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Mormonism in the Netherlands

Can Dutch members of the church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints be considered fundamentalist?

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2. Abstract

This research investigated if the Dutch members of the church of the Latter Day Saint can be labelled fundamentalist. More specifically, Dutch members of the church in Groningen. Ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews were conducted to gather data for this research. Two American missionaries and four men and two women between the age of 19 and 24 were interviewed. Framing theory and the definition of Almond et al. were used to analyze if Dutch Mormons can be labelled fundamentalists. After focussing on ideological and organizational characteristics it was concluded that Dutch Mormons cannot be considered fundamentalists. Nonetheless, some features of fundamentalism are visible looking at the Dutch Mormon but are more nuanced than appeared at first sight. It was striking that Dutch Mormons do not react against the marginalization of religion and that national context influences the perception of the faith of Dutch Mormons. Moreover, this research challenged the scholarly debate about the notion of fundamentalism and analyzed if the notion still has value or if we should come up with a different kind of notion to characterize global movements. Future fundamentalism studies should take into account the influence of national context before labelling a movement fundamentalist.

Key concepts: Fundamentalism, Mormonism, Dutch Mormonism, framing theory

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4. Introduction

4.1 Problem analysis

After the attack on the Twin Towers in New York in 2001, the entire world was in shock. As a counter-reaction, George W. Bush declared the war on terror against the Islamic organization Al-Qaida and governments that supported these groups. Out of the blue, the role of religion was again prominently discussed on the world stage. However, negatively. Studies established the link between extremism, fundamentalism, modernization, and secularization that has influenced the public debate and public policies.¹ In the media fundamentalism and extremism are used as synonyms and are directly connected with religion. This led to the stigma that fundamentalist movements are willing to use violence to obtain their goals.² Moreover, it led to 'Othering' in society whereas members are associated with being 'anti-Western' and 'anti-modernization' which has led to fierce reactions of governments concerning movements they qualify as fundamentalists.³

One movement that is associated with being 'anti-modernization' are members of the church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (LDS) also known as Mormons.⁴ The original American church is nowadays a worldwide church that consists of roughly 16 million members. They often caught public attention with conservative ideas concerning science, women's rights, and LGBTQ+ issues.⁵ For example, a new Netflix series called 'Keep Sweet, Pray and Obey' tells the story about the lives of members of the Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints (FLDS) and has caused lots of commotion.⁶ Although the FLDS and LDS are not the same, the image of the FLDS might influence that of LDS and has (again) raised the question of whether members of the LDS can be labelled fundamentalists. Much information can be found about the ideas, rituals, and ideologies of the American church members. However, it is a worldwide church with also churches and members in the Netherlands. Nonetheless, information about Dutch members can hardly be found. Therefore, this research focuses on the political and ideological ideas of Dutch members of the LDS church, more specifically, members that visit the LDS church in Groningen.

4.2 Aim of the thesis

It is important to start theorizing and conceptualizing the definition of fundamentalism because substantial research has been done on this subject but it is nonetheless still unclear what fundamentalism exactly entails. For instance, Riesebrodt, Almond et al., and Armstrong

¹ Michael O. Emerson and David Hartman, "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism," *Review of Sociology* 32, (2006): 128.

² Gabriel A. Almond, R. Scott Appleby and Emmanuel Sivan, *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalism Around the World* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), 16.

³ Peter Antes, "Fundamentalism: A Western Term with Consequences," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 12 (2000): 263. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23551187>. (accessed June 10, 2022).

⁴ David E. Campbell, John C. Green and J. Quin Monson, *Seeking the Promised Land: Mormons and American Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 10, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139227247>.

⁵ Campbell, Green and Monson, *Seeking the Promised Land*, 91.

⁶ Geoffrey Ketels, "Bizarre Netflix serie 'Keep Sweet: Pray and Obey' schokt kijkers," *Serietotaal*, June 13, 2022, <https://www.serietotaal.nl/nieuws/22300/bizarre-netflix-serie-keep-sweet-pray-and-obey-schokt-kijkers>. (accessed June 30, 2022).

all created different definitions. However, it can be questioned if the LDS church can be qualified as a fundamentalist movement by using one of these definitions. For instance, Mormons are well-known for their specific Scriptures, their opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage, and their authoritarian organization.⁷ But does this makes them fundamentalist? More specifically, can Dutch Mormons be qualified as such? It is possible that although members are part of the same church, they have different political and ideological ideas that influence the way they experience their religion. Therefore, more research about Dutch Mormons is needed. Moreover, by giving an overview of the current debate on fundamentalism a more nuanced view of the relation between fundamentalism and Mormonism can be given.

4.3 Research questions

To gain insight into the relationship between fundamentalism and the LDS church, this research will be structured around the following research question:

Can Dutch members of the church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints be considered fundamentalist and what is the role of the national context in the ideological positioning of the group?

The answer to this question will be derived from the answers to the following sub-questions:

- Can Dutch members of the LDS church be labelled fundamentalist?
- What is the current status of the scholarly debate about framing fundamentalism and the LDS church? How do scholars conceptualize the different types of fundamentalism?
- What is the history and ideology of the LDS church?
- How do cultural and social norms influence the political and ideological point of view of Dutch Mormons?

4.4 Academic relevance

Myriad research is done about the definition of fundamentalism. However, it is still unclear what fundamentalism exactly entails and who can decide what is included or excluded. Nonetheless, movements around the world are qualified 'fundamentalists'. This has consequences due to the negative connotation connected to fundamentalism. It is associated with religion, violence, 'anti-Western' and 'anti-modernity'.⁸ Moreover, sanctions are justified when an organization is labelled fundamentalist. Therefore, this research can contribute to our understanding if the notion of fundamentalism is still relevant in the scholarly debate and the public sphere or whether we should come to the conclusion, just as Innacome advocated, that the definition of fundamentalism should not be used anymore because it has lost its meaning.⁹ Moreover, more understanding of Dutch Mormons can give nuance to the debate on the worldwide position of the LDS church.

⁷ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, *Strong Religion*, 95.

⁸ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, *Strong Religion*, 16.

⁹ Lawrence R. Iannaccone, "Toward an Economic Theory of "Fundamentalism,"" *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 153, no. 1 (1997):114.

4.5 Chapter outline

To answer all these questions first an overview of relevant studies on fundamentalism and the LDS church can be found in the literature review. After that, the theoretical framework chosen for this research is explained. Key concepts that will be discussed are framing theory and fundamentalism. Then the methods that I have used to conduct this research will be discussed. I will elaborate on my ethnographic fieldwork and the conducted interviews. The analytical part of this thesis consists of two chapters. The first chapter analyses if Dutch Mormons ideologically can be labelled fundamentalist using the definition of Almond et. al. I will argue that Dutch Mormons cannot ideologically be considered fundamentalist. In the second chapter, the organizational characteristics of the church are discussed. I will argue that organizational-speaking Dutch Mormons can to some extent be labelled fundamentalist. In the conclusion, the main research question will be answered and positioned within the broader debate about fundamentalism and Mormonism. Moreover, the gaps in the research are discussed and the topics that needed to be researched more.

5. Literature review

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present literature about fundamentalism and the LDS church to set a basis for my research. By doing so, I want to point out the gaps in the current debate and the relevance of my research. Due to the long-time use of the term fundamentalism, it has developed into a definition with multiple meanings that have influenced political policies and public debate.¹⁰ For example, Riesebrodt argues that fundamentalism is used in the political field as a label to legitimize conservative religious groups around the world.¹¹ Through this political interest, the notion faces many concerns because it led to contrasting attitudes, generalizations, and understandings of what should be incorporated to be labelled fundamentalist.¹² Therefore, it is important to introduce the current academic debate concerning fundamentalism. Thus, in the first part of this review, the history of fundamentalism and the connection to secularization are discussed. Afterward, the complications of defining fundamentalism and the consequences of the inconsistent use are analyzed. After that, the church of the LDS is introduced as a case study for this research. The LDS church is often associated with conservative ideas concerning science, women's rights, and LGBTQ+ rights, which are aspects that can contribute to the label fundamentalism.¹³ Moreover, it is a church that often gets negative public attention. The recent release of the Netflix series 'Keep Sweet, Pray and Obey' caused lots of commotion.¹⁴ Therefore, it interested to study the history and ideology of the church. This chapter ends with an outline of the academic relevance of this debate.

5.2. History fundamentalism

Although the definition of fundamentalism was first used in 1870 to distinguish a conservative strain of American Protestantism from other Christian denominations, it is nowadays understood as a broader notion that refers to religious groups who literally believe in Holy Scriptures.¹⁵ Moreover, fundamentalism is understood as the opposition to modernization and secularization.¹⁶ Fundamentalists believe that the 'dislocation' of the world is caused by processes of modernity. Due to the technological transformation, led by Western institutions, the world is viewed as a holistic system where everybody is treated the same.¹⁷ Therefore, people feel threatened because they are afraid to lose their own unique identity. Since fundamentalists believe that modernity is the cause of this threat, they are against the consequences of modernity.¹⁸ However, what fundamentalism exactly entails and why it seems to be 'everywhere' these days is still unclear. By analyzing the chronicle

¹⁰ Emerson and Hartman, "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism," 128.

¹¹ Martin Riesebrodt, "Fundamentalism and the Resurgence of Religion," *Numen* 47, no. 3 (2000): 270.

¹² Riesebrodt, "Fundamentalism and the Resurgence of Religion," 270.

¹³ Campbell, Green and Monson, "Seeking the Promised Land", 91.

¹⁴ Ketels, "Bizarre Netflix Serie,"

¹⁵ Emerson and Hartman, "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism," 131.

¹⁶ Emerson and Hartman, "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism," 130.

¹⁷ Manochehr Dorraj, "The Crisis of Modernity and Religious Revivalism: A Comparative Study of Islamic Fundamentalism, Jewish Fundamentalism and Liberation Theology," *Social Compass* 46, no. 2 (June 1999): 226.

¹⁸ Dorraj, "The Crisis of Modernity and Religious Revivalism," 226.

order of research of fundamentalism and the sociological context in which it appeared, the basis of this debate can be found.

The first time use of fundamentalism referred to a conservative strain of American Protestants who emphasized the 'fundamentals' and non-negotiable aspects of the Christian faith. The fundamentalists were opposed to the progressive changes and modernization that took place within the Protestant religion at the time.¹⁹ After the first use of the term in 1870, it disappeared from the public sphere. However, around the 1970s the definition caught new attention due to the revival of conservative religious movements around the globe.²⁰ Scholars called this new phenomenon 'global fundamentalism' because it reached outside the borders of a country.²¹ The consequences of global fundamentalism were major studies concerning the relationship between religion, violence, and fundamentalism.²²

5.3 Modernization and secularization

Researchers were surprised by the rise of global fundamentalism because at the time researchers were engaged by secularization theories.²³ As Weber teaches us, religion will slowly disappear in the public sphere because through the process of modernization everything will be rationalized.²⁴ Not only Weber but also Peter L. Berger made the connection between secularization, modernity, and the decline of religion in the public sphere.²⁵ Since then, researchers were so caught up in these secularization theories, that it took time before scholars started to view fundamentalism as a sociological phenomenon that is shaped by history, time, and space.²⁶ However, the academic field still interprets the rise of (religious) fundamentalism differently. On one hand, researchers argue that the wave of global fundamentalism can be considered the last grasp of religion before it will fade away.²⁷ Others argue that due to modernization and secularization individuals need religion to understand the world and therefore religious fundamentalism will grow.²⁸ Due to the different views and thoughts of researchers, politicians, and the media about the definition of fundamentalism, multiple problems occur by applying fundamentalism in the broader context.

5.4 Problems of the modern use of fundamentalism

The first problem of adopting fundamentalism beyond its original Protestant use is that people connect fundamentalism directly with religion. However, fundamentalism can also

¹⁹ Emmerson and Hartman, "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism," 132.

²⁰ Emmerson and Hartman, "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism," 132.

²¹ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, "Strong Religion," 2.

²² William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) 4.

²³ Emmerson and Hartman, "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism," 129.

²⁴ Emmerson and Hartman, "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism," 129.

²⁵ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy : Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2011), 244.

²⁶ Emmerson and Hartman, "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism," 133.

²⁷ Emmerson and Hartman, "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism," 133.

²⁸ Emmerson and Hartman, "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism," 133.

refer to political movements.²⁹ Therefore, Razaghi et al. specify fundamentalism in different categories. They distinguish fundamentalism from religious fundamentalism whereas religious fundamentalism refers to religious groups that interpret the religious text as literally true.³⁰ A second problem is that fundamentalism and violent extremism are used as synonyms.³¹ However, not every group that can be labelled fundamentalist also supports the tactic of using violence.³² Nonetheless, this assumption can have consequences for members of these non-violent movements. Members are seen as part of a violent 'anti-Western' and 'anti-modernization' organization. Therefore, the West should react against these threats with sanctions. Paradoxically, the West decides who is labelled fundamentalist which can lead to biased assumptions.³³ Thirdly, mainstream believers consider fundamentalists as irresponsible minorities who unrightfully claim to represent the fundamentals of faith. This leads to 'Othering' in society. People are inclined to favor their own group and be less favorable to outgroups which can lead to more misunderstandings in society.³⁴ The final problem is that the notion of fundamentalism is so frequently used, that non-specialists often make facile generalizations.³⁵ Therefore, scholars argue that the notion has lost its meaning.³⁶ For example, Iannaccone states that researchers suffer from a biased use of the 'fundamentalist' label and that movements are only labelled fundamentalist if the movement is viewed as a threat to Western society. So, being labelled fundamentalist depends more on who it scares than on what kind of group it is.³⁷ Therefore, Iannaccone advocates to not using the term fundamentalism anymore. He argues that scholars should study sectarianism which he describes as a high-powered religion rooted in separation from and tension with broader society.³⁸ Hartman and Emmerson disagree with Iannaccone. They argue that fundamentalism just needs conceptualization and theorization and that a unified measure system should be developed to describe fundamentalism.³⁹

In sum, it is debatable if the use of fundamentalism has lost its meaning. To analyze this, I will use a case study of the Church of the LDS.

5.5 The Church of the Latter Day Saints

LDS members are often associated with fundamentalism. However, it can be questioned if this is the case. Nonetheless, some Mormons would self-identify as fundamentalists, namely

²⁹ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, "Strong Religion," 4.

³⁰ M. Razaghi, H. Chavoshian and H. Ebadollahi Chanzanagh, "Religious Fundamentalism, Individuality and Collective Identity: A Case Study of Two Student Organizations in Iran," *Critical Research on Religion* 8, no. 1 (2020): 5.

³¹ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, "Strong Religion," 16.

³² J.S. Nielsen, "Will Religious Fundamentalism Become Increasingly Violent?" *International Journal on Group Rights* 2, no. 3/4 (1994): 197.

³³ Peter Antes, "Fundamentalism: A Western Term with Consequences," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 12, no. 1/4 (2000): 263.

³⁴ Matthew J. Hornsey, "Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory," *A historical review. Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 8, no. 1 (2008): 211.

³⁵ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, "Strong Religion," 16.

³⁶ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, "Strong Religion," 262.

³⁷ Iannaccone, "Toward an Economic Theory of "Fundamentalism,"" 101.

³⁸ Iannaccone, "Toward an Economic Theory of "Fundamentalism,"" 114.

³⁹ Emmerson and Hartman, "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism," 141.

members of the FLDS.⁴⁰ However, most members are part of mainstream Mormonism. Both groups have to deal with a negative image in America due to the negative media discourse.⁴¹ To understand what Mormonism entails and where it deviates from other Christian denominations, it is important to start analyzing the church's history and beliefs.

