

THE FUNCTIONS OF RELIGION AND
WORSHIP MUSIC FOR THE UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST FAITH

A THESIS

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Sociology

The Colorado College

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Bachelor of Arts

By
Nicole Santilli
April 2012

On my honor
I have neither given nor received
unauthorized aid on this thesis

Nicole Santilli
Spring 2012

ABSTRACT

Unitarian Universalism (UUism), which began in 1961, is a liberal religion built on covenant rather than creed; its members are not required to subscribe to one specific belief or deity. Despite the non-traditional foundation for this religion, music is still an essential part of worship for Unitarian Universalists. My study is seeking to uncover how Unitarian Universalist religion functions and what purposes its worship music serves. I used qualitative methodology to conduct my research at two UU churches in Colorado over a period of seven weeks. Using Durkheim's definition of religion and his purposes of ritual, as well as more current research on the sociology of music and its role in worship, I have shown that this modern religion and its music function to ultimately provide an inclusive alternative to mainstream religion.

This study will focus on the role of worship music in the Unitarian Universalist (UU) church. Unitarian Universalism, while it has its roots in Christianity, is a liberal religion based on a covenant, with no required deity/s or truth/s. While the entire premise of what we as Americans may think of as “traditional religion” has been significantly altered in Unitarian Universalism, the presence of music in this religion is essential for its congregants. Time and time again, members cited how vital music was to the worship service and how they could not imagine Sundays in church if there was no singing, no choir, and no music in general. Using Durkheim’s work on religion and ritual, as well as current research on the sociology of music and music in worship, my study seeks to uncover the functions of this modern liberal religion for its members, as well as the role that worship music plays given that their hymns and musical performances are still so essential for a seemingly progressive religion that seeks to transcend the constraints of mainstream religion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To date, there have been no sociological inquiries into the Unitarian Universalist faith or its music. My study will seek to bring to light how the UU religion and its music function given that there is an absence of one central deity or creed in which they all believe. I will first introduce Durkheim and his views on religion and its functions, and then concentrate on ritual, which is an essential part of religion for Durkheim. Next, I will transition into discussing music as ritual in the church, exploring current research about how music functions in society (the sociology of music) and how music functions in worship. Given that Unitarian Universalism is a religion that came about in the mid 1960s, I will then discuss both Durkheim and Wuthnow’s predictions for religion in a modern age. Lastly, I will paint a brief picture of the history of the UU religion and its music in order to give the reader a bit of familiarity with the religion being studied and to situate my topic within the previous research on worship and music.

PURPOSE OF RELIGION

Durkheim, in his seminal work *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, focuses on the religion of aboriginal Australian tribes to show that regardless of how complicated it may seem, religion is a social phenomenon that performs similar functions for all groups of people.

Durkheim defines religion as “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and surrounded by prohibitions—beliefs and practices that unite its adherents in a single moral community called a church” (1961:46) The existence of beliefs and practices, as well as the existence of sacred things, are both essential to the definition of religion for Durkheim.

Durkheim also acknowledged that for religion to be valid, one all encompassing god does not have to exist: “[Religion’s] sphere of action extends, then, beyond the interaction of man with the divine. We know for certain, moreover, that a religion without a god exists (Buddhism). This alone should be sufficient to show that we should not continue to define religion in terms of the idea of god” (1985:222). Durkheim again justifies Buddhism, noting that: “Buddhism is a religion because, in the absence of gods, it accepts the existence of sacred things, namely the Four Noble Truths and the practices that derive from them” (1961:37). Therefore, religion does not have to necessarily have one god or many gods, but must accept the existence of sacred things.

Durkheim posits that there is a distinction between what is sacred and what is profane; the profane being all that is natural and ordinary, and the sacred being anything that transcends what is ordinary, or profane (Durkheim 1961). These sacred things do not possess their sacred quality inherently, but receive their distinction from the meaning that is given to them by society, for “...we find abstract powers, anonymous forces, more or less numerous in different societies...[this] is because this force may be attached to words that are pronounced or actions that are carried out just as well as to corporal substances; the voice or the actions may serve as its vehicle, and it may produce its effects through their mediation, without the aid of any god or spirit (Durkheim 1972: 226-7). This is another reason then, why multiple gods or no god can exist in religion.

Durkheim also notes that religion is used to produce two types of social sentiments: the first type connects the individual to his immediate society, and the second binds the clan, the society, with other societies (Durkheim 1972). It is the latter of the two, what Durkheim terms “inter-social factors”, which creates religious sentiment (Durkheim 1972). Inter-social factors create obligation—if the gods bring rain, the society prospers. If they bring a tornado, the society is destroyed. It is not about the individual’s relationship with a God—if it were, who would care? It is about this current society’s relationship with other societies that creates social order and obligation—if the whole society behaves, follows suit, they will prosper, because “everything that interests the collectivity becomes imperative law” (1972: 220).

Religion can also serve to create what Durkheim terms collective effervescence through the unity of the group. “When individual minds are not isolated, but enter into close relation with, and act upon, each other, from their synthesis arises a new kind of psychic life...sentiments created and developed in the group have a greater energy than purely individual sentiments...following the collectivity, the individual forgets himself for the common end and his conduct is directed by reference to a standard outside himself” (Durkheim 1972: 228). Collective effervescence can serve to remind the individual that there is something larger than his self. At the same time, it can cause the individual to lose himself within the group, to become one with the group, and can therefore act as a vehicle for social order and obligation.

Ritual

Durkheim suggests that religion transcends the idea of mere belief in something; religion must include ritual as an essential one of its parts. Many other more recent theorists have also cited ritual as vital for the life of congregations. Ritual is defined as “the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers” (Bellah 2003: 37). In Ammerman, Carroll, Dudley, and McKinney’s work on congregations, they define ritual as “predictable activity intended to express something beyond itself...[rituals] communicate meanings and relationships that are central to the very identity of the congregation”

(1998:86). According to Durkheim, religions can be considered ritualistic institutions, which have four main functions: 1) a disciplinary and preparatory function; 2) a cohesive function; 3) a revitalizing function; and 4) a euphoric function (Alpert 1961). For the scope of and relevancy to my research, numbers two through four are especially vital, and I will therefore focus on these three functions.

On cohesion, Alpert writes, “Ceremony brings people together and thus serves to reaffirm their common bonds and to enhance and reinforce social solidarity”. Because “man” is inevitably busy with the monotony of day-to-day life, i.e. work, personal commitments, and individual interests, “his social ties to his fellowmen [and] their common pool of values tend to become obscure, indistinct, and even to lapse from consciousness” (Alpert 1961: 200). This is why communing with others is so vital; society is an integral part of being human and man must be able to commune with others in some capacity. Religions, or ceremonial institutions, offer people a way to keep in touch with their fellow members of society. Bellah agrees: “The sheer act of participating in serious rituals entails...at the very least solidarity with one’s fellow communicants” (2003:38).

Religion also functions to revitalize: “If society is to be kept alive, its members must be made keenly aware of their social heritage. Traditions must be perpetuated, faith must be renewed, [and] values must be transmitted and deeply imbedded” (Alpert 1961: 200). By coming together each Sunday and worshipping in a similar fashion, groups “renew the sentiment which [they have of themselves and of their] unity; at the same time individuals are strengthened in their social natures” (Alpert 1961:201). Coming together in a ritualistic way and performing rituals as part of a group serves to revitalize the sense of collective effervescence that is an essential purpose of religion for Durkheim (1972: 228). People are reminded of their past and reminded of their present through ritual.

The last relevant way that Alpert sees religion functioning for Durkheim is by creating euphoria. “We mean by [the euphoric function] that [ritualistic institutions] serve to establish a

condition of social euphoria, i.e. a pleasant feeling of social well-being” (Alpert 1961:200). In times of crisis, i.e. the church is in danger of being shut down, or there is a natural disaster or tragedy within the community, rituals as facilitators of euphoria serve a vital function by bringing people together in a collective conscience. Rituals “perform this [euphoric] function by requiring individuals to have and to express certain emotions and sentiments, and by making them express these sentiments and feelings together” (Alpert 1961:201). The ritualistic aspects of religion then, bring cohesion, revitalization, and euphoria.

MUSIC AS RITUAL

In order to more fully understand music as ritual in congregations, it is useful to step back and understand how music works in society and in social groupings in general. The sociology of music and some of its tenets can shed light on these functions. In addition to the sociology of music, I will discuss literature that has focused on ritual worship music uniting the individual and community. I will then give a brief overview of the only previous sociological inquiries into music’s role in religion and worship, which happens to be centered on the Christian faiths, to provide a solid basis for my research on music in Unitarian Universalism.

The Sociology of Music

According to Martin (1995), the sociology of music does not base its claims on the aesthetic or technical qualities of the music, but rather on music’s consumption and its social relevance. There are three important functions of music for society; music creates community, is a reflection of the society in which it was created, and can reach emotions.

DeNora suggests that music creates a collective, a community: “music [has a] role as an active ingredient in close relationships and intimate settings. Such relationships exhibit collaborative action at the face-to-face level and in an emotionally heightened form where two actors are mutually engaged in producing an intimate mode of communicative, embodied, expressive action” (2000:111). According to DeNora, music can collectively organize potentially disparate individuals (2000). Music’s meaning is dependent on the communities that it creates;

without social interactions, the meanings of music could not be derived (Martin 1995). “The meaning of music is neither inherent in it nor grasped intuitively by the human mind” writes Martin. “Rather, meaning is created in the processes of social interaction which mediate all our experience of the world” (1995:63).

Second, music can be seen as a reflection of the society in which it was created, which is quite helpful when studying music sociologically. Various cultural objects, such as music, are not independent from society. Martin quotes Frith’s (1983) work to highlight this point: “the sociology of music ‘has usually rested on more or less crude reflection theories: the music is taken to reflect, to be homologous to, the society or social group that makes it’” (1995:79).

Music also has the potential to go beyond mental capacities to reach emotions. Music works at non-cognitive and subconscious levels (DeNora 2000). DeNora highlights that “to speak of music merely as a kind of exemplar is to remain committed to a cognitivist conception of agency...such a conception stops short of the more profound levels on which music also operates, the levels on which we do not turn to music as a resource but are rather caught up in it, find ourselves in the middle of it, are awakened by it” (2000:159). Music therefore can function at some level beyond the cognitive for society.

