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**A Cord of Three: A Phenomenological Study of Linkages in Interdenominational Interactions in Northwest Wyoming as Informed Through Network and Social Exchange Theories**

Timothy N. Gray

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A Cord of Three: A Phenomenological Study of Linkages in Interdenominational  
Interactions in Northwest Wyoming as Informed Through Network and Social Exchange

Theories

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## Abstract

This study explores pastors' interactions in a rural regional network through Network and Social Exchange Theories. With the increasing need to understand the life experiences of network actors, a qualitative based approach is utilized. The results provide in-depth and contextually sensitive results that traditional quantitative-based techniques cannot. Open-ended interviewing allowed the participants to share their lived experiences, identifying the rhythms of boundary spanning behaviors. This offers hope for those seeking to understand the intricacies that orchestrate groups of people coming together in synergistic relationships. From a biblical understanding, a Cord of Three is not easily broken, and this study reveals multifarious threads (or themes) and the conditions in which these threads readily entwine. As knots can be studied to understand their composition, so can these ties and intersections.

The overarching theory for this study is Network Theory, with Social Exchange Theory providing insight into the personal linkages. These two key typologies are used for data interpretation; Eisenberg (2006) helps us understand the Institutional and Representative linkages through a network theory perspective. The institutional level themes centered around syncretism factors and how ecumenical or unity minded the organizations found themselves. At a representative level, resource poverty theory presented findings that showed interactions centering on time efficiencies, human capital needs, and the impact of space scarcity. Salzer's (1998) typology helps delve into Social Exchange elements and the more personal, intimate factors involving an individual's discrete setting, organizational and ideological ties, the dynamic of trust, and how common threat acts as a unifier. Patterns and rhythms emerged from the participants' lived stories regarding their respective churches and interdenominational relationships. Interestingly, once certain thresholds are met (such as time demands, theological beliefs, and trust is developed) people are readily willing to cross traditional boundaries and join forces.

Individuals can use time, purpose, and trust-building to create powerful personal relationships. Busy schedules and responsibilities hinder many relationships from developing into a healthy regional network, but careful and deliberate attempts to work around these boundaries can bring results. The pastors in this study exhibit that a healthy network can exist in a region, but relationships require effort to maintain and grow. The lived experiences of these pastors show that they are engaging in risky social behavior by trusting their peers in these relationships, but the narratives repeatedly show that the risk is worth the gain. The perspective and social currency gained from these interactions act as a life-giving source when done without ulterior motives. Looking for commonalities and following the rhythms produces opportunities for authentic relationships interactions.

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A Phenomenological Study of Linkages in Interdenominational Interactions in Northwest Wyoming as Informed Through Network and Social Exchange Theories

**Chapter One: Introduction**

Ecclesiastes 4:12 states that “though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three is not quickly broken.” While this is often referenced regarding the joining of one man and one woman together by God in a marriage relationship, it also reflects the union of Christ and his church. It also shows the power of numbers and relationships; the more relationships, the stronger the whole. This study seeks to explore the lived experiences of pastoral linkages in a regional/local church. There is a very good reason studying this group is so important to the academic community: Throughout the United States, no matter how rural or urban, one type of non-profit business frequently exists. This non-profit is the church congregation. Understanding how these organizations interact is important to further our understanding of network theory and social exchange theory in a regional context. It is also important if we want to understand how 501c3 organizations with similar values interact. If we can understand the lived experiences of this population, we will learn why leaders and people cross boundaries and decide to engage in relationship together. When people cross boundaries, knowledge is exchanged and understanding grows. In its design, this study is meant to reflect the joining of three strands: church theory, network theory, and social exchange theory. The intersection point for these theories is unique; the individual pastors, as leaders of their own organizations, are only truly understood through the lens of the individual experience. We also gain unique insight into the organizations as entities that engage in boundary-spanning, through the voices of those who lead them.

### Statement of the Problem

The Church in a postmodern world is in an identity crisis, particularly at a local/regional level. It is not well understood at the personal level in the literature as to why this larger identity crisis is happening. This is a sweeping statement, but a review of the literature shows that this identity issue is seated at the highest levels and works down to the lowest levels. As formal governance models have failed or are failing, problems have arisen. Some of these governance models started with the great schism that occurred during the reformation when the first denominations began their splits from the catholic church. This is where the Lutheran, Episcopal, and Presbyterian denominations can trace their roots. These denominations often became state churches, England had the Episcopal (also called Anglican); Presbyterian church was often affiliated with Scotland; and the Lutheran churches were often the official state churches of many German and Scandinavian countries (Shelley, 1996). In the American melting pot of immigration from many of these same countries multiple denominations emerged. With the Constitution preventing a state-sponsored church, these denominations were separated from the secular power many of them wielded in the Old World. In America, these denominations went through their own boom and bust cycles, often rising and falling with the influx of immigrants and declining as those immigrant groups assimilated into the American nation. A 100-year review done by Chaves and Sutton, shows how organizational consolidation in American protestant denominations has a cyclical nature. As these consolidations and schisms ebb and flow, The study points out that the religious sector in the United States is distinctive for the degree to which institutional change occurs not through birth and death of organizations, but through the mergers and schisms occurring among preexisting denominations (Chaves & Sutton, 2004, p. 51). Some of these old denominational models represented