5.6 History

The history of the LDS starts in 1820 when Joseph Smith at the age of fourteen got his 'First Vision'.⁴² Mormons believe that during this vision Smith came face-to-face with God and Jesus Christ and that they gave him a message. This vision is the basis of the church's authority.⁴³ After the first revelation, Smith got multiple divine visitations. At some point, an angel called Moroni informed Smith that he had been chosen to restore God's church on earth. To help Smith with this duty, Moroni revealed to Smith the location of hidden golden plates. These plates contained details of an ancient Hebraic civilization in the Americas whose ancestors travelled from the Holy Land to the New World in the time of the Old Testament. With help of the divine, Smith translated the golden plates and published the visions in the Book of Mormon. After his publication, Smith formed, as God's prophet, a church in 1830 that he called the Church of Christ. Together members of the church formed strong and close communities. By outsiders they were denigrated called 'Mormons'. Nonetheless, the community embraced this nickname, and they are still known as Mormons.⁴⁴

Since the growing community lived differently than the surrounding communities tension arose between the Mormons and neighboring communities. Therefore, the Mormons regularly moved and sought new places to live. In 1844 commotion was caused by a publication in the newspaper where was stated that LDS leaders had polyamorous relationships. Therefore, Smith commissioned to destroy the newspaper's press. As a consequence Smith was imprisoned. On June 27, 1844, an angry mob stormed the jail, and Smith was killed. Smith's murder was by the Mormons perceived as an act of Martyrdom.⁴⁵

After the death of Smith, the church faced a crisis about the succession of the prophet.⁴⁶ Since the atmosphere between the Mormons and other communities was still tense, the newly chosen prophet Brigham Young, decided to lead his people to present-day Utah. Here they established considerable settlements. In 1852 the LDS church openly acknowledged the practice of polygamy. This led to decades of conflict between the federal government and the Mormons. Eventually, in 1879, the Supreme Court of America decided that polygamy is

⁴⁰ D. Michael Quinn, "Plural Marriage and Mormon Fundamentalism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 31, no. 2 (1998): 2.

⁴¹ Campbell, Green and Monson, "Seeking the Promised Land," 10.

⁴² Stan Larson, "Another Look at Joseph Smith's First Vision." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 47, no. 2 (2014): 37.

⁴³ Gregory A. Prince, "Joseph Smith's First Vision in Historical Context: How a Historical Narrative Became Theological," *Journal of Mormon History* 41, no. 4 (2015): 76.

⁴⁴ Campbell, Green and Monson, "Seeking the Promised Land," 7.

⁴⁵ Davis Bitton, "The Martyrdom of Joseph Smith in Early Mormon Writings," *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 3 (1983): 30.

⁴⁶ Campbell, Green and Monson, "Seeking the Promised Land," 8.

not considered to be a free exercise of religion that is protected by the U.S. Constitution.⁴⁷ Therefore, it is against the law to have multiple wives. This led to dilemmas in the LDS church until 1890 when the prevailing president (husband to four wives), announced that the church would no longer approve new plural marriages.⁴⁸ This official polygamy ban was called the 'Manifesto' and had a tremendous impact on society because it resulted in many unresolved questions. For example, what is the legal status of a pre-existing polygamous marriage? However, by banning polygamy Utah was granted statehood in 1896. Which strengthened the position of Mormons.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, the Manifesto led to a split within the church between the LDS and FLDS whereas the FLDS still practice polygamy. The FLDS attracts lots of public attention through reality TV shows such as 'Sister Wives' which also influence the image of the LDS.⁵⁰ For this research, the FLDS is not included when speaking about Mormons.

5.7 What do Mormons believe?

Just like other Christians, Mormons believe in the Old and New Testament. They see Christ as their Savior, celebrate Christmas and Easter, will take communion, and sing hymns during service. However, Mormons deviate because they also believe in other Scriptures.⁵¹ The church doctrine consists of four scriptural texts namely, the Old and New Testament, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.⁵² The Book of Mormon serves as a strengthened source of authority next to the Bible.⁵³ Moreover, Mormons believe that God still sends divine messages to the current prophet of the church.⁵⁴ Thus, newly given divine revelations can be part of the official church doctrine. Instead of merely theology, Mormons emphasize for a great length on their history because the foundation of the LDS religion is based on historical events.⁵⁵ Mormons believe that events from their Scriptures literally have happened. For example, Mormons believe that people from flesh-and-blood traveled from the biblical Holy Land to America to restore the church. Although they believe that their Scriptures are historical records, Mormons are not considered biblical literalists, because they also believe that parts of the Bible have been corrupted.⁵⁶ Therefore, Biblical texts have errands.⁵⁷

⁴⁷ Campbell, Green and Monson, "Seeking the Promised Land," 9

⁴⁸ Thomas G. Alexander, "The Odyssey of a Latter-Day Prophet: Wilford Woodruff and the Manifesto of 1890," *Journal of Mormon History* 17 (1991): 171.

⁴⁹ Martin Mitchell, "Gentile Impressions of Salt Lake City, Utah, 1849-1870," *Geographical Review* 87, no. 3 (1997): 334.

⁵⁰ Campbell, Green and Monson, "Seeking the Promised Land," 10.

⁵¹ Campbell, Green and Monson, "Seeking the Promised Land," 11.

⁵² Campbell, Green and Monson, "Seeking the Promised Land," 11.

⁵³ Timothy L. Smith, "The Book of Mormon in a Biblical Culture," *Journal of Mormon History* 7 (1980): 10.

⁵⁴ Paul C. Gutjah, *The "Book of Mormon": A Biography* (Princeton: University Press, 2021) 65.

⁵⁵ Campbell, Green and Monson, "Seeking the Promised Land," 12.

⁵⁶ Campbell, Green and Monson, "Seeking the Promised Land," 12.

⁵⁷ Campbell, Green and Monson, "Seeking the Promised Land," 13.

5.12 The LDS church in the Netherlands

The LDS church in the Netherlands consists of several churches and one temple.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, almost no information can be found on these churches and more importantly the members of these churches. The only recent article on the Dutch LDS church is that of van Beek et al.⁵⁹ Here they state that Dutch Mormons lead an almost invisible life in contrast to American Mormons who are often the subject of national news.⁶⁰ Moreover, they argue that Dutch Mormons have different views on the political and ideological agenda of the church than their American counterparts. For instance, the Netherlands is well known for its progressive view on same-sex marriages. So, in Dutch political culture, it is almost social suicide for an organization to speak openly against same-sex marriages or LGHBQTQ+ rights.⁶¹ These strong cultural values can influence the political perspective of the Dutch Mormons. For example, research by van Beek et al. shows that among local LDS women in the Netherlands there is an unequivocal acceptance of the LBHBTQ+ community.⁶² However, this research is based on semi-structured interviews conducted in 2013 and 2014 with a total of 30 female participants from the Low Countries (the Netherlands and the northern part of Belgium).⁶³ Since this is the only recent source I could find, I believe that more research about the political and ideological views of Dutch Mormons is needed to create a clearer picture of Dutch Mormonism and the relationship between Dutch and American Mormonism.

5.13 Conclusion

This chapter shows that the concept of fundamentalism has been studied a lot. However, it is still unclear what fundamentalism entails and who can decide what is included or excluded. Nonetheless, Fundamentalism is often associated with religion and violence which could have major consequences for the members of the movements. Moreover, this review shows the history and beliefs of the LDS church. However, it is still unclear if American Mormons can be considered fundamentalists. Moreover, almost no information can be found about the church and its members in the Netherlands. Therefore, I think it is important to investigate the Dutch LDS community to analyze if they have the same beliefs, practices, and rituals as in America. So that, nuances can be brought to the broader fundamentalism debate and the position of the church.

⁵⁸ Walter van Beek, Wilfried Decoo and Ellen Decoo, "Persisting in a Secular Environment: Mormonism in the Low Countries," In *Global Mormonism* (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2020), 503-531

⁵⁹ Beek, "Persisting in a Secular Environment," 521.

⁶⁰ Beek, "Persisting in a Secular Environment," 521.

⁶¹ Beek, "Persisting in a Secular Environment," 521.

⁶² Beek, "Persisting in a Secular Environment," 521.

⁶³ Beek, "Persisting in a Secular Environment," 518.

6. Theoretical framework

6.1 Introduction

Nowadays, the term fundamentalism appears everywhere in the media, politics, and public debate. It has become an umbrella term whereas everybody uses it without defining it.⁶⁴ However, studies still try to find a universally applicable notion of fundamentalism.⁶⁵ Therefore, it can be said that analyzing fundamentalism is still relevant. Especially, since all the research led to debates on the relationship between fundamentalism and extremism. However, there are scholars, such as Iannaccone, that advocate not using the definition of fundamentalism anymore because it has lost its significance.⁶⁶ Other scholars argue that not using the definition anymore would not be the solution to the debate and therefore recommend that the notion of fundamentalism should only be used by groups that apply the definition to themselves.⁶⁷ Other scholars such as Almond et al., argue that a group can be labelled as fundamentalist if they have a certain set of characteristics.⁶⁸ This shows that there are different views on how to analyze fundamentalism.

In the following section, I introduce framing theory to show how this influenced the perception and depiction of the LDS church. Moreover, I will unpack the definition of fundamentalism, starting with studying multiple definitions. Then, Almon et al. research is discussed. After this, I elaborate on the definition of fundamentalism used in this research.

6.2 Framing theory/frame analyses

The literature review shows how politics and public discourse can influence whether a movement is labelled fundamentalist. Therefore, framing theory is chosen to investigate my research question. Framing is the process by which a communication source, such as newspapers, television, and social media, defines and constructs a political issue or public controversy.⁶⁹ More concrete, certain frames are used to provide information to the broader public. These frames help to organize and present facts and opinions about debatable themes.⁷⁰ Moreover, these frames have consequences on people's perceptions and understandings of affairs. Frames help individuals to form an opinion. They light out one or two specific elements of the broader controversy to make it easier to understand the debate.⁷¹ So, frames do not only inform public opinion, they also influence individuals' opinions. In this research, I will analyze how framing affects the depiction of the LDS church and the fundamentalism debate.

⁶⁴ Emmerson and Hartman, "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism," 128.

⁶⁵ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, "Strong Religion," 102

⁶⁶ Iannaccone, "Toward an Economic Theory of Fundamentalism," 114.

⁶⁷ Terry Mattingly, "Can anyone define 'fundamentalist'?" *Ventura County Start*, May 2011.

⁶⁸ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, "Strong Religion," 102

⁶⁹ Thomas E. Nelson, Rosalee A. Clawson and Zoe M. Oxley. "Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and Its Effect on Tolerance," *American Political Science Review* 91, no. 3 (1997): 567.

⁷⁰ Nelson, Clawson and Oxley, "Media framing of Civil Liberties Conflict," 568.

⁷¹ Nelson, Clawson and Oxley, "Media framing of Civil Liberties Conflict," 569.

6.3 Different definitions

According to Riesebrodt, there are two points of view in the academic debate concerning fundamentalism. Scholars who want to limit the definition of fundamentalism to the original protestant or at least to the Christian faith and therefore state to not apply it to other movements.⁷² Other scholars, including Riesebrodt, argue that fundamentalism should be seen as a sociological category that is universally suitable.⁷³ Riesebrodt states to study fundamentalism as a process of social transformation whereas fundamentalism refers to a particular form of a religious revival movement that reacts against social changes understood as a climatic crisis.⁷⁴ Another scholar that views fundamentalism beyond its original Protestant use is Antoun. He defines fundamentalism as ‘a religiously-based cognitive and affective orientation to the world characterized by protest against change and the ideological orientation of modernism.’⁷⁵ However, both definitions imply a direct connection between religion and fundamentalism. As explained in the literature review, exactly this connection is seen as a problem in the current scholarly debate. Therefore, I will not use Riesebrodt or Antoun's notion of fundamentalism for this research.

Nonetheless, similarities in the given notions can be found. Both terms imply a reaction against something. However, it can be questioned if fundamentalists react *towards* something or just simply try to *adapt* to the ever-changing society. According to Armstrong, fundamentalism is a modern religious experiment that puts religion back on the international agenda whereas fundamentalism has lost sacred value because fundamentalists have turned the mythos of their religion into their logos.⁷⁶ With this, she means that fundamentalists try to explain their myths and legends with rationality (that she views as a modern way of thinking), and that complex mythology is transformed into streamlined ideology.⁷⁷ Therefore, Armstrong argues that fundamentalism is a new modern phenomenon that struggles with the place of religion in society.⁷⁸ Although I agree with Armstrong that fundamentalists encounter difficulties with the place of religion in society, this is not a definition that can easily be applied to different movements to see if movements can be qualified as fundamentalist. Therefore, I will not use Armstrong's definition.

Sharpe and Hadden also view fundamentalism as a modern movement that seeks original solutions to new pressing problems in society. According to them, fundamentalist leaders restore society by creating new social orders against the growing forces of secularisation.⁷⁹ Therefore, Shupe and Hadden state that fundamentalism and secularization are intertwined. Without secularization and modernization, there was nothing that fundamentalists could

⁷² Bruce Steve, *Fundamentalism*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008) 80

⁷³ Riesebrodt, “Fundamentalism and the Resurgence of Religion,” 270.

⁷⁴ Riesebrodt, “Fundamentalism and the Resurgence of Religion,” 271.

⁷⁵ Richard Taft Antoun, *Understanding Fundamentalism: Christian, Islamic, and Jewish movements* (California: Walnut Creek, AltaMira Press, 2001), 153.

⁷⁶ Karen Armstrong, *The Battle For God, fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (London: published Harper Collins Publishers 2000), 366.

⁷⁷ Armstrong, “The Battle For God,” 366.

⁷⁸ Armstrong, “The Battle For God,” 366.

⁷⁹ Malise Ruthven, *Fundamentalism: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 125.

react to. Hence, secularization is the cause that religion is back into public policy.⁸⁰ I agree with Sharpe and Hadden that the phenomenon of fundamentalism, secularization, and modernization all are interconnected. However, this aspect of defining fundamentalism can also be seen in the notion of Almond et al., and since they have developed a multi-layered definition of fundamentalism I prefer their definition.

In sum, it becomes clear that scholars use different definitions that are open for interpretation. Each definition has its pros and cons. However, for my research, the most suitable definition is that of Almond et. al. which will be explained in the next heading.

6.4 Defining Fundamentalism

Before Almond et a. define their notion of fundamentalism they researched different movements around the world to look if any characteristics can be considered 'fundamentalist' to create a so-called 'working' definition of fundamentalism. They distinguish two types of fundamentalist movements namely 'unmixed' religious movements and ethnoreligious/nationalist movements. 'Unmixed' religious movements consist of true believers, whose main protection is the religious way of life. Ethnoreligious/nationalist movements include religious elements to achieve territorial and political gain on behalf of an ethnic or nationalistic bloc.⁸¹ During their major research, Almond et al. discovered five ideological and four organizational characteristics that movements should have to be considered fundamentalist. The five ideological characteristics are (1) reactivity to the marginalization of religion, (2) selectivity, (3) moral Manichaeism, (4) absolutism and inerrancy, and (5) millennialism and messianism. The four organizational qualities are (1) elect, chosen membership, (2) sharp boundaries, (3) authoritarian organization, and (4) behavioral requirements. Since Almond et al. 'unpacked' their definition in nine common characteristics it is a multi-layered definition. Clear indicators of a movement are used to decide whether or not a movement can be considered fundamentalist. Therefore, this definition is more holistic than the other definitions I have discussed. In the analytical chapters, I discuss each characteristic to see if they apply to the Dutch LDS church. However, since the characteristics are conceptual and contextual and intertwined and interrelated, the notion of Almond et al. got critique. According to Iannaccone, only two of the eighteen religious movements that are researched score high on all nine features. In contrast, other religious movements such as Mormons, Adventist and Pentecostal groups, score high on every characteristic but were not part of the research and thus not labelled as fundamentalism.⁸²

Despite the critique of scholars, I argue that it is an important study because it recognized important characteristics of movements throughout the world and beyond the Abrahamic tradition. Moreover, I have chosen this definition because it is a notion that is already 'unpacked' in nine characteristics. By focusing on these a clear overview of an organization can be given. Therefore, I think that this definition is the best tool for my research.