Functions of Worship Music: Individual and Community Uniting through Song

Specific research has been done on the purposes of music for worship in different faiths. In congregations, music, rituals, and even ritual music are reasons for attraction to worship services. They are elements of worship that unify the congregation together and keep people coming back each Sunday. Bohlman recognizes music’s importance for individuals in worship; “[worship music is a] means of experiencing religion, engaging the individual through performance...the hymn is, of course, a vehicle for the voice of the individual” (2006: 237-40). Music in action can not only be used as a means of expressing and actively performing faith for the individual (Bohlman 2006), but also for the community (Ammerman et. Al. 1998): “Ritual music is a deeply sensual experience that often touches people in ways words cannot...singing

and chanting call worshipers to enact and relive—together—the faith they are recounting in song” (1998:85). Congregational song has the power to unify congregants in their faith and to give them an outlet to express their personal belief and faith that they may not ordinarily express—music can give agency in faith for both the community and the individual (Gray 2006). The individual and the community experience and express their faith through music. According to Bohlman, “we might think of individuality and community actually existing in a sort of dialectic synthesized by music” (2006: 238).

Music in Worship: A Sociological Review

Much is written about worship wars, i.e. the battle over the integration of contemporary music into the worship service. However, there are only two sociological inquiries to date on the functions of music in the worship service: *Music in Churches* by Linda J. Clark and *Agency and authority in the performance and practice of Christian worship; a study of worship in three Presbyterian Congregations* by Deborah Kapp.

Clark found that “Music has everything to do with faith and with the corporate life of a group of people...[the congregation member] uses the music as an expression of faith. Moreover, his purposes in attending worship extend beyond the music to other forms of expression in which music is embedded, such as rituals” (1994:3). Congregational singing is a large part of Clark’s (1994) study of music in churches, and her findings support music as a reflection of the society in which it was created: “Music is an aural image of the shape of feeling alive. When a congregation sings together, the words of the hymn come alive to them and mean more than just a statement of fact...The hymn creates that faith by bringing it into being and therefore is functioning as a symbol of the singers’ faith” (1994:7). Looking at the hymn as a symbol of faith is related to looking at music as a reflection of the society in which it was created; if hymns can reflect the faith of a congregation, they also inherently reflect what that congregation values.

Kapp contends that worshipers are as significant as are the contributions of worship leaders, and therefore both must be studied when researching music and worship in congregations (2002).

She found that, in general, worshipers are active agents in worship, not just passive recipients of worship; through paying attention, they get closer to God, are allowed a break from daily life, and can be recharged. They can get help with real, immediate issues, live better moral lives, have an emotional connection, and seek fellowship. Worshipers are also taking something private and personal and turn it into something collective through vocal prayer (2002). Worship can then act as a sanctuary, a refuge from daily life, a place to receive support, and to engage in a community.

CHANGES IN RELIGION

Given that UUism is a movement that began in 1961, it is pertinent to talk about religion and its function in modern times. Wade Clark Roof combines Wuthnow's theory of dwellers and seekers (1998) and Swidler's strategies of action (1986) to describe Americans' religious actions (2003:144). In Wuthnow's (1998) work, he comments on how Americans use religion in different ways during what he calls "settled" (socially stable) and "unsettled" (socially unstable) times. In settled times, people tend to be *dwellers*; that is, they are firmly grounded in traditions of faith and in the habits of their religious community. Settled times, then, evoke strategies of action (ways that people act based on cultural influences) which are firmly grounded within religious communities (2003:144). During unsettled times, however, people tend to be *seekers*; there is no firm rooting in tradition, and people must "devise new strategies of action, or ways of responding to the sacred" (2003:145). These new ways of responding to the sacred may include discussion and debates of the true meaning of faith and can extend all the way to a more radical "conscious exploration of religious alternatives and recognition of the 'merits of borrowing' symbols, beliefs, and practices from many sources" (2003:145). In both cases, the psychological views of religion are changing rather than the religion itself. Religion, then, creates 'action orientations', or ways that people think they should act, i.e. rituals and morals, regardless of whether or not people comply with these orientations (Christiano, Swatos, Kivisto 2008).

Durkheim gave several predictions for what religion would be in the future, calling it a "cult of man", which essentially means "a cult in which the human individual (idealized) and his

human rights would be held sacred” (Westley 1978:137). In his study, Westley outlines the predictions that were either made explicit by Durkheim or that were derived from his assumptions about religion. These predictions are mostly centered on the individual’s relation to his or her immediate society and a shift in what people hold to be sacred. He notes that as specialization and diversification occur in the society’s future, it will be harder to find a common thread that bonds individuals, so they will connect to and hold sacred what is most essentially basic to all; their humanity (Westley 1976). Therefore, what is held sacred will reside within the individual rather than being contained in a being or object that is external. With the diversification of society there will also be a diversification of religion, and the “ideal human individual will vary according to the cultural background of the participants” (1976:139). Durkheim also discusses ritual, most notably predicting that it will be private rather than public, and “concerned with the development of the sacred self within” (1976:139). While the “cult of man” would be seem to be almost entirely centered around the individual, the religion would in fact recognize that all men have equal rights and consider these rights to be sacred, which would bond men to one another and would then need to be constantly revitalized through ritual (Westley 1978).

The “cult of man” predictions acknowledge religion as functioning for the needs of the individual. Current research shows that more and more, people are choosing religions that fit their personal needs; Christiano, Swatos, and Kivisto (2008) refer to the broader rational choice theory to describe the modern affinity for religion. They maintain that regardless of the various reasons for becoming part of a church, membership in a religious organization is dependent purely on the satisfaction of wants. Assuming that human beings are rational actors, individuals interested in religious life will inevitably weigh the costs and benefits of joining (or continuing membership with) a church—is it correctly aligned with my beliefs? Does it have support groups and tolerance for my lifestyle? Religion as satisfying individual needs as well as Durkheim’s predictions for humanity-centered faith are vital for understanding Unitarian Universalism as a religion that was born in a modern age.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM: A BRIEF HISTORY

The Unitarian and Universalist churches, each with their own rich histories, joined together in 1961 to become the UU church as it is known today. The Unitarians have roots all the way back to the reformation, and were considered part of the radical left wing of the movement because they could not find Biblical validity for the trinity. On the other hand, Universalists believed in universal salvation (denouncing hell) because God represented love, not fear or intimidation. Both churches were not founded on creeds, but on covenants; the covenants were centered on humans and their relationships with each other, and the idea of covenant is still central to the Unitarian Universalist tradition today (Greenwood and Harris 2011). The Unitarians began to see the influence of humanism coming into the religion in the 1930's and became more secular; they didn't need God in the statement whereas Universalists did. The Universalists began to decline in the 1950's, with membership decreasing at an alarming rate. When the Unitarians and Universalists merged in 1961, forging the creation of the Unitarian Universalist church, the Unitarians essentially acquired the Universalists. The real emergence of the joint Unitarian and Universalist faiths in 1961 came at a time when there was a lot of social upheaval and change in America, when Americans were questioning the established institutions, and when social structures and norms were beginning to diversify, to shift all around them. Beginning in 1985, when they began to adopt their own UU covenant as fundamental to who they are today, UU's actually rewrote their principles and sources; their principles center on humanity rather than a specific deity, and encourage an individual search for truth and meaning. The UU church then, is an example of a church that could reflect Durkheim's predictions for the future of religion.

Music in the UU Church

In the early 1800s, Unitarians did not have much original musical composition; they set psalms of their Puritan ancestors to music (Skinner 2008). Around 1845, Unitarians would meet in groves, even though a new church had been built, to read Thoreau, tell Welsh myths, and sing what hymns they did have (Greenwood and Harris 2011). Unitarian protest folk songs began to

grow out of these types of discussions. “Singing sermons” would mobilize people for social justice causes, such as women’s rights and the abolitionist movement (Greenwood and Harris 2011). Unitarians began writing and singing hymns that were more “graciously theological, celebrating nature and the bond between God and humankind” (Skinner 2008). In the late 18th century, Unitarians and Universalists alike began to compose their own textual hymns set to familiar religious music; by the mid 19th Century, Unitarians became outstanding composers of their own hymns (Greenwood and Harris 2011). The end of the century is referred to as their “golden age of hymn writing”, with themes such as social justice and theological diversity coming to the forefront (Greenwood and Harris 2011).

To contrast, Universalists were entrenched in the act of singing; “[they] sang about God’s love for everyone, very pointed evangelical hymns” (Skinner, 2008). However, their hymns did not receive a wider audience beyond their own denomination, perhaps because they were so radical in their theology, rejecting any kind of hell. (Greenwood and Harris, 2011).

In more recent history, with the 1940’s and 1950’s came a diversity of materials and perspective to challenge liberals (Greenwood and Harris 2011). As jazz and rock and roll emerged, they were definitely “in the secular camp and were not considered appropriate for church music programs” (Arnason and Rolenz 2008:104). The latter half of the century brought even more “diversity of religion, inclusive language, and new focus on ritual and sensory experience” (Greenwood and Harris 2011:155). Folk music was and continues to be the radical departure of choice for musically innovative UU churches (Arnason and Rolenz 2008), although “there is no longer a central, agreed-upon standard of music for Unitarian Universalist churches” (Arnason and Rolenz 2008: 104). The current hymnals, *Singing in the Living Tradition* and *Singing the Journey*, go beyond anti-feminist and anti-race sentiments, using music from a variety of world traditions to reflect the current pluralism of Unitarian Universalism (Greenwood and Harris 2011).

Why Study Them?

Unitarian Universalists make for a sociologically interesting population to study because they fall somewhere between a mainstream religion and a cult. UUism is an extremely functional and generally socially acceptable religion, and at the same time it maintains some beliefs and practices that may seem radical or non-traditional. For example, UU's accepting of atheists, because they do not demand belief in one central deity or all-encompassing truth. Rather than having a creed that demands a specific belief system, Unitarian Universalists use a covenant, or an agreement, to respect and accept multiple traditions and people in their own responsible search for truth and meaning. While the Unitarians and Universalists have their own rich histories that both, interestingly enough, have their basis in Christianity, they have begun to create their own tradition for their combined religion. UU's have created seven principles, which act as moral guides that are open to interpretation:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
6. The goal of the world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

(Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations 2012).

Unitarian Universalists also draw from multiple different sources to create their religion, rather than just one. They are generally referred to as the "6 sources", and they speak to UUs' respect for a diversity of traditions:

1. Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
2. Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
3. Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
4. Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
5. Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
6. Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

(Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations 2012).

In religions with a central truth or deity, a main function of music and of the religion itself is to worship that deity or truth. What are the functions of music then, and the religion in general, for Unitarian Universalists?