preindustrial, industrial, and modern societies, but the new realities reflect a postmodern reality that often echoes tribalism. The debate about the role of the universal church and its role over particular churches is still debated by Popes and Bishops (Massa, 2007). Wuthnow (1997) writes about the spiritual malaise and fiscal problems, all fruits of a loss of identity and calling. The place in society of the church in terms of evangelical identity and politics is in crisis. The role of churches in their local and regional identity is in jeopardy. McKinney and Hoge (1983, p. 52) state that “local institutionalized factors were most influential in suburbs and least so in small cities and rural areas.” This makes sense, as population density brings with it more power from more relationships. More congregations of the same denomination can tie together, much as a cord of three is not easily broken.

Small cities and rural areas are not well understood, and this study hopes to provide some insight into the lived experiences of those pastors dealing with the reality of local and regional church issues. Differences between denominations at the local level become blurred with the decline of denominational systems. Official denominational theological stances exist at the higher echelons of the denominational structures, but due to the discretion of local pastors and governing boards (elders, directors, etc.), local inquiry into a congregation or an assembly’s theological views is needed. Some denominations have started to reconcile through agreements. Efforts have been made by some Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopal (Anglican), and Presbyterian church organizations to be able to hire each other’s clergy, or at least make it easier for ordained pastors to switch between these denominations. This has not altered the declining numbers in Christian churches in the west. Local community and non-denominational churches have even less incentive to create normalized clergy exchanges. While there is no formal demand placed

on local churches to interact with one another, there is scriptural precedent for them to interact in response to Christ's call to unity and Paul's letter regarding the topic.

Understanding the linkages between these networks/communities in northwest Wyoming can tell us whether or not this region differs from the norm. Once established, the results can be used to shape the practices of organizations in similar environments. The Eisenberg typology will be used to help frame the institutional and representative linkages in relation to Network Theory. Then the Salzer typology will help to identify the granular causes of interactions as applied to Social Exchange Theory. This exploration into some of the drivers for relationships will provide unique perspective into the lived experience of these pastors and their organizations. All of this is driven by the desire to have a better understanding of truth, facts, and advancing theory.

“Christianity makes claims to have access to truth, wherever it is found,” writes C. S. Lewis (1951). This sentiment is echoed and built on in more current times through the works of Strobel (2009, 2004), Plantinga (2002), and Nash (2010)—investigations anchored in the theological perspective that God is truth. Academia and the advancement of literature and theories is humanity's collective attempt to understand facts and truth. In relation to this study, Network and Social Exchange Theories are academia's best attempt at gaining an understanding of the interactions.

### [Purpose of the Study](#)

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological investigation is to understand the linkages between congregational networks. This is accomplished by studying how pastors in a community, through their lived experiences, interact with other pastors through their boundary spanning behaviors. These interactions impact the organizations they represent. This study lies

at the convergence of two often divergent claims to truth: church and academia. It is the hope of the author that both sides will benefit from understanding the experiences of these different linkages interacting between networks and located within the larger community and then convert these lived experiences into actionable themes for the benefit themselves and others. Outcomes of network and social exchange theories, in relationship to non-profit organizations, can help advance our understanding of these entities in the literature, add to this literature base, and help non-profits navigate the complexities of inter-organizational dynamics. It is with this desire that the following research questions have been posited.

### Research Questions

- Primary Research Question: What is the composition of Northwest Wyoming's regional and congregational linkages, as informed through network and social exchange theories?

### Secondary Research Questions

- How does Network Theory inform leaders' institutional and representative linkages behaviors by engaging in boundary-spanning activities?
- What Social Exchange Theory indicators exist for personal linkage engagement in boundary-spanning activities? What factors inform pastors' degree of willingness to engage in inter-denominational activities?

### Definition of terms

Language is the vehicle through which we communicate. Certain terms and concepts need to be defined to avoid miscommunication and misunderstanding. To aid in this, the following terms and concepts have been defined that are relevant to this study:

- *Network*: An organized pattern of non-linear, non-hierarchical relationships that nest within other networks.

- *Linkages*: Connections between different organizations or subgroups within a network. There are three types: institutional, representative, and personal (Eisenberg et al., 2006, p. 265).
- *Institutional Linkages*: Connections that formally represent a larger organization or network. These are formal (or hard) connections, an individual acting on behalf of the whole, not the part. Examples are denominational representation, accreditation, affiliation, synod, diocese, or certain theological conferences.
- *Representative Linkages*: Connections that represent a local congregation or church organization. These connections can be formal or informal, an individual who represents the organization, but who can be informally represent the whole. An example would be Presbyterian Church of Jackson Hole or Shepard of the Mountains Lutheran Church.
- *Personal Linkages*: Connections representing the individual and not acting as an agent of any organization. These are informal. Individuals may hold greater representative duties, but it is clear they are not representing the larger organizations in any way.
- *Nodes*: Events (can be people) that are well-defined occurrences in time. Inside a network nodes are the elements interacting with other nodes within the network (Elmaghraby, 1970b).
- *Arc*: An activity that consumes something. This is the relationship or connection between the nodes (Elmaghraby, 1970a).
- *Relationships*: An exchange of activity, tangible or intangible, and more or less rewarding or costly, between at least two persons (P. M. Blau, 1964).

