desire to study his scriptures. He feels like when he reads a page in his scriptures that he “hasn’t marked…[he] doesn’t focus nearly as much.” On the other hand, when he marks his scriptures he feels “more focused” and “looks for things…and learns things and finds ways to better [himself].” Jason feels like because he marks his scriptures he gets more out of his study sessions. He described it this way: “Because I mark my scriptures, there’s more to scripture study for me so then I want to come back and keep doing it again and again.” Jason’s interactions with his scriptures influence his desire to study.

**Passive Interactions**

Passive interactions also influence Jason’s motivation to study his scriptures.
Jason admits that he feels motivated to read because his seminary and institute classes make him feel like he’s “supposed to read the scriptures every day.” He feels like “it’s expected” so that is one reason he does it. While Jason says that the expectation helped him get into a habit of reading his scriptures, it is not the strongest motivation. He admits that he would read, but he “would be lucky if he got anything from it.”

Jason feels more motivated when his institute teacher helps him learn how to study his scriptures in new ways. He explained that his teacher taught the class to “put a question mark out in the margin” when they do not understand something they read in the scriptures. This helps Jason feel motivated to read his scriptures because he says that he used to “move on” when he did not understand what the scriptures meant. By putting a question mark in the margin, Jason says that it makes him stop and ask, “What about these things that I don’t understand.” Jason believed that stopping and asking himself questions helps him understand what he is reading and thus helps him want to read more.

Jason also related that he feels motivated to read because he is taking religion courses about the Book of Mormon and the Old Testament. He feels motivated to “study along,” so he can understand the conversations in his institute classes. He says that he also feels motivated to read the scriptures because of his missionary preparation class. The instructor told him that he needed to read in order to become an effective missionary. Therefore, these passive interactions influence Jason’s motivation to study his scriptures.
CHAPTER V
STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION

This chapter focuses on the structural description of motivation to read religious texts by young single adults. In other words, this chapter provides a description of “how” participants experience motivation to study scriptures (Creswell, 2007). To adequately provide a structural description, this chapter provides a historical and genetic analysis of scripture study motivation (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Therefore, this chapter explores the setting and contexts of the origin and history in which scripture study motivation was and is experienced (Creswell, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978). These descriptions are explored and interpreted using sociocultural theory to provide meaning of the lived experiences (van Manen, 1990).

As in the previous chapter, the six emergent themes are used to guide the exploration of structural descriptions. While these themes provide an organizational and logical flow of data, they also provide a tool for analyses of distinct interactions. Lantolf (2006) asserted that it is desirable to examine social factors independently and distinctly because it provides information-rich data about the phenomena. Even with this assertion, he recognizes that in normal human behavior, it is clear that social factors generally function as an integrated organic system. Sociocultural theory views all phenomena as dynamic, contextual, complex entities in a constant state of change and interconnectedness (Mahn, 1999). Therefore, while these categories help make the structural description of the phenomenon possible, they do not provide a complete description of the complex interconnections. In fact, Vygotsky (1978) claimed that such
an exploration is impossible because interactions are qualitatively distinct from, and
irreducible to, their primitive antecedents.

Even though it is not possible to reduce complex phenomena to simple cause and
effect relationships, it is appropriate, and even desirable, to analyze phenomena using
distinct categories (Lantolf, 2006). Lantolf contended that distinct and independent
analysis of social phenomena should be explored within three socially fundamental
categories: activities, artifacts, and concepts. Within the sociocultural context, activities
refer to interactions with others within particular systems, artifacts refer to cultural tools
that mediate interactions, and concepts refer to understandings constructed of the
personal, the physical, and the social worlds (Lantolf, 2006).

While these concepts provide a fundamental base for exploration, they also
provide a genetic structure conducive to analysis of phenomenon using sociocultural
theory. In other words, the fundamental factors allow phenomena to be explored from a
historical and social perspective (Mahn, 1999). Vygotsky (1997) explained this genetic
structure when he contends that every function in cultural development appears on the
stage twice, in two planes, first the social, then the psychological. Thus, genetically
speaking, it is appropriate to begin analysis fundamentally at the social level and proceed
to the psychological.

Simply stated, before psychological functions become an integral part of the
personality they manifest themselves in the “outer” world as interaction between the
individual and the people around him or her (Haenen, Schrijnemakers, & Stufkens,
2003). They first emerge in the social context and are gradually absorbed and
transformed “inwardly.” Vygotsky (1981) viewed this inward development as an outcome from being structured through, embedded in, and mediated in and by relationships with peers, adults, and objects.

Therefore, this chapter is organized and analyzed in a consciously constructed chronology based on the tenets of sociocultural theory described above. In other words, motivation to read religious texts is explored below both genetically and historically. Based on Lantolf’s (2006) cultural fundamentals, emergent themes relative to “activities” are explored first. The emergent themes considered “activities” are as follows: interactions with family, interactions with friends, passive interactions, and interactions with God. These themes are considered activities because they deal with interactions within particular systems. Genetically speaking, these themes should be examined first because the interactions appear socially before they appear psychologically (Vygotsky, 1997). These themes are also organized historically, in chronological order, which means they are organized according to which interactions appeared to influence scripture study motivation first, second, and so on.

Lantolf (2006) termed his second cultural fundamental as “artifacts.” Obviously, the emerging theme “interactions with objects” fits within this category and will be explored next. Interestingly, artifacts genetically can be viewed in a plane somewhere between “activities” and “concepts” because they mediate between social and psychological functions (DavyDov, 1995). Historically speaking, “artifacts” naturally follow “activities” because it is only after objects are used socially do they become a mediating factor that leads to internalization (Karpov & Haywood, 1998). Thus, the
analyses in this chapter proceeds by exploring the influences on motivation found in interactions with objects.

Finally, this chapter concludes by examining Lantolf’s (2006) final social fundamental category: concepts. This term refers to psychological or metacognitive development (Fox & Riconscente, 2008). In sociocultural theory this metacognitive attainment is referred to as internalization, or the moment when social norms are internalized into more advanced psychological processes (Karpov & Haywood, 1998). Thus, the emergent theme of interactions with self is explored and analyzed in this section. Genetically speaking, metacognition or consciousness is the ultimate attainment in sociocultural theory and can only be attained after social mediation (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003).

Therefore, in order to better understand what social factors influence motivation to read religious texts, this chapter examines it from its genesis to its present state (Vygotsky, 1978). This historical and genetic analyses allow exploration of matter in a state of motion, change, and development which allows its true nature be revealed (Mahn, 1999). These truths are revealed as individuals construct new knowledge and as they internalize concepts appropriated through participation in social activities (Mahn, 1999).

**Activities**

Lantolf (2006) explained activities as interactions within certain social systems. Furthermore, sociocultural theory holds that these social interactions are generally mediated through four main social functions: context, zone of proximal development,
dialectics, and observations (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978, 1997).

Therefore, using these four main social functions, this section explores interactions with
family, interactions with friends, passive interactions, and interactions with God. This
exploration allows a focus on interpersonal aspects of the theory combined with
simultaneous attention to culture and history and to the role played by the individual
(Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003).

**Context**

According to sociocultural theory, the development of human personality takes
place during its upbringing and teaching, and has a specifically historical character,
content, and form (DavyDov, 1995). In other words, environment matters. In qualitative
research the environment means the physical and/or psychological background,
surroundings, or milieu of a particular context (Glesne, 2006). Furthermore, sociocultural
theory contends that human development depends on the environment developed by
caregivers (Pressick-Kilborn & Walker, 1999). This certainly seems true in this study.

**Context and interactions with family.** As shown in Figure 1, the data from this
study reveal that family contexts influence motivation to read religious texts. In
particular, engaging family scripture study and a loving and supportive environment
influence motivation to read scriptures. These two contexts are explored below.

Interestingly, each of the ten participants report that their involvement in family
scripture study influences their motivation to read. Early family interactions with social
practices like scripture study should not be overlooked or taken lightly. While other
factors clearly influence social practices such as motivation to read religious texts,
The data in this study show that interactions with friends provides the only context that influences participants to feel motivated and not to feel motivated to read religious texts.

*Figure 1. Contexts that influence motivation to read scriptures.*

Sociocultural theory contends that immediate social influence plays a larger role than broad global social influences. Packer and Goicoechea (2000) explained that while society has a fibrous thread-like wiry, stringy, ropy, capillary character; it is a global entity—a highly connected one which remains nevertheless local.

Sociocultural theory refers to these types of local contexts as learning communities (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). Examining the family as a learning community sheds light on the influence it has on social practices like scripture reading. For example, if the family is viewed as a learning community, then it is appropriate to examine what is done in this context to promote learning. Lave (1991) noted that learning must be grounded in a social ontology that conceives of the person as an acting being...
engaged in activity in the world. Vygotsky focuses on the connections between people and the cultural context in which they act and interact in shared experiences (Crawford, 1996). Valisner (1988) argued that children transcend the culture of caregivers, especially parents, in the process of learning, through actively transforming promoted cultural messages in novel ways as they internalize structures. Therefore, sociocultural theory contends that learning occurs within a family community when individuals have opportunity to be engaged in activity with those around them.

The data reveal that such a context exists for participants. Six of the 10 participants related that their family scripture study evolved into an engaging activity where they interact with family members. They explained that initially they were passive participants of family scripture study who “didn’t get much out of it,” but as they grew and matured they began to engage in family scripture study by reading the scriptures, asking questions, and relating personal experiences with scriptures.