METHODS

Ammerman et. Al. have written about studying music in worship in terms of congregations, which has been extremely useful in the creation of the research methods for this project. In their research guide, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*, they advise the researcher to focus on the congregation as its own entity when analyzing different aspects of worship sociologically, anthropologically, and demographically. My methods were also guided by Clark's study of music in churches, which encourages researchers to study music in its action, i.e. during worship, and to listen to the people in churches talk about how music and faith come together. She also cautions that while patterns exist, differences between churches remain.

The focus of my study is two Unitarian Universalist churches that branched off from older, already established UU churches in two different metropolitan areas in Colorado. The main reason for studying these particular churches was that I had heard through locals in each community that they both have fantastic music programs and/or a great interest in music as a part of their worship service. I also had one contact at each church, and they both proved to be extremely helpful when it came time to gain entry into the communities. After gaining the appropriate IRB approval from Colorado College, I found my participants using snowball sampling; I asked my contacts at each church to suggest names of those who might be interested in participating in the study. I interviewed the pastor and the musical director at each church, and eight laypeople from each congregation, giving me a total of twenty participants. Each interview with a layperson lasted approximately thirty to forty-five minutes, and each interview with a director or pastor lasted for about one hour. I created three separate interview schedules, one for laypeople, one for musical directors, and one for pastors (see Appendix A, B, and C). One member of Mile High Universalist cancelled for a face-to-face interview at the last minute, and

had to be interviewed over the phone for the sake of time. For each participant I interviewed, I gained written and/or verbal consent. All names and locations that could be used to properly identify any subject or community in the study were changed. I also interviewed a professional UU hymn writer for background information about music in the UU church prior to beginning my study. I taped all interviews on a personal recording device, transcribed them onto my personal computer, and deleted the original recordings and the transcriptions once they were analyzed to protect the participants' privacy. Utilizing the idea that worship should be studied in its action, I also decided to attend eight different Sunday worship services to enrich my qualitative research. I made formal observations three times at each church during Sunday services. I attended these services in full and took notes on my observations.

To select the questions for my interview schedules that would glean the most productive responses, I utilized a combination of three different resources: Deborah J. Kapp's (2002) study, *Agency and authority in the performance and practice of Christian worship; a study of worship in three Presbyterian congregations*, Ammerman et. Al.'s (1998) *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*, and Linda J. Clark's (1994) *Music in Churches: Nourishing Your Congregation's Musical Life*. These resources both exemplified and gave me important suggestions on how to study music and worship, and what types of questions I should be asking. After I acquired the transcripts and field notes, I analyzed them through coding by hand. I read over the transcripts and found themes that were the most prevalent, and then selected quotes from each interview that appropriately coincided with each theme.

THE SETTINGS: FIRST PEAK AND MILE HIGH UNIVERSALIST

First Peak

First Peak is located in a major metropolitan area in southern Colorado, on the northern side of town. The city is known for its extreme social and religious conservatism, being the home of several Christian mega-churches and conservative Christian advocacy organizations. First Peak began in 1994 and essentially was a church that branched off from the primary UU church located

in the downtown area, which was founded in the 1890's. First Peak was formed by way of an endowment given to spread Unitarian Universalism in the region. The church downtown was also becoming a bit crowded and a number of leaders left the church to plant the seed for a new church on the north side of town, which they named First Peak. They went from place to place for a while, renting out schools and the like as places of worship. Now, First Peak has its permanent location in what used to be a miniature golf venue. The church has between 170 and 180 adult members, 80 children, and 30 to 40 friends who attend the church on a semi-regular basis but are not members. The church is comprised of members who are mostly middle-class, mostly white, and liberal in an otherwise fairly conservative part of town. When asked why they chose to become members at First Peak rather than the church located downtown, some members reported that they attended this specific church for convenience. A majority of members, however, actually noted that this church felt more friendly and welcoming than its downtown counterpart.

First Peak does theme-based worship services, meaning that each service is centered around a different topic pertaining to UUism or social justice, a special interest that UU's have. While this congregation is definitely smaller than the congregation at Mile High Universalist, the other church I studied, there is still a huge emphasis and importance placed on the music program. The first hire back in 1994, after a UU pastor, was in fact a musical director. Since then, the music program has grown slowly but surely. The choir is up to 12 members, and they have since hired a professional musician as musical director of the church. The choir members and congregation alike are generally pleased and enthusiastic about the direction in which the music director is taking worship services.

Mile High Universalist

Mile High Universalist is located in a suburb of the largest city in Colorado. It was established in 1891 as a Universalist church, and they have kept the "Universalist" in the title because they are in fact historically Universalist, and also because another church in the area with Unitarian roots has not changed their name either (although a lot of churches did change names

when the two traditions merged in 1961). By about 1915, the founders built a church for Mile High Universalist approximately four to five miles north of the current site. The church almost went out of business in 1953, when membership decreased drastically. A dedicated ministerial student turned things around, and they moved to a new building in 1959 with about 200 members. The church has grown significantly since then, with just over 900 currently attending on a regular basis; Mile High Universalist has 626 members, 134 returning newcomers, 181 children in the religious education program, and another 30 people who come on and off. Unitarian Universalists do not tend to have massive churches; the biggest churches in the denomination have about 1800 to 2000 people. Mile High, with 900, falls at about the 28th largest UU church in the United States.

Mile High Universalist also does theme-based ministry, but adheres to a stricter schedule; they focus on one theme each month which is planned out at least a year in advance, and a journal is also published each month which centers around the theme. Mile High Universalist is highly committed to their music program, which is diverse and has multiple offerings, and can be considered more developed than the program at First Peak. They offer non-traditional services during the week, such as the resonance service, which is based on Tai-Zae and meditative singing. They hold a monthly Shabbat Friday night service, because five percent of their members come from or identify with Jewish backgrounds. They are also starting programs for earth-based spirituality. Sam, the music director, was constantly given praise by the Mile High interviewees, because he has really turned around the music program. He brought a new accompanist and a director for the children's choir, who he is grooming to be the assistant music director. Both the music director and the director of the children's choir have been trained in music and directing. Mile High Universalist has 2 children's choirs, 3 adult choirs, and some other small ensembles. The largest choir has about 60 voices. In the course of the year, about 200 people are involved in the music program.

While they have their differences, both First Peak and Mile High Universalist place an extremely high value on worship music, and consider themselves to be musically inclined congregations.

ANALYSIS

I have separated my findings into the functions of the UU religion and the functions of worship music for the members of Unitarian Universalism. I have also included a section on issues, tensions, and contradictions in the UU faith.

FUNCTIONS OF THE UU RELIGION FOR ITS MEMBERS

Unitarian Universalism as a religion functions in two main ways for its congregants. First, it acts as a safe haven from the exclusivity of mainstream religion by providing a place where people can feel comfortable and free to express themselves. Second, Unitarian Universalism can be considered a religion for the 21st century in its adoption of a modern covenant rather than a creed.

Unitarian Universalism is a safe haven

The congregants I interviewed either came to Unitarian Universalism from another religion, or had not really subscribed to a religion or considered themselves religious before they found UUism. UU's come to the religion primarily because they feel or felt a heavy sense of exclusion by their previous religious experience.

“I grew up El Dies. My mother converted to Mormonism when I was 13, and then for a couple decades, I practiced it until I couldn't face that exclusiveness anymore”-Arthur, First Peak

There are three different ways that UU's generally felt this exclusion. First, UU's said their previous faith excluded them because it adhered to principles which they could no longer agree with for whatever reason, or that no longer fit their spiritual needs.

“I had been brought up in a Christian, more crazy Christian family...there was something that I didn't find fulfilling, something that didn't make conviction”-Harry, First Peak

“I'd say, typically we have been raised in a different religion. There [are] not many people who have been born and raised UUs. And typically we have found, that for whatever reason, that religion did not meet our spiritual needs. Often, the belief system is too restrictive, too exclusive,

and so a lot of us came to UUism through a process of rejection, rejecting whatever it is we were raised as” –Laura, First Peak

“My name is Renee, and I grew up in a very conservative Christian family. During my college years I began to have some questions and doubts about that faith and I began to do some study into feminist religions and feminist spirituality, the more I studied the more I realized I could no longer associate myself with the religion of my youth, but I was still seeking a religious community”- Renee, Mile High Universalist

As illustrated by the above quotes, UU members often expressed similar stories of their previous religion. Second, UU’s felt excluded because the religion’s principles inherently denounced or rejected something crucial about their lifestyle or identity. Other religions, through their narrow belief systems, can tend to place massive value judgments on certain types of lifestyles; that is, they completely exclude peoples’ entire ways of life, and oftentimes people do not have another place to turn spiritually or even socially. UUism offers that safe haven for all lifestyle choices; you can choose to be whoever you want to be, you have a freedom to be an individual but still be connected to a larger community through shared faith in a broader UU morality. Third and somewhat related, a UU may have had an experience in particular that so personally wounded them that they could not attend the church any longer. Although I did not have anyone disclose personal stories due to their possibly revealing nature, I was told by several members, including the music director at First Peak, that this is true:

“Because many people who come to the UU church are wounded by their church origin, whether it’s Catholic or Jewish or Lutheran or Episcopalian, there is a lot of pain surrounding organized religion”-Mark, Music Director, First Peak

Given that UU’s generally have experienced some shared sense of being wounded, whether from a literal experience or from a feeling of exclusion in a less extreme sense, UUism can function as a refuge, a place where those old wounds can begin to heal.

“Once I got here, really, it was the inclusiveness of the church, the fact that we don’t turn people away... you know what makes me stay, its like coming home, you know [at] your home you feel safe, you feel warm, you feel comfortable, [the UU church is] like home”-Arthur, Mile High Universalist

“[UUism has] a shared vision and goal to make this a safe, loving, welcoming place, for anybody who is looking for a haven of safe, loving connection”-Barbara, Mile High Universalist

UUism is welcoming of any person, regardless of their spiritual beliefs or who they are; as Barbara from Mile High Universalist notes, UUism offers “Freedom of thought, freedom to explore, freedom to love, freedom to believe, freedom to choose”.