- *Social Exchange*: Social behavior as exchange. A combination of both the *Arcs* and *Relationships* definitions. Social Exchange includes (but is not limited to) power, emotions, social capital, or other factors. (Emerson, 1976)
- *Boundary-Spanning Activity*: Any relationship, arc, or exchange that takes an individual outside of his/her normal network or organization.
- *Organization*: A social entity that is goal directed, designed as deliberately structured and coordinated activity systems, and linked to the external environment. (Daft, 2001)
- *Organizational Communication*: The enduring transactions, flows, and linkages that occur among or between organizations. (Eisenberg et al., 2006)
- *Denominations*: Subdivisions of Christianity that consist of particular theological and structural differences containing a common heritage and set of doctrinal differences. (Shelley, 1996)
- *Catholic*: From the Greek phrase *kath'holou* ("referring to the whole"), the universal church. (McGrath, 2006)
- *Ecumenical*: From the Greek word *oecumene*, generally now understood to mean the movement concerned with fostering of Christian unity. (McGrath, 2006)
- *Church*: Used with many identifiers, a church is a group of believers in Christ that unite. The catholic (universal) church embodies the whole collection of Christians, while a local (city) church would include the Christians in a geographical location. House churches would be subgroups within that city or region. In terms of this study, this level of denotation includes local church congregations that hold a separate (501c3) status from other churches in the region (Koivisto, 2009).



### Delimitations and limitations

As in any study, certain delimitations and limitations exist, as well as assumptions regarding the expectation of results. The delimitations of this study include sample size and geographical positionings. This study will focus on the community of churches found in Teton County, Wyoming. While the sample represents a high percentage of Teton County's pastors, it does not constitute a large sample, and thus could be considered a unique microcosm or subcommunity. This region is chosen because of the investigator's deep knowledge of a particular phenomenon that continues to affect the relationship among several churches in that region. Limitations of the study are anchored in the qualitative nature of phenomenology, meaning that what is happening in Teton County may not be generalizable to other communities. Though this approach does not mean the study has statistical significance, it does mean it has practical significance in relation to understanding a complete network of leaders in this specific setting. The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) involves a double hermeneutic, and as such, the double interpretation leaves room for error. To attempt to overcome this, an attempt was made to interview almost all pastors in the valley and then be able to triangulate the data on the shared collective narratives.

Some of the assumptions are that linkages exist in Teton County between church leaders and that Teton County is a community that differs from neighboring communities because of its economy (resort/tourism), economic distribution (high wealth, high real estate), geographical limitations, and population size and composition. There are also assumptions that pastors are relational and seek peer relationships that are in line with their theological beliefs.

### Need for significance of the Study

The need for this study is based on the need to increase the qualitative research pool in relation to Network and Social Exchange Theories. While quantitative network research exists that pulls from large meta-data analysis, it often lacks the context of these individual personal drivers. Correlation does not mean causation, which means causation must be studied to understand the context better. Christianity makes claims to have access to truth/Truth, wherever it is found (Lewis, 1951). This claim is anchored in the statement that God is truth. Academic theory attempts to make a claim at truth through the compilation of mankind's knowledge. Network theory is academia's best attempt at understanding truth regarding the interaction of different networks; in this case, network and social exchange theories interact with the ecumenical movements for interdenominational convergence in Teton County. This study lies at this convergence of claims. One study noted that all its investigators agreed that "local church growth depends partly on adapting to local conditions" (McKinney & Hoge, 1983). There is an overarching construct that bridges these theories, and that construct posits three typologies of linkages: institutional, representative, and personal linkages. Understanding the linkages in the interactions between these networks can help inform and advance knowledge in network, social exchanges, and ecumenical collaboration. It is then possible to take this knowledge and use it to enact flexible practices to be tried elsewhere. It is the hope of the author that both sides may benefit from understanding the lived experience of the pastors studied who describe the various networks interacting within the larger community.

### Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes of this study were:

- To provide a better understanding of the factors influencing pastors in their boundary spanning behaviors
- To add to the general literature by providing qualitative examples and context, thus adding to the literature gap in network theory and social exchange theory.
- To understand the dynamics of the institutional and representative linkages in a network of churches that exist in a specific setting.
- To understand how joint venture and resource sharing help alliance building between similar organizations in a network theory context.
- To make sense of the personal linkages that impact a pastor's willingness to engage in relationship.
- To further give context to the social exchange indicators, especially trust and time, which act as commodities in social exchange transactions.