The data also reveal that a caring and supportive environment influences motivation to read religious texts. While most of the participants did not explicitly use the words love or supportive, they did describe their home environment in ways that reflect that type of environment. This study reflects the sociocultural assertion that a person’s access to a caring environment, which includes the social environment, will guide the interest of the child that is co-constructed within the setting (Pressick-Kilborn & Walker, 1999).

**Context and interactions with friends.** As shown in Figure 1, the data from this study reveal that the contexts of friendship influence motivation to read religious texts. In
particular, as participants spend time with friends who read scriptures they feel motivated to read. On the other hand, when participants spend time with friends who do not read scriptures, they did not feel motivated to read. These important findings are explored below.

For Vygotsky, the child’s development is structured through, embedded in, and mediated in and by relationships with peers and adults (Haenen et al., 2003). It is interesting to note the use of the words “peers” and “adults” and the absence of the word “friends” in Vygotsky’s work about mediating relationships. This may be why most of the research on sociocultural theory focuses on the context of formal classroom settings with peers and not friends.

Even though Vygotsky does not mention friends in his research, descriptions of embedded contexts within the discourse of sociocultural theory surely must include friends. For example, Smith (2002) asserted that joint involvement is a rich context for continuing learning at all ages and that it is important for effective participation. Furthermore, he says that feeling comfortable, accepted and turned in to the other participants in a group (and the group members being sensitive to you) is likely to contribute to effective participation.

Clearly these embedded contexts of sociocultural theory describe contexts mediated through friendship. Additionally, sociocultural theory discourse also describes the importance of contexts during changes in the social situations of a person’s life, or during changes in the types of kinds of his personal activity (DeVries, 2000). This study reveals these changes are often mediated and perpetuated through the guidance of friends.
Again, it is important to note that while global contexts do have some influence on individuals, sociocultural theory contends that more significant influence comes through local contexts (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). Interactions with friends, personify this assertion. While peers may have a global influence on individuals, friends have a more significant influence on individual enculturation than relatively unknown peers. Vygotsky believed that these local connections between people and the cultural context influence the way they act and interact (Crawford, 1996).

In this study, all 10 participants report that they feel motivated and, at times, not motivated to read scriptures because of the people they are with rather than the physical environment they are in. The data reveals that when participants spend time with friends who frequently talk about scriptures, they feel motivated to read. The data also shows that when participants spend time with friends who are busy in pursuits other than scriptures, they feel less motivated to read. In this context, friends were not necessarily considered “good” or “bad” by participants, rather the context of friends is delineated by whether or not they talk about scriptures. This difference appears to be the difference in motivation.

This is an interesting phenomenon of scripture reading motivation. The “context” of friendship appears to be a catalyst of whether or not a young single adult feels motivated to read religious texts. Therefore, context is an extremely important element regarding interactions with friends.

This is an important finding within the context of sociocultural theory. Packer and Goicoechea (2000) described this phenomenon when they assert that human beings are
formed and transformed in relationship with others, in the desire for recognition, in the practices of a particular community, and in manner that will split and initiate a struggle for identity. This transformation and desire for recognition and identity among friends greatly influences motivation to read religious texts. This is interesting because it appears that the choice of friends in great measure influences motivation to read religious texts.

**Context and passive interactions.** As shown in Figure 1, the data from this study reveal that passive contexts influence motivation to read religious texts. In this study it appears that formal environments which provide an expectation for reading scriptures influence motivation to read. This finding is explored below.

While sociocultural theory takes into account impersonal relations and abstractions as contexts that mediate development, the theory does not do more than acknowledge these abstractions (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). Packer and Goicoechea describe these passive impersonal contexts as legitimate peripheral participation. Interestingly, while these acknowledgments are legitimate they are rarely discussed outside formal classroom settings.

Therefore, within the discourse of sociocultural theory, little has been done to explore the context of passive interactions. Such an exploration provides some fascinating insights. Most notable, the data reveals that passive interactions usually occur in some sort of formal setting. In fact, seven participants state that their motivation to read scriptures stemmed from the expectation in seminary to read scriptures every day.

Other formal church settings also provide a passive motivating context for the participants in this study. These settings include General Conference, Institute of
Religion classes, and Church-sponsored firesides. Interestingly, only one participant reports feeling motivated to read scriptures because of attendance at Sunday worship services.

**Context and interactions with God.** As shown in Figure 1, the data from this study reveal that contexts which support interactions with God influence motivation to read religious texts. In particular, environments where participants are alone appear to facilitate that interaction. Frequently, participants report that they interact with God while in their bedroom or alone in nature.

Exploring the context mediating interactions with God does not fall within the normal parameters of sociocultural theory. The theory does take into account religious activity as a spiritual culture in the process of that person’s teaching and upbringing which takes place through that person’s carrying out of personal activity in collaboration with other people (DavyDov, 1995). In other words, religion is a product of society and is not based upon interactions with God. Therefore, because sociocultural theory views religion as a socially constructed phenomenon, it does not take into account interactions between an individual and an actual higher power. In fact, the basic law of historical and social human development proclaims that human beings are created by the society in which they live and that it represents the determining factor in the formation of the personalities remains in force (Panofsky, 2003). Thus, the theory does not give provisions for interactions with God. Vygotsky (1999) asserted that sometimes when less-informed people seek to understand the higher man they inevitably resort to rejecting the laws of nature, and introduce a theological and spiritualistic principle of absolute freewill not
subject to natural necessity (Vygotsky, 1999). Perhaps Vygotsky’s view is skewed heavily by his historical background within the Marxist Soviet Union. Even though sociocultural theory does not take into account contexts that mediate interactions with a higher being, eight of the ten the participants in this study report that solitary contexts mediate their personal interactions with God.

**Summary of Context.** Context is an important element of sociocultural theory. This study reveals that context is an important influence in scripture reading motivation. In particular, it appears that families who actively involve its members in scripture discussions influence their scripture study motivation. It also appears that friends have a unique influence on scripture reading motivation. In fact, it is the only context mentioned by participants in which they describe friends as both a motivating and un-motivating factor. It also appears that contexts where passive interactions occur influence motivation to read religious texts. It is important to note that passive contexts are particularly influential when participants feel like they are expected to read. This study also reveals that participants feel they interact with God when they are in contexts of solitude.

**Zone of Proximal Development**

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) has been defined as the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1987). More particularly this zone is socially constructed in that it is based on the cultural meaning systems of the child’s caregivers, who lead the organization of the zone for the
developing child and is formed in interaction with them (Pressick-Kilborn & Walker, 1999). It is within these zones that paths of action and development are constrained, and promoted, and through which possibilities for action within the zone become actualized. Thus it is an appropriate venue in which to examine motivation to read religious texts.

**Zone of proximal development and interactions with family.** As shown in Figure 2, the data from this study reveal that ZPD with family influence motivation to read religious texts. In particular, family scripture study and one-on-one interviews with parents influence motivation to read scriptures. These two zones are explored below.

It is important to note that the ZPD works in all contexts and that it is a mistake to only view it as a formal education tool (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003). This is an important assertion, because much of the research regarding sociocultural theory and the ZPD is limited only to formal education settings. However, the data derived from this study

![Figure 2. Zones of proximal development that influences motivation to read scriptures.](image-url)
clearly show that the concept of ZPD is manifest in some family interactions involving scripture reading.

As this concept is developed below it is important to note that ZPD should be viewed as created through negotiation between the more advanced partner and the learner rather than for scaffolding to be regarded as a one way process (Pressick-Kilborn & Walker, 1999). It should also be viewed as a means to provide mediation through modelling, contingency management (praise and critique) feedback, and organizational or cognitive structuring (Kozulin, 2002). It is also important to note that this zone exists only when actual and potential developmental levels are determined. Thus, the more capable adult working to help a less capable child in the ZPD does so consciously and with real purpose. Therefore, based on these assumptions, only three participants describe events that may be considered within the parameters of the ZPD.

The data in this study reveals that only one participant reports family scripture study in a way that follows the concept of ZPD. This description of family scripture study fits within the parameters of ZPD because it is consciously designed to guide participants from their actual level of development to their potential level of development. It also provides means to “transfer” scripture study methods from the more capable parent to the less capable child.

This description follows the very essence of sociocultural theory because social norms are “transferred” and internalized by the individual (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003). Furthermore, Valisner (1997) explained that as the child develops the zone becomes internalized providing a structure for personal thinking and feeling through semiotic
regulation. Additionally, over time less capable individuals take on increasing responsibility for their own learning and participation in joint activity (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Valisner asserts that ZPD is useful in explaining regulation of the ongoing developmental process, through the restructuring of the zones and the relationship between them.

The data from this study also reveals that one-on-one interviews with family members influence motivation to read religious texts. Two participants report that their fathers spent time interviewing them to find out “how they were doing spiritually.” This interaction mirrors the concepts of ZPD, because according to its definition, the more developed adult or peer (or parent) must determine the “actual level of development” so it can be determined what guidance is needed to achieve “potential development” (Vygotsky, 1987).

This relationship between the child and the caregiver, including perceptions of interest and participation, and the caregiver’s knowledge of the child’s skill development are also crucial factors in the coconstruction of the zone (Pressick-Kilborn & Walker, 1999). In studies of ZPD within the parent-child interaction, the parents finely tune their interaction to the needs of the child, and they are highly attentive and sensitized to those needs (Cole, 1996). This coincides with the assertion that when a new setting is entered by the child and caregiver, the zone is reconstructed through the caregiver’s analysis of the possible actions afforded by the new environment and a knowledge of the previous action of the child (Pressick-Kilborn & Walker, 1999).