“...[It’s a safe haven] socially, internationally, whether you are lesbian, gay, a person of color, or a different brand of religion. Because I’m Germanic pagan, everyone, people either think its novel or weird or that I hear voices or weird stuff like that, and here if people ask questions about that its not to evaluate it its to understand that and I think that what I see as an overarching goal of people is the need to understand other peoples perspectives”-Barbara, Mile High Universalist

“The opportunity to hold my own views and share them with people without any hesitation or any fear or anything like that”-Ted, First Peak

“I think for a lot of us its just the fact that we have found a home for our beliefs that are different than the mainstream culture, and its hard to be different within the mainstream culture without a group around you as kind of protection and support so I think that tends to bring UUs together”-Cassandra, First Peak

UUism’s function as a safe haven is heightened for members of First Peak; it is absolutely vital. Not only have these members been wounded by other religions, but due to the extreme social conservatism of the town in which they live, they are constantly reminded of the exclusivity of their past, and also feel that sting of rejection consistently in their present. Edward, the pastor at First Peak, sees this sting of rejection happening first hand among liberal members of the UU Church and among liberal members of the Colorado Springs community. When he offered a seminar on humanism and Unitarian Universalism at First Peak, which was covered in the local newspaper, he said:

“One of the first classes I offered was a class on religious humanism, which would be for atheists, agnostics, people who are inspired by nature, and people who are not sure there’s a god. And even for those who [believe in a god] but like the idea of trying to make this world a little better. And it got covered in the newspaper, and 50 people showed up, it was a 4 part series, many of whom were not from this church, and many of them said, ‘I live in this part of [the town], I felt completely alone’...[some that were]...gay...transgendered... they just felt totally isolated, like there were no communities of support and [an introduction to UUism] was really helpful, I think, for them”-Edward, Pastor, First Peak

“In Colorado Springs, it’s a pretty conservative at least religiously conservative place, and about the only place I can speak my mind is at Unitarian church”-Bob, First Peak

“I really feel like the community there is a source of support, a source of encouragement, it’s a community of like-minded people, which especially in this town is important to me, where I can feel safe discussing spiritual views and practices that are really not the mainstream in this town” – Laura, First Peak

UUism offers a safe space where liberal religious people can come together with others who think like them, and their community is strengthened by the fact that they all feel relatively isolated by the overwhelming presence of social and religious conservatives all around them and have that as a commonality to bond over. These people do not have another place where they can go to not only get together to express their liberal religious faith, but to just feel a sense of acceptance and belonging.

Religion for the 21st Century: Creed vs. Covenant

Unitarian Universalists, when they join the church, enter into a covenant with one another rather than a creed. This covenant is a voluntary agreement to uphold the UU tenets of respect for all diversity, acceptance, promotion of the responsible search for truth and meaning, etc. When UU's subscribe to a covenant, they are not professing one truth that they all believe; it is more of an agreement, which implies negotiation and the acceptance of multiple perspectives. A creed on the other hand is an expression of one statement that the entire congregation must accept as true, or else they cannot or should not be a part of that religion, for example the Nicene Creed in Christianity which states that one must believe in the trinity, heaven and earth, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—all tenets that are black and white.

“The idea of covenant has been really important in the last 30-40 years in UUism. Maybe if you went next door to St. Patrick's the Catholic church, you would read a creed together, or some other guiding words, that help to orient that catholic community, and they're beautiful words, and they're awesome and great for that community, so those creeds help to orient them. Here, we're non-creedal. SO that means you'll find people who are comfortable with that language and people who aren't, and you'll find a wide range and so what we've decided to do is gather around the idea of covenant and covenant is this idea that the holy or the divine and the human can be connected but not with words that one has to ascribe to”-Edward, Pastor, First Peak

With no set dogma or creed that one must believe, there is less judgment that goes on because there are no real rules surrounding the way that one should think that have the potential to be broken/not upheld:

“I think if any church can grow we can because we are not high bound by dogma... There are all sorts of problems in these other religions that we don't have because I don't think we judge each other because we're not following this dogma, this doctrine, yes we have ideals and ideas and we like to follow those, and we like to be good people, it's a sense of community, we help one

another, and that is genuine, and that's what the real foundation is for me, we help each other" – Harry, First Peak

"And so what you find here is people who develop this sense of morality based on the covenant we have with each other based on the 7 principles, and it's high in my perspective, it's the highest moral standard as we can get, its something that gives you a base for your moral life"-Robert, Mile High Universalist

Church members believe that a non-creedal, covenant based religion can offer absolute freedom of religious beliefs:

"[UUism offers] FREEDOM. The end. I mean other religions want to tell you what to believe and prescribe for you what is ok and what is not ok, and UUism is based on love and justice and anything within that framework that is meaningful for you is welcome and I love that. I love it. I need it. Yeah" –Renee, Mile High Universalist

"Um, freedom of conscience, um, again speaking from my religious background there are a number of people who say that people in my religion can't have a moral basis in their life and I think people would apply that to UUism because there are no rules. I tend to find people at this church have a very developed sense of morality, the difference being that it's an individual, personal one; the 7 principles, if you read them, are moral standards plain and simple. People adopt those"-Robert, Mile High Universalist

As Robert is saying, sometimes a lack of creed, or freedom of thought, can be equated with a lack of morals; if people don't subscribe to one agreed upon truth, than what is making them stay good? With a covenant, there is no one group moral entity for all, morality comes on an individual level—it still exists, but individuals can decide what is right for them within a moral framework, i.e. the seven principles. Durkheim and Wuthnow predicted that society would become increasingly diversified, religion would become more focused on the individual, and people would begin to seek new ways of thinking and responding to religion. While the idea of a covenant in religion is not a brand new thing, having this type of modern covenant that centers on complete freedom of belief rather than a creed that tells one what to think can be considered a new way of responding to religion. This religion is functional for the individual's needs; in unsettled times such as these, the religion offers acceptance for seekers, and even acceptance for the search itself.

Unitarian Universalism as a religion functions as a safe haven and as a beacon of freedom for its members through the adoption of a modern covenant. In addition to his definition of, and

theories about, religion in general, Durkheim also discussed the importance of ritual for religion. In the UU religion, music, while diverse in content, can be considered ritualistic in nature, and can therefore be discussed as an important ritual in the worship service.

FUNCTIONS OF MUSIC DURING WORSHIP

“I’d say music is integral to every service...if it wasn’t there, why would you come?”-Diane, Choir Member, Mile High Universalist

As Diane’s quote illustrates, music plays a vital role in the services for Unitarian Universalists. Almost every congregation member interviewed from both churches agreed—music is an essential part of the Sunday service. In this section, I will describe the functions of worship music for Unitarian Universalists in order to understand its shared importance and its vitality within the faith. There are two main ways that music happens in the Unitarian Universalist service--through inclusive/congregational singing and through performances during worship. Both of these types of musical experiences serve different functions for the community, but pastors at both churches agreed that there was something about congregational singing that made it more vital for the community:

“I’d say once every two months we will have a solo or group instrumentalist or instrumentalists, but for us that is not really a powerful thing [compared to community hymn singing]”-Mark, Musical Director, First Peak

“There’s only so much you can do...without involving [congregants] in [the musical] experience”-Sam, Music Director, Mile High Universalist

Since the ritual of singing together as a congregation was reported by almost all respondents as a powerful and important part of the service, this aspect of music will be my primary focus and I will just briefly touch on the role of performance-based worship. There are three main ways Unitarian Universalists use worship music during their services. I will first discuss the way in which they use congregational singing to unify through its participatory aspect. Secondly, I will introduce UU’s use of music as a vehicle for transformation through breaching the head versus

heart dynamic and through transforming mental state. Lastly, UU's use music as an expression and reflection of their interconnected shared values of inclusivity, respect and search for meaning.

Congregational Singing and Cohesion

During my time at both Mile High Universalist and First Peak, I witnessed and participated in congregational singing. For this study, I will refer to congregational singing (which will be used interchangeably with the terms "participatory" and "inclusive" singing) as the act of the congregation singing songs together in unison or harmony. Each church has copies of both UU hymnals, *Singing in the Living Tradition*, and the newer supplemental hymnal, *Singing the Journey*. Both churches also have recently installed projection screens where words to hymns as well as visual images are displayed during the service. Hymns are sung intentionally around the theme being explored that Sunday.

One of the four main functions of ritualistic institutions for Durkheim is cohesion. Inclusive singing can act as a tool through which congregation members can feel connected with one another. Congregants seemed to discuss congregational singing in terms of their selves as part of a larger entity. Congregational singing seemed to create and reinforce community in both UU churches that I studied. Renee from Mile High Universalist summed up many congregants thoughts in both churches: "I think it's very important for the community, um for really any faith community to be able to sing together, I think that's an incredibly unifying experience." Inclusive singing is a definite and driving unifying force in the worship service for Unitarian Universalists. Music can create and reinforce community through participation.

Participation

As Bellah (2003) notes, participation in rituals (such as inclusive singing) creates fellowship and unity with one's fellow congregants.

"I think [congregational singing is] a prime example of feeling connected to each other, that sense of connectedness, that sense of community, [comes from actually]... worshipping together"-
Donna, Mile High Universalist.

Community is created and reinforced in both UU churches through the active participation of all congregation members, which gives them a sense of being part of a group, and creating unity:

“[In congregational singing] one is participating as part of a group. This is giving you a sense of unity, communing with your fellow congregants”-Harry, First Peak

For both Donna and Harry, inclusive singing gave them a *sense* of unity/community. As Durkheim’s notion of collective effervescence suggests, when UUs are coalescing through singing together they are experiencing something larger than their individual selves, that is a connection to the beings around them, giving them that *sense* of community.

“When we’re all singing together it connects all of us, and whether we sing bad, good, low, or high, everyone has a place in that choir. And so there’s a sense of belonging”-Edward, Pastor, First Peak.

This can be especially important for new members, like Arthur at Mile High Universalist:

“I enjoy [participatory singing] because of the acceptance here, it helped break that barrier.”

Participatory singing can help congregants find their place in the community and be accepted by those around them.