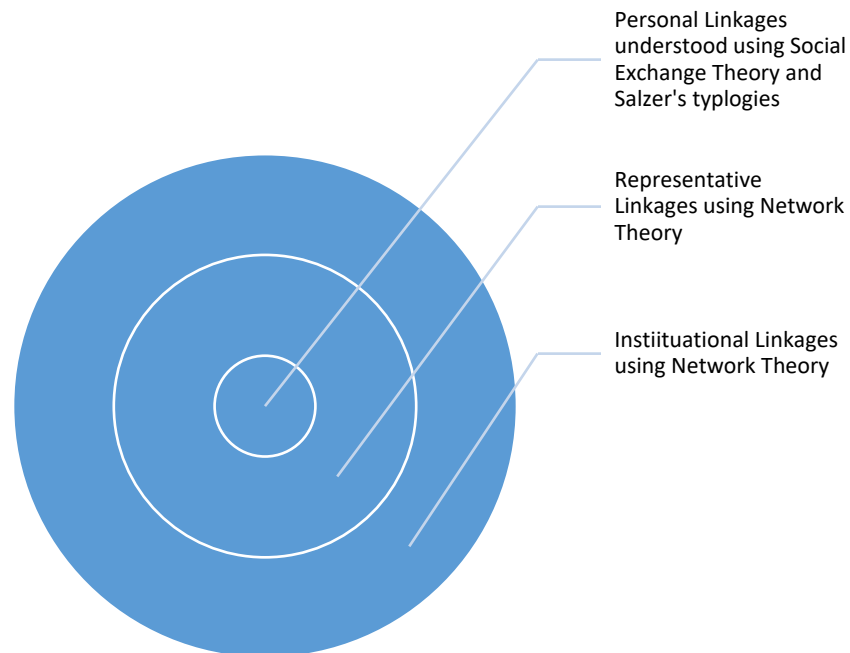
### Researcher's perspective

The researcher's lengthy involvement in the identified community created the impetus for exploration into this area. In traveling to various professional youth workers conferences across the United States the author discovered that his particular community was notably different in its cross-denominational interactions. As months turned into years, and then into a decade, the phenomenon continued. This observable and lived experience to ministry provides an important and significant perspective into a relational dynamic that many people may not be familiar with or even aware of.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review provides a background and exploration of concepts that are important to the purpose, problems, and issues surrounding this study. The impetus of this study centers on the lived experiences of pastoral interactions in a community, and how their relationships and organizations are impacted by these interactions. These interactions are synonymous with exchange behaviors, arcs, and linkages. Eisenberg (2006, p. 265) proposed a typology of interorganizational communication that helps classify linkages. This typology bridges Network and Social Exchange Theories, and helps us understand many of the dynamics regarding the position of the collective church and those individual actors within the church. Diagram 1 is useful to understand the interplay between these two theories and clarify how Network Theory encompasses Social Exchange Theory.

Diagram 1



These linkage designations are institutional, representative, and personal. Eisenberg's typology falls short in understanding the relational pieces of the personal linkages, and that is where

Salzer's typologies help. Salzer's typologies are helpful in understanding the social exchange elements of the personal interactions. Certain social exchange indicators act as commodities or currency within a social economy. The pastors in this study, by their exchanges with each other, can help advance our understanding of how to process the nature and implications of these linkages between organizations. Their interactions can show us why they are crossing boundaries in a way that a quantitative review of the organizations would miss. The literature review's initial focus will be on framing the necessary background regarding church history, network theory, social exchange theory, and where network theory and social exchange theory overlap. This is designed to help frame the material found through the lived experiences of the pastors.

After the background for network theory is provided, the review will explore institutional and representative linkages through the lens of Network theory. This frames boundary spanning activities occurring in the dominant culture and community. The progression of network theory in the literature transitions from quantitative to a qualitative approach to investigating and understanding network theory. Institutional and representative demands that impact organizational dynamics are then reviewed. Social exchange theory (SET) is reviewed, with pertinent exchange indicators discussed that relates to personal linkage factors.

Before exploring the external and internal influencers of these linkages, a short review of the state of church in America occurs.

### Culture and History: Church

#### Historical: Reformation and Denominationalism

It is important to frame the role and history of the church in order to set the backdrop of the relationships in this study. The church builds on its foundation of Jesus Christ first and the

Word second (Atkins, 2007). While there are creeds from the early years of the church that continue to be accepted as universal, unity in ecumenical church thinking can break down quickly after those two foundational points. Before we can explore the current state of Christianity in the United States, it is important to take a quick look at how the church separated into different denominations. This review is important in order for this step to embrace paradigm thinking: that is, understanding the past contextually (Webber, 1999). This allows a review of the catholic (whole) church in all of its various epochs and manifestations. Some of these early manifestations exist currently as denominational movements. Others developed partially in global regions without fully engraining themselves into western strains of Christianity. For example, eastern variations that occurred in Asia Minor can be found in Eastern Orthodoxy and Armenianism. Webber states we may broadly say “the story of Christianity moves from a focus on mystery in the classical period, to institution in the medieval era, to individualism in the Reformation era, to reason in the modern era, and now, in the post-modern era, back to mystery” (1999, p.16).