⁸⁰ Ruthven, "Fundamentalism: A Very Short Introduction," 128.

⁸¹ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, "Strong Religion," 90.

⁸² Iannaccone, "Toward an Economic Theory of "Fundamentalism,"" 102.

In sum, I will use framing theory and the definition of Almond et al. to analyze the Mormons in the Netherlands.

7. Methodological Framework

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline and justify the methodological approach taken in this research. This study will make use of a qualitative research approach because qualitative research methods have the purpose to gain insight into people's experiences, feelings, in-depth understanding, and perspectives in the context in which they live.⁸³ This is important for my research since I am interested in the way Dutch members experience and live their religion. Quantitative research, in contrast, would not be a sufficient research method since this studies more objective and statistical events.⁸⁴ For this reason, ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews have been chosen as the best research methods to collect data. I aimed to get access to the Mormon community in Groningen to get data about how Dutch Mormons live their religion. First, the ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews are discussed. Second, the weaknesses and strengths of these methods are debated. This chapter ends with the methodological analyses I have chosen.

7.2 Ethnographic fieldwork

Since there is little known about the LDS community in the Netherlands, I planned on doing ethnographic fieldwork to collect data. For my thesis, I will use Delamont's definition of ethnography which she defines as participant observation during fieldwork and conducting interviews.⁸⁵ However, before I could start my ethnography I first needed to get access to the community. Therefore, I looked on Facebook and found a special page of the LDS church in Groningen. On 25 March 2022, I sent this page a message where I introduced myself, and my research and asked if it was possible to visit a service. Within half an hour, I had already a response and I was invited to the service on Sunday 27 March from 10-11. For my first service, I wore a long black skirt, with a gray blouse with a white print and black heels. By the door of the church, the man with whom I also had contact through Facebook was waiting for me. As soon as I stepped into the church, I noticed that my looks were way too conservative. However, nobody said anything about it. Everybody in the church greeted me and it felt like they were curious about who I was as a newcomer in church. The man from Facebook invited me to sit with his family. I was sitting between this man and his wife and the daughter was sitting next to the wife. Through this setting, it immediately felt like I was part of this family. During the service, the man explained different aspects of the church and what was happening.

After this first service, the men and women were separated to follow a lesson. Although the content of the lesson is the same, they separate men and women because they think differently about certain topics. I was invited to sit by the women. Many curious women ask me who I was and what I was doing here. When I told them that I was doing research they reacted enthusiastically and were curious why I wanted to write about this particular church.

⁸³ Monique I.B.A Hennink, *Qualitative Research Methods* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd. 2010), 9.

⁸⁴ Tim May, *Qualitative Research in Action* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd. 2002), 3.

⁸⁵ Sara Delamont, "Ethnography and participant observation," in *Qualitative Research Practise*, ed. Gobo, G., Gubrium, J. F. and Silverman, D. (London: SAGE Publications Ltd 2004), 218.

After an hour-long lesson, I got a tour through the church building and I participated in the potluck. This is a gathering where every member brings something to eat so they can share a meal. Here, I also sat by the same family. During our conversation, I said that I was interested in interviewing members to know what being a member means for them. The man said that he would ask some members if they wanted to participate. The next day I got a text message from the spokesperson of the youth who invited me to play volleyball with the youth on Wednesday evening and go to Institute (scripture study) on Thursday. On the sixth of April 2022, I went to the church to play volleyball and this was the first time that I came directly in contact with the youths. The next day, I was invited to go eat with them at 18:00 and after that to go to the Institute. This was my first encounter with a more in-depth approach to the Scriptures. After this lesson, I was able to ask some youngsters if they wanted to participate in my research. Moreover, I came in contact with two American missionaries who were also enthusiastic to participate in my research. After these first activities, I participated in three more services and one more dinner and Institute. So, in total, my fieldwork lasted from 27-03-2022 till 01-05-2022. Although this is a short amount of time, I think that I have got a good insight into how the Dutch Mormons live their faith.

7.3 In-depth interviews

From the end of March until the beginning of May the interviews took place. My first interview was with the two American missionaries. They were enthusiastic and proud to tell about their faith. The interview took place in a separate room in the church after the Sunday service. The language of this interview was English. Moreover, I asks five youngsters if they wanted to participate in my research. In the beginning, they were skeptical but they were also curious about what I wanted to know and gave me their number. I contacted them through WhatsApp to find a date and a place. All five participants were between 19-24 years old. I interviewed four males and two females. In my research the names of the participants are pseudonyms. Due to the good weather, most interviews took place in the garden of my house. The interview questions of the American missionaries are different than that of the youngsters. However, the structure of the interview is the same. The interview started with general questions about the participant and their family. After that, the focus lies on questions regarding daily life in society and the connection to the faith. After this, more controversial themes were discussed. The interview ended with questions regarding the future of the church. All interviews lasted approximately an hour. The way the participants talked during the interviews and how they express their own beliefs and ideas behind those answers provided important data.⁸⁶ However, all the information from my ethnographic fieldwork and interviews is freely translated by me. Before the interview started participants agreed with the informed consent, to make sure that the data is anonymous and that they were aware of the possibility to withdraw anytime from this research.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Barbara Johnstone, *Discourse analysis* (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell 2017)

⁸⁷ Yvonna S. Lincoln, "Ethical Practices in Qualitative Research," In *The Handbook of Social Research Ethics*, 150-69 (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009) 152

7.4 Strength and weaknesses

One of the weaknesses of ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews is my position as a researcher. Since I have met the participants on several occasions, I already knew them a little bit before I interviewed them and they also know some personal things about me. They knew that I was a student who participated in so-called 'student life' and that I was not religious. This information may have influenced the way they responded to some questions. However, my age and the fact that I am a student, just like them, could also be seen as a strength. A lot of the problems the youth encounter have to do with the different interests of the church and the student life. Since I am also a student it was easier to understand what they were saying about student life and I believe they feel comfortable sharing sensitive topics with me because I am their age.

Moreover, I encountered difficulties concerning my ethnographic fieldwork because a researcher needs to abstain from judgment.⁸⁸ However, this is complex and the researcher should always be alert to their own biases and that their presence might influence the observation.⁸⁹ During my ethnography, I sometimes struggled with this position. Since the community was welcoming and interested in my research they often approached me to ask questions and tell their own experience. Since this felt natural it was sometimes difficult to notice how my presence influenced the conversations. However, I tried to reflect on my own position as much as possible to stay as objective as possible. Furthermore, as a researcher, it is my job to just listen and watch closely to discover the meaning of an event. However, by just sitting and listening you place yourself as an outsider who values the information with her own biases. So, you must talk and show interest to understand what the participants think, feel, believe, etc.⁹⁰ I sometimes struggled with this position. Since I am not religious I felt doubt about participating in the distribution of the sacrament because, on one hand, I wanted to show them that I take them seriously and wanted to know how it feels to fully participate. On the other hand, I had trouble with the fact that they knew that I was not religious and I did not want to mock their rituals. I also did not participate in singing the hymns and in praying. I did close my eyes but did not pray along. In this type of situation, I was really aware of my own position and had difficulty finding the balance between being a researcher and being part of the community. Nonetheless, I believe that they noticed that I tried my best and that the community felt taken seriously.

7.5 Methods of analysis

After an activity, I immediately started to write down everything I have noticed. Not only the direct things of what happened but also small inside jokes or the way things were said. My notes are a combination of field notes and a field diary whereas field notes refer to describing what is happening in the field. It includes observations, actions, and events. My field diary touches upon my feelings as a researcher concerning the research process. This includes notes about difficulties in the field or the complexity of relationships with

⁸⁸ Anne Ryen, "Ethnography: Constitutive Practice and Research Ethics," in *The Handbook of Social Research Ethics*, 229-42 (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009) 234

⁸⁹ Ryen, "Ethnography: Constitutive Practise and Research Ethics," 241.

⁹⁰ Ryen, "Ethnography: Constitutive Practise and Research Ethics," 241.

participants. By using a field diary it is possible to reflect on conflicting emotions.⁹¹ Furthermore, I used my field diary to not forget details about my ethnography.⁹² This data was analyzed to gain insight into what being part of the LDS church means in the Netherlands, more specifically Groningen. Moreover, similarities between interviews and the ethnographic data were sought to see the relation between my observations answers of the participants.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed after they took place. The interviews were analyzed thematically using the interpretive phenomenological approach. An interpretive phenomenological approach is used to describe what the experience for this particular person is like and what sense it makes for this particular person.⁹³ This method does not only look at the individual experience but also looks at the similarities and differences between the participants.⁹⁴ This method will help me to explore the participant's views regarding different themes which can be linked to my definition of fundamentalism.

⁹¹ Samantha Punch, "Hidden Struggles of Fieldwork: Exploring the Role and Use of Field Diaries," *Emotion, Space and Society*, 5, no. 2 (2012) 90

⁹² Punch, "Hidden Struggles of Fieldwork," 90

⁹³ Jonathan A. Smith, Paul Flowers and Michael Larkin, *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, Method, and Research* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2009), 7

⁹⁴ Smith, Flowers and Larkin, "Interpretative phenomenological analysis," 7

8. Analytical chapter 1: Can the church of the LDS in the Netherlands ideologically be considered fundamentalist?

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will analyze if the Dutch LDS church can ideologically be considered fundamentalist. More specifically, the Groningen LDS church. For this analysis, I will use Almond et al. definition of fundamentalism.⁹⁵ This notion discovered nine characteristics that are markers for a movement to be considered fundamentalist. They make a distinction between ideological and organizational characteristics. The five ideological characteristics are reactivity to the marginalization of religion, selectivity, moral Manichaeism, absolutism and inerrancy, and millennialism and messianism. Not every characteristic is needed to be qualified as a fundamentalist organization. Nonetheless, I will discuss all features and look at if they apply to the Dutch LDS church.

8.2 Reactivity to the marginalization of religion

The first ideological characteristic Almond et al. noticed during their research was that fundamentalist movements react against the consequences of modernization and secularization that have affected the religious community.⁹⁶ Fundamentalists often struggle with the place of religion in modern society. This influences the way fundamentalists look at the world. They see modernity as a threat to their lifestyle and therefore they are against 'progressive' changes in society.⁹⁷ According to Shepherd and Shepherd, the popularity of the LDS church is caused by the stable social identity that the church offers in times of the secular age.⁹⁸ Mormons are well-known for their conservative ideas. They vote more heavily Republican than other religious groups and are known for their opposition to homosexuality, abortion, woman, and LGBT rights.⁹⁹ However, Mormons do believe that people are capable of rationalized thinking which is viewed as a sign of modernity. Therefore, Mormons participate in all aspects of society such as science, business, education, and political life.¹⁰⁰ It is interesting to look at the differences between American and Dutch Mormons because America is still a religious county in comparison with the Netherlands. However, before a comparison can be made, it is important to give some historical background about the Netherlands.

⁹⁵ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, "Strong Religion," 90.

⁹⁶ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, "Strong Religion," 90.

⁹⁷ Dorraj, "The Crisis of Modernity and Religious Revivalism," 226.

⁹⁸ Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd, *A Kingdom Transformed: Early Mormonism and the Modern LDS Church* (University Utah Press, 2016) 236.

⁹⁹ Michael Lipka, "U.S. religious groups and their political leanings" Pewresearch, February 23, 2016. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/02/23/u-s-religious-groups-and-their-political-leanings/> (accessed June 30, 2022).

¹⁰⁰ Unknown, "Mormon and Modern" churchofjeseschirstorg, July 6, 2012, <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/mormon-and-modern>. (accessed June 30, 2022).

Until 1960 the Netherlands was characterized by the system of 'pillarization'. There was a Protestant, Catholic, and Social Democrat pillar who did not mix in society.¹⁰¹ However, after 1960 this system collapsed and a rapid secularization process started which made room for religious plurality. However, in the private sphere. Nonetheless, being religious became an abnormality, and having a religious identity request justification.¹⁰² Moreover, being Mormon in the Netherlands needed an extra explanation because of the combination of the rarity of being religious with the added oddity of belonging to an American religion with a different view on the Holy Scriptures.¹⁰³ This deviant position, religiously and culturally, is highlighted by a change in the Dutch perspective of the United States. Through America's international military actions in the 21st century and the policies and personalities of US presidents, Europeans view American exceptionalism as arrogance. American exceptionalism refers to the fact that many Americans, including Mormons, believe that America is the number one country in the world. Moreover, they believe that God had a hand in the country's creation.¹⁰⁴ So, being linked to America is increasingly seen as a disadvantage rather than an advantage in Dutch society.¹⁰⁵

This difficult relationship between the position of America and the faith is also stressed by Anne when she was asked about the influences of missionary work in the Netherlands. She said:

"It is originally an American faith so to say, so I make always a distinction between the gospel and the church culture. I believe that the church culture is quite influenced by the American culture so some people get American vibes from our church and I think that we, as Dutch people, are a little bit too realistic for this."

It is interesting to see that she makes a distinction between the church culture and the faith. Moreover, she believes that the American church culture is too American for the common Dutch citizen to get interested in this faith because Dutch people are straightforward.

Moreover, this shows a paradoxical image of the disconnection between church culture and the LDS theology.¹⁰⁶ It is important to analyze how Dutch members cope with this disbalance between the Mormon faith and the realities of Dutch society. Will they portray themselves as 'not of this world' and create distinctions between 'them' and 'us'? Van Beek et al. argue that due to the level of integration of members and non-members in society it is unlikely that Dutch Mormons going to isolate themselves because they feel that they belong in the secular environment.¹⁰⁷ Since secular public space is a fact, neither religious secularism nor secularization is seen as an issue for Dutch Mormons. This in contrast to American Mormons. In the Netherlands, a secular space is viewed as a place in which everybody, including church members, can be themselves. Secularization is not viewed as

¹⁰¹ Beek, "Persisting in a Secular Environment," 507.

¹⁰² Beek, "Persisting in a Secular Environment," 510.

¹⁰³ Beek, "Persisting in a Secular Environment," 510.

¹⁰⁴ Campbell, Green and Monson, "Seeking the Promised Land," 108.

¹⁰⁵ Beek, "Persisting in a Secular Environment," 514.

¹⁰⁶ Beek, "Persisting in a Secular Environment," 518.

¹⁰⁷ Beek, "Persisting in a Secular Environment," 524.

the opposite of being religious.¹⁰⁸ This paradoxical image is also visible in how the participants reacted to the question: do you always directly tell new people that you are part of this church?