It is not enough for members to be merely present in a room together mumbling along with the song, or even as Cassandra from First Peak comments, to experience music without being involved in it; there must be some sort of participation by the members of the community:

“In the past music was more of a concert, you know...kind of a little bit like we had last Sunday [with the violin quartet], the music was beautiful, but that to me was more of a concert than participatory and supporting the whole experience of the community”-Cassandra, First Peak

Musical directors actively think about how to use music to get members more involved in the church, whether it’s through singing in rounds, switching up verses, or inviting the congregation to add their own harmonies:

“...you have to give people ways to interact [during the worship service], you have to give people a part to play for them to feel a part of the whole”-Sam, Musical Director, Mile High Universalist

“When our music director makes an experiential activity out of the music, and gives us assignments and we have to do this and that and then jump in here and he really involves us in the music... when we do a round, or [are given] a musical instrument to play, when we are involved in it, [that’s when I really get into it and feel community]”-Barbara, Mile High Universalist

Singing together can also lead to feelings of unity after the service has ended. Bob at First Peak pointed out how participation in inclusive singing reinforces community for Unitarian Universalists through the feeling that one receives during the worship, and by the activity that happens afterwards:

“The best music experience I have had was at a general assembly (national convention of UU’s), there was a guy there...he had all of the UUs up, 3000 of us, clapping and swaying, even the guy...who was the president of UU, a pretty straight guy in his white suit, he was moving. As we left the place, everybody just walking out was still singing and talking together and it was a fantastic musical experience”-Bob, First Peak

Barbara from Mile High Universalist agreed with Bob’s comment that one can tell how successful the music was because of the acts of unification that happen after the service:

“[Congregational singing] plays a very, very big role. Especially when we sing a song that we are all capable of singing and can have fun with it, we always leave with more discussion in the common area, we always do more hugging and laughing and clapping, it just, brings us together”- Barbara, Mile High Universalist

In Barbara’s remark, she also brings up an extremely important stipulation to unification through congregational singing that was echoed several times throughout interviews at both churches; Congregational singing works “*especially when we sing a song that we are all capable of singing and can fun with it* [emphasis added]”. Unitarian Universalists stressed the importance of physically being able to sing the music during worship in order for worship to “work”, i.e. for them to be comfortable so that they can experience the feeling of emotional connection to community. It is not that UU’s don’t welcome new songs, many of them actually cited bringing in new hymns as a vital part of their worship service, it is just that when those new songs are at an extremely high level of difficulty for the congregation, where the congregation cannot pick up the song with ease after a few repetitions, the congregation can become distracted and the sense of community can be lost:

“...And we’ve become more participatory in the years that I’ve been a member here, and when we all sing and know the music and enjoy it it’s a much better feeling than when we are trying to pick through one that we don’t know or that we are not comfortable singing...to me that’s distracting [from the point of the service]...I think [congregational singing] works when we know the music and can sing it, I think it works when there are members within the congregation that know the music and can sing it out to support the rest of us who don’t sing as well”-Cassandra, First Peak

Worship is “not working” when some congregants cannot fully participate. These members can feel personally inadequate which decreases the sense of community and belonging.

“When I enjoy [congregational singing] it’s because I have been given the opportunity to succeed, to do something right. Those people on the Dias are fantastic, but when I’m given the same chore, its like when you tell a fish to ride a bicycle, they are destined to fail. When I’m given those really difficult things I feel bad about myself, that I can’t achieve, and that’s my own deal, but I like a blend, like some days [those other] people are better, but some days I have the opportunity to be a simple singer”-Barbara, Mile High Universalist

Comfort with the music and a low level of difficulty is important to UU’s to increase the sense of community.

There is one moment of participatory singing during the Unitarian Universalist worship service that is extremely ritualistic in nature because it consists of the same music and lyrics and happens at the same time during every Sunday service. This moment is when the children are being “sung out” of the worship service to go to their educational classes and happens after the first 10 to 15 minutes of the service. The two congregations that I studied both sing different songs to perform the function of “singing out the children”, but each song is the same each week and is also sung at the same point in the service every Sunday. Because the congregation is singing the same song each week in this respect, all members have the potential to participate fully during these times because they are extremely familiar with the tunes. In addition, *The Spirit of Life* was the only one song that was mentioned by multiple people as being one of their favorites and/or a staple in UUism. It is sung in both congregations almost every week. Congregants at both churches cited these moments, which had the maximum potential for participation due to their familiarity, as very significant moments for community building during the service.

“I do really like *Spirit of Life* because it’s kind of like the UU anthem, and it does provide that sense of unity, its like ok this is who we are, although its kind of like a vague sort of thing...everyone knows that song and so I like it for that purpose”-Laura, First Peak

“...This applies to my favorite kinds of worship services as well...like singing the children out...we are involved in it”-Barbara, Mile High Universalist

“I do think [congregational singing] is important for the community, but particularly when the kids are present...it gets everyone breathing, [intentionally] breathing [together]”-Derek, Mile High Universalist

Durkheim maintains that religion is used to connect the individual to his immediate society, and to also connect the clan, the society, with other societies (Durkheim 1972). It is the latter of the two, what Durkheim terms “inter-social factors”, which creates religious sentiment (Durkheim 1972). Participation in congregational singing does not only connect UU’s with the congregation of which they are a part, but it can also connect them with something bigger than that, a broader world community:

“[Congregational singing] gives me something to hang on to for the rest of the week, a reminder that I’ve connected to a community, I’ve connected to a universe, I’ve connected to reasons and causes and things that are larger than I am...it gives me a sense of continuity in a way, that I’m part of something bigger and longer and possibly even eternal” -Renee, Mile High Universalist

I have just clearly demonstrated how participation in inclusive singing is used to connect UU’s with an immediate as well as a world community.

From what I observed and from the interviews I have done, I think that the nature of singing can add to the already large role that participation in inclusive singing has in creating community in the UU worship service. Kapp (2002) found that congregational singing takes something private and personal and turns it into something collective. When the personal is becoming public, worship can then act as a sanctuary, a refuge from daily life, a place to receive support, and to engage in a community. My findings suggest that some form of Kapp’s private to personal transition is going on through congregational singing in the UU church. Congregants realize that the act of singing is deeply personal, and that during congregational singing they are becoming more intimate with that group of people because they are taking personal expression and making it a group expression.

“Singing is something that comes from deep inside, it’s not an external instrument and I think that enhances the communal aspect, it’s like this is really yourself that’s coming out, it’s really internal”-Lydia, First Peak

“Personally, [congregational singing is] a means of expression [that is] both personal [and] a group process too. It’s not just your voice, it’s your voice joined with others so I think there is this personal form of musical expression for people participating”-Robert, Mile High Universalist

Arthur recounted his first experiences at the Mile High Universalist to me during his interview; initially, he did not feel at all comfortable participating in singing at the church: “I didn’t want to sing when I got here, that’s because I [assumed] judgment, I really [assumed I was going to be] judged”. The personal nature of singing can make one feel very self-conscious; one’s worth can be reflected to others through what comes out of his or her mouth. Because members of the group are sharing something so intensely personal with a larger group of people, and furthermore are feeling accepted by that group of people when they do so, it can heighten their feelings of connection to those around them.

“[I enjoy participatory singing] because of the acceptance here, it helped break that barrier...[at first I could] listen to music and be uplifted but now [I can] participate in music and be uplifted, that was a giant barrier [that was broken] for me, it really was, I always find more reasons to come back here”-Arthur, Mile High Universalist

Participatory singing then, in the Unitarian Universalist church, is truly inclusive. Music in worship allows for a deep sense of connection and unity with their immediate as well as a world community.

Music as a Vehicle for Transformation

As I have just shown, worship music in the UU congregation brings a sense of unity to the congregation as a whole, and it can also transform congregants on both an individual and group level. Worship music connects the head and heart, therefore allowing for a deeper spiritual experience and even transformation, and it can also transform the mental state of congregants by uplifting and centering people through its ability to be engaging.

Head vs. Heart

As DeNora (2000) highlights, music has the capacity to function beyond the cognitive, to reach emotions. Congregants frequently made reference to two specific places that congregational singing could take them: their “head place” and their “heart place”. When congregants go to their head place, they are having a more intellectual experience, their minds are being stimulated, and oftentimes they are actively thinking about what their faith means to them. On the other hand,

when congregants go to their heart place, they are having an emotional experience that congregants equate with the act of letting go, or giving in. Music can serve to connect the head place with the heart place to give congregants a deeper spiritual or even transformative experience.

When asked to describe the typical Unitarian Universalist, some of the most frequently used adjectives were “educated” and “free-thinking”. As congregants from both churches commented:

“I think the typical UU is probably college-educated, and very much more towards studying and investigating and making their own decision about various things”-Cassandra, First Peak

“I think probably the closest I could come is probably somebody who likes to think for themselves, [who] does not like other people telling them what they have to believe, so I think that’s probably the closest you can say is typical because of the fact that you are encouraged to and really asked to think for yourself and think about what you believe”-Bob, First Peak

“The typical UU [is] a person that is thoughtful about, and perhaps more skeptical than average about, whatever background they came to the church from, oftentimes there are folks from hardline Catholic [or] Evangelical [backgrounds, or] no religion at all, skeptical typically of the common Christian party lines. [These people] want to have a focus in their life, but not necessarily as dogmatic as other places might be, so [they want] more of a free thought approach”-Derek, Mile High Universalist

“Most [UUs] are pretty intellectual, and searching for additional information, they are looking for input and they like to play with ideas”-Barbara, Mile High Universalist

Free-thinking does not mean that the typical congregation member is not spiritual or does not have a belief in a higher power, but the typical UU, as Derek said, is “skeptical”. They are always thinking and analyzing what is put in front of them to make sure that they agree, perhaps because most UU’s have felt wounded and excluded by previous religions of which they were a part. A common generalization then, is that Unitarian Universalists tend to dwell mostly in their head place.

As part of the worship experience, the participants associated both the sermon and the lyrics with their head place. Since the sermon is used each week as a prevalent mechanism to transmit a specific theme or message to the congregation, it acts as a vehicle through which congregants can get in touch with their intellectual side, to absorb and to question the message, to

be pushed further on their faith journey and on their search for a correct spiritual answer. If the sermon gets congregants into their head place, than the music would be a tool to get them to their heart place. However, there is also a head versus heart tension within the music itself.

The “head” element is reflected through the existence of lyrics in music. The lyrics play a huge part in UUs’ musical experience because they provide congregants with a textual message, which they can accept, reject, or feel free to question. Unitarian Universalists then are always thinking about their beliefs, and this is reflected through their interactions with music:

“There’s always the joke about UUs, why don’t UUs sing hymns well? Well, its because they’re always reading ahead to see if they agree with the words. And so there’s that, kind of part of the tradition of UUs is that they’re stuck on the words”-Sam, Pastor, Mile High Universalist

They want to make sure that, as the joke goes, they agree with what they are professing through song.