While this is a generalized attempt to describe these church ages, it is useful to piece together the divisions of church institutions that occurred over the course of the two-thousand-year history of Christianity. These broad categories are supported by Bruce Shelley (1996) in a chapter by chapter approach to each epoch of church history, and how each transformed into the next manifestation. Of particular note for this study is the rise of denominationalism, and the attempts during the reformation to create a church that was centered on theology based on the Bible (Grimm, 1965). The ideology was admirable, but the result was chaotic: each reformer reflected their own nuanced approach to theology and numerous denominations were formed. Many of these bear the names of their founders such as Calvinism, Mennonites, and Lutherans

(Webber, 1999). The legacy of the reformation was a culture of disagreement (Grimm, 1965). When enough disagreement occurred, it was easier for the party to split and form a new church with its own theological particulars than it was to stay and keep relationship. These divisions caused conflict, and many of these new denominations would flee to the New World where persecution was not as real of a threat (Shelley, 1996). Koivisto (2009) does not ascribe denominationalism as the problem, but the mutual exclusivity that often accompanies denominationalism. And yet, even within the major denominations within the United states, subdivisions within the those denominations number over 200 (Koivisto, 2009, p. xx). Often what defines church organizations today is not what they agree on, but what differentiates them from others. Denominations are splintering down into smaller and less controllable groups (P. N. Thomas, 2011). On the other hand, merger events are also occurring. These merger is often influenced by denominational identify (family, racial makeup), and organizational characteristics (size, centralization, and membership concentration)(Chaves & Sutton, 2004). These larger trends set the environmental stage for the reactions and direction that Christianity in America is headed. This trend parallels a larger institutional degradation that follows the decline of modernism and the rise of postmodern and tribality societal tendencies.

#### Current State of Church in USA

Many of the denominations trace their roots to the great schism that occurred during the reformation when the first denominations began their splits from the catholic church. This is where the Lutheran, Episcopal, and Presbyterian denominations find their origins. These denominations often became state churches. England had the Episcopal (also called Anglican), the Presbyterian church was often affiliated with Scotland, and the Lutheran church was often the official state church of many German and Scandinavian countries (Shelley, 1996). As

America became a melting pot of immigrants from many of these countries, many denominations in America emerged. As denominationalism created vertical lines of governance for national denominations (and sometimes global denominations) to govern regional and local congregations, a silo effect occurred between local congregations. With the restriction in place from the United States Constitution preventing state-sponsored churches, these denominations were separate from the secular power that many of them wielded in the Old World. With these vertical lines weakened from secular influence, denominations moved on with their own organizations, but the silo effect remained. This is partially due to the fact that local congregations did not need to appeal to other local congregations outside of their affiliation for resources or help.

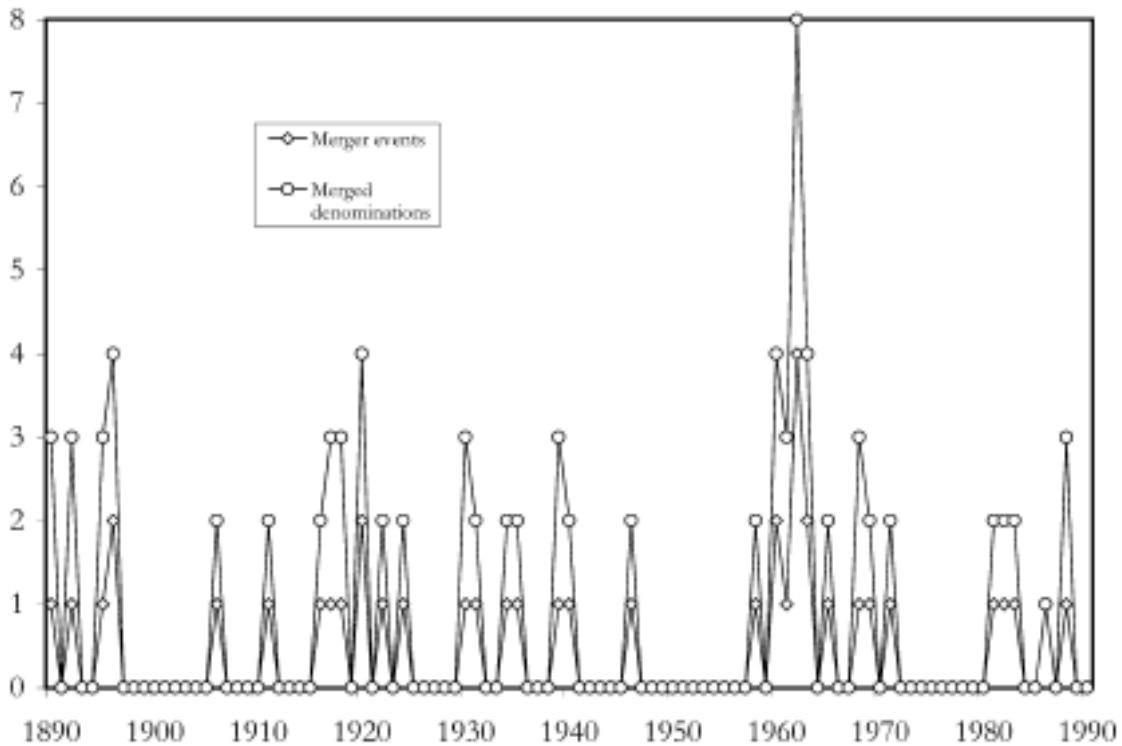
Global efforts of ecumenicalism between denominations started occurring in the early 1900s (Zurlo, 2015) and continued through the mid- to late-1900s (Brown, 2012); at the regional/local level ecumenicalism is dependent on personalities of local ministers with specific local circumstances (Boldon, 1985). While research is limited on studies of regional/local ecumenicalism, there is an increasing trend exploration of concepts centered around the idea of the city-church (Koivisto, 2009, Morgan, 2000, Durheim & Turnbloom, 2015). McGrath (2002, p. 90) notes that by the end of the 20th century a new ecumenism emerged from the ashes of the failures of the global World Council of Churches. Chaves and Sutton (2004) track the organizational consolidation that occurred from 1890-1990 (see figure 1). The church is not immune to the social ebbs and flows that society experienced in the early- and mid-1900s, and this is reflected in the data presented below. What is not included in the denominational mergers below are those churches that consider themselves non-denominational. These local churches started to expand in the mid- to late-1900s and continue to this day. Attempts at ecumenical