**Zone of proximal development and interactions with friends.** As shown in
Figure 2, the data from this study reveal that ZPD with friends influence motivation to read religious texts. In particular, ZPD is evident as participants seek to answer friends’ questions and also as participants seek advice from friends concerning their own questions. These two zones are explored below.

Examining the ZPD within the context of interactions with friends may push the boundaries of sociocultural theory. Typically, ZPD is researched and explored in terms of a more capable adult guiding a less capable child to some level of potential achievement. Granted, in a few cases, ZPD is also examined in a peer-to-peer relationship where a so-called more capable student is paired with a less capable one (Vygotsky, 1987). Unfortunately, this view of ZPD generally relates to formal classroom settings and may limit the applicability of ZPD in other contexts.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that Vygotsky conceptualized internalization, or even interactions creating a zone of proximal development, as processes that occur only in school contexts. Once the concept of ZPD has been divorced from instruction, it becomes much easier to understand how Vygotsky could discuss other contexts (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003). Regardless of context, the key component of the ZPD is the interaction between more capable and less capable learners. This interaction contributes to the construction of an interface between systems that are relatively stable and ones that are developing and adaptive (Mahn, 1999). Mahn asserts that this development occurs as individuals are tutored by a more competent other that can serve as a guide through the ZPD.

While sociocultural theory does not explicitly explore ZPD within the context of
interactions with friends, the assertions above give enough leeway to make such an attempt. In this study, interactions with friends prove to be a dynamic system in which participants take on roles of both more capable and less capable peer. Interestingly, in certain situations, participants take on both expert and novice roles within the same conversation. This phenomenon may actually describe some elements of ZPD better than traditional research in classrooms.

For example, Pressick-Kilborn and Walker (1999) asserted that ZPD is created through negotiation and is based on two-way interaction. In formal classrooms however, often ZPD is formed through teacher intervention and evolves into little more than one-way communication. Interactions with friends however, allow ZPD to exist through authentic negotiation and two-way interaction. This authentic negotiation is an appropriate view for ZPD with friends because it is based on the status of the participants, the amount of shared experience, and the nature of the relationship between them (Smith, 2002). Such negotiation allows for co-construction of ZPD with friends that is based on interest and encouragement, which contribute to the cultural and personal meaning systems (Pressick-Kilborn & Walker, 1999). This coconstruction is less formal than a classroom setting, but the principles of ZPD still hold true. Therefore, because actual development of an individual is determined and because guidance is given to help the individual move to an assumed potential development level, these interactions fit within the definition of ZPD (Vygotsky, 1987).

The data from this study reveals that ZPD exists when friends interact with each other. Interestingly five participants frequently take on the role of a more capable friend
to guide their less capable friends to some perceived level of potential development. They guide their less capable friends by sharing personal experiences, asking questions, offering hints, or directing their friends’ attention to information in scriptures (DeVries, 2000).

While the data in this study reveals that five participants act, at times, as the more capable friend, the data also shows that four participants take on the role of the less capable friend within ZPD by asking their friends for help with specific life problems. Interestingly, some of those who take on the role of a more capable peer also take on the role of a less capable peer in certain situations. These findings refute Duncan’s (1995) assertion that adults have greater knowledge of the culture than peers, and are thereby in a better position to help bring about this process of enculturation. However, the findings do agree with Tudge and Scrimsher’s (2003) assertion that the highest form of intellectual activity arise out of collective behavior, out of cooperation with surrounding people and from social experience.

**Zone of proximal development and passive interactions.** As shown in Figure 2, the data from this study reveals that ZPD with passive interactions influence motivation to read religious texts. In particular, participants report feeling motivated to read when they heard stories about scripture reading. They also report feeling motivated when they were given formal challenges to read scriptures. These two zones are explored below.

This exploration definitely pushes beyond the boundaries of sociocultural theory, because ZPD is often couched within contexts of interpersonal relationships that are co-constructed. In fact, most of the research on ZPD is explored as teachers use interactive
teaching techniques (Kozulin, 2002). However, because ZPD is housed in the ideal that a more capable person guides a less capable person from their actual development level to a potential developmental level, it opens up the possibility to examine it in the context of passive interactions (Vygotsky, 1987). In other words, a more capable person, like a lecturer or speaker, may guide a less capable individual to a potential level of development without interpersonal coconstructed relationships.

This may hold especially true as more capable individuals use stories to guide less capable individuals to their potential development. Stories constitute intelligent systems that both stage and facilitate the process of shared thinking about past events and about one’s own and other minds. Such systems propagate experiential frames—specifically, the experiences of character narrators—across time and space (Herman, 2006). Additionally, more capable individuals often use challenges to guide a less capable individual through ZPD. These challenges suggest that people can transform their understanding through participation in activities (Rogoff, 1997). Granted such assumptions may be outside the realm of sociocultural theory, but it is still fruitful to examine the social impact of passive ZPD on scripture reading motivation.

It is important to examine ZPD within passive interactions because nine of the ten participants report passive interactions that influence their motivation to read religious texts. Specifically, these participants talk about times when they were given challenges that motivated them to some action. Often these challenges were couched in the context of a story that taught some cultural norm, which almost always brought some desired outcome. In other words, the participants in this study experienced times when a more
capable adult assessed their actual development level and gave a challenge to guide them to their potential development level.

**Zone of proximal development and interactions with God.** As shown in Figure 2, the data from this study reveals that ZPD and interactions with God influence motivation to read religious texts. Interestingly, participants perceive God as a kind being and someone who is willing and able to guide them to their potential level of development. This ideological view motivates them to read religious texts. This concept is explored below.

The theory does not address this type of interaction nor its attendant ZPD. However, from an ideological standpoint, ZPD is still a valid exploration because to these participants “God” is considered a more capable individual who determines the actual level and potential level of development for the individual. Ideologically, as part of the belief system of these young people, they believe that God speaks according to the understanding of each person and that development happens incrementally (not all at once) until a person’s potential is reached. They also believe that God is a kind being who provides guidance to help them reach that potential. This agrees with Jackson and Coursey’s (1988) assertion that a person’s view of deity influences their religious motivation. Each of the ten participants report feeling motivated to read scriptures because it provides a way for God to guide them from their current state to a higher one.

**Summary of zone of proximal development.** The ZPD is an important element of sociocultural theory because it provides means whereby development occurs (Vygotsky, 1987). This development generally occurs when a more capable individual
consciously guides a less capable individual to reach their potential. Interestingly, the data in this study reveals that only a few families consciously work within a ZPD to help guide its members to reach their potential. However, the data reveals that friends frequently work within the parameters of the ZPD because they consciously determine the actual development level of their friends and provide guidance, often through scriptures, to help them reach their perceived potential. While sociocultural theory does not include passive interactions within discussions of ZPD, the data reveals that challenges are an important element to guide people to reach their potential developmental level. Similarly, the theory does not include descriptions of God’s interaction within ZPD. However, the data from this study reveals that participants view of God as a caring God. Thus, they see him as one who provides guidance through the scriptures to help them reach their potential.

**Dialectics**

Dialectics is a lesser known and lesser developed element of sociocultural theory. Even though Vygotsky (1987) asserted that dialectics are an essential element of this theory, very few research studies and theoretical papers mention, let alone explore, dialectics. The dearth of information may be due to the fact that Vygotsky was not able to fully expand his ideas before his early death and/or because the entirety of his works may not be readily accessible (Mahn, 1999).

In Vygotsky’s view, human learning and development are bound up in activity, that is, purposeful action mediated by various tools. The most important of these tools is language, the semiotic system that is the basis of human intellect (Vygotsky, 1978).
Vygotsky used a dialectic approach to analyze the way that language led to more complex social interactions and the development of human consciousness (Mahn, 1999). In other words, rather than using a reductionist approach, like Descartes, to explain development through language, he used a dialectical approach (Glock, 1986).

According to Vygotsky, this approach has three basic or central tenets: (a) phenomena is part of a developmental process, (b) changes in development are not linear but occur through qualitative processes, and (c) transformations take place through contradictory processes that take place in nature, society, and the human mind (Mahn, 1999). DavyDov (1995) expanded this view of dialectics by asserting that psychological development should be examined through the prism of relationships, through the dialectic of their mutual connections. From this perspective, DavyDov argues, one cannot study development without discovering the role of assimilation.

This assimilation relates to Vygotsky’s (1978) assertion that the developing individual relies on the vast pool of transmitted experiences of others. These transmitted experiences often are carried out through dialogue. From this point of view, dialogue is considered a manifestation of dialectics, because it involves a process of constantly defining and redefining the relevant aspects of reality as individuals develop through problem-solving efforts (Wertsch, 1980). Furthermore, it is collaborative dialogue that leads to learning and constructs knowledge (Swain, 2000). Thus, dialogue may be seen as the basic form of carrying out activity in a joint-collective enactment by a group of people through their social interaction (DavyDov, 1995).