“It is not that I scream it from the tops of the roof, so to say, but as somebody asks me about it then, of course, I tell them but for me, it is not something that I need to tell to everybody. I can just live with other people and have other norms and values such as not drinking coffee without explicitly telling them that I am part of this church and explaining why I don’t drink coffee and that it has to do with my faith but also with my own choices etc.” Daan

Daan is not the only one who does not immediately tell new people that they are part of the church. Fleur also keeps it more to herself:

“Now that I am a student I do not tell people often [that I am part of the church] because I don’t know. I have told it to a couple of people but it is not something I immediately tell.”

All five participants only tell about their religion if they have to. For example, to their bosses. One participant refers to her faith as just ‘church’. She does not go into detail about which specific church she visits if people ask her questions.¹⁰⁹ In line with this, Dutch Mormons accept that the church does not have political influence. They live a comfortable life on the margins of society and think it is important to not impose their worldview upon others.¹¹⁰ This becomes visible when the participants were asked if they have political preferences. Daan mentioned:

“If every member of the church would vote on the same political party then I am surprised about the unity in the church but at the same time I think that is kind of creepy haha.” Daan

Moreover, Koen explained:

“ I don’t think that we, as a church, should decide what happens in the Netherlands. Therefore, I don’t want to combine religion with politics. Not that it is a bad thing or something, but it is not what the country wants. Because there are some rules which I think are too strict. For example, in our church, it is not allowed to drink coffee but this does not mean that it is not allowed in the Netherlands. Moreover, some things in the Bible are old-fashioned and do not fit in this time. Therefore, I would not combine religion with politics.”

All five participants mentioned that they believe that it is a good thing that the church does not have political influence in the Netherlands and that they believe that it is important to separate church and state.

Moreover, fundamentalist organizations choose one aspect of modernity to show the public the negative consequences of modernization. For example, American Mormons are well-

¹⁰⁸ Beek, “Persisting in a Secular Environment,” 524.

¹⁰⁹ Interview.

¹¹⁰ Beek, “Persisting in a Secular Environment,” 524.

known for their opposition to abortion.¹¹¹ In the LDS theology abortion is not primarily seen as murder. However, according to teachings, an abortion performed for social or personal gain is against the will of God. Therefore, church members who give support, subsidize, or arrange such abortions can lose their church membership.¹¹² Mormons are against abortion because in their Scriptures is stated: 'Thou should not kill, nor do anything like unto it'.¹¹³ However, church policy permits abortion when the pregnancy results from rape/incest or the life or health of the mother is in serious jeopardy.¹¹⁴ Nonetheless, abortion is seen as the last option and a woman should first consult the local leader and try to seek 'divine confirmation through prayer'.¹¹⁵ If you compare this with the American Catholics then it is striking that 35% of the Catholics (well-known for their strict anti-abortion policies) approve an abortion when a woman wants it for any reason in contrast to 15% of the Mormons.¹¹⁶ When the Dutch youngsters were asked about their opinion on abortion all five start their answers by stressing that it is a difficult question. Nevertheless, three out of the five participants react in line with the LDS theology. They see it as a last option but it depends on the situation. For instance, Daan mentions:

"Oof that is a difficult question. For some people, abortion can be seen as an escape from further problems but I believe that you have taken away the chance for somebody who could come to earth and live a life. Only if you would die from the pregnancy or when there is something that would make the life of the child a hell on earth, abortion is a right escape."

So, just as in America abortion in the Netherlands is a controversial theme. Three out of five interviewees are in principle against abortion. Moreover, the American missionaries answered also in line with the LDS theology. They also stressed that abortion should be the last possible option under certain circumstances.¹¹⁷ However, it is also interesting to see what the other two participants mentioned:

"Oh abortion, luckily I don't have any experience with that. I do know friends who have experience with that and that is really difficult since life is life but it is the choice of the girl to choose if she wants to have an abortion." Koen

Moreover, Fleur mentioned:

"I think that it is okay. Look some people accidentally get pregnant and are not prepared for that and then they think about abortion. Look, you know, I believe that in itself it should be allowed."

¹¹¹ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, "Strong Religion," 95.

¹¹² Unknown, "abortion", Churchofjesuschrist.org, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/abortion?lang=eng>. (accessed June 30, 2022).

¹¹³ Doctrine and Covenants 59:6.

¹¹⁴ See section 21.4.1 of the LDS Handbook 2 ("Administering the Church") used by local church leaders (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2012c).

¹¹⁵ Campbell, Green and Monson, "Seeking the Promised Land," 118.

¹¹⁶ Campbell, Green and Monson, "Seeking the Promised Land," 118.

¹¹⁷ Interview.

These answers show that it is the choice of women to have an abortion. So, in this research 40% approve of abortion for any reason. That is way higher than the 15% of the American research.¹¹⁸ However, this percentage can be influenced by the age of my participants since youths are generally more open-minded concerning conservative thoughts. Another reason might be that the abortion debate in America is bigger and get more media attention than in the Netherlands.¹¹⁹ Therefore, national context should be taken into consideration when researching a movement.

How national context influences people's faith is something Hans Noot studied. His major study questioned how members of the LDS all over Europe experience their faith differently although the ecclesiology of the church is everywhere the same. People are educated with the same books, at the same time and are part of the same church structure. During his research, he concluded that local culture has such a big impact on the way a human thinks and experiences the world that an individual is first his nationality and then his or her religion. Therefore, he stated that you can speak about Catholic Mormons or Calvinistic Mormons.¹²⁰ Looking at my field diary and after analyzing the interviews, I would argue in line with Noot's research. I believe that Dutch Mormons behave and think differently than their American counterparts exactly because they have Dutch norms and values and live in Dutch society. So, since the abortion debate is influenced by national and cultural factors the different answers between the American and Dutch Mormons might be explained.

In sum, the Netherlands is a secularized country where religion is part of the private sphere. Due to the combination that Dutch Mormons believe that religion and politics should be separate, their modest views about homosexuality, abortion, and same-sex marriage, and the fact that they do not want to impose their worldview upon others, I argue that Dutch Mormons are not against secularization or modernization. As later will be explained Dutch Mormons emphasize the importance of religious freedom and freedom of choice and do not want to isolate themselves from the rest of society. Moreover, they fully participate in Dutch society and are comfortable in this position. Important to note is that Almond and et. state that this characteristic is a condition for being labelled as fundamentalist.

8.3 Selectivity

Fundamentalist movements reshape and elect particular facets of their history to differentiate themselves from the dominant society. This reshaping influences how they view themselves compared to the rest of society. Members of the LDS church identify themselves symbolically with the people of ancient Israel as chosen people.¹²¹ They believe that they are descendants of the covenant and blessings of Abraham because God commanded Smith to restore the only true church.¹²² Since Mormons accept the name of

¹¹⁸ Campbell, Green and Monson, "Seeking the Promised Land," 118.

¹¹⁹ Robert Chesal, "Afschaffen Abortusrecht verdeelt VS: van 'moment om te vieren' tot 'nachtmerrie'" nosnieuws, June 25, 2022, <https://nos.nl/artikel/2434022-afschaffen-abortusrecht-verdeelt-vs-van-moment-om-te-vieren-tot-nachtmerrie>. (accessed June 30, 2022).

¹²⁰ Fieldnotes.

¹²¹ Eugene England, "Good Literature for a Chosen People," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 1 no. 32 (1999): 69.

¹²² England, "Good Literature for a Chosen People," 69.

Jesus Christ through the ‘the right method’ of the ordinance of baptism, they are special.¹²³ According to the Scriptures, God revealed to Joseph Smith the ‘true’ method of baptism which entails two components. First, baptism should be performed by someone with the authority of the priesthood. Secondly, the person must be immersed. By immersion, someone’s sins are washed away and the person is reborn into a spiritual life that is dedicated to serving God.¹²⁴ The age of baptism in Mormonism is eight years old.¹²⁵ So, just like the people of Israel, Mormons have a special or chosen status. Mormons believe that they are chosen by God and different from the rest of society because they are on a special mission, can receive special blessings, and have special family relations and responsibilities.¹²⁶ What someone’s special mission in life is can be revealed through a patriarchal blessing. Patriarchal blessing refers to a blessing that is inspired by the declaration of the lineage of the person that undergoes the blessing. It tells the person something about his/her purpose in life.¹²⁷ When Koen was asked if he understands his faith better now that he is older he mentioned:

“Last year I received my patriarchal blessing. That is a blessing where you get more information about yourself and what the Heavenly Father has depicted for you in the future. That gave me a clearer picture of what I want to do and who I want to become in the church and I really liked that.”

Since I was not familiar with this blessing I asks Koen to describe this event to me. He explained:

“It is not a ceremony. You visit the patriarch and he gives you the blessing. I went to his house and in his house, he has a special chamber with all kinds of symbols from our church. The patriarch explained to me what was going to happen and then I received my blessing. He stands behind you and puts his hands on my head and then he tells God’s blessing. Afterward, you get a letter so that you can reread what exactly is been said. So that you can use the information to learn about yourself.”

This is a unique way of knowing your purpose in life. However, Mormons do not only distinguish themselves by having special blessings. They also have different views about death than other Christian denominations. As explained by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf: “We were His children before we came to this world, and we will be His children forevermore. This basic truth should change the way we look at ourselves, our brothers and sisters, and life itself.”¹²⁸ When a Mormon dies it is viewed as a physical death that separates the spirit from the mortal body. After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, everybody will be revived from physical death whereas death is believed to be an essential part of Heavenly

¹²³ Noel B. Reynolds, “Understanding Christian Baptism through the Book of Mormon.” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (2012): 9.

¹²⁴ Roman 6:3-6.

¹²⁵ Doctrine and Covenants 68:27; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 17:11.

¹²⁶ England, “Good Literature for Chosen People,” 70.

¹²⁷ Irene M. Bates, “Patriarchal Blessings and the Routinization of Charisma,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26, no. 3 (1993): 1–29.

¹²⁸ President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Four Titles”, *Ensign of Liahona*, May 2013, 58. churchofjesuschrist, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/the-eternal-family-teacher-manual/lesson-3-our-divine-potential?lang=eng>. (accessed June 30, 2022).

Father's plan of salvation.¹²⁹ However, before this resurrection takes place spirits will live in the spirit world.¹³⁰ In the spirit world, there are two different places namely the world where the spirits of righteous live and a place called the spirit prison. It is possible, after good behavior and learning about principles of the gospel to get a transition from the spirit prison to the spirit heaven.¹³¹ Anne also explained to me how she views death. She illustrates:

"We believe that a family stays a family after death. This in contrast to people that believe till death do us apart. It sounds maybe a little bit extreme but we believe that after we die we can make progress. Instead of seeing death as a 'state of rest' we think life continues."

Later on, she continues:

"We believe that if we die, this sounds strange and it is also something people often think is weird, that we have a Divine Potential. This means that we can make progress and that we one day can create worlds and get children who live on this earth."

In conclusion, Mormons view themselves as chosen ones by God. Moreover, God tells members how to live by giving the Scriptures to them. This selectivity can be shown by the way the patriarchal blessing is performed and how Mormons view death. This makes Mormons view themselves differently from the rest of society. However, these distinctions are not visible on the outside. Only if you have deeper conversations with members about their faith these aspects are discussed. Paradoxically, the youths that I have interviewed do not often talk about their faith with non-members. When asked if members tell a new friend that they are religious Anne mentions:

"I do not tell people that I am part of the church unless people explicitly ask."

Moreover, Daan mentions;

"For me, it is not necessarily to tell people. I just live my life."

Not only Anne and Daan do not quickly share that they are part of the church. All five participants told me that they only tell people if they have to. Therefore, I argue that Dutch Mormons prefer to keep their faith private.¹³² Nonetheless, I would argue that members of the LDS church in Groningen believe that they have a special status as chosen ones by God with special tasks to accomplish in this world.

¹²⁹ Unknown, "Death, Physical," Churchofjesuschrist.org, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/death-physical?lang=eng>. (accessed June 30, 2022).

¹³⁰ Alma 40:12.

¹³¹ Unknown, "Death, Physical," Churchofjesuschrist.org, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/death-physical?lang=eng>. (accessed June 30, 2022).

¹³² Interview.

8.4 Moral Manichean Worldview

Thirdly, fundamentalist movements are characterized by a Manichean worldview. A Manicheism is an ethical framework that separates actions between forces of good and evil expressed by contrasts between lightness and darkness.¹³³ In religions, light is often associated with divine presence whereas everything that is not white is automatically dark.¹³⁴ This phenomenon is present in all the Abrahamic religions as well as in Hinduism and Buddhism.¹³⁵ For instance, in Catholic theology, God is seen as the source of all light in the universe.¹³⁶ In Mormonism references to the light of Christ can often be found in the Scriptures.¹³⁷ One of the meanings of the light of Christ in Mormonism is conscience. According to the prophet Mormon, the light of Christ is given to every man so that he distinguishes good from evil.¹³⁸ During my research, this dualistic worldview was not obviously present. Nonetheless, if you take a closer look it is everywhere. When Tim was asked what the difference is between his faith and other Christian denominations he replied:

“Everybody can make the distinction between good and bad decisions so to say and we can choose to help each other and to make the right decisions and support each other to continue to make the right decisions and this feeling is what makes us unique.” Tim

This shows that there is a difference between good and evil. Although he emphasizes the freedom of choice, he implicitly states that there is only one good choice. Thus, the other choices are bad. Moreover, all interviewers believe that God is all-knowing. They believe in the Ten Commandments and believe that people can sin. Mormons are not the only one that believe that people can sin. Fundamentalist Jews are also well-known for their belief in sins. According to the laws of idolatry, chapter 2 rule 5 Maimonides stated that Jews that committed idolatry (sin) are seen as non-Jews, this in contrast to Jews that pledged other sins that are punished by stoning.¹³⁹ So, there are whole laws that should be followed otherwise people sin which can have serious consequences. The same goes for Salafi Muslims. Salafi Muslims believe that the faith of people is decided by inner faith and actual deeds whereas individuals are judged on account of apparent sins.¹⁴⁰ They even have a book of sins.¹⁴¹ Looking at the Dutch Mormons, the emphasis on sins was also mentioned. For example, Anne mentions:

¹³³ Katerina Deliovsky and Kitossa Tamari, “Beyond Black and White: When Going Beyond May Take Us Out of Bounds,” *Journal of Black Studies* 44, no. 2 (2013): 160.

¹³⁴ Jeremy Stolow and Birgit Meyer, “Enlightening Religion: Light and Darkness in Religious Knowledge and Knowledge about Religion,” *Critical Research on Religion* 9, no. 2 (August 2021): 119.

¹³⁵ Stolow and Meyer, “Enlightening Religion,” 119

¹³⁶ Stolow and Meyer, “Enlightening Religion,” 123.

¹³⁷ For instance, Doctrine and Covenants 88:6-11.

¹³⁸ Moroni 7:16,18.

¹³⁹ Norton Mezvinsky, *Jewish fundamentalism in Israel: New Introduction* (London: Pluto Press, 2004) 120.

¹⁴⁰ Jeffrey Haynes, *The Routledge Handbook of Religion, Politics and Ideology*, (Routledge, 2021) 190.

¹⁴¹ Haynes, “The Routledge Handbook,” 192.

“To put it a very rude way, homosexuality is a sin in our church. Not being homosexual but practicing homosexuality just as having an extramarital relationship is a sin.”

This shows that there is a clear difference between good and bad behavior. Moreover, there are also consequences within the church for these ‘bad’ choices. As Anne explained to me:

“If a man marries a man then he will not be summoned for any callings because in principle it is against our teachings. It is so to say the same if I am going to live together with my partner whilst we are not married. Then I would not receive any callings either.”