consolidation have therefore remained mostly seated in the formal denominational structures, those that are big enough or powerful enough to engage in negotiations and be able to feel organizationally confident enough to stand their ground.

Figure 1.

**NUMBER OF MERGER EVENTS AND NUMBER OF DENOMINATIONS INVOLVED IN MERGERS PER YEAR, 1890-1990**



Ecumenical movements rest on personal mutual respect and a serious love of the Christian gospel. Grassroots ecumenism has worked where the creaking bureaucracies of the institutions have failed (McGrath, 2002). Durham and Turnbloom (2015) focus on the grassroots ecumenical efforts in both official (sanctioned) and unofficial capacities. In particular they focus on unauthorized practices of collaboration between denominations. This is a bold effort found in

the literature to force dialogue and communication to help identify and foment champions that are willing to take risks for church unity. Bolden (1985) describes local/regional ecumenism as a form of cartelization that is a more rational way of covering the market for religion. This reduces the number of competitors in a market (through mutual agreement), and also allows intra-denominational operations to be streamlined and economies of scale introduced (Bolden, 1985). With formal communication models and methods giving way to free flow of information (Brown, 2012), the control of local/regional denominational entities via information is breaking down. Many denominations, especially liberally identified ones, are in decline (Wolfe, 2005, p. 43). This has allowed a new perspective to develop on the nature of the New Testament church in regards to the local church being far broader than any single local congregation. Instead the local church includes all the believing congregations within an entire city or locality (Koivisto, 2009, p. 270). Morgan (2000) describes in great length the biblical foundation for unity in the body of Christ (the church) and mentions that unity starts at the individual level, then family, friends, local church (congregation), and then unity in the greater church of a city. Koivisto's work similarly explores (but in greater detail) the theological foundation needed for a cross-denominational renewal. He looks at various denominational differences for commonality and themes that can be used to help bridge some of the more common sticking points in cross-denominational efforts. At the end of his work, he references the Chicago Call, which was an appeal to evangelicals in the late 1970s for unity. While this is a theological approach to the problem, Morgan's study goes further and provides a list of preferred cooperative efforts for the churches in that network. Prayer for the region (including government), coordinated student ministries, and interchurch celebrations are mentioned as effective methods for local/regional collaboration. Organizations exist to help encourage

collaboration efforts like those just described. One such organization, Church Collaboration (“Church Collaboration Home,” 2012), provides nine methods that churches can consider collaboration efforts. Each of these methods is provided with an inspired case study as an example. This organization is more of a practitioner’s resource, but it is a useful evidence for collaborative efforts currently being explored. It is Koivisto, Durheim and Turnbloom, and Morgan’s studies that most reflect the proper setting of ecumenical approach for this study of the church. This study seeks to identify current or historical linkages, understand how they fit into the two predominant theories (Network and SET), and present them as evidence that new practices can be developed and enacted by others.

#### Background: Network Theory

Networks are a form of organization and how those networks develop and respond is synonymous with organizational dynamics. As management theory has advanced, the understanding of organizations, networks, and their interplay has developed more nuance. It is important to know some of the basic elements of what comprises a network. Network theory and SET overlap, but SET is really nested into network theory, in that many of the components needed to explain the relationships first existed in a formalized sense in network theory first. In order to understand network theory and SET, it is important to understand the following components. Networks are comprised of nodes and arcs. Sometimes these arcs are referred to as threads or linkages (Eisenberg et al., 2006). A node can represent an organization, unit, person, computer, or another type of entity that is distinctly individualistic enough to qualify as an independent operation (Elmaghraby, 1970b). Arcs represent the relationship between nodes. The relationships can be formal or informal, but any type of interaction, be it communication or transaction, will signify an arc. The stronger the relationship, the stronger the arc.

Network theory differs from graph theory in that a graph defines the purely structural relationship between the nodes while a network also bears the quantitative characteristics of the nodes and arcs (Elmaghraby, 1970b, p. 1). When these nodes start increasing, the complexities of interaction via the nodes increase as well. The arcs in network theory represent both the qualitative (structural) and the quantitative realities of the interactions. Another way of understanding this is to view nodes as events (well-defined occurrences in time), and arcs as activities that consume resources such as time, money, and skills (Elmaghraby, 1970a). This construct is a simple concept to understand at this level, but the implications reach into all fields of study. As the nodes increase, the interactions between the nodes grow in complexity making navigating the network more complex. These complexities start developing into situations and scenarios that require models to help an observer understand the relationships. Network models then help guide the analysis of interactions and relationships. As mentioned previously, Eisenberg (2006, p. 265) proposed a typology of interorganizational communication that helps classify linkages. These three linkage categories are institutional, representative, and personal, and they help explain how the quality of linkages can differ within the larger network. These linkages also align nicely with Salzer's (1998) typologies of dominant culture narratives, community narratives, and personal stories. The Eisenberg and Salzer typologies will be the filters through which the data will pass through network and social exchange theories.