The foregoing discussion gives general guidelines to dialectics to which this study
adheres. Namely, dialectics may be defined globally as the complex nature of development through qualitative interactions derived from some sort of contradiction. Locally, dialectics can be manifest through dialogue with another person. While this study recognizes the complex developmental process defined by dialectics, it is not within the scope of this study to define the nature of participant contradictions, especially because many contradictions occur internally and do not manifest themselves during interviews and observations. However, the data does allude to the fact that many of these contradictions occur as individual seek to know and understand truth through dialogue.

This study explores dialectics using the foregoing basic and applicable descriptions found within the discourse of sociocultural theory. While this study explores the local dialectics of dialogue, it adheres to the global tenets of developmental complexity through contradictions. It is important to note that it is not the purpose of this study to explore the complexity or the contradictory nature of dialectics. Rather dialectics are used to help provide a lens through which to explore what social factors influence motivation to study religious texts. Accordingly, this study explores dialectics as it is revealed through dialogue between an individual and another person in society. Ultimately, it is revealed that these dialectical activities lead an individual from perception to cognition (Vygotsky, 1965). It should be noted that because there is a dearth of information about dialectics within the sociocultural it is not addressed any further in the following sections. Rather, the following sections explore the manifestations of dialectics in the data.

**Dialectics and interactions with family.** As shown in Figure 3, the data from this study reveal that dialectics in family interactions influence motivation to read
Figure 3. Dialectics that influences motivation to read scriptures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialectics that influences motivation to read scriptures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interactions with Family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dialogue about scriptures with family members</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactions with Friends</td>
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<td>Dialogue about scriptures with friends</td>
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<td>Passive Interactions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overhearing dialogue about scriptures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactions with God</td>
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<td>Dialogue with God through prayer and scriptures</td>
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religious texts. In particular, participants report feeling motivated to read scriptures when they engage in dialogue with family members about scriptures. This finding is explored below.

The data reveal that 8 of the 10 participants reported that dialogue with members of their family influence their motivation to read religious texts. The eight participants reported that these dialogical experiences usually consisted of one or more family members sharing personal experiences regarding times when scriptures helped with some dilemma. Often these conversations started because someone in the family asked for advice or help with a problem.

**Dialectics and interaction with friends.** As shown in Figure 3, the data from this study reveal that dialectics in interactions with friends influence motivation to read
religious texts. In particular, participants report feeling motivated to read scriptures when they engage in dialogue with friends about scriptures. This finding is explored below.

The data in this study reveal that 8 out of the 10 participants reported dialogue with their friends influenced their motivation to study religious texts. The data of this study reveal that these dialogical experiences consist of friends sharing personal experiences with the scriptures. The data also show that these conversations about the scriptures occurred frequently and were often referred to as “gospel discussions.”

**Dialectics and passive interactions.** As shown in Figure 3, the data from this study reveal that dialectics in passive interactions influence motivation to read religious texts. This study shows that participants report feeling motivated to read scriptures when they overhear dialogue about scriptures. This finding is explored below.

This phenomenon is not addressed within the tenets of sociocultural theory. Nevertheless, even though passive dialogue is not addressed by the theory, participants report feeling motivated because of passive dialogue. Passive dialogue refers to times when participants overheard conversations. Four participants report that overhearing conversations about scriptures influences their motivation to read. Generally, they feel motivated to read because they are curious about the content of the conversation.

**Dialectics and interactions with God.** As shown in Figure 3, the data from this study reveal that dialectics within interactions with God influence motivation to read religious texts. In particular, participants report feeling motivated to read scriptures when they engage in dialogue with God. This finding is explored below.

Sociocultural theory does not address this phenomenon. Nevertheless, participants
in this study believe they can and do dialogue with God. In fact, 9 of the 10 participants related times in their lives when they have turned to God and engaged in dialogue with him to find answers to their problems. The data reveals that these participants believe that they can communicate with God through prayer and scripture study. The data also shows that participants believe that God talks to them through their scriptures. Thus, they feel motivated to read their scriptures because they want God to talk to them.

**Summary for Dialectics.** Even though dialectics are an important element of sociocultural theory, it is not readily understood. However, as stated above, often dialectics are manifest through dialogue. This study reveals that as participants engage in dialogue about the scriptures with family and friends they feel an increased motivation to read on their own. Similarly, passive dialogue concerning scriptures also motivates them to read. Interestingly, the data from this study also reveals that participants’ feel God talks to them through the scriptures.

**Observation**

Vygotsky (1978) argued that people grow into the intellectual life of those around them. Brown and colleagues (1989) also contended that from a very early age and throughout their lives, people, consciously or unconsciously, adopt the behavior and belief systems of the groups around them. They further argue that people pick up relevant jargon, imitate behavior, and gradually start to act in accordance with its norms. These cultural norms and behaviors are often “picked up” through observation.

**Observation and interactions with family.** As shown in Figure 4, the data from this study reveal that observations of family members influenced motivation to read
In this study, observation of family members appears to strongly influence participants’ reading motivation. In fact, all 10 participants referred to specific times when they observed family members reading religious texts. Randall’s statement summarizes the importance of observation when he says, “My parents...if they weren’t reading, I don’t think I would...I mean they set the example.”

The data from this study reveal that the role of the caregiver as a guide to and model for actions with objects within the activities of the setting creates interest for actions with those same objects (Pressick-Kilborn & Walker, 1999). In other words,
motivation appears to be inextricably linked to observation of caregivers. Many participants report feeling motivated to imitate the practice of scripture reading because they observe parents participation in scripture reading.

This is not surprising because even when children were not conversational partners, or dialectic, with adults, they were involved in the adult world as observers (Rogoff, 1990). Rogoff asserted that the routine arrangements and interactions between children and their caregivers and companions provide children with thousands of opportunities to observe and participate in the skilled activities of their culture. Through repeated and varied experience in supported routine and challenging situations, children become skilled practitioners in the specific cognitive activities in the communities.

The data reveal that 8 out of the 10 participants report times when they observed their parents participating in scripture study. The data in this study shows that these observations influence participant motivation to read religious texts. This is not surprising because given the opportunity to observe and practice cultural norms, people adopt them with great success (Brown et al., 1989).

While it is not a surprise that observation of parents influence motivation, this study reveals that observing siblings also influences motivation. In fact, 8 of the 10 participants also described times when observing siblings reading scriptures influenced their motivation. Interestingly, most of the literature from sociocultural theory concerning the family does not address the role of siblings. It is almost entirely focused on adult to child relationships. However, its prominence in this study should signify its importance as a social influence.
**Observation and interactions with friends.** As shown in Figure 4, the data from this study reveal that observations of friends influence motivation to read religious texts. In particular, participants report feeling motivated to read scriptures when they observed their friends’ attitude and behavior. This finding is explored below.

Sociocultural theory contends that learning involves enculturation which includes: picking up the jargon, behavior, and norms of a new social group; adopting its belief system to become a member of the culture (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). Furthermore, Packer and Goicoechea assert that the ease and success with which people do this belie the immense importance of the process and obscures the fact that what they pick up is a product of the ambient culture rather than of explicit learning. This process of picking up ambient culture is often relevantly couched in the context of observing friends. In fact, from a very early age and throughout their lives, people, consciously or unconsciously adopt the behavior and belief systems of their social groups (Brown et al., 1989).

The data in this study reveal that 7 out of 10 participants report that observing their friends’ attitude and behavior motivates them to want to read. In particular, the data reveals that participants believed their friends read their scriptures because they are happy and because of the “good” choices they make. Participants report feeling motivated to read scriptures because they want to be good like their friends.

**Observation and passive interactions.** As shown in Figure 4, the data from this study reveal that passive observations influence motivation to read religious texts. In particular, participants report feeling motivated to read scriptures when they observed peoples’ good behavior and happy attitudes. This finding is explored below.
Sociocultural theory does not address this phenomenon. Nevertheless, four participants in this study report that observing others, even those whom they do not know, influences their motivation to read religious texts. Thus, these so called passive observations are an important element in understanding motivation to read scriptures. The data reveals that participants report feeling motivated when they observe people who “appear” to have spent a lot of time reading and understanding the scriptures.

**Observation and interactions with God.** As shown in Figure 4, the data from this study reveal that observation of God’s interactions influence motivation to read religious texts. This study reveals that only one participant reports feeling motivated to read scriptures because he observed God helping someone. The participant reports a time when he saw God helping someone else through the scriptures. This phenomenon is not addressed within the scope of sociocultural theory.

**Summary of Observations.** Observations are an important element of sociocultural theory, because the theory holds that culture is often transmitted through observation (Rogoff, 1990). It is not surprising then that this study reveals that observing parents read scriptures strongly influence participants’ scripture reading motivation. This study also shows that observing siblings read scriptures has a strong influence on participant motivation. It is interesting to note that participants did not report being motivated to read scriptures by observing their friends read, rather they report feeling motivated because of their friends’ actions and behavior. Passive observation also influences motivation, but in this study, it does not appear to have the same effect as observing family and friends. This agrees with Packer and Goicoechea’s (2000) assertion
that while society is a global and highly interconnected entity, its impact and influence is nevertheless local.

**Conclusion to Activities Section**

sociocultural theory holds that activities, or interactions, are important for the development of an individual (Lantolf, 2006). This is because the theory holds that things must appear socially before they appear psychologically (Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, a person must experience social interaction before they can develop mentally. This is accomplished in the social practices of human relationship and community (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). Thus, development is the result of guided practice in the lived in world, legitimate peripheral participation and understanding is developed through continued, situated use involving complex social negotiations so that learning and cognition are fundamentally situated in activity, context, and culture (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000).