This shows that within the church behavior is labelled good or bad and that there are consequences for bad behavior. However, during my research, I mostly noticed the focus on your own choice. For instance, when Tim was asked what he believes makes his faith different than other Christians he replied;

“I think that freedom of choice is the most important value that I noticed in our church. Of course, there are a lot of different opinions about certain issues but eventually, everybody is free to choose for themselves what he/she wants to do.”

This emphasis on choice was also mentioned during services. One member explained to me that it is forbidden to drink alcohol and smoke. However, he immediately stated that it is someone’s own choice to follow them and that all members are still welcome in church.¹⁴² One member of the church mentioned: “We hate the sin and not the sinner”.¹⁴³ This shows that there are good and bad decisions but it is your responsibility to choose the right option. Moreover, it becomes clear that the lived religion of the Dutch Mormons is different than how the doctrine explains the faith.¹⁴⁴ Nonetheless, it becomes clear that Dutch Mormons to some extent have a dualistic worldview.

8.5 Absolutism and inerrancy of Holy Scriptures

The fourth characteristic Almond et al. discovered is the absolutism and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures. Fundamentalistic movements regard their Holy Scriptures as of divine origin. Moreover, sacred texts are precisely suitable and accurate in all aspects of society.¹⁴⁵ An example of this is how the Taliban implemented the Sharia law in Afghanistan. Sharia can be translated as the Word of God and is the basis of the legal system of the Taliban.¹⁴⁶ Mormons have four official Scriptures namely the Bible, the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Prince. Every year one book is discussed in the church.¹⁴⁷ Mormons view the Scriptures as testimonies of Christ that help members of the church to achieve eternal life.¹⁴⁸ Just as other Christian denominations Mormons revere the Old and

¹⁴² Fieldnotes.

¹⁴³ Fieldnotes.

¹⁴⁴ David Hall, *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practise* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021) 7.

¹⁴⁵ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, “Strong Religion,” 96.

¹⁴⁶ Anand Gopal, “Who Are the Taliban? (Cover Story).” *Nation* 287 (21): 17-20.

¹⁴⁷ Fieldnotes.

¹⁴⁸ 1 Nephi 6:4.

New Testament. The Book of Mormon is another testimony of Jesus Christ that tells and explains God's affairs with the individuals who lived in ancient Americas. Through this Scripture, the special connection between America and Mormonism is emphasized. This connection is also visible if you look at how American Mormons relate to their Constitution. Mormons believe that the Constitution is a divine document because they believe that God has had a hand in the country's creation. Thus also in making the constitution.¹⁴⁹ By following the teachings of the Book of Mormon and the Bible peace in the world can be established.¹⁵⁰ Revelations that living prophets received from God are written down in The Doctrine and Covenants. This Scripture is different from the Bible and the Book of Mormon because it is not a translation of an ancient document.¹⁵¹ The Pearl of Great Prince is a collection of doctrines and teachings that give additional information about texts that were lost from the Bible. Moreover, it contains the books of Abraham and Moses, a translation by Prophet Joseph Smith of Matthew chapter 24, and some writings of Smith.¹⁵²

Moreover, Mormons distinguish themselves from other Christian denominations because they believe that the Scriptures are historical journals. However, they also believe that elements of the Old and New Testaments are depraved.¹⁵³ Therefore, some parts have been selected as errant and new revelations are part of the formal church doctrine.¹⁵⁴ This special role of the Holy Scriptures is evident in the answers given by the participants. For example, when being asked what is the differences between your faith and that of other Christian denominations, Daan answered:

“The book of Mormon is not per definition a new kind of Bible, it is another word God has given us to help us.” Daan

How God can give revelations for pressing problems in society is explained by Tim when he was asked how the roles within the family should be divided. He mentions:

“In the proclamation of the family, it is stated that men and wife are equal to each other and that they have both the same responsibilities within the family.” Tim

This shows that new proclamations can be part of the official church doctrine. According to the American missionaries, there have only been five proclamations of the church since 1820 and when they come out they are like really big and had consequences for all members around the world.¹⁵⁵ Although the youngsters point out the correctness of the Scriptures and

¹⁴⁹ Campbell, Green and Monson, “Seeking the Promised Land,” 112.

¹⁵⁰ 2 Nephi 3:12.

¹⁵¹ Unknown, “Scriptures”, Churchofjesuschrist.org, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/scriptures?lang=eng>. (accessed June 30, 2022).

¹⁵² Unknown, “Scriptures”, Churchofjesuschrist.org, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/scriptures?lang=eng>. (accessed June 30, 2022).

¹⁵³ Campbell, Green and Monson, “Seeking the Promised Land,” 12.

¹⁵⁴ Campbell, Green and Monson, “Seeking the Promised Land,” 12.

¹⁵⁵ Interview.

that the Scriptures are applicable in daily situations, they do acknowledge that some aspects are a bit old-fashioned.

For instance, Koen states:

“Some things in the Bible are old-fashioned and do not fit in the current time. Therefore, I do not want politics and religion to be combined.”¹⁵⁶

Although the prophet may explain the Scriptures differently, it is not something that often happens. This becomes clear when analyzing the church's opinion about LGBTQ issues. According to a survey of the Pew Research center, American Mormons are well-known for their opposition to same-sex marriage. Only 12% of the American Mormons approve of same-sex marriage. The other 88% view homosexual activities as sinful.¹⁵⁷ This can be explained by the Holy Scriptures where marriage is viewed as a commitment between husband and wife.¹⁵⁸ Although Mormons are against same-sex marriage the church nonetheless states and encourages members to show love and respect to everyone. Therefore, Mormons may approve of some rights for same-sex couples. However, not the right to marry.¹⁵⁹ This is because marriage is seen as something between man and wife and is important for creating family bonds in the afterlife.

The Netherlands and America have a different history regarding same-sex marriages. In 2001, as the first country in the world, the Netherlands legalized same-sex marriages. However, this did not happen out of the blue. Already since the 1990s Dutch media supports the view that homosexuality and same-sex marriage are part of nature. Moreover, in the Netherlands, many LGBT rights activists were part of the national LGBT organization, the Centre for Culture and Leisure (COC) which has lots of influence and started legal cases to reform the system.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, already from the 1980s, the Netherlands was well-known for its moderate levels of religiosity. This combination led to comparatively tolerant views of homosexuality.¹⁶¹ Finally, since the Netherlands was the first country to legalize same-sex marriages it became part of the Dutch identity to support same-sex marriages. To be against it is seen as social suicide in the Dutch political culture.¹⁶² These trends influenced the LDS church in the Netherlands. In the late 1990s, Dutch LDS leaders acknowledged that homosexual attraction is not a choice.¹⁶³ However, homosexual relations were viewed as unacceptable. Paradoxically, at the same time as the legalization of same-sex marriage in the Netherlands, the LDS church in the United States campaigned against gay rights. In 2005, a couple of months after the Supreme Court of the United States had legalized same-sex marriage in fifty states, the LDS church published a worldwide policy that excluded same-sex

¹⁵⁶ Interview.

¹⁵⁷ Campbell, Green and Monson, “Seeking the Promised Land,” 119.

¹⁵⁸ Genesis 2:24.

¹⁵⁹ Campbell, Green and Monson, “Seeking the Promised Land,” 120.

¹⁶⁰ Kelly Kollman, “Pioneering Marriage for Same-Sex Couples in the Netherlands,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 24, no.1 (2017): 106.

¹⁶¹ Kollman, “Pioneering Marriage for Same-Sex Couples,” 107.

¹⁶² Beek, “Persisting in a Secular Environment,” 520.

¹⁶³ Beek, “Persisting in a Secular Environment,” 520.

couples and their children from church membership.¹⁶⁴ This resulted in outrage in the Netherlands and many members, including an ex-bishop and stake president, left the church over the controversy. In 2019, this refusal policy was revoked but it is still prohibited to act in accordance with homosexual feelings.¹⁶⁵ So, the worldwide church policy regarding same-sex marriages and the history of the Netherlands differ. The influence of national context is also visible in the answers given by the participants when their opinion about homosexuality was asked. They all started their answer by stating that it is a complicated question. All five state that they have nothing against people that are homosexual. For instance, Daan mentioned:

“Oof, this is a difficult question. Not that I am against homosexuality or something. I know people that are homosexual, even friends of mine, and these are really sweet people. I don’t have anything against homosexuality but it is that we have our faith in God and the Ten Commandments.” Daan

However, when I asks about marriage four out of five mentioned that they do not approve of same-sex marriage in the temple because they believe that marriage is meant for reproduction and that the natural way of reproduction is not possible for same-sex couples. Nonetheless, none of them is against the fact that same-sex couples have the civil right to marry. Koen mentioned:

“That should be allowed, you know it is their life. Heavenly Father should always support people. He should not love them less, it is more that He regrets that it went that way.”

Only one of the five members allows same-sex couples to marry in the temple. When ask about her opinion about homosexuality she states:

“That is a thing of the church that I have never understood. Homosexuality is more accepted than it used to be but it is still really behind what is nowadays accepted in society. I think the youth do accept it but the older generation makes it difficult for them [homosexuals] and I think that is sad because we are a loving church but not towards homosexuals.”

Although only one out of five favors same-sex marriage, the interviewees all describe struggles from friends who are dealing with this right now. Anne stressed that she could not give a friend advice concerning his struggles with his sexual orientation.

“If he does not act in line with his feelings then of course it is a lonely life and he also wants to build a relationship with someone and to start a family with someone he loves. For him, it is a dilemma. I do understand his dilemma and I cannot help him.”

All these quotations show how complex these controversial themes are. The Scriptures do not align with trends in society. Moreover, the national context affects the perception of individuals. So, although on the one hand Dutch Mormons do believe in the absolutism and

¹⁶⁴ Beek, “Persisting in a Secular Environment,” 521.

¹⁶⁵ Beek, “Persisting in a Secular Environment,” 521.

inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures, on the other they see strict rules that need to loosen up to comply with current society.

8.6 Millennialism and messianism

Another distinctive feature found in the research of Almond et al. was that fundamentalist movements believe in Millennialism and Messianism. Millennialism is that activity that derives from the foresight of the end of times.¹⁶⁶ The end of times promised the end of all hardship in the world for those of the right belief.¹⁶⁷ Fundamentalist movements believe that the end of times is coming soon. Messianism refers to the fact that members believe that the Messiah comes back to the earth as Savior.¹⁶⁸ The consequence of this perception is that the overall mentality of fundamentalists is pessimistic.¹⁶⁹ For example, ISIS propagated its ideology concerning the end of times to gain support and legitimize its actions in the eyes of Muslims. In ISIS ideology special attention is given to the Hadith of Dabiq. Dabiq is the place where the end of times battle between the good and bad will take place. It is no coincidence that ISIS named its magazine after this place.¹⁷⁰ In the LDS theology America is believed to be the starting and end point of this world. According to Joseph Smith, the Garden of Eden is located in Missouri and this would be the place where members will gather in the last days.¹⁷¹

When the participants were asked if they believed in the end of times they all responded to some extent. However, variations can be found in what degree they believed in it. For example, Koen said: “

“I think so. I believe that because of the pandemic of two years ago that still goes on and the heavy events that happen worldwide that this could be the end.”

Moreover, Anne mentions:

“We live in strange times and if you read our Scriptures then I see a lot of similarities. For example, families are fallen apart. That is something I see happening around me. So, I do believe in it but I do not think that tomorrow or the day after tomorrow the world will end. I believe it is a gradual process.”

Although all participants believe to some extent in the end of times. Two out of five do not necessarily have a strong feeling concerning the end of times. For instance, Daan states:

“You know if I am going to live a life of which I know it is going to be okay. It does not matter if I live during the end of times because if you live during the end of times there is a massive change that you will die anyway haha.” Daan

Moreover, Fleur mentions:

¹⁶⁶ Theodore Olson, *Millennialism, Utopianism and Progress*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2019) 14.

¹⁶⁷ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, “Strong Religion,” 97.

¹⁶⁸ Olson, “*Millennialism, Utopianism and Progress*,” 14.

¹⁶⁹ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, “Strong Religion,” 39.

¹⁷⁰ Aida Arosoaie, “Doctrinal Differences between ISIS and Al Qaeda: An Account of Ideologues.” *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 7, no. 7 (2015): 25.

¹⁷¹ Campbell, Green and Monson, “Seeking the Promised Land,” 109.

“It does not feel like we live in the end of times but by everything the church teaches you it has to be but my thoughts and feelings do not align.”

They both mention that they think it is a complicated subject. They stress that it is a subject that is often discussed in church but they do not concern themselves with this. So, not every member is preoccupied with this topic. Moreover, Almond et al. state that due to the belief in the end of times most members are pessimistic. Although I have noticed that a lot of members encounter life as difficult and suffering, I would not argue that the Dutch members are pessimistic because they are hopeful. They believe that Christ can help them with every problem they have and that gives them hope.¹⁷² However, the recent war in Ukraine was something that the church was worried about. Therefore, at the entrance, a checklist about what items you should collect in case of a life-threatening situation was handed out. According to the list, you should be able to stay alive for at least 72 hours in case of an emergency. Moreover, they were collecting data of the members that showed the strengths of people in case of emergencies.¹⁷³

In sum, not every member is concerned with the topic of the end of time. However, the church pays a lot of attention to preparing members for when the end of time comes. Therefore, I would state that Millennialism and Messianism are characteristics that are visible in the LDS church in Groningen.

8.7 Conclusion

The current chapter focuses on the five ideologically characteristics discovered by Almond et al. and if they apply to the Dutch LDS church. The main question in this chapter was ‘Can the church of the LDS in the Netherlands, specifically Groningen ideologically be seen as fundamentalist? First, I analyzed if the Dutch Mormons react against the marginalization of religion. Since I analyzed that Dutch Mormons have modest views regarding same-sex marriages, abortion, homosexuality, roles within the family, and that they want to separate church and state, they are not against the consequences of the marginalization of religion. Moreover, Dutch Mormons do not want to impose their worldview upon others and keep their faith private. Therefore, I argue that Dutch Mormons are not characterized by reactivity against the marginalization of religion. According to the definition of Almond et al. reactivity towards the marginalization of religion is a condition for being labelled fundamentalist.

Although Mormons do not react against the marginalization of religion, they do select particular parts of history to distinguish themselves from the rest of society. They view themselves as part of the one and only true church and as chosen people. However, this characteristic can only be discovered when you engage in deep conversations with the members. Paradoxically, the members keep their faith private. Therefore, it’s not obvious that they view themselves as different from the rest of society. Moreover, the members of the LDS church in Groningen have a dualistic worldview. They make distinctions between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ behavior that both have consequences for the member. However, freedom of choice is one of the things that was often mentioned as what makes this religion unique.

¹⁷² Fieldnotes.

¹⁷³ Fieldnotes.

Thus, I would state that the youth have a dualistic worldview whereas emphasis on free choice is even more important to them. Furthermore, the importance of the Scriptures and the correctness of the Scriptures is often stressed by all interviewees and during service. However, participants also acknowledged that some aspects of the Scriptures are old-fashion and do not align with the current society. Finally, the concept of the end of times was discussed. Although some members are concerned that this is going to happen soon, others are not occupied with this aspect of the faith. Therefore, I state that the youngsters believe to some extent in the end of times. To conclude, I argue that Dutch Mormons, specifically those who attend service in Groningen can to some extent be considered fundamentalist if you look at the ideological characteristics defined by Almond et al. Nonetheless, national context brings nuances to this point of view, and therefore should be taken into account when researchers analyze fundamentalist movements. Moreover, to be labelled fundamentalist by Almond et al. definition it is also important to look at the organizational characteristics. Therefore, the next chapter will dive deeper into the organizational features of the LDS church.