#### History of Network Theory

The history of network theory really started to gain traction in the literature in the in the 1960s and 1970s. At that time, much of the literature expressed a theoretical attempt to quantify and qualify the proposed models. Salah Elmaghraby (1970b) reflected this in his attempts to model and equate some activity networks and problems. In his work, he explored some basic

problems such as shortest path, maximum flow, and activity networks. The concept of networks existed in human history long before these types of works were developed, but an exploration of network theory in such a scientific and methodological approach, started to appear in the literature during these two decades. This development reflected the reductionist and scientific approaches as they appeared in other theories and approaches throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s (Scott, 2013). The models developed during this time are valuable to current investigators in the conceptualization that they allow, but they are far too simplistic to be useful in all areas and fields of systems and organizations.

The literature shows how network theory evolved into its current position by tracing its roots to the systematic organizations developed in the fertile ground of the Industrial Revolution. Before organizations could look externally to implement networks and cooperation, they needed to change internally. Frederick Taylor started this process in the academic realm with his attempt to implement scientific management and his mental revolution (Taylor, 1911). Specifically, Taylor was one of the first to realize the importance of social factors in organizations (Locke, 1982). Network theory utilizes many aspects of social theory (Scott, 2013). This is why it ties in well with Social Exchange Theory (discussed later). Taylor's theory was too large for the time, and though many of his principles found acolytes to continue the cause, elements lay dormant until later. Taylor took criticism for trying to implement the basic efficiency elements (time studies, benchmarks). Trying to revolutionize management thinking about the human side of workers was a battle for Taylor's acolytes and followers. The technological side of networks (radios, switches, processors) developed during two world wars, but the social side remained stagnant in the literature, mainly producing reductionist models and remaining highly theoretical (Elmaghraby, 1970b, Elmaghraby, 1970a).

Earlier efforts of Network Theory expansion follow the reductionist nature of the 1940s, 1950s, and the 1960s. As network theory has a strong scientific and mathematical side, this allowed important models to be developed to advance the hard science aspects of the theory. Included in this are efforts in network technology, microprocessor development, and other informational technologies. These models were then found to be exportable in their own ways to social network interactions.

#### Network Theory and Management Strategy

In the social and human side of management, theory understanding started to change. Douglas Macgregor's (1960) *Theory X and Theory Y* and James McGregor Burns (1978) *Transforming Leadership* formally questioned traditional leadership and management assumptions, allowing the atmosphere to develop where organizations could look outside of themselves. Both Theory Y and transformational leadership contain elements of empowering, trust, and charismatic leadership that seek to transform the inside of organizations. Once an organization becomes efficient and whole, it uses resources to grow and expand. After consumption of these resources, the organization is forced to look outside of its capabilities for new resources. This is how network theory and the complexities it brought were able to come into its own.

Literature in network theory took a turn in the late 1970s and early 1980s towards understanding networks and organizations abilities/roles as well as understanding organizations' ability to manage within those networks. This is reinforced in the literature by Knight and Harland who state "much of this body of work focuses on creating and sustaining relationships with specific actors in the wider network or networks of closely bonded actors that are referred to as strategic networks" (2005, p. 281).

As these strategic network concepts were explored, Hakansson and Snehota traced the official Network Model to research at the Swedish University of Uppsala in the mid-1970s (Mintzberg et al., 2005). By the early 1990s, prolific works started to show up in the literature surrounding various components of network theory. During this time the merging of quantitative and qualitative approaches occurred, resulting in a complexity element that was hosted inside Network Theory (Hakansson et al., 2009). Now that network theory had a structure, it required validation and exploration of secondary issues to build out the theory. The late 1990s and the first part of this century have provided a chance for theory critiques synthesizing of processes into a more refined theory. The complexity of the component systems on which network theory rests is openly discussed in various literature articles (Beach, Keast, & Pickernell, 2012, Mischen & Jackson, 2008). This complexity creates a system that is not linear and static, but interdependent and dynamic. Out of this emerges complex, unpredictable, and uncontrollable participant and network behaviors (Franken & Thomsett, 2013). Due to the uncontrollable nature of the larger networks, collaboration is required, if only with a small cluster of participants getting the collaboration started. This study can then help fill the need of starting to learn about how these small clusters of participants decide to engage. Understanding these smaller clusters can help add value and meaning between these clusters and the system as a whole.