The data from this study shows that interactions with family, interactions with friends, passive interactions, and interactions with God all contribute to the development of the individual. The sections below explore how these interactions and interactions with artifacts lead to the psychological development of the participants.

**Artifacts**

Lantolf (2006) described artifacts as cultural tools that mediate interactions. Wertsch (1985) pointed out cultural tools are the meditational means that serve as the “carriers” of sociocultural patterns, skills, and knowledge. Vygotsky (1978) asserted that
human learning and development are bound up in activity, that is, purposeful action mediated by various tools (Vygotsky, 1978). In fact, he contends that “all” human activity is mediated by tools (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003).

Brown and colleagues (1989) asserted that learning how to use these tools involves far more than can be accounted for in any set of explicit rules. Furthermore, they contend that tools are not invented by individuals in isolation. Tools can only be fully understood through use, and using them entails both changing the user’s view of the world and adopting the belief system of the culture in which they are used (Brown et al., 1989). Thus, it is clear in the sociocultural discourse cultural tools are a significant element in the developmental process of individuals.

Within the discourse of sociocultural theory, cultural tools are generally described as both physical and psychological tools. However, Vygotsky (1978) argued that the most important of these tools is language, the semiotic system that is the basis of human intellect. This assertion has influenced most of the research within the sociocultural paradigm to focus solely upon psychological cultural tools.

Unfortunately this course has caused physical tools to be a somewhat understudied element of sociocultural theory. Tudge and Scrimsher (2003) assert that cultural tools, whether physical or psychological, are essential links to the broader social and cultural context. Lantolf (2006) also pointed out that physical as well as symbolic tools are artifacts created by human culture over time and are made available to succeeding generations. Therefore, physical tools should also be considered an important element of sociocultural theory.
While physical tools are an important element of sociocultural theory, in order for an exploration of cultural tools to be complete, psychological tools must also be included. Lantolf (2006) asserted that as with physical tools, humans use symbolic artifacts to establish an indirect, or mediated, relationship between ourselves and the world. The task of psychology, in Vygotsky’s (1978) view, is to understand how human social and mental activity is organized through culturally constructed artifacts.

Therefore, this section provides an exploration into both physical and psychological cultural tools that mediate motivation to study religious texts. It is divided into two sections: physical tools and psychological tools. Interestingly in this case, the cultural tool of scriptures is explored both as a physical tool and as a psychological tool. This corresponds to the theoretical premise that before psychological functions become an integral part of the personality they manifest themselves in the “outer” world as interaction between the individual and the people around him or her (Haenen et al., 2003). In other words, scriptures are considered products of sociocultural evolution to which individuals have access by being actively engaged in the practices of their communities (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). The cultural tools exist in physical context before it is gradually absorbed and transformed psychologically (Vygotsky, 1997).

Physical Tools

As shown in Figure 5, the data from this study reveal that physical tools influence motivation to read religious texts. In particular, participants report feeling motivated to read scriptures when they physically see their scriptures and other objects that remind them to read. This finding is explored below.
Vygotsky’s position on the centrality of artifacts, including external artifacts, in human mental processes has great resonance in contemporary cognitive science, as well as human sciences more broadly (Cole & Wertsch, 1996). Objects a person finds around himself or herself are considered cultural artifacts (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). Again, because there is a dearth of information in the sociocultural discourse concerning physical tools, this study asserts the importance of them. The following section explores how those physical objects influence motivation to study religious texts.

The data show that 8 of the 10 participants report seeing their scriptures in a physical context motivates them to read their scriptures. Each of these participants report that putting their scriptures on their bed or on their nightstand next to their bed motivates...
them to read. The data also reveals that four of the participants report that seeing other objects also motivates them to read. These objects are generally other Church-produced material or objects they received at a Church-sponsored activity.

In sum, physical tools are an important element in sociocultural theory. This study reveals that physical tools influence motivation to read religious texts. In particular, the data in this study shows that when participants see their personal set of scriptures they feel motivated to read. Even though other physical objects also influence motivation, scriptures seem to have the greatest influence. It is important to understand that these physical objects are not considered cultural tools merely because they are found in the external world. Rather, they must first be used socially before they evolve into a cultural tool (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). Once the tool has been mediated socially, then it may gradually evolve into a cultural tool that influences psychological development.

**Psychological Tools**

As shown in Figure 5, the data from this study reveal that psychological tools influence motivation to read religious texts. In particular, participants report that interacting with their scriptures through marking motivated them to read scriptures. This finding is explored below.

Vygotsky places behavior, in particular human activity in tool and symbol use, at the center of his examination of the way consciousness transformed early humans. A key to this transformation is the development of symbolic reference as a means to mediate activity and to facilitate the internalization of culture (Cole & Wertsch, 1996). Participation in a world of cultural tools does not simply facilitate processes that would
have developed regardless, but utterly transforms mental functioning (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003). Furthermore, objects are not merely given or discovered by the subject, but rather are made objects by the subject’s activity with them (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). This certainly holds true in this study. The data reveals that as participants actively interact with a physical tool, their scriptures, it evolved into a psychological tool mediating internalization (Vygotsky, 1978).

The data in this study reveals that over time the physical tool-scriptures-developed into a psychological mediating tool. In other words, the scriptures evolved from a physical tool the participants used to help remind them to read to a tool that helps transform mental function and led to higher level thinking (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky argues that most often such psychological mediation comes through language. Interestingly, in this study, participant interaction with scripture language appears to facilitate psychological mediation.

The data reveals that all ten participants report psychological mediation as they talk about their interaction with scriptures. This psychological mediation is especially apparent when participants describe how marking their scriptures influences their motivation. The data shows that as participants mark and write in their scriptures this activity becomes a means for them to regulate their behavior. In fact, often scripture markings and notations are used by participants to examine their personal development. This self-regulative behavior mediated by a cultural tool transforms the scriptures from a physical tool into a psychological one.

In sum, psychological tools are an important element of sociocultural theory. The
data reveals scriptures have evolved into a psychological tool for the participants in this study. Often the participants in this study use the scriptures as a way to engage in higher level thinking and self-regulation. The data reveals that participants use the scriptures by marking them to evaluate their personal growth and development and to determine their future course of action.

**Conclusion to Artifacts**

As shown above, artifacts function as cultural amplifiers and suggest that both physical tools and psychological tools amplify memory and increase capacity to organize and communicate knowledge (Bruner, 1966). The most fundamental concept of sociocultural theory is that the human mind is mediated (Lantolf, 2006). This mediation occurs through the use of tools, or signs to mediate and regulate ourselves and our relationships with others (Lantolf, 2006). A tool is always originally a means used for social purposes, a means of influencing others, and only later becomes a means of influencing oneself (Karpov & Haywood, 1998). Engaging with these tools in shared social purposes provides the means for a person to acquire knowledge about their world and about themselves (Smith, 2002).

Thus, an essential role of tools in culture is to lead a person to internalization (DavyDov, 1995). Vygotsky located the origin of consciousness at the intersection of the intertwined and reciprocal development of interactions in society and tool use within a particular culture (Mahn, 1999). Thus, having explored interactions and tool use, it is now appropriate to explore consciousness in the section below.
Concepts

Lantolf (2006) described concepts as understandings constructed of the personal, the physical, the social worlds, and the mental worlds. Such concepts are considered psychological functions. Sociocultural theory views these psychological functions and the means mediating development as emerging from the child’s social interaction with adults, peers, and objects (Haenen et al., 2003). In other words, before these functions become an integral part of the personality, they manifest themselves in the “outer” world as interaction between the child and the people around him or her. After they emerge in the social context they are gradually absorbed and transformed “inwardly” (Gindis, Ageyev, & Miller, 2003). Vygotsky viewed social interaction analytically prior to individual functioning (Haenen et al., 2003). Thus, it is through others that we develop ourselves (Vygotsky, 1978).

Therefore, the broad pattern of ontogeny involves movement from initially social, interpersonal processes toward the individualized, personalized level (Duncan, 1995). This development proceeds not toward socialization, but toward individualization of social functions. The individualization of social functions is the way of carrying out activity as the result of internalizing in its basic form (DavyDov, 1995). Vygotsky (1978) called this process of transforming an interpersonal process into an intrapersonal one internalization.

Vygotsky’s works distinguish two major divisions of internalization: cognitive and metacognitive (Karpov & Haywood, 1998). These concepts are not separated from one another by an impermeable barrier but are in the process of continual unceasing
interaction (Vygotsky, 1999). In this case, cognitive psychological functions occur where external material is acquired through individual processing according to stored memories, scripts and plans (Smith, 2002). These functions refer to acquiring the cognitive tools necessary for solving subject-domain problems (Karpov & Haywood, 1998). Sociocultural theory contends that these cognitive tools lead to higher mental capacities, which include voluntary attention, intentional memory, planning, logical thought and problem solving, learning, and evaluation of the effectiveness of these processes (Lantolf, 2006).

These higher mental processes constitute metacognition, which is often referred to in the sociocultural discourse as consciousness. The core of Vygotsky’s work examines humans as meaning makers or becoming conscious (Mahn, 1999). Clearly for him, a central criterion in our mastery of a function is being able to perform it consciously rather than unconsciously (Shotter, 1993). Conscious awareness is what makes us social beings, or in other words, human (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003). Therefore, it is appropriate to use this section to explore the emerging theme “interactions with self” under the auspice of internalization both cognitively and metacognitively.