9. Analytical chapter 2: Can the church of the LDS in the Netherlands organizationally be considered fundamentalist?

9.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have studied if the Dutch LDS church in Groningen can ideologically be considered fundamentalist. I argued that Dutch Mormons to some extent can be considered fundamentalists. However, Almond et al. did not only discover ideological characteristics but also organizational features. The four ideological characteristics are elect chosen membership, sharp boundaries, authoritarian organization, and behavioral requirements. In this chapter, I will discuss these features and look at if they apply to the Dutch LDS church. The central research question in this chapter is: 'Can the church of the LDS in the Netherlands organisationally be seen as fundamentalist?'

9.2 Elect chosen membership

Fundamentalist organizations are characterized by their elect chosen membership. Members feel that they are the chosen ones by God and want to distinguish themselves from others in society.¹⁷⁴ Therefore, they often live in a closed enclave that literally separates them from the rest of society. For example, due to strict rules concerning the sabbath, orthodox Jews are not allowed to drive. Therefore, they live within a walking distance of the synagogue causing big Jewish communities in cities.¹⁷⁵ In line with other fundamentalist movements, Mormons believe that they are part of the one and only true church.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, they believe that every human being is a child of God.¹⁷⁷ Living by these beliefs you should think that being a member is a requirement for participation in church activities. However, this is not necessarily the case. When the participants were asked about their families it was striking that not everybody was an active member of the church. For example, Daan was the only child of six siblings that is an active member, and Koen and his mother are the only two going to the church of a family of five. His father has even never been a member.¹⁷⁸ However, this does not mean that partners are not welcome in the church activities.¹⁷⁹ The fact that active membership is not a requirement may influence the way participants view their status as 'chosen ones' and how they depict their future family. When the youths were asked if their future partner should be a member of the church only one out of five answered this question with yes. The other four mentioned that it would be helpful but not a requirement. For instance, Daan mentions,

¹⁷⁴ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, "Strong Religion," 97.

¹⁷⁵ Paul Demeyer, "Vrouwen met Pruiken en mannen met pijpenkrullen," *nieuwsbladbe*, January 8, 2011, <https://www.nieuwsblad.be/cnt/g9734osn1#:~:text=%20De%20sabbat%20verklaart%20ook%20meteen,best%20dicht%20bij%20jouw%20gebedshuis>. (accessed June 30, 2022).

¹⁷⁶ England, "Good Literature for Chosen People," 69.

¹⁷⁷ Unknonw, "Spirit Children of Heavenly Father," *churchofjesuschrist* <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/spirit-children-of-heavenly-parents?lang=eng>. (accessed June 30, 2022).

¹⁷⁸ Interviews.

¹⁷⁹ Fieldnotes.

“Preferable I would like to find someone within the church but if I notice that that is not going to happen then I would definitely date outside the church. I do believe that a marriage can work if one partner is not a member but it is easier if both partners are part of the church if you look at questions such as raising children.”

Moreover, Koen explained:

“It would be nice if she wants to become a member, of course, it is her choice. My mother and father are not both members of the church and that works out fine. If my partner does not go to the church and does not accept that I would go to the church then this would be a dealbreaker because then she does not accept me as the person who I am.”

However, during my fieldwork, I noticed that the church pays lots of attention to finding the right partner. Activities are organized such as youth camps and wildfires so that the youth will interact. As an encouragement to go, they promoted these events with the sentence: ‘Maybe you will find your eternal partner.’¹⁸⁰ However, during my conversation with a young woman, she immediately added that she found the posters really awful. Moreover, she told me that sometimes youths go on holiday to America to find a partner.¹⁸¹ This shows that youths have a preference for finding a partner within the church. After telling me this, she also explained that she would love to marry but if she does not find the right partner then she would be perfectly happy on her own. She emphasized that she was not looking for anybody at this moment.¹⁸² Paradoxically, she also mentioned that sometimes she feels pressure from the church that she has come to an age that it would not be strange to start a family.¹⁸³ I was surprised by this comment because on the one hand, she stresses her individuality and that she would be happy alone whilst on the other hand, she feels pressure to start a family.¹⁸⁴ Moreover, her view stands in contrast with the view of the American missionaries. When I asked them what they were going to do after their missionary work, they both answered going to college and hopefully find a partner in college. Where finding a partner was just as important as finishing a study.¹⁸⁵

However, since the Mormon community in the Netherlands is small and the youth sees that there are successful marriages with couples that are not both part of the church, I do not think that the youth strongly believes that they are elected chosen members. Otherwise, I would think that a partner from the same religion should be a requirement.

9.3 Sharp Boundaries

Fundamentalist organizations create sharp boundaries between them and the rest of society. For example, by typical dress code, special vocabulary, and access and control of the media.¹⁸⁶ For instance, Orthodox Hasidic Jews can be recognized by their black heads and

¹⁸⁰ Fieldnotes.

¹⁸¹ Fieldnotes.

¹⁸² Fieldnotes.

¹⁸³ Fieldnotes.

¹⁸⁴ Fieldnotes.

¹⁸⁵ Fieldnotes.

¹⁸⁶ Beek, “Persisting in a Secular Environment,” 98.

coats and their ringlets that they never shave.¹⁸⁷ Another piece of clothing that has caused commotion worldwide, especially in the West, is the burka. This traditional religious piece of clothing is even banned by the Dutch government on 1 August 2019 because it is seen as a threat to society.¹⁸⁸ By dressing differently it becomes immediately clear to which group you belong and it is easy to make a distinction between you and the rest of the society. During my visits to the church, I directly noticed the black trousers, white shirts, and black ties of the American missionaries. These young men wear distinctive clothes compared to people of their age.¹⁸⁹ Because of this you immediately recognize them as different from the norm. However, what I found fascinating was that most of the boys did not know how to wear these clothes. Their trousers and shirts are often way too big and you notice how uncomfortable they are when they have to button their suit jacket. Due to this their distinctiveness and awkwardness stood out. When I asked the Elders if they were dressed like that every day one elder replied as follows:

“If we go out street contacting, I am not wearing a tie, I do not have my suit coat on. I just wear a shirt. Feeling a little bit more approachable.”

This shows that during street contact the elders dressed differently than in church because otherwise, they are less approachable which has negative consequences for their missionary work. I also asked Tim how he was dressed on his mission and what the rules concerning clothes are. He mentions:

“The rule is that you are dressed as a representative of the church. If you want to accomplish your calling as a missionary then they expect from you that you have dressed the right, no not the right, but just in a decent way and that you are representative for the church.”

This demonstrates that it is important that you act as a representative for the church. I found this an interesting comment because when I first visited the church I had asked my contact person what I should wear to the service. He answered with ‘Sunday clothes’. I expected men in suits and women in long skirts or dresses. Therefore, I wore a long black skirt and a blouse with black heels. However, when I entered the church, I immediately noticed that I was dressed way too conservative. Not every man was wearing a suit, most of them just wore jeans and a vest. Women also did not only wear skirts and dresses. Most of them wore trousers with a jersey so that they were comfortable. One woman, who stood out for me, was dressed in a tight yellow dress and black boots till above the knee. She wore a bright-colored knitted vest over the tight dress. She introduced herself as a feminist and an active member of the church. Her appearance surprised me.

Moreover, I visit services when the weather was nice so I could see people's arms and legs and I noticed that I did not see any tattoos. After I noticed this, I also observed that women

¹⁸⁷ Janet S. Belcove-Shalin, *New World Hasidim: Ethnographic Studies of Hasidic Jews in America* (London: SUNY Press, 1995) 184

¹⁸⁸Hass Bat-Sheva, “The Burka Ban: Islamic Dress, Freedom and Choice in the Netherland in Light of the 2019 Burka Ban Law,” *MDPI Religions* (2020): 11.

¹⁸⁹ Fieldnotes.

only had one earring per ear. I did not see any piercings. Moreover, the jewelry that women wore was modest.¹⁹⁰ These external features are in line with the teachings of the church. Members of the LDS church view their bodies as a gift from God.¹⁹¹ Whereas the body is compared with the temple of God.¹⁹² Therefore, the body should be treated with the same respect as a temple.¹⁹³ Excessive piercings and tattooing are not seen as taking care of the body and therefore it is not recommended.¹⁹⁴ The importance of taking care of your own body was also something the missionaries mentioned during the interview. When I asked them what they believed is the biggest cultural difference between the Netherlands and America they said:

“Another thing I like is that in America we kind of have a lot of fat people and here there are not many overweighted people. I really appreciate that.”

When I ask him why he liked that, he explained to me:

“ For me, it is like if you taking care of your body, you are taking care of yourself, and if you take care of yourself there is a clear link that you are doing mentally so much better.”

This shows that there are boundaries that can show that you are a good Mormon. So, although the visual boundaries are more in the absence than in the presence, there are external boundaries between Mormons and the rest of society.

Furthermore, there are lots of invisible distinctions. For instance, during volleyball, I noticed distinctive language. One person said after someone hit the ball to the ceiling: “We have a lot of blessings today”.¹⁹⁵ This refers to the fact we played volleyball in the church building that has a ceiling that consists of different tiles. If the ball hits the ceiling, a tile may fall. The youths often get warnings from the church leaders that the ceiling should remain in one piece. Nonetheless, at the back of the church, some tiles are missing. However, no tiles were broken during my participation although the ceiling was occasionally hit.¹⁹⁶ I was triggered by the word blessing. I think that non-religious people would not describe the situation the same. Furthermore, I noticed a different vocabulary in the absence. I am a pretty fanatic athlete and when I hit the ball completely wrong, I shouted fuck. Immediately after this, I started to mumble and apologize. They all laughed and said it does not matter and that I did not have to worry about this.¹⁹⁷ After this incident, I realized that I did not hear any curse words or inappropriate language in the church. So, there are boundaries between Mormons

¹⁹⁰ Fieldnotes

¹⁹¹ Abraham 3:26.

¹⁹² Corinthians 6:19-20.

¹⁹³ President Russell M. Nelson, “Tattooing and Body Piercing”, Church of Jesus Christ, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/tattooing?lang=eng>. (accessed June 30, 2022).

¹⁹⁴ Gordon Hinckley, “Great Shall Be the peace of Thy Children”, *Ensign* 52, (2000).

¹⁹⁵ Fieldnotes.

¹⁹⁶ Fieldnotes.

¹⁹⁷ Fieldnotes.

and the rest of the Dutch society. However, I would not describe them as really sharp and obvious boundaries.

In sum, there is a bright variety in the way members dress. If I would pass them in the streets, I would not notice that they are part of this church. Moreover, Mormons talk differently than the rest of the Dutch society. In the absence of talking their religious background becomes noticeable. However, you should take a close look to recognize it in their everyday language. Therefore, I argue that there are no sharp boundaries between members of the church and the rest of society. Nonetheless, boundaries are visible if you take a closer look.

9.4 Authoritarian organization

Another organizational component of fundamentalist organizations is the authoritarian structure organized in a strict top to down hierarchy.¹⁹⁸ On top, there is a leader that has a higher rank and therefore more authority than a general member.¹⁹⁹ In the LDS church, this hierarchical structure is incorporated and based on the New Testament whereas it is stated that the church is described as one with structure and form.²⁰⁰ The basis of the hierarchy anchors in strictly following the word of the Lord. On the top of the hierarchy is Jesus Christ who is an active prophet. This means that Jesus can actively speak through his living prophets.²⁰¹ Members are blessed if they follow the highest prophet of the church which is the president.²⁰² However, when the president receives a divine revelation this revelation is not automatically part of the official doctrine. First, the president has to consult his counselors. The First Presidency is also called the troika and consists of two males.²⁰³ The second counselor is called the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. They are believed to be special witnesses of Christ.²⁰⁴ Thus, the highest position in the church is that of President of the Church, after that the Troika followed by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.²⁰⁵ This clear distinction in the hierarchy is also incorporated into the rest of the church structure. The LDS is one big worldwide church divided into stakes, congregations, temples, and churches. A stake consists of 3000-5000 members divided into five to ten congregations. One congregation consists of multiple churches. At the top of each stake stands a stake

¹⁹⁸ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, "Strong Religion," 75.

¹⁹⁹ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, "Strong Religion," 75.

²⁰⁰ Unknown, "Authority in Church", Church of Jesus Christ <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/authority-in-the-church>. (accessed June 30, 2022).

²⁰¹ Unknown, "Prophets", Church of Jesus Christ <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/prophets?lang=eng> (accessed June 30, 2022).

²⁰² Doctrine and Covenants 1:14-16.

²⁰³ Campbell, Green and Monson, "Seeking the Promised Land," 13.

²⁰⁴ Unknown, "Quorum of the Twelve Apostles", Church of Jesus Christ <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/quorum-of-the-twelve-apostles?lang=eng>. (accessed June 30, 2022).

²⁰⁵ Unknown, "Quorum of the Twelve Apostles", Church of Jesus Christ <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/quorum-of-the-twelve-apostles?lang=eng>. (accessed June 30, 2022).

president. At the top of every church, there is a church president.²⁰⁶ When the participants were asked their opinion about the church hierarchy, the following things were mentioned:

“First, I wanted to say that it is not a perfect system because nothing is perfect. I believe it is a good structure. The hierarchical structure gives clarity and when there is clarity there is no conflict, so to say. Therefore, I think it is a good structure.” Tim

“Well, I do not think that it is a democratic system so to say. Leaders make certain decisions. For example, the prophet for everybody, the ring president for the ring, the municipality president for the municipality, and the parents make the decisions for their children. Look, the point is that you can decide for yourself if you agree with something and if you disagree then you are free to leave.” Anne

This shows that the participants are aware of and acknowledge the hierarchical structure of the church. All five interviewees recognize that the church has not a democratic but a hierarchical structure. However, this is not seen as a problem. Moreover, they state that they did not know how to organize it differently.

Moreover, in the LDS theology man and woman have different authority since only man can receive the rank of priesthood. The priesthood has two different meanings. According to Alma 13:7-8, priesthood is the power and authority of God.²⁰⁷ Because of this priesthood, God can create and manage heaven and earth.²⁰⁸ Moreover, the priesthood is given to every active man to perform ceremonies for the salvation of God’s children.²⁰⁹ For example, fathers and husbands can bless babies, baptize members or bless the sick, and boys can hand out The Last Supper during services. This authority of the priesthood is only given to men and not to women. However, women are allowed to have leadership roles in various sub-organizations of the church.²¹⁰ According to van Beek et al., the combination of a highly organized and hierarchical church with strict rules concerning priesthood goes against the grain of present-day Dutch culture.²¹¹ Since, Mormonism displays a message of authority in an anti-authoritarian climate, whereas the founding hero has enormous influence on church doctrine while in the Netherlands heroism has become suspect just as American exceptionalism and the fact that churches have embraced secularism stands in contrast to the exclusive salvation which is important in Mormonism.²¹² All these factors clash with the core values of Dutch society. Paradoxically, even though the Netherlands is notable for its

²⁰⁶ Unknown, “Church Councils”, Churchofjesuschrist <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/church-councils?lang=eng>. (accessed June 30, 2022).

²⁰⁷ Alma 13:7-8.

²⁰⁸ Doctrine and Covenants 84:35-38.

²⁰⁹ Unknown, “Priesthood.” Churchofjesuschrist <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/priesthood?lang=eng> (accessed June 30, 2022).