Worship music however also brings an entirely new element into the worship service in general, and that is “heart”, or emotion, by way of auditory sound. There is more to congregational and performance-based worship than just lyrics. Music has a certain “je ne sais pas” that can reach past the text and connect people with their heart, with their emotions. DeNora highlights that “to speak of music merely as a kind of exemplar is to remain committed to a cognitivist conception of agency...such a conception stops short of the more profound levels on which music also operates, the levels on which we do not turn to music as a resource but are rather caught up in it, find ourselves in the middle of it, are awakened by it” (2000:159). Music then, can operate past the cognitive and “hit home” emotionally. “[Music] gets people off their butt and out of their heads, and it works on heart stuff a little bit”, commented Pastor Edward of First Peak church. Several congregants and both music directors agree that worship music has the potential to reach the heart as well as the head, the emotional as well as the cognitive, to make us feel:

“Um, you know, I will often find myself, my eyes misting, for no reason I understand and I [think to myself], ‘Oh, I’m starting to cry, why is that?’ Of course this is a safe space for that here, but I

think something is connecting to me on an emotional level, its kind of surprising and [one of] the things that [does] that sometimes is the music program”-Robert, Mile High Universalist

“To me music is an avenue to your soul, and to emotion. And so that’s what the music does for me, um, I think sermons can do that as well, but sometimes they tend to be more up in the head than wholeness experience”-Cassandra

“I think music is all about creating emotion, and tying mind to heart...honestly, for me, the emotion should run the gamut. I love heart songs that really push [you]...when you are halfway through, or on the edge of bursting into tears. I love songs that make you think, especially if they’re presented in a way that forces you to stay in your heart”-Mark, Music Director, First Peak

“I’m able to work with community amateur musicians and create something that may not be the quality of a professional recording but hopefully has the heart and speaks to people in a way that only music can, where it transcends those barriers that we put up to words and to interactions between each other and music can kind of sink into there and affect us and make us feel”-Sam, Music Director, Mile High Universalist

There is this tension then, between the head and the heart, thinking and feeling. Worship music, because it is conjoining both the text and emotion into one, has the potential to connect both the head and the heart, to turn what might have been a mostly intellectual experience into something more, to bridge the head and the heart so gracefully that it becomes an intense vehicle for the message and an intense function to enhance the message.

“...here I have been more appreciative of our worship services since Rev. Edward joined us because they are more tied together, the music and the sermons and the readings and all of that than we have had before. They tend to be a little more heartfelt than head felt”-Cassandra, First Peak

“...but with music, what could be sort of an intellectual experience becomes a real experience that touches me”-Laura, First Peak

“Music is an integral part of the worship service because it moves more than just the mind...there are emotional components to music greater than words and that can help enhance the worship service. [They are] just different levels of communication I think”-Ted, First Peak

Music can thus give forth the potential for transformation, the potential to find answers that fit congregants’ questions, can give them an opportunity to come a little bit closer to finding what they are looking for;

“The biggest thing is to make sure that the music gives more dimension to what is being spoken on Sunday, supports what is being spoken but also helps us understand it from a different perspective. I think that’s essential for UUs, without that, its not complete...it’s this complete presentation around this one topic”-Sam, Music Director, Mile High Universalist

“From a religious perspective, it brings somebody closer to what they are seeking, whether that’s God, or peace, or whatever you want to say. I still think it might help everyone get close to what they are looking for” –Derek, Mile High Universalist

Worship music, because of it stimulates both the intellectual and the emotional, can be an essential vehicle to deepen and transform how the congregants receive the message as well as the group’s worship experience as a whole, and help them get closer on their search for truth and meaning.

Music transforms mental state: Uplifts and Centers

In addition to connecting the head with the heart, music was also described as transforming participants’ mental states. In this way, music can be seen as fulfilling the euphoric function of ritual for Durkheim. Music was described as functioning to uplift church members and to center them.

Music during worship was cited by many congregation members as having the potential to elevate one’s mood. Sherry from First Peak noted, “I think it’s uplifting, I think it cheers us up, it makes us happy”. Many cited this transformation to a better mood as one of the reasons for attending the church:

“[The music] does need to uplift me, that’s part of why I go to church, I don’t want it to just be all some sermon that really makes me think and feel guilty about the starving kids in Afghanistan, although that’s important too”-Laura, First Peak

Music does have the power to be transformative emotionally for congregants, to lift them up to a new place:

“I think it’s transformative and when you look at...one of the basic missions of this church, [it] is to be a vehicle of transformation, and I think music transforms people. I know I walk out of here...a foot and a half off the ground emotionally... I feel good, I feel uplifted, I feel a sense of community and all that, and I think that’s part of the purpose [of congregational singing]”-Donna, Mile High Universalist

Music has the potential to leave congregants in a more euphoric state then, and for some, like Donna, this is an essential function of worship music for the UU congregation and community.

Music can also be transformative in that it has a meditative quality; it allows congregants to calm down and to become centered.

“I think ritual also centers you, it reminds you, it cues your body and your mind, here I am in this space, here’s what’s going to happen next, this is what I’m preparing myself mentally and physically for”-Renee, Mile High Universalist

“You also mentioned about the instrumental music. I would take that above and beyond just instrumental. Sarah does a lot of music, the contemplative music, some of the postludes, or during the service, and I find those extremely calming times, times where I can center myself, its that sense of stopping whats going on to go inward, that sometimes I don’t always get when im listening to people sing so, so I think its crucial to have that as part o the worship service so that people have the opportunity to get centered, because I think that’s part of the reason people come once a week, it’s to take that break from your normal life, it should feel different. I think its important to have both during every service, a mix of that, including the instruments”-Kathy, Mile High Universalist

“I said it helps me clear my mind, it helps me get centered, it helps me actually keep the noises out and hear what’s being said at the moment, you know yada yada, sometimes it operates entirely on the emotional level too”-Terry, Mile High Universalist

Robert also illustrates this point through his belief that “[Worship music] allows me to slow everything down, escape from the noise you have when you talk to yourself, and just listen to it”.

This slowing down or relaxing of one’s emotional state can serve to change UU’s perspective:

“I think [music during worship] changes perspective, it pulls us out of our every day thought if we let it”-Renee, Mile High Universalist

Renee brings up an essential function of worship music. Not only does music have the potential to transform the congregant’s mood, but it also can transform the congregant’s outlook on their own faith, the faith of their community or just on life in general through shifting one’s perspective. People come to worship services to feel differently, and music is a vehicle for that change in emotional state, whether it is to bring them to a euphoric state or to slow them down so they can center themselves.

Music as an Expression and Reflection of Shared Values

In the absence of one set deity or creed, Unitarian Universalists subscribe to seven principles, or values, that align with a moral way to live one’s life that in itself is completely open to interpretation. Rather than taking each principle and seeing if/how music can express it individually, I found three general moral themes in my research which most of these principles have in common and used these as a basis for my findings: inclusivity, respect, and search for meaning. These principles do not have to do with expressing an all-encompassing truth, but have

to do with the ways in which UUs live their lives day to day. Music is then functioning to revitalize, as Durkheim noted, to re-connect with UU's with their values of inclusivity, respect, and search for meaning. Music does this through its diversity.

Musical Diversity Reflects Values of Inclusivity, Respect, and Search for Meaning

Diversity of the music in the UU church reflects the free and responsible search for truth and meaning:

“[Diversity in music] can serve to broaden people’s perspectives and therefore give them new ways of thinking about their faith, having the potential to catapult them forward on their continuous journey for understanding”-Robert, Mile High Universalist

“I learned so much about the value of the religions and how much we have in common and at the same time the things that we can gain from each other, so I don’t want to be told what I have to believe in...I’m learning and seeking and searching my whole life and this allows me to do that” – Diane, Mile High Universalist

Music from a variety of different traditions can also help people from all faith backgrounds feel welcome and included:

“The one thing that I think this music [does] is you have some traditional religious music but you also have world music, completely secular songs... the music [in other denominations]...reinforce[s] the denomination and the theology of the church ... whereas this music is much more open than that”-Robert, Mile High Universalist

Having multiple traditions represented through the music can give congregants the opportunity to connect to a larger global community, and also creates the opportunity for multiple interpretations of the music, therefore supporting inclusivity of all and respect for other cultures, as well as spiritual and personal growth/search for truth and meaning through the exposure to multiple perspectives and the use of broad language that can be interpreted in many ways. The importance of inclusiveness is also seen in the variety of music and musical styles that are selected and presented in the service. UU's have borrowed from many different musical traditions in the creation of their worship services. Donna from Mile High Universalist notes, “One week we’re singing music from south Africa, the next week we’re singing a mass”. Amanda Udis-Kessler, a published UU hymn writer, told me that UU music comes from all different traditions, and the main way that they have created their own musical tradition, besides writing their own

music with lyrics to express their beliefs, is through appropriating older, more well known hymns from a variety of traditions, but changing the lyrics to make them line up with their own idea of a UU perspective. UU's are even changing the published songs in their own current hymnals to fit individual congregations' needs. Amanda said she is always finding versions of her work online in which the lyrics have been changed. Mark, the music director at First Peak, cites his own experience with changing lyrics for worship to fit UU preferences and values:

"I have changed lyrics on songs that were traditional to fit...UUs are notorious for their questioning of religious dogma in general, so its an old Christian spiritual called I'll fly away [sings] 'Some bright morning when this life is over, I'll fly away'...so um, the second verse, I changed it to "some bright morning when this life is over, I *might* fly away" and it ended up turning into this questioning [verse] for agnostics, and the last [verse I changed] is for atheists, "I *won't* fly away"...It was very funny, it was this really twisted twist on this old faith-filled song, but of course if I played that at a local Pentecostal church they would have thrown me out"-Mark, Music Director, First Peak

Lyrics express what the congregants believe, but they can also express multiple values since the congregants believe multiple different things; this in itself reflects the acceptance of a constant search for truth and meaning, a willingness to be inclusive of and to respect multiple viewpoints.

There is huge controversy and tension over using the word God and/or Jesus language in song:

"I think people would stay away from anything...in our congregation that had a real Christian theme. I think people are even uncomfortable singing with the word god in it, some people, not everybody. The lyrics are huge, you don't think about that, that you [might] offend someone" – Sherry, Mile High Universalist

God language is seen as a truth that not everyone in the faith subscribes to; therefore it has the potential to exclude certain members of the congregation. UU's prefer broader language, having songs such as "spirit of life", which are very general, so that they can be interpreted in multiple ways by people with different beliefs; therefore anyone can feel comfortable, welcome, and included in the UU environment. Such a large part of Unitarian Universalism is that there is no one deity, and by extension no one overarching truth. There is an individualistic search for meaning, and congregants commune and bond not over an ultimate truth and rightness, but over the individual (and simultaneously mutual) *search* for what is true and right. Therefore using any

sort of God or Jesus language would imply an absolute that is true for the whole religion, which runs counter to the inclusivity that UU's hold so dear. The music then has a certain open-ness to it, there is no absolute strict truth that it must adhere to or that it must express in order to be considered valid by the congregants, making it inclusive for people of all beliefs. UU's tend to desire to be true and honest to themselves and to respect the truth and honesty of those around them, even if they do not necessarily agree with those people. This helps create a feeling of inclusiveness for all.