**Cognitive Functions**

As shown in Figure 6, the data from this study reveals that cognitive functions influence motivation to read religious texts. In particular, participants report feeling motivated to read scriptures when they engage in self-talk about scripture reading. This finding is explored below.
Sociocultural theory holds that human activities take place in cultural contexts that are mediated through symbolic systems. (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Vygotsky contends that the most important symbolic system within a culture is that of language (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003). In fact, he argued that development proceeds through the internalization of social interactions, with the fundamental social interaction being interaction through language (Fox & Riconscente, 2008). This is because cognitive functions and language are dynamically related (Lindblom & Ziemke, 2003).

Sociocultural theory does not describe cognitive functions in any length, however, it asserts that cognitive function is manifest in the development of inner speech (Vygotsky, 1960). Vygotsky contended that speech is first a social function that serves the goals of social contact, social interaction, and the social coordination of behavior.
Wertsch (1980) asserted that only after internalization, do humans develop the same speech patterns within themselves. This is known as inner speech. In this process, they preserve the function of social interaction in their individual behavior. Under this condition, the individual function becomes in essence a unique form of internal collaboration with oneself. Therefore, Wertsch asserted, egocentric and inner speech are not isolated phenomena. As was the case for all other psychological functions, these speech forms are based on tracing them back to their origin, which in this case is found in social interaction.

Those social interactions transform into a new form of speech, inner speech, that emerges with distinct characteristics and functions (Mahn, 1999). In fact, words, intonations, and inner-word gestures first undergo the experience of outward expression wherein they acquire social polish by the effect of reactions and response, resistance or support, on the part of the social audience (Warschauer, 1997). Therefore, the concept of semiotic mediation reveals that internalization is transformative rather than transmissive (Mahn, 1999). Rather than functioning mechanically and systematically, inner speech reflects in its functioning essentially the same ethical and rhetorical (responsive) considerations influencing the transactions between people, out in the world (Shotter, 1993).

The data in this study reveals that eight out of the ten participants engage in cognitive functioning about scriptures through some sort of inner speech. While it is impossible to know the extent of participant inner speech, during the course of the interviews for this study eight participants expressed their motivation to read religious
texts in terms of inner speech.

In sum, cognitive functions are an important element of sociocultural theory. This study reveals that eight of the ten participants actively engage in cognitive function concerning their scripture study through inner speech. This is important because Vygotsky (1960) describes transformation of communicative language into inner speech and then into verbal thinking. In other words, sociocultural theory contends that cognitive functions often lead to metacognitive functions. Thus verbal thinking becomes a starting point in the quest to understand the nature of human consciousness (Mahn, 1999).

**Metacognitive Functions**

As shown in Figure 6, the data from this study reveal that metacognitive functions influence motivation to read religious texts. In particular, participants report feeling motivated to read when they engage in self-regulating behavior mediated through scriptures. This finding is explored below.

While the transition from cognitive functioning to metacognitive functioning is unclear, the presence of egocentric speech reflects the emergence of a new self-regulative function of speech (Wertsch, 1980). According to sociocultural theory, it is at some point during egocentric speech when a person thus recognizes him or herself through this objectification of his or her capacities and needs (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). This recognition leads to self regulation: self-planning, self-monitoring, self-checking, and self-evaluating (Karpov & Haywood, 1998). These higher mental processes often originate from feelings of how, semiotically, people are positioned in relation to the others around them (Shotter, 1993). Furthermore, this type of mediation facilitates the
development of some processes that are designated in contemporary psychological literature as metacognitive (executive) processes (Karpov & Haywood, 1998).

Once again, sociocultural theory contends that metacognitive mediation of psychological processes has its roots in interpersonal communication (Vygotsky, 1978). In fact, it contends that distinctively human psychological processes develop through reflection and internalization of characteristics of activity that is initially external and social (Duncan, 1995). Thus, metacognition and self-regulation can also be manifest in terms of verbal activities or self talk (Fox & Riconscente, 2008).

The data from this study shows that each of the ten participants report metacognitive functions, or consciousness, through numerous examples of self-planning, self-monitoring, self-checking, and self-evaluating (Karpov & Haywood, 1998). Most interestingly, the data reveals that the majority of responses during interviews involved some sort of self-regulating behavior. Thus, according to Vygotsky (1960) these participants have achieved a level of consciousness and this consciousness strongly influences motivation to read religious texts.

The data reveal that participants manifest self-monitoring behavior through analysis of feelings. They report feeling motivated to read because of the happy and good feelings they get when they read their scriptures. The data also shows that participants manifest self-planning when they talk about their respective futures. Participants report that scriptures help them plan for their future and their future family. This also influences their motivation. The data also reveals participants manifest self-evaluating behavior when they use the scriptures help them evaluate their lives and help them make sure they
are on the “right path.”

In sum, metacognitive functions are an important element in sociocultural theory. In fact, Vygotsky (1978) asserted that the ultimate achievement of metacognitive development is consciousness. Consciousness occurs when a person becomes aware of, interprets, and emotionally relates to events (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003). Sociocultural theory asserts that consciousness is manifest through self-regulating behavior (Wertsch, 1980). This study reveals that each of the ten participants have achieved this level of consciousness. In each case, it appears that scriptures provide the means for participants to engage in self-regulating behavior.

This self-regulating behavior, it appears, influences motivation to read religious texts. Not surprisingly, sociocultural theory contends that self-regulation is related to motivation. In fact, Vygotsky (1978) claimed that as a person develops, control shifts from the environmental factors to the individual’s voluntary regulation of his/her behavior. In other words, as a person becomes conscious they become capable of determining their actions. Susan and Paul’s statements epitomize this theoretical assertion. Susan says:

I think I really started to fully understand once I saw the change in my life that it made...and I had gone times when I’d read them and then I would stop. And then when I would start up again I saw what it did for me and I realized that it’s something that I want in my life. It’s not just a need anymore, it is a want.

Paul said, “You know I started getting older and realized the importance of it …so I told myself, determined to get it done, just do it, it’s not that hard.” Even with this assertion, only recently have people looked at sociocultural theory to try to understand motivation (Pressick-Kilborn & Walker, 1999).
Conclusion for Concepts

Sociocultural theory asserts that concepts are the understandings of the personal, physical, the social, and mental worlds (Lantolf, 2006). These psychological functions are mediated through social interactions (Haenen et al., 2003). Thus, context and form appear socially before they appear psychologically (Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, a person must experience social interaction before they can develop mentally. After they emerge in the social context they are gradually absorbed and transformed “inwardly” (Gindis et al., 2003). This transformation usually appears cognitively as “self-talk” and metacognitively as self-regulating behavior.

The data from this study reveal that each participant used scriptures as a cultural tool that enabled both “self-talk” and self-regulating behavior. This is the essence of sociocultural theory. It asserts that the key to the acquisition of consciousness is the development of the use of tools and signs to mediate human activity (Vygotsky, 1987). Consciousness appears after and as a result of regulation by others and cultural tools (DeVries, 2000).
CHAPTER VI
THE ESSENCE

This chapter provides an overall “essence” of the phenomenon of young single adults who feel motivated to read religious texts (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, from an ontological perspective, this chapter presents information which provides a better understanding of what it is like for someone to experience social influences that motivates them to read religious texts (Polkinghorne, 1989). This chapter fulfills the basic purpose of this type of study, which is to reduce individual experiences with scripture study motivation and provides a description of the universal essence of the phenomenon (Dukes, 1984; Giorgi, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989; Tesch, 1990; van Manen, 1990). In order to provide the essence of the phenomenon, this chapter first describes the findings of this study. Next, this chapter explores the implications of the findings. Finally, the chapter concludes by discussing areas for future study.

Findings

The essence of this study was designed to answer the following question: What are the contexts and social factors that influence religious motivation of college-age LDS young adults to study religious texts? This section answers this question by providing descriptions of the contexts and social factors that appear to influence religious motivation. Additionally, this section describes unexpected findings resulting from this study. Finally, this section explores how this research has contributed to sociocultural theory. In all of these findings, it should be noted that reading motivation for this
particular sample was and is influenced by their purpose in reading religious texts. In this study, each participant read scriptures for two reasons: to get closer to God, and for self-improvement. Recognizing this assertion is essential to appropriately understand the findings. Samples from different religious sects may offer different reasons for reading religious texts and that may, in turn, alter findings significantly. Therefore, these findings are best understood within this particular paradigm.

**Contexts and Social Factors that Influence Motivation to Read Religious Texts**

The following section provides a summary of contexts and social factors that appear to influence religious motivation to read religious text. The contexts are divided into four main categories: family, friends, passive, and personal. The social factors of each context are also included below.

- **Family:** Participants felt motivated to read religious texts in family contexts that include: engaging family scripture study; love and encouragement; one-on-one interviews with parents; seeing other family members read; and frequent gospel discussions.

- **Friends:** Participants felt motivated to read religious texts in contexts with friends that include: frequent gospel discussions; and friends who have a positive attitude about gospel-related activities. Participants felt less motivated to read when they were in contexts with friends that include: no discussions about the gospel; friends who are focused intently on things other than scriptures.
• Passive: Participants felt motivated to read religious texts in passive contexts that include: a formal expectation to read; challenges to read; and testimonials of others who regularly read the scriptures.

• Personal: Participants felt motivated to read religious texts in personal contexts that include: a solitary environment; a personal set of scriptures placed conspicuously in view; and the tools necessary to mark and write in personal copies of scriptures.