²¹⁰ Campbell, Green and Monson, “Seeking the Promised Land,” 14.

²¹¹ Beek, “Persisting in a Secular Environment,” 511.

²¹² Beek, “Persisting in a Secular Environment,” 511.

anti-authoritarian climate, LDS women in the Netherlands do not question the male-controlled system of the church nor their exclusion from priesthood ordination.²¹³ This is in contradiction to American Mormon feminists who want access to the priesthood.²¹⁴ According to van Beek et al., Dutch LDS women feel already emancipated and equal to the men in the church. Moreover, Dutch women do not want the priesthood because they were not thrilled about getting more church assignments and responsibilities and risking the fact that men become less active in the church.²¹⁵

The findings of van Beek et al. correspond to my findings. All five participants (3 men and 2 women) view priesthood just as a division of labor between men and women in the church and stress the equality in the church. Both Anne and Fleur state that they do not want access to the priesthood.

“In the past, I found it strange that it is divided the way it is, but when you learn more about it, it makes sense because when you have access to the priesthood it is not like you can use it for yourself or that you have supreme power. It is created to help other people. I just discovered that women, in general, are better caregivers, they help other people, and feed their children. It is in their nature to help others and boys need the priesthood to be courageous enough to help other people. Now, I have learned this in church, I do understand it better.” Anne

Moreover, Fleur explained:

“I know that [priesthood] involves many responsibilities so sometimes I think, I don’t even want to have it” Fleur

These answers show the same results as in the research of van Beek et al.. LDS women do not think that the fact that they have no access to the priesthood makes them unequal. They are happy with the way the church is organized.

In sum, the LDS church is an authoritarian organization with a clear distinction of labor. However, Dutch Mormons experience equality between men and women. The fact that women do not have access to the priesthood is not something Dutch Mormons are concerned with. They compared the tasks within the church with the division of labor in the family. In the proclamation of the family equality between husband and wife is stressed.²¹⁶ Members feel that this is also the case in the church. Nonetheless, I argue that the Dutch LDS church is an authoritarian organization.

9.5 Behavioral requirements

Fundamentalist movements generally have behavioral requirements for their members. Believers follow strict rules that come from the dogma of the faith. These behavioral rules are based on authorial texts.²¹⁷ Exactly these rules deviate fundamentalists from the rest of

²¹³Beek, “Persisting in a Secular Environment,” 519.

²¹⁴ Beek, “Persisting in a Secular Environment,” 519.

²¹⁵ Beek, “Persisting in a Secular Environment,” 519.

²¹⁶ Interview.

²¹⁷ Almond, Appleby and Sivan, “Strong Religion,” 98.

society. Just as other Christian denominations, Mormons believe in the ten commandments and rules such as no sex before marriage. Noteworthy is that at some point during the interview all interviewees mentioned the Word of Wisdom. The Word of Wisdom is revealed by God for physical and spiritual prosperity for His followers. Joseph Smith received this prophecy on February 27, 1833, and nowadays it is written in section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants.²¹⁸ It declared what kind of substances are good or bad for the human body. It declared the prohibition to drink alcohol, tea, and coffee.²¹⁹ By obeying these rules, members are promised increased health, knowledge, protection, and wisdom.²²⁰ You can compare the Word of Wisdom with dietary laws in Judaism and the distinction between halal and haram in Islam. Especially, the rules regarding the prohibition of drinking alcohol, coffee, and tea are different in comparison with other Christian denominations. The participants all admitted that not drinking alcohol is the most difficult rule to follow because all interviewees are students and in the social environment of students drinking alcohol is part of the norm. Therefore, the youth struggle with the feeling of not being part of the in-group. However, when participants were asked if they follow all the rules and guidelines of the church, four of the five answered that they try their best. For instance, Koen answered:

“I follow all of them.”

When I asked him if he encounters difficulties with any particular rule he mentions:

“Well, I am a student and students do drink and smoke a lot and I do not participate in this. Therefore, I sometimes feel a little bit left out. But on the other side when I tell people that I do not drink and why I do not drink they all react respectfully. They offer me, for example, an alcohol-free beer or a Fanta.”

This shows the difficulty a member encounters by the rules. He feels left out because he acts differently than the people in his environment. Moreover, three of the five participants have had a time around the age of sixteen when they were not active in the church. During this time they tried alcohol and broke other rules. One of the members explained that even though she is now part of the church she sometimes tries an alcoholic beverage just to taste and to have the same experience as her friends.

“At some point, you are getting older, and then there is a big gap between people who do and don’t drink alcohol. So at some point, I started to try and taste some drinks. Some beverages tasted gross and I do not have to taste those ever again and others taste quite nice and I thought at least I have tried it.” Fleur

This quote shows that although there are rules people have the right to choose if they follow all of them. Moreover, it shows that the lived religion of ordinary Mormons is different than the teachings in the Scriptures.²²¹ Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to find the balance between

²¹⁸ Unknown, “Word of Wisdom,” Churchofjesuschrist <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/word-of-wisdom?lang=eng>. (accessed June 30, 2022).

²¹⁹ Doctrine and Covenants 89:5-7, Doctrine and Covenants 89:8 and Doctrine and Covenants 89:9.

²²⁰ Doctrine and Covenants 89:18-21.

²²¹ Hall, “Lived Religion in America,” 7.

following the rules and finding your agency. This balance is studied in many religions. For example, Schielke researched young Muslim men in Egypt during Ramadan. During Ramadan behavior that is typical for youths is viewed as 'un-Islamic' such as flirting, making out, and the consumption of alcohol and cannabis.²²² Therefore, young Muslim men fill their time with playing football. Because of the unusual circumstances of fasting, the delicate balance between religion and morality becomes visible.²²³ The dilemma of how you act in your daily life and in which way you want to express your religiosity can clash with the expectations of society. This clash with the broader society is something I also noticed by my participants. As stated above, the question of how to be a good Mormon and at the same form your own identity is something some of the Dutch members of the LDS struggled with.

During my fieldwork, the rules were also discussed. One member of the church explained to me that although smoking is prohibited, it does not mean that people do not smoke. He explained to me if a member wants to smoke it is his or her own choice. Moreover, if he/she used to smoke ten cigarettes a day and now he/she has limited to one, that is a great achievement.²²⁴ This demonstrates that there are a lot of rules and members know between themselves if a member does or does not follow a rule. However, this led not to exclusion in church. It is seen as something between the individual and God. Therefore, it can be stated that there are a lot of rules Dutch Mormons have to follow. Although these rules are not necessarily visible on the outside, following them makes Mormons different than the rest of society.

Moreover, Mormons do not only have general rules that should be followed by everybody but also rules that are only applicable to men or women. In LDS theology, men and women have different roles. Men are the ones that work and the women are responsible for the household. These traditional gender roles are also visible in the curriculum young Mormons are taught. The curriculum teaches young girls how to prepare for marriage and motherhood whereas motherhood is compared with divinity.²²⁵ A clear division of labor is also noticeable in other fundamentalist religions. For example, in elementary school young Haredi Jews are taught that women and men have different rights. Rule 8 of a textbook for Jewish children is stated: "A male should not walk between two females or two dogs or two pigs."²²⁶ So, at a young age, Jewish children learn to compare women with dogs or pigs. This is not the only example of the inferior position of Jewish Haredi women. In the Talmud section concerning the Tractate Shabat women are defined as 'sack full of excrement'.²²⁷ Furthermore, women and men receive different rewards from God for performing the same ritual.²²⁸ Although the position of women in Mormonism is different than that of men, I would not necessarily argue that women are suppressed in the church because most Mormons are satisfied with

²²² Samuli Schielke, "Being Good in Ramadan: Ambivalence, Fragmentation, and the Moral Self in the Lives of Young Egyptians," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15, (2009): 25.

²²³ Schielke, "Being Good In Ramadan," 25.

²²⁴ Fieldnotes.

²²⁵ Caroline Kline, "The Mormon Conception of Women's Nature and Role: A Feminist Analysis," *Feminist Theology* 22, no. 2 (January 2014): 193.

²²⁶ Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, (London: Pluto Press 2004) 38.

²²⁷ Shalak and Mezvinsky, "Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel" 38.

²²⁸ Shalak and Mezvinsky, "Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel" 39.

these traditional gender roles and do not think that women should have more voice in the church.²²⁹ Moreover, Mormons do not think that men are superior to women. Mormon leaders emphasize that women and men have different tasks and that both genders are needed for God's plan of salvation.²³⁰ Although the view on traditional gender roles is conservative, it does change over time. For example, nowadays fewer people believe that a working mom has a bad influence on the child.²³¹ So, Mormons' attitudes towards gender roles do change over time. However, it is a slow change. This emphasis on equality is also visible in some of the answers of participants. For example, when participants were asked how the roles within the family should be divided, one interviewee responded:

"I always thought that the father should work and that the mother should stay at home with the kids and I always pictured myself as a stay-at-home mom. But if a woman graduates as a doctor and she is expected to stay at home with the kids, I think that is not okay." Fleur

However, when I ask if she wanted to work in the future because she will also be a woman with a degree from the university she needed some time to think. Eventually, she explained:

"All women in my environment are stay-at-home moms. My mother started to work until we were older and you know, I always really liked it that she was home."

Later on, she continued with:

"Maybe later I will work one or two days a week. I do not want to work 5 or 4 days a week that does not sound like fun to me."

This shows that as a woman with a university degree she does not necessarily want full-time or even part-time work. She is raised with the idea of the man as the breadwinner and the woman taking care of the household and she will happily conform to these norms.

In sum, there are a lot of behavioral requirements members should act by. These rules make Dutch Mormons different from the rest of society. However, all participants explained that it is your own choice if you want to follow them and that you are still allowed in the church if you do not follow every rule. Therefore, I argue that to some extent there are mandatory behavioral requirements.

9.6 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the organizational characteristics of the LDS church in the Netherlands. The central question of this chapter was 'Can the church of the LDS in the Netherlands organizationally be seen as fundamentalist?' First, I analyzed if Dutch members believe that they are elect chosen people. It becomes clear that Dutch members of the LDS to some extent view themselves as chosen people. However, the participants barely talked about this aspect. Therefore, it is difficult to explicitly say something about it. Nonetheless, this research shows that it is not necessarily a requirement for the interviewees that their

²²⁹ Campbell, Green and Monson, "Seeking the Promised Land," 113.

²³⁰ Kline, "The Mormon Perception of Women's Nature and Role," 194.

²³¹ Campbell, Green and Monson, "Seeking the Promised Land," 115.

future partners are part of the church. Therefore, I would argue that Dutch Mormons to some extent view themselves as chosen ones. Secondly, I noticed during my fieldwork visible boundaries between the Dutch Mormons and the rest of society. However, these boundaries are more present in the absence than in the presence. The lack of piercing, tattoos, or prominent jewelry is only noticeable if you have background knowledge of the faith and will be not something the rest of society will immediately notice when interacting with members of the church. This might can be explained by the fact that Mormons in the Netherlands are active participants in society and do not want to exclude themselves from society. The third feature that I have analyzed is the authoritarian organization of the church. This component is clearly visible in the church. The worldwide church is organized in the same hierarchical and structural way as the Dutch church. Also within the church, there is a clear division of labor. Men have access to the priesthood and therefore can perform certain rituals. Women are not able to get the priesthood and therefore do not have the same position as men. However, my two female Dutch interviewees do not feel treated differently within the church than men. They feel that they are treated equally, in contrast to some American women. Moreover, the men that I have interviewed also explain that the priesthood is just a division of labor and that men and women are equal. Nonetheless, I would argue that the LDS in the Netherlands is an authoritarian organization. The last characteristic debated in this chapter is the behavioral requirements of members. There are lots of rules Mormons have to follow. Every participant referred to the Word of Wisdom as the most distinctive element of their faith compared to other Christian denominations. Although there are many rules to follow, all participants emphasize the freedom of choice. Therefore, I argue that to some extent Dutch Mormons have to follow behavioral requirements. Taking all of the above into consideration, I would argue that organizational speaking members of the LDS church can be to some extent labelled fundamentalist. However, these characteristics are not immediately visible on the outside. You need to take a close look before you notice their distinctness.

10. Conclusion

This study focused on the Church of the LDS in the Netherlands, specifically the LDS church in Groningen. The main research question was 'Can Dutch members of the church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints be considered fundamentalist and what is the role of the national context in the ideological positioning of the group?' Different sub-questions were answered by using qualitative research methods namely ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews whereas the most important sub-questions were: 'Can the church of the LDS in the Netherlands ideologically be seen as fundamentalists?' and 'Can the church of the LDS in the Netherlands organizationally be seen as fundamentalists?'. The five Dutch participants in my research were all between 19-24 years old. The two American missionaries were 21 and 22 years old.

This research is relevant because nowadays religions are quickly labelled fundamentalist which can have enormous influences on the way people live their life. By being labelled as fundamentalist members are automatically part of the 'out group' and are viewed as a threat to the modern western societies because fundamentalism is often associated with violence and anti-modernity. Moreover, there is almost no research until now about Dutch Mormons whereas they automatically are compared with American Mormons that are often negatively portrayed in the media.

First, an overview of the current academic debate on fundamentalism and Mormonism was given. Next, the academic basis of this study was explained in the theoretical and conceptual framework whereas framing theory and the definition of Almond et al. was chosen as a tool for analyzing my data. Afterward, two analytical chapters were provided to answer the main- and sub questions of this research.

The first analytical chapter looked at the ideological characteristics of the Dutch Mormons. It was striking that due to the specific historical and cultural history of the Netherlands, Dutch Mormons do not react against the marginalization of religion. Although, other characteristics mentioned by Almond et al. were visible they were more nuanced than appeared at first sight. Through the combination of these two aspects, it was argued that Dutch Mormons ideologically cannot be considered fundamentalist.

The second analytical chapter analyzed the organizational characteristics of the Dutch Mormons. Dutch Mormons do have a lot of characteristics that fit into the researched categories. For example, there are boundaries and behavioral requirements that deviate Dutch Mormons from the rest of society. However, their distinctiveness is not immediately noticeable. Therefore, it was argued that looking at the organizational features, Dutch Mormons can to some extent be considered fundamentalist.

So, after analyzing different characteristics of Dutch Mormons it is not immediately clear if the Dutch LDS church can be labelled a fundamentalist movement using Almond et al. definition. Nonetheless, because of the nuance found in the research and the lack of reactivity against the marginalization of religion, I would argue that Dutch Mormons are not fundamentalists if you use Almond et al. definition. Moreover, if I had used one of the other

notions discussed in this research, reactivity against the growing forces of secularisation is a condition for being classified as fundamentalist. Since this characteristic is not clearly found after analyzing my fieldwork and the interviews, I argue that Dutch Mormons are not fundamentalists. Although I argue that Dutch Mormons are not fundamentalists, it becomes clear that just as Emerson and Hartman state, fundamentalism is a conceptual and contextual notion.²³²

This research shows that before a movement can be labelled fundamentalist thorough research is needed. Moreover, in-depth conversations are essential in understanding the way a member experience their belief. These understandings are influenced by the national and cultural context.²³³ Since these elements should be taken into account when studying fundamentalism, I advocate to change the current notion of fundamentalism. In this new definition, it should be obvious that (religious)fundamentalism is not necessarily linked to violence because not all violence in the world is caused by fundamentalists and not all fundamentalists are violent.²³⁴ By better conceptualizing and theorizing the definition, just as Emerson and Hartman advocate, it should be possible to make a system to define different forms of fundamentalism.²³⁵ I argue that one way of creating this unified system is by making different notions of fundamentalism to describe different movements around the world based on a particular religion or faith. The first sub-category that can be distinguished by scholars is e.g. Jewish fundamentalism, Christian fundamentalism, Islamic fundamentalism, Hindu fundamentalism, Marxist fundamentalism, etc. However, this research shows the importance of regional/national context in how people live their religion. American Mormons have a different point of view than Dutch Mormons due to the different religious and cultural climate of the nation. Therefore, these broader notions should be sub-categorized. For example, the broader notion of Jewish fundamentalism can be split into North-American Jewish fundamentalism, South-American Jewish fundamentalism, European Jewish fundamentalism, Sub-Sahara Jewish fundamentalism, Middle East Jewish fundamentalism, etc. By creating sub-categories political, social, cultural, and economic features can be taken into account in defining the term and this can contribute to a better understanding of the connection between global movements.²³⁶ Moreover, the definition fits the reality of the world better. Looking at Mormonism, I would make distinctions such as North American Mormonism, South American Mormonism, South European Mormonism, and North European Mormonism. In the last category, I would fit the Dutch Mormons because Northern Europe has multiple similarities regarding their social, economic, and religious system. Therefore, I believe this would be a suitable sub-category.