ISSUES/TENSIONS/CONTRADICTIONS

Unitarian Universalists, while striving to be inclusive of all, actually have somewhat of a tendency to condemn those who have condemned them. UUism acts as a safe haven from the exclusivity of previous religious experiences, so congregants are hesitant to be as accepting of the group of people who "hurt" them, i.e. those who they assume do not share their sociopolitical beliefs and who are not accepting of all, most pointedly those who subscribe to mainstream Christianity.

"But unfortunately some [in our UU] community are also intolerant of other churches. We can tend to be a little elite and say, 'oh those Christians who have their devout faith and they are damning us to hell'... there's that little bit of fear of Christianity in our community I think, fear of theism and fear of the god language. There's a definite fear of that in our church, in First Peak... I think [this fear is] because [congregants] have had bad experiences as kids...we have a lot of former Catholics and they felt that they were judged and that they were told they were just an idea and sin[ful]. I think people...have almost...a backlash against those very, very mainstream ideas, [like] traditional Catholic ideas"-Sherry, First Peak

"This church has a lot of humanist leaning members...I almost didn't stay with this church when I first started attending because one of the kind of stronger voices in the community got up and really lambasted Christianity...and I thought that's not why I would be part of this church...I mean obviously I don't believe what some Christians do believe, but I don't feel I need to make fun of them or belittle them or turn them away from my church just because they believe that, and hopefully that's what UUism stands for"-Cassandra, First Peak

This tendency to condemn those who have condemned them is in direct conflict with their core principles: inclusivity and respect, in particular.

The willingness to condemn other groups may come from the rejection UU members have felt from these groups. As the pastor at First Peak noted, there seems to be a fear of anything that might reflect more traditional Christian groups.

“On the negative side, I think sometimes this church, anytime there is a hint of something that feels Christian or religious or something like that, there is this kind of, ‘Don’t make us go there, because we’re here to be something completely different’. If you say the god word, then people are going to be confused and think we are focus on the family, or the family research council...if you say the god word than people will think we are conservative, and then if we’re conservative, we’re anti-gay, and if we’re conservative, we are tea partiers, and if we’re conservative, we don’t think. And so even if you use that god language in the most liberal open way imaginable, there are still going to be people that were battered by conservatism, and harmed when people use the Bible as a weapon, and they’re going to be like, ‘Don’t turn me into that. Don’t do that, don’t take me there, because I’m not going to go there’...that’s the negative side of being a liberal church in a very conservative part of the world. The positive side is that we give refuge to people who think they’re harmed”-Edward, Pastor, First Peak Church

UU’s at both churches then have essentially identified an “other” that they juxtapose themselves against to create some semblance of an identity or sense of self as a religion; being unified through a sense of knowing who you are not, rather than knowing who you are, can be constricting and limiting for a religion, especially when the members desire to be inclusive of all types of people. A sense of community is coming through a negative channel rather than a positive channel. In a way, UU’s are in fact contradicting and disregarding the principles and what they are supposed to unite over in order to feel more unified. While UU’s maintain that their religion is inclusive and welcoming of everyone, is that really true? It seems that they are welcoming of all types of spiritual beliefs, as long as those beliefs don’t inhibit the inclusivity/safe haven that they strive to offer people. They are welcoming of all types of people, but not those who do not share their socio-political beliefs, those who have wounded them by their exclusivity. UUism is a safe haven for anyone who does not subscribe to exclusive political beliefs, i.e. anyone who does not subscribe to mainstream religion, and by extension, has liberal political beliefs.

DISCUSSION

The literature and my findings suggest that music is emblematic of the UU church's philosophy of inclusiveness and acts as a vital ritual that connects the individual to their immediate community as well as a larger world community by providing a sense of belonging.

To understand Unitarian Universalism's philosophy of inclusiveness, we can first expand Durkheim's definition of religion and then examine his and others' predictions for how religion would evolve in an increasingly diversified society. Durkheim's definition of religion and his functions of ritual in religion generally fit for Unitarian Universalism, yet because there is no one central belief/s or truth/s that UU's must subscribe to, there are essentially two different categories of belief systems happening simultaneously for UU's, rather than the one that Durkheim notes in his definition. There is a general unified or communal system of beliefs that all UU's adhere to in some way, which are the seven principles. The rituals that UU's adhere to around this 7 principled belief system are few and far between, but may include different types of communion (water, flower), as well as diverse and inclusive worship through which solidarity and personal transformation occurs. However, the personal beliefs of individuals and the practices surrounding those beliefs can be entirely diverse, for example the use of self referential terms to describe themselves, such as "I'm a Buddhist UU", or "I'm a Christian UU", or "I'm a UU still searching", etc. Unitarian Universalists tend to unify over the fact that there are these two different belief systems, the former static and the latter fluid, and that they all subscribe to both; UU's have their personal beliefs, but want to understand these personal beliefs and learn from them, which is more a function of the group process. This diversity of beliefs is respected within the community as part of the seven principles, which means that these two systems can in fact coincide relatively peacefully. These belief systems allow the individual to keep a personal religious perspective but still be connected to their immediate community. They come together over their shared moral code, the principles, but also over the first level belief system; the existence of these differences bonds them, and their differences are worth respecting, including, and exploring.

Durkheim suggests that a religion with the absence of a deity can still be functional as long as there is some entity that exists that holds a shared meaning which is separated from the profane, or the everyday, for that group of people. For the UU's, that sacred entity is the individual and humanity, just as Durkheim predicted. In Unitarian Universalism, the individual is held as sacred and the system of beliefs and practices surrounding this sacred individual, i.e. the seven principles, are moral and relative to the individual and his/her relationship with other humans and society. The individual as sacred is set apart from the profane (i.e. the individual search for truth and meaning) like Durkheim's original definition of religion suggests, but the sacred is not so much surrounded by prohibitions or rules as it is by agreed upon, covenantal tenets. In this sense, UUism is extremely unique and is a religion that can function for people who desire to have freedom in religion (in that humanity is held sacred and that the tenets surrounding the sacred are loose) but still want to be connected to a community, to be included in and to belong to a religious fellowship.

Durkheim saw the religion of the future as becoming highly diversified, and the ideal human, which religions would hold sacred, varying according to the cultural background of the participants. Thinking about the functions of religion for UUs in terms of their cultural background can be highly informative as to why religion and ritual, as exemplified in my study by music, function the way they do. The ideal human individual for this group of people is in essence a reflection of what UUs value. They value a free and responsible search for truth and for meaning, and that value is a reflection of who they are: they are privileged to be able to have that search, they are white, upper/middle class, and educated. The backgrounds that UUs come from then, can shape their values and what they hold sacred. Because UUs also have similar backgrounds of being excluded from mainstream religion, the ideal human is one who tries to be inclusive of all rather than one who, for instance, accepts Christ as their savior and condemns all others who do not.

We are in a time that is unsettled, a time when there are new family structures emerging, technology is developing rapidly, and restrictions are being put on liberal lifestyles by mainstream religions, such as the renouncement of abortion as a sin, or homosexuality as wrong. UU's are finding that these unsettled times are not conducive to their beliefs, spiritual needs, and/or lifestyles, and they are proactive about it; they want a religion that will be accepting of them and their beliefs. They are seeking acceptance and a spiritual fit for their individual needs, a la Christiano et. Al (2008). UUs, a mostly liberal clan, find their religion to be an essential safe haven from the judgments/exclusion that can come from the restrictions of mainstream religion; people are seekers, they are seeking a religion that fits their needs as individuals living in the 21st century. Once they are active members of the religion, they *remain* seekers; they are constantly on a free and responsible search for truth and meaning; they are responding to whatever they deem sacred by discussing and debating the true meaning of faith with each other—there is no one belief so discussion is encouraged, which can facilitate connection with their immediate community.

Music is one way UUs help create rituals that are inclusive and respectful of all beliefs. Ritualistic music, by connecting the head to the heart, has the power to communicate through lyrics but also through a transcendence of the lyrics to reach emotions. UUs can use worship music as a conscious or subconscious tool to help them in their search, to connect them with something that is larger than themselves. UUs do take seeking to a more radical place by “consciously [exploring] religious alternatives and [recognizing] the ‘merits of borrowing’ symbols, beliefs, and practices from many sources” (Roof 2003:145). While UUism is a non-creedal, living, liberal faith, in which most of its members have been wounded by, disagree with, and/or reject traditional religious values and rituals and all that they stand for, they do not disagree with or reject inclusive singing or performance music during worship that are typical of mainstream worship services. UU's have embraced that part of their tradition, but have chosen to make it their own modern, 21st Century ritual. As the interviewees revealed, UUs are in fact

borrowing from a diverse array of cultures to create their own traditions. The biggest example of their creation of group tradition is through their music, which is an expression and reflection of their core values of inclusivity, respect, and a joint search for meaning. Unitarian Universalists are enacting Swidler's strategies of action (1986) to respond in new ways to what they hold sacred; they borrow songs from more mainstream faith traditions and change the lyrics to be more general and therefore more inclusive, to work for them at an individual level on their responsible search for truth and meaning. They are actively using diversity through music to create meaning for themselves in their own search, and to be inclusive of all faiths, which connects them to larger communities but can also facilitate a sense of belonging within the church; all individuals' beliefs are included. Durkheim also believed that religion would still continue to express the individual's relation to society, but sacred power would be seen to reside within rather than outside. If sacred power lies within the individual, then congregational, inclusive singing functions as a deeply personal act which unifies the UU congregation and also serves to bring the sacred, i.e. humanity, out into the open. The hymn then brings faith into tangible being and functions as a symbol of the singers' faith.

For the participants in my study, music served a vital role by acting as a ritual. While UU's may not sing the same thing every week, they still sing together every week. The act of inclusive singing is the only thing that they do during worship in which everyone participates at an equivalent level. For Unitarian Universalists there exists a "third sentiment of religion" that is vital to upholding UUs' values and beliefs and can be added to Durkheim's original two when discussing Unitarian Universalism. The UU individual is connected to his or her surrounding/immediate community (Durkheim's first sentiment of religion), the community is connected to other world societies (Durkheim's second sentiment of religion), and in addition, *the individual also feels connected to a larger world community* (the suggested third sentiment of religion). When the individual feels connected to a larger world community, he or she not only

has the support of the immediate society but also can feel a sense of belonging in the world, a greater sense of personal identity.