Unexpected Findings

In her book, Glesne (2006) used an analogy to compare qualitative research to a dot-to-dot exercise wherein each bit of information leads to another bit of information, and so on, until a pattern emerges. In other words, regardless of the researcher’s initial assumptions, searching for information in a qualitative paradigm inevitably leads to unexpected findings that are then used to pursue other bits of information. This pursuit of the unexpected often helps lead the researcher to understand the pattern of the phenomena.

The researcher agrees with Glesne’s (2006) analogy and acknowledges that some of the findings in this study were unexpected. Furthermore, these unexpected findings may not have been discovered using other methods. The unexpected findings are listed as follows.

• Participants use scriptures as a self-regulating tool, which influences motivation to read.

• Participants report feeling motivated to read because they see their scriptures
on their bed or nightstand.

- Participants report that observing their siblings read scriptures influences their motivation to read.
- Participants report that their choice of friends greatly influences whether or not they feel motivated to read religious texts.

**Contributions to Sociocultural Theory**

While it was not the purpose of this study to contribute to sociocultural theory, some of the findings provide additional insights into the theory. These are certainly appropriate to discuss in the findings section. It appears from the data that while certain findings “fit” well within the theoretical lens of the theory other findings did not. In fact, some findings push at the boundaries of sociocultural theory and other findings seem without the theoretical bounds. Therefore, it appears that some areas of the theory require additional explanation and retooling. The following paragraphs describe how some of the findings contribute to sociocultural theory.

Passive social interactions appear to have an influence on the religious motivation of young adults. Participants report feeling motivated to read religious texts in a variety of passive contexts. Particularly, participants report feeling motivated to read when they are given challenges to read, or when they feel like they are expected to read scriptures. This type of interaction is not mentioned in the theory. In fact, while the general premises of the theory seems to encompass any type of social interaction, little is mentioned or studied about passive interactions. Furthermore, many studies focus only upon interpersonal relationships and seem to discount the influence of passive interactions.
This needs to be pursued in greater depth to understand how passive interactions influence the consciousness of the individual.

Sociocultural theory also lacks information and description concerning dialectics. Vygotsky himself discussed the importance of dialectics in sociocultural theory, but little has been done to define or explore what dialectics mean. In many cases, dialectics are mentioned as an important element of theory, but often it is not mentioned again in the research or theoretical papers. The researcher in this study gathered all the information he could find about dialectics in sociocultural theory and still struggled to incorporate it appropriately and use it as a lens to explore social impact on religious motivation. If dialectics are such an important element of sociocultural theory they must be explored and defined in greater depth.

The researcher in this study also found that many researchers and theorists focus intently on particular elements of sociocultural theory and neglect, almost entirely, other elements. For example, findings in this study show that cultural tools appear socially before they appear psychologically. These findings coincide with the basic premises of sociocultural theory, which contend that things must appear socially before they appear psychologically. Interestingly, many researchers and theorists seem to forget this important step. In other words, often cultural tools are examined only psychologically. This means that theorists and researchers are not examining the evolution of the tool from its social state to its psychological one. Such an omission strikes at the heart of sociocultural theory because without an understanding of the “genetic” evolution from social to psychological it is impossible to understand the impact of both the social and
cultural contexts. It is imperative that researchers and theorists examine sociocultural theory through its intended lens and through its fundamental assumptions in order to more clearly understand the impact of social factors and contexts.

Implications

Implications from the findings are presented in this section. These implications are based on the findings section and often combine elements from many different findings to strengthen the implications. Implications concerning the theory are also presented below. It is important to note that this study provides a type of base-line for this research topic. Because a base-line has been established, any number of these implications may be used to develop quantitative strategies to explore relationships and levels of significance. In other words, further research needs to be done to better understand the relationships and significance of these findings.

One of the implications from this study is the influence gospel discussions have on scripture reading motivation. Regardless of the context, it appears that talking about the scriptures increases the likelihood of an individual feeling motivated to read. Therefore, it would be pertinent for those who have influence in these contexts to provide more opportunities for discussions about the scriptures.

A second implication from this study is the influence friends have on scripture reading motivation. Even when other contexts include elements that encourage scripture reading, it appears that friends strongly influence whether or not individuals feel motivated to read scriptures. The implication from this assertion is that parents, leaders,
and teachers should help individuals understand the importance of influence from friends.

A third implication from this study is that environments of expectation influence scripture reading motivation. In other words, when people feel like they are expected to read religious texts, they are more likely to feel motivated to do so. The implication from this assertion is that those who teach or lead have an obligation to set forth an explicitly clear expectation. Challenges to read often seem coupled with this implication.

A fourth implication from this study is that people are more likely to feel motivation to read when they observe other people reading. This finding seems especially true within the family context, observing both parents and siblings. The implication from this assertion is that parents should encourage each family member to exhibit desired behaviors.

A fifth implication from this study is the importance of individuals having a personal copy of scriptures. It appears that individuals who spend time marking in and writing in their scriptures feel motivated to read. The implication from this assertion is that individuals not only need their own set of scriptures but they need to be taught how to mark and write in their scriptures so they can engage in self-regulating behaviors.

A sixth implication from this study relates to elevating levels of religious consciousness. The data reveals that participants became conscious of their reasons for reading because of the interview process with the researcher. Participants report that this raised level of consciousness increased their motivation to read religious texts. Thus, it seems appropriate that an implication is that teachers, parents, and leaders can and should do more to raise the level of religious consciousness in individuals. Various methods may
be explored such as: interviews, discussions, peer-to-peer interaction, and journaling.

**Areas for Future Study**

These implications lead to further questions and other areas of research that may provide additional insight into scripture reading motivation. The following questions relate to further research needed for the implication about gospel discussions: First, are there certain types of gospel discussions that influence motivation more than others? Second, how frequent do these discussions need to be in order for them to be influential? Third, what are effective ways for these discussions to be implemented in different contexts?

The following questions relate to further research needed for the implication about the influence of friends: First, what other religious practices are influenced by friends? Second, at what point in life are friends most/least influential on motivation to read religious texts? How much time does an individual need to spend with friends before they become influential in motivation to read scriptures?

The following questions relate to further research needed for the implication about environments of expectation. First, how should one communicate the expectation to read religious texts? What type of follow-up is needed to ensure continual motivation? How does accountability play a role in the effectiveness of implementation of the expectation?

The following questions relate to further research needed for the implication about personal copies of the scriptures: First, is there a difference in motivation between
marking (coloring) things in the scriptures and writing (journaling) in the scriptures? Second, what are effective ways to train marking and journaling that lead to self-regulating behavior?

Finally, because this study focused on a homogeneous LDS sample, it would be prudent to explore this phenomenon within the context of other religious denominations. Also, because this study only examined an extreme case sampling of LDS young adults who read scriptures regularly, it would be wise to focus additional studies on samples of LDS young adults who do not read regularly but are otherwise active in church worship services. Comparative analysis of LDS youth who read scriptures regularly and LDS youth that do not read regularly may provide additional insights into this phenomenon.
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Appendix A

Conclusion to 2nd Pilot Study
Conclusion To 2nd Pilot Study

The data reveals that these three participants were influenced by their cultural experiences and interactions. They seem to be products, at least in part, of cultural transmission and cultural negotiations. It is significant to recognize the important role friendship played in religious motivation. It seemed that, even though each participant knew they “should” read scriptures, their friends seemed to dictate whether or not scripture reading actually occurred. I suggest that this phenomenon be examined more closely to determine if this is true for others as well.

While some connections have been made between scripture study motivation and sociocultural influences, it is also apparent that this is a complex and dynamic phenomenon. Hans said it well, “I think it was a mix of a lot of things that influenced me to read.” This mix of things leads to many new questions. Why are friends such a big influence on private religious motivation beyond adolescents? What role do families play in determining what “should” or “should not” be done? How does internalization take place? How could someone encourage or facilitate internalization?

This study is significant because it reveals, at least in some ways, that social context influences religious motivation. Implications of these findings should lead to additional studies to verify what social context influences religious motivation.
Appendix B

Background of Researcher
So, Dustin, why did you pick scripture study motivation as a phenomenon to study?

Well, I teach it every day and...I teach from the scriptures and I try to encourage my students to read the scriptures. I also write lessons for curriculum so other teachers can know how to teach the scriptures. So it’s part of my daily life. And as such I always try and find ways to encourage my students to read. You know I’ve tried challenges, I’ve tried commitments, I’ve tried little gimmicks or prizes or whatever to try and find things that work the best. So that’s why I studied it. Another reason is that it is one of our objectives for Seminaries and Institutes: to help the youth develop a daily habit of reading. And probably the most important reason is that it is vital to salvation. There are a lot of scriptures about why we should study scriptures like John 5:39; 2 Nephi 32; Helaman 3, but the biggest thing that probably hit me was Elder Bednar 2007 talk about the living water. He used John 4...anyway and he talked about the living water and how we have to have the living water to make it...to be saved. And he just said that the scriptures are the reservoir of living water. He also tied it in to Lehi’s vision and said that if we don’t read our scriptures we’ll be lost. He compared people’s scripture study to just taking a sip every once in a while versus really drinking.