However, by making these sub-categories not all problems of the fundamentalism debate would be solved. There would still be the problem of how to define these sub-categories. What is included and what is excluded and which characteristics are needed to be labelled

²³² Emmerson and Hartman, "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism," 128.

²³³ Fieldnotes.

²³⁴ Bruce, "Fundamentalism," 7.

²³⁵ Emmerson and Hartman, "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism," 128.

²³⁶ Ibrahim, Saad Eddin. "Anatomy of Egypt's Militant Islamic Groups: Methodological Note and Preliminary Findings," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 12, no. 4 (1980): 423–53.

fundamentalist. Therefore, further research is needed to study how to exactly define these sub-categories. However, researchers that create these new sub-categories should not only focus on doctrine. As stated by Bruce, researchers should be taking into account how fundamentalist identities get shaped in the modern world.²³⁷ Since defining these new sub-categories will not be an easy task, it will still be important for the researcher to contextualize these new sub-categories. For example, when a scholar uses the notion of 'European Jewish Fundamentalism' then he/she should clarify what he/she thinks entails this definition. This is crucial because academics provide data to the broader public and by using definitions the wrong way biases are created in individuals' minds that can lead to more conflict since people can feel threatened by other people's worldviews.²³⁸ Moreover, scholars provide frames that individuals use to form their own opinion.

Although some scholars, such as Iannacone, state to not use the definition of fundamentalism anymore because of its overuse and to create a completely new notion such as sectarianism to describe the same phenomenon, I would argue that did not solve most of the problems. The reason why I think this is not helpful is that I think it is impossible to create a new notion that can describe and encapsulate all the different characteristics that can be seen around the world for the same phenomenon. If this is possible, then fundamentalism could be easily defined as well. Moreover, one of the advantages of the notion of fundamentalism is that there are consequences for an organization when being labelled fundamentalist. Certain economic and legal sanctions become justified because of the label the organization has.²³⁹ There will be no legal consequences when an organization is labelled sectarian.²⁴⁰ Therefore, I argue to create different sub-categories that can include the dynamic processes of religion, economy, history, and regional differences instead of trying to fit everything into one notion. Hence, the current definition of Almond et al. is helpful but incomplete. Future scholars of fundamentalism should try to contextualize these new subcategories of fundamentalism to get a better insight into these global movements.

However, limitations to this research should be taken into account such as the impossibility to be 100% objective and the fact that I only visit a couple of church activities and interviewed seven young people. Nonetheless, I tried to stay as objective as possible and give a clear overview of the lived religion of the Dutch Mormons. Because of these limitations, further research is needed about the Dutch Mormons. This research should see if it is correct whether the Dutch Mormons cannot be labelled as fundamentalists. Moreover, future studies should include larger participant groups and spend more time with the community to see whether the same results will come up. Furthermore, further research is needed to see if creating sub-categories of fundamentalism helps to take regional aspects

²³⁷ Bruce, "Fundamentalism," 122.

²³⁸ Susan T. Fiske, "What We Know Now about Bias and Intergroup Conflict, the Problem of the Century," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 11, no. 4 (2002): 126.

²³⁹ James Mayall, "The sanctions problem in international economic relations: reflections in the light of recent experience", *International Affairs*, Volume 60, Issue 4, (1984): 634-642.

²⁴⁰ Mayall, "The sanctions problem in international economic relations: reflections in the light of recent experience," 634-642.

into account when labelling a movement so that nuanced can be brought into the fundamentalism debate.

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12. Appendix

Appendix A: Informed consent

INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH

“WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MORMON IN DUTCH SOCIETY”

➤ **Why do I receive this information?**

You are invited to take part in this research project. Before you decide to participate, you must know that this project has been ethically approved by the Exam Committee of Theology and Religious studies of the University of Groningen. This research project aims to investigate what it means to be a member of the Church of the Latter-Day Saints in the Netherlands. The start date of the project is 20-03-2022 to finishes on 08-05-2022. The study is conducted by J. Bouwmeester and Prof. M. Carpenedo Rodrigues.

➤ **Do I have to participate in this research?**

Participation in the research is voluntary. However, your consent is needed. Therefore, please read this information carefully. Only afterward do you decide if you want to participate. If you decide to not participate, you do not need to explain why, and there will be no negative consequences for you. You have this right at all times, including after you have consented to participate in the research.

➤ **Why this research?**

This project aims to investigate what it means to be a member of the Church of the Latter-Day Saints in the Netherlands and to look at if the national context of Dutch society has influenced the way you practice your religion.

➤ **What do we ask of you during the research?**

First, we ask you to read the present information and if you agree, sign the consent to participate. Then, you will be asked to answer some questions in an interview which we estimate to take about 60 minutes. The interview consists of multiple parts, first, some general information about you will be asked, then, we will discuss how being a member of the church influences your daily life and how you will look at some political themes that are often portrayed in the media.

➤ **What are the consequences of participation?**

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will have a beneficial impact on how we understand what it means to be a religious minority in Dutch society. If you decide to participate in this research, we inform you that you are not going to feel any disadvantages or discomfort. The potential psychological harm or distress will be the same as any experienced in everyday life.

➤ **How will we treat your data?**

Your name will be deleted from our files and all the information that we collect about you during this research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified or identifiable

in any reports or publications. Any data collected about you in the interview will be stored online along with other participants in a form protected by passwords and other relevant security processes and technologies. You will not be identified in any report or publication. If you wish to know more about this study, please email us using the email addresses mentioned below.

➤ **What else do you need to know?**

You may always ask questions about the research. You can do so by emailing (j.bouwmeester.1@student.rug.nl) the principal investigator and M. Carpenedo Rodrigues (m.carpenedo.rodrigues@rug.nl).

Do you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant? For this, you may also contact the Ethics Committee of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of Groningen: ethicscommittee.ggw@rug.nl.

Do you have questions or concerns regarding your privacy or the handling of your data? For this, you may also contact the Data Protection Officer of the University of Groningen: privacy@rug.nl.

As a research participant, you have the right to a copy of this research information.

INFORMED CONSENT

“DUTCH VALUES AND REACTIONS TO MINORITIES”

I have read the information about the research and I have enough chance to ask questions about it.

I understand what the research is about, what is being asked of me, which consequences participation can have, how my data will be handled, that the personal data I provide will be handled anonymously, and what my rights are.

I understand that participation in the research is voluntary. I choose to participate. I can stop participating at any moment. If I stop, I do not need to explain why. Stopping will have no negative consequences for me.

Below I indicate what I am consenting to.

Consent to participate in the research:

Yes, I consent to participate.

No, I do not consent to participate

The researcher declares that the participant has been extensively informed about the research.

Appendix B: Interview guide American missionaries

Interview guide Missionaries

General

1. Date of birth
2. Place of birth
3. Where did you live in America
4. Did you live in a place where the Mormons are in the majority
5. Did you go to a Mormon school
6. What kind of afterschool activities did you do?

Family and going on a mission

1. What does your family look like? Do you have brothers or sisters?
2. What do your parents do for a living?
3. Is your whole family part of the church?
4. What do you think of your religious upbringing?
5. How old were you when you knew that you were going on a mission?
6. How does this process go?
7. Where are you excited to go?

Daily life in America

1. Are you open to being a Mormon in society?
2. How do people react when they discover that you are a Mormon? If this is applicable
3. What does it feel to be a Mormon in America? Are you part of a majority or minority
4. What do you like the most about being a Mormon?
5. In what kind of everyday life situation do you feel the presence of your religion?

Dutch society

1. Did you been to Holland before?
2. What was the first thing that you noticed when you arrived?
3. Which places did you visit?
4. Where do you live? Does the church arrange places to sleep?
5. What do you do on an average day? What are your daily tasks?
6. What do you think is the are differences between the Mormon church in America and the Netherlands?
7. The Netherlands is called a secularized country? Do you notice this in society?
8. What do you think is the biggest difference between being part of the Mormon society in America and the Netherlands?
9. Do you have the feeling that members of the church in the Netherlands have different opinions about some aspects of the faith due to their upbringing in the Netherlands?

Because I'm curious about the difference between American and Dutch Mormons and if national context can have influenced people's opinions I would now like to move on to some more controversial themes.

Therefore, I was wondering how do you think about:...

Controversial themes

1. What do you think about how the roles within the family should be divided?
2. Do you think that women should get access to the function of the priesthood?
3. Do you think divorce should be allowed? If applicable, do you think that there should be any terms or conditions before someone can get a divorce?
4. If there is an election in America, do you vote Republican or Democrat?
5. Do you think that God should have a place in politics?
6. What do you think if people of the same sex fall in love?
7. Do you think that same-sex marriage should have a legal status? Does your opinion change if a distinction between civil and church marriage?
8. What do you think about abortion? Should a woman always have access to abortion if she wanted?
9. What do you think about immigrants?

Appendix C: Interview guide youngsters (Dutch)

Interview Guide Youths

Personal Details

General

1. Date of birth (geboortedatum)
2. place of birth (geboorteplaats)
3. What kind of work you do for a living (wat doe je in het dagelijks leven?)
4. Religious upbringing (ben je religious opgegroeid?)
5. How long part of the church of LDS (Hoelang ben je al aangesloten bij de kerk?)
6. Heb je op dit moment een specifieke taak in de kerk?

Family

1. Is de rest van je familie ook lid van de kerk? Niet alleen gezin maar ook opa en oma's, ooms en tantes?
2. Wat doen je ouders voor werk?
3. Ben je religieus opgegroeid?
4. Hebben jullie elke maandag familieavond?

Partner (since I interview the youth probably not necessarily)

1. Marital status- Ben je getrouwd en zo ja wanneer?
2. Where did you get married? heb je zowel een kerkelijk huwelijk als een civiel huwelijk? Ben je ook in de tempel getrouwd?
3. How did you meet your partner? Hoe heb je je partner ontmoet?
4. Religious background partner? Is je partner ook religies?
5. Occupation partner? Wat doet je partner in het dagelijks leven
6. Children? Ages

Becoming Mormon

1. Can you describe how you come into contact with the LDS church? Kan je omschrijven hoe je in contact bent gekomen met de kerk?
2. What does being a Mormon mean to you? Wat betekent het voor jou om Mormoon te zijn?
3. What makes your approach of Christianity different than other Christians? Wat maakt wat jou betreft jouw geloof anders dan andere Christenen?
4. Can you tell me about how you become a Mormons (if mentioned that it is other than birth)
5. Do you following all the rules/guidelines of the church. For example, drinking coffee and alcohol, prohibition of Tabaco. Volg je alle regels/richtlijnen van de kerk? Denk aan het verbod op roken en drinken en koffie
6. have you gained more insight and strength from religion since you are older?
7. What religion means to you/ what your own religious experiences/practices/views are

Daily life

1. What does being a Mormon mean to you? Wat betekent het voor jou om Mormoon te zijn?
2. What make your approach of Christianity different than other Christians? Wat maakt wat jou betreft jouw geloof anders dan het anderen?
3. What do you like the most of being a Mormon? Wat vind je het leukste/mooiste aspect van lid zijn van deze kerk?
4. How do you feel your faith in your daily life? In wat soort dagelijks situaties voel je de aanwezigheid van je geloof?
5. Are you open of being a Mormon in society? Zeg je altijd meteen dat je lid ben van de Mormoonse kerk in het dagelijks leven? Denk aan verenigingen/werk/school
6. How do people react when they discover that you are a Mormon? Hoe reageren mensen als je ze vertelt dat je lid bent van de LDS kerk?
7. Do you feel that Dutch society understand what being a Mormon means? Heb je het gevoel dat je wordt begrepen door de Nederlandse samenleving?
8. What do you think of the work/church balance? Wat vind je van de balans tussen de kerk, je studie en je vrije tijd?
9. Are there situations in your daily life where you feel the struggle between your religion and the society? Zijn er situaties in het dagelijks leven waar tegenstrijdigheid voelt tussen je religie en de verwachtingen vanuit de maatschappij?

Society

1. How does it feel to be a religious minority in a secular society? Voel je dat dat je anders in de maatschappij wordt behandeld omdat je onderdeel bent van een religieuze minderheid of speelt dit niet echt een rol?
2. Do you think religion has major influence on the Dutch society? Vind je dat er aandacht is voor uw geloof in de Nederlandse politiek?
3. Do you have a political party where you feel most affiliated with? Is er een politieke partij waar jij de voorkeur voor hebt

Missionaries

1. Did you went or are you planning on going on a mission? Ben je op missie geweest of ben je van plan om te gaan?
2. Do you think missionary work works in the Netherlands? Denk je dat het werk van de Elderlingen effect heeft in de Nederlandse samenleving?

Controversial themes

1. How do you think roles in the family should be divided? Hoe denk je dat de rollen binnen het gezin verdeeld moeten worden?
2. Do you think there should be changes in the way roles within the church are divided? For example, that woman should gain access to priesthood? Denk je dat er veranderingen moeten komen in de wijze waarop de rollen binnen de kerk zijn verdeeld? Bijvoorbeeld dat vrouwen ook de status van priester moeten krijgen?
3. What do you think of the authoritative structure of the church? Wat vind je van de structuur binnen de kerk?
4. Do you think

5. What do you think of divorce? Should it be allowed? Under certain conditions? Wat is je mening over scheiden. Is dit oke en moeten er voorwaarden aan zitten?
6. What do you think of sex before marriage? Wat is je persoonlijke mening over seks voor het huwelijk?
7. What do you think about the legal status of same sex? Do you think that they could marriage within the church/temple? Wat is je persoonlijke mening over homoseksuele relaties? Is dit okee, en zouden homoseksuelen ook voor de kerk mogen trouwen?
8. What do you think about the Dutch drug policies? Wat is je mening over de Nederlandse drugs wetgeving?
9. What do you think of abortion? Should it be allowed? Wat is je persoonlijke mening over abortus?
10. What do you think about immigration? Should the laws be more open to immigration or more strict? Wat is je persoonlijke mening over immigratie. Zou de huidige wetgeving versoepeld moeten worden of juist niet?

Future

1. How do you view the future of the Mormon church in Groningen? Hoe zie je de toekomst van de kerk voor je?
2. If you are looking for a partner do you search within the church? If applicable. Als je naar de toekomst kijkt moet je toekomstige partner ook lid zijn van de kerk?
3. Do you think we live in the area of the end of times? Denk je dat we leven in het einde der tijden?