My research on the functions of religion for Unitarian Universalists extends what Durkheim believed to be the purpose of religion and ritual and generally fits his predictions for what ritual and religion would mean in the future. Unitarian Universalism and its music provide the opportunity for those of any faith background to have spirituality and a faith community, to feel a sense of belonging within a smaller group of individuals and within the larger world community. They are allowed a sense of place even if they may be non-traditional in their beliefs or their lifestyle. As society is becoming increasingly diversified, UUism is functioning as part of the diversification of faith. Worship music functions as it does in other religions, to bring people together, but in this religion and in this society, the stakes are higher—it serving a more vital function because UU's are actively choosing to include it in their faith, which signifies that they need it in some way, that the ways they are using it to connect, to emphasize their values, to transcend, are all vital for the maintenance of their faith.

CONCLUSION

Religion in today's society can truly be one for the satisfaction of individual wants and needs. Unitarian Universalism and its music offer an inclusive alternative to mainstream religion through providing worship mediums and general tenets that are broad and open to interpretation, and that can connect people to the world around them in a society that is becoming increasingly diverse. While most of my findings were relevant for both churches I studied, I do recognize that every church, regardless of its denomination or affiliations, has its differences and can be considered unique. I included Unitarian Universalist churches in two of the largest cities in Colorado, so my findings are relevant especially in this region. Given that Unitarian Universalism can be considered a liberal religion, some of my findings may be relevant for liberal religion as a whole. Time was a limitation of this study that only allowed me to examine two churches located in similar regions, and therefore I could only conduct and draw conclusions from a limited

amount of interviews. To get a broader range of views, this study could be extended to analyze Unitarian Universalist churches in all regions of the U.S., including some of the founding UU churches which are located in Boston—does music play a different role given that they may be more steeped in tradition? This project could also be extended through conducting a content analysis of the hymnals in the UU church, and interviewing UU hymn writers to delve deeper into the contradictions and issues that surround the creation and appropriation of music in a modern church. During the project, those who were members of the choir related to me that the choir is almost a community within a community; another idea then, would be to study church choirs as subcultures in the UU religion or other religions as well. A final area of future research could focus on the contradictory notions of the *inclusion* of all people and beliefs that UU's strive for and the actual *exclusion* of people with differentiating political beliefs that is happening in the religion. This shows us that Unitarian Universalism, while providing a progressively inclusive and respectful spiritual haven, still succumbs to tensions that arise from the diversification of modern life.

References

- Adorno, Theodor W. 1976. *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*. New York, NY: The Seabury Press, Inc.
- Alpert, Harry. 1961. *Emile Durkheim and his Sociology*. New York, NY: Russell & Russell, Inc.
- Ammerman, Nancy T., Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, eds. 1998. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Abingdon Press.
- Arnason, Wayne B. and Kathleen Rolenz. 2007. *Worship That Works: Theory and Practice for Unitarian Universalists*. Boston, MA: Skinner House Books.
- Bellah, Robert N. 2003. "The Ritual Roots of Society and Culture". Pp. 31-44 in *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Michelle Dillon. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Bohlman, Philip V. 2006. "Prayer on the Panorama: Music and Individualism in American Religious Experience." Pp. 232-253 in *Music in American Religious Experience*, edited by Philip V. Bohlman, Edith L. Blumhofer, and Maria M. Chow. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Christiano, Kevin J., William H. Swatos, Jr., and Peter Kivisto. 2008. *Sociology of Religion: Contemporary Developments, second edition*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Clark, Linda J. 1994. *Music in Churches: Nourishing Your Congregation's Musical Life*. New York, NY: The Alban Institute, Inc.
- DeNora, Tia. 2000. *Music in everyday life*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Durkheim, Emile. (1961). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Carol Cosman, Trans.). New York: Oxford University Press Inc. (Original work published 1912)
- Durkheim, Emile. (1972). "Religion and Ritual." Pp. 219-239 in *Selected Writings*, edited by Anthony Giddens. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Gray, Judith. 2006. "'When in Our Music God is Glorified': Singing and Singing About Singing in a Congregational Church." Pp. 195-212 in *Music in American Religious Experience*, edited by Philip V. Bohlman, Edith L. Blumhofer, and Maria M. Chow. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Greenwood, Andrea and Mark W. Harris. 2011. *An Introduction to the Unitarian and Universalist Traditions*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Kapp, Deborah J. 2002. "Agency and authority in the performance and practice of

Christian worship; a study of worship in three Presbyterian congregations.” Ph.D. dissertation, Program in Sociology and Anthropology, Loyola University Chicago. Retrieved from WorldCat.

Martin, Peter J. 1995. *Sounds & society: Themes in the sociology of music*. New York, NY: Manchester University Press.

Roof, Wade Clark. 2003. “Toward Integration of Religion and Spirituality.” Pp. 137-148 in *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Michelle Dillon. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Skinner, Donald E. 2008. “Music programs key to congregational life.” Unitarian Universalist Association. Retrieved April 18, 2012 (<http://www.calstatela.edu/library/guides/3asa.pdf>).

Swidler, Ann. 1986. “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies.” *American Sociological Review* 51 (2): Pp. 273-286.

Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations. 2012. “Our Unitarian Universalist Principles.” Unitarian Universalist Association. Retrieved April 18, 2012 (<http://www.uua.org/beliefs/principles/index.shtml>).

Westley, Frances. 1978. “The Cult of Man”: Durkheim’s Predictions and New Religious Movements. *Sociological Analysis* 39 (2): 135-145.

Wuthnow, Robert. 2003. *All in Sync: How Music and Art are Revitalizing American Religion*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: The Regents of the University of California.

Wuthnow, R. (1998). *After heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Appendix A. Individual Interview Schedule

1. Please briefly introduce yourself.
2. What attracted you to the UU church?
3. What attracted you to this church in particular?
4. What makes you stay at this church/stay with UUism?
5. Please describe the typical UU.
6. What do you hope for and experience when you come to worship on Sunday mornings?
7. What currently is good about worship in your congregation?
 - a. Is there anything not so good about worship that you would like to change?
8. What unifies this congregation?
 - a. In general?
 - b. In the day to day activities?
9. Please relate to me an experience that you have had that you would consider worship at its best.
 - a. Please relate to me an experience that you have had that you would consider worship music at its best.
10. How do you feel about the musical offerings during worship and in this congregation in general?
11. What does the music here do for you each Sunday?
12. Please discuss congregational singing during worship. How does it make you feel?
13. How do you feel about music without lyrics during worship? How does it make you feel?
14. What is your all time favorite hymn/song during worship? Where did you learn it? Who do you sing it with and in what contexts? What does it evoke in you?
15. What does UUism offer that other religions cannot or do not?
16. How would you respond to those who may say that UUism is not a “real religion”?
17. Are UU churches well poised for this particular moment in time?

Appendix B. Interview Schedule for Musical Directors

1. Tell me about [First Universalist/High Plains] church.
 - a. When did the Church begin in Denver/C.Springs? Brief History?
 - b. Core beliefs? Mission?
 - c. Describe the typical congregation member
2. Tell me about how you came to be at [First Universalist/High Plains] church.
 - a. What do you do as musical director/worship pastor? What is your role during the service?
 - b. Why do you do this job?
 - c. How does membership work at First Universalist?
3. What are the musical offerings at the church? Choir/Bands/Etc.
4. How is music selected each week for services? What is the general type of music during worship?
5. How do you feel about tradition in this church?
6. For the most part the older hymns no longer truly represent the mood of the new day, which must pour out its own heart in joy and praise, in aspiration and resolution. Today, UU congregations have many options when it comes to music, just as they have multiple theological paths. Many styles and tempos can be used each Sunday. Yet some congregations prefer the traditional music. How do you feel about tradition through music (i.e. singing songs people know, creation of new)?
7. What do you think is most important for the congregation to get out of the musical aspects of worship each Sunday?
8. What, if any, are the specific goals of the worship music?
 - a. Community? How/do you think the music inspires people?
9. I've seen people weeping because the third line in the fourth verse had an image that cradled them or evoked a beautiful memory. Music can bring a level of emotional resonance that no other form of worship can. Music with lyrics vs. w/out lyrics? Could you explain the different aims of each?
10. I noticed that there are parts of the service when the congregation participates, and when the congregation sits and listens. What are the purposes of each?
11. As musical director, do you think about the music's visual presentation? Do you think the visual presentation has the potential to enhance the aims of the music?
12. Comment on the dynamic between spoken word and music.

Appendix C. Interview Schedule for Pastors:

1. Tell me about [First Universalist/High Plains] church.
 - a. When did the Church begin in Denver/C.Springs? Brief History?
 - b. Core beliefs? Mission?
 - c. Describe the typical congregation member.
2. Tell me about how you came to be at First Unitarian church.
 - a. Why did you choose UUism? What lead you to UUism?s
 - b. What do you do as worship pastor? What is your role during the service?
 - c. Why do you do this job?
 - d. How does membership work at First Universalist?
3. What experience is useful to you as you plan/lead worship?
 - a. How did you learn to plan/lead worship?
 - b. What kind of training was involved or required?
 - c. Who are your mentors for this activity? Tell me about them.
 - d. What, if any, skills or experience do you lack for worship?
4. Could you please describe the rituals in this church?
5. How do you feel about tradition/rituals in this church? What role do they play, especially in a place like this?
6. Without a deity, what holds the church together? What unifies the congregation?
 - a. Why do people come here, especially from other religions?
7. When you are involved in worship, what are you trying to accomplish? What are the goals of worship?
 - a. What is your responsibility?
 - b. Who is your audience?
 - c. To whom are you accountable?
 - d. What material resources do you need and use for worship?
8. What is your role in the musical life of the church, if any?
9. How do you incorporate music into your sermons? Do you actively think about it?
10. What do you think are the goals of worship music?
11. What do you feel is the purpose of music as part of worship?
 - a. What is the role of music in the life of the church, day to day?
12. “A conservative Christian may not like a new tune that Michael smith of any CCM artist, but they agree on the theology, so they still have their worship wars, but their wars are about a smaller range of music.” (AUK) The 7 principles do unite the church, but praise music is about praising SOMETHING! Because really what can we praise together? We can’t praise God together, we don’t all believe in God.

13. Comment on the dynamic between spoken word and music.
14. How would you like to see worship grow or change in your congregation?
15. Is there a place where I can get membership data on the church?
16. Is there anything else you would like to comment on that we have or haven't discussed?
Are there any questions that I have not asked that you think should have been included in this interview?