For me personally, I’ve come to know and love the scriptures. They’ve changed my life and who I am and what I believe. It really started in Institute. I had two teachers, Brother Burhley and Brother Cal Stephens. They are totally different teachers but both of them instilled this amazing desire to study and learn and know. It’s funny because when I was in seminary I read but it wasn’t that big of a deal to me. But Institute just...I don’t know if things just clicked or if I was more mature.

Same here.

You know, I feel the same as Alma when he says I’ve found great joy and peace doing this myself and I want to help others find the same thing. Throughout this whole thing I have thought a lot about my own motivation. Why do I feel motivated? Because that’s what I’m studying...Why do these young people feel motivated to do it? You know I’m studying social factors that influence it...I don’t know if at this point
in my life if there are many social factors that really influence me to read. Other than occasionally maybe a general conference talk or someone at church will say something but other than that...maybe that would be a good future study. Now that I’m older does it change? Has my motivation changed?

Dr. Morrill: Hmm. That is cool. So biases…it seems like you would have a lot…So what ones did you bring to this study that are worth mentioning?

Dustin: So I can think of six.

Dr. Morrill: Okay

Dustin: I’m sure there are more. But a big bias that I have is the belief that everyone can benefit from scriptures. Not only can they benefit, but they should do it. So that is a big bias coming in thinking ‘You should be doing this,’ and not just that it will benefit them in some way. Another bias is that I believe in God. I believe that higher powers are involved in this more than we know and more than we can study with research. Another bias that and I think it comes out in my literature review, is that motivation is difficult to describe.

Dr. Morrill: Yah

Dustin: And it’s difficult to study spiritual things and so that is another bias that I have. So here’s motivation that is hard to study combined with spiritual things that are hard to study. You know that being said though, I do think people around us and situations around us help us make decisions and do influence what we do. I don’t think…this is probably one of my biggest biases…is a belief that the current research on religious motivation just doesn’t quite cut it. It all focuses on extrinsic and intrinsic elements and I think it misses so many other complex elements and interconnections. Instead the research just says “oh you get a treat for reading your scriptures” or “now that I feel it inside I’m going to read just because I want to read.” I think there is a lot more that plays a part in this. My sixth bias is that I think effective research can produce better understanding of religious motivation and can help us be better teachers and administrators and parents and leaders. I think we can find things. I think that is the whole reason the Church has a research division so they can find things that make a difference.

Dr. Morrill: And you also did your thesis on scripture reading as well?

Dustin: I did. I did it on comprehension and enjoyment.

Dr. Morrill: So something different?
Dustin: Yah, it was different. I actually wanted to do it on motivation. I didn’t have the research tools, so when I learned about qualitative research and how to get into more complex phenomena I thought “this is my chance.”

Dr. Morrill: Cool. So what did you think…before you collected your data did you already have an idea what was driving a lot of this motivation or were you wide open?

Dustin: I thought I would find some things. I thought I would find that social factors play a part. I did a couple of pilot studies and found that…you know people were saying things like “well I know I should read” and “I read because my parents tell me to” and “I read because of my friends.” So yah I thought some things…especially that friends influence reading. In my pilot studies it kept coming up that the friends played a big part. I also thought I would find that seminary and institute teachers have a big impact. I thought their impact would be bigger.

Dr. Morrill: It isn’t?

Dustin: Not that I found; not in this study. The study shows that if they have an expectation then the students will do it. One of my criteria in my methodology is that I would contact the former seminary teachers of these participants and ask them if the participants read scriptures while they were in their class. Often the seminary teachers said something like, “I don’t know. I don’t keep track.” “I don’t know. I didn’t ask them.” I thought that was pretty telling because are students going to do it without being…

Dr. Morrill: Accountable?

Dustin: Yes accountable and even that there is an expectation or do you just get up at the start of the semester and say “Read your scriptures”

Dr. Morrill: Is that enough?

Dustin: I don’t know. That’s not a finding, but I thought it was odd that I would contact these teachers and they would say “I have no idea.” I wonder if that is a general trend?

Note: Dr. Morrill is a principal within the LDS Church’s Seminaries and Institutes program. He is familiar with the phenomenon of motivation to read scriptures. He also understands the potential biases I bring to this study.
Appendix C

Patton’s Reflexive Questions
Patton’s Reflexive Questions

**Inquirer**

- What led me to this topic?
- What kind of relationship have I developed with research participants and why?
- What kind of relationships do I desire and why?
- What values and experiences shape my perspectives and my research decisions?
- As I analyze and interpret the data, what do I choose to include and what do I choose to omit and why?
- What became the important analytical themes and what is it about who I am that makes these themes important?
- What do I do with what I have found?

**Participants**

- How do they know what they know?
- How do they perceive me? Why? How do I know?
- How do they respond to what I am writing?

**Audience**

- How do they make sense of what I give them?
- What perspectives do they bring to my presentations?
- How do they perceive me?
- How do I perceive them?
- How do these perceptions affect what I say and how I say it?
Appendix D

Letter of Information
Letter of Information

Social Factors that Influence Religious Motivation of College-age L.D.S. Young Adults to Read Religious Texts: A Qualitative Study

Introduction/Purpose Professor Michael Freeman and student researcher Dustin West in the School of Teacher Education and Leadership at Utah State University are conducting a research study to find out more about motivation for reading religious texts. You have been asked to take part because of your experience in reading religious texts. There will be a total of 10 participants in this research.

Procedures If you agree to be in this research study, you will be asked to participate in two in-depth interviews, lasting about an hour each, at a time and location of your convenience. The interviews will be audio-taped. Following each interview, you will be asked to review the written transcript of the interview to ensure accuracy.

Risks Participation in this research study involves minimal risk. You may feel uncomfortable answering questions about your motivation for reading religious texts and/or sharing an artifact representing an environment of motivation. You may also feel uncomfortable talking about your social experiences. There is a small risk of loss of confidentiality but we will take steps to reduce that risk as described below.

Benefits There may or may not be any direct benefit to you from these procedures. The investigator, however, may learn more about how social environments affect and influence motivation to read religious texts. This information may help religious educators or leaders know how to help create such environments.

Explanation & offer to answer questions Dustin West has explained his research study to you and answered your questions. If you have other questions or research-related problems, you may reach Professor Freeman at (435)797-1474 or via email at michael.freeman@usu.edu

Voluntary nature of participation and right to withdraw without consequence Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without consequence or loss of benefits.

Confidentiality Research records will be kept confidential, consistent with federal and state regulations. Only the investigator and student researcher will have access to the data which will be kept in a locked file cabinet or on a password-protected computer in a locked room. To protect your privacy, names and other identifying information will be removed from all study documents and digital files. Personal, identifiable information will be stored separately and kept only until the project is complete in August 2011. Audio recordings will be destroyed August 2011.
Letter of Information

Social Factors that Influence Religious Motivation of College-age LDS Young Adults to Read Religious Texts: A Qualitative Study

IRB Approval Statement The Institutional Review Board for the protection of human participants at USU has approved this research study. If you have any pertinent questions or concerns about your rights or a research-related injury, you may contact the IRB Administrator at (435) 797-0567 or email irb@usu.edu. If you have a concern or complaint about the research and you would like to contact someone other than the research team, you may contact the IRB Administrator to obtain information or to offer input.

Investigator Statement "I certify that the research study has been explained to the individual, by me or my research staff, and that the individual understands the nature and purpose, the possible risks and benefits associated with taking part in this research study. Any questions that have been raised have been answered."

Signature of PI & Student Researcher

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Appendix E

External Audit
External Audit

I hereby attest that this study meets the validity requirements for qualitative inquiry. I have performed an external audit examining the audit trail which consists of raw data, analyzed data, records of study processes, and theoretical framework. In my opinion the researcher has followed proscribed and recognized qualitative methodology for establishing trustworthiness.

[Signature]

Casey Wayne Ashcroft
LDS Seminary Instructor
Ph.D. Candidate
CURRICULUM VITAE

DUSTIN R. WEST

Academic Degrees

Ph.D., Utah State University, 2011, Curriculum and Instruction—Educational Leadership

M. Ed., Weber State University, 2005, Curriculum and Instruction

B.S., Weber State University, 2000, Secondary Mathematics and Journalism Education

Professional Experience

2009-2011 Coordinator, Clearfield South Jr. LDS Seminary
2007-2009 Instructor, Syracuse High LDS Seminary
2003-2007 Instructor, Farmington Jr. High LDS Seminary
2000-2003 Instructor, North Layton Jr. LDS Seminary

Related Experience

2011-Present Committee Member, LDS Church Human Resources, Leadership Pattern Development

2011 Presenter, CES Davis Area Summer In-service. Reading Scriptures: What the Research Reveals

2011 Committee Member, Master’s Committee, For Kevin Clayton: LDS Seminary Attitude and Perception of Reading Comprehension and Strategies in the Seminary Classroom

2010 Committee Member, Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, Developing Hybrid Curriculum

2008-2011 Field-Writer, Seminaries and Institutes of Religion Curriculum Services

2009 Presenter, Seminaries and Institutes of Religion Research Forum,
Salt Lake City, Utah. *Scripture Study: Relationship Between Reading Frequency, Reading Comprehension, and Reading Enjoyment.*

2007-2008 Committee Member, S&I Doctrinal Understanding Exam Committee

2005 Committee Member, Master’s Committee, For Rob Andrus: *A Comparative Study of Direct Instruction and Practice of Reading Strategies Within a Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Religious Education 9th Grade Seminary*

2000 Studied Ancient Biblical Sites in Egypt, Jordan, and Israel