The role of network theory is crucial for managers and leaders to understand if they intend on having any sense of a strategic plan for their organization and understand the larger network environment within which their organization exists. As network theory spans across social and natural sciences, it can thus apply to all aspects of life. This is most certainly true in business and organizational networks (Hakansson et al., 2009). Open-systems theory places a

greater significance to an organizations environment (Eisenberg et al., 2006), and the complexities of these environmental networks require great vigilance and skill to manage. Mintzberg states “organizations do not operate in isolation, but in complex webs of interactions with other actors and organizations, including suppliers, competitors, and customers” (2005, p. 255). This approach places a great emphasis on managers or organizational leaders understanding the role of network theory in the realm of business operations and strategic planning for those businesses. It seems that network theory is not well understood by leadership as “relationships with potential customers, and suppliers are commonly undeveloped, unstructured, and uncoordinated” (La Rocca et al., 2013, p. 1026). There is a great desire to understand organizations’ abilities to manage, and manage in, networks of organizations linked by economic exchange (Knight & Harland, 2005). Knight and Harland discuss this through role theory; in particular how organizations in certain networks have roles they are expected to play. An example of the how difficult the roles played in these networks is seen in the realm of public networks. Rethemeyer and Hatmaker (2008) state “most conceptualizations of network management have underemphasized the complexity public managers face when seeking to “steer” network entities and have underappreciated the degree to which public managers are hemmed in by competing network members who wish to direct public networks” (p. 618). Roles within networks are complex and difficult, and this makes network theory’s role in strategic management more important and simultaneously more difficult to understand. Network theory is central to internationalization efforts by businesses and organizations, as many of the activities firms exhibit when internationalizing can be characterized as networking (Welch & Welch, 1996). Clearly, network theory holds a critical position in organizational dynamics, but why is it so important for firms to engage in networking? Networking allows



close relationships and interdependencies to develop that allow companies to do things they would not be able to do on their own in isolation (Snehota, 2014). In essence there is greater reward for engaging outside of your network. There is also a tradeoff with those potential increased gains. While resources are required to maintain that relationship and network position (resources could be used inside of the organization for operational costs instead) there is also a risk and loss of control associated with close interdependence. Levels of power (both micro and macro) are real and significant, and this causes network theory placement in the power school of strategic management. Politics, positioning, and communication, backed by a firm understanding of the host firm's actual role and power, interacting with other firms (both cooperating and competing) who hold similar levels of independence create great potential for multiple interactions and outcomes. Due to this fact there are areas of study within network theory (both in the hard science and the social theory sides) specifically studying risk interdependency between two risks (C. Fang et al., 2012). This is why it is so important to understand all elements of network theory.

Network theory has shown to this point in the literature that it is extensive (spanning multiple fields and pedagogies), it runs deep into these fields (with both science and social theories), and it is comprehensive (uses elements of many other theories). In business and organizational dynamics, the micro-macro components of networks could fill volumes. As an overview of some of these components, the next sections will explore some of the structural elements of networks.

#### [Contemporary Network Trends Framing the Study](#)

This section summarizes and presents a review of the topics trending in the last ten years that are directly relevant to the current study. While this work is often built on the work of

others (and in some case the author's earlier career), trends can be extrapolated based on a topical review. In terms of business and organizational networks, the trends of the last decade have a focus on qualitative aspects of relationships, roles, value, opportunities, risk, alignments, and control (Hakansson & Ford, 2002). Corsaro and Snehota (Corsaro & Snehota, 2011) explore issues of alignment and misalignment in business relationships and then point out that concepts of alignment and misalignment remain ambiguous. They conclude there are gaps in the literature in these areas. They find that there is no agreement on objects of alignment and misalignment, specifically how this impacts relationship development. They also note that there is little empirical research in this area. In their other works, they note "business relationships tend to entail intense adaptations and interaction processes, and complexity of content beyond the grasp of the individuals involved" (Corsaro & Snehota, 2010, p. 987). In this we see the field trying to incorporate complex variables into the larger picture of network theory to better understand the process. Their works suggest that more studies are needed to provide both quantitative and qualitative data points for better triangulation and theory expansion.

Besides relational and qualitative aspects of network theory, there is also a trend of reflection and reconsideration on previous network theory areas. Work done in a reductionist period (certain models and sub-theories) is now being looked with fresh eyes and new assumptions. Montenegro and Bulgacov's (2014) work with actor-network theory (ACT), governance networks, and strategic outcomes are an example of this trend, as is Rethemeyer and Hatmaker's (2008) work on network management. The ACT work frames ACT theory in the realm of governance, informal mechanisms, and private actors. It is the latter two that we are interested in bringing into this study as they reflect elements of SET and personal linkages. Network management is important to this study, as each of the pastors interviewed are not only

managing their own internal networks, but acting as representatives to the external networks in the valley. The reflections on the older works also bring new perspectives on older theories. Social worldviews change, and the realization by some that government is not the primary tool for social steering allows a greater level of evaluation on theories and concepts that were limited to sub segments in those realms of network theory. The conclusion from the ACT studies is that network management theory needs to be reconsidered in its entirety. Other authors reflect this as well. Franken and Thomsett (2013), state that, “Today, in the face of unprecedented pressures to rapidly and continuously adapt to a complex, dynamic, uncertain, and highly interconnected global environment, many organizations are moving towards multi-firm or multi-actor network designs” (p. 107). As many churches’ denominational declines shatter larger governance networks, regional interdenominational multi-firm approaches will become more relevant in parallel with current postmodern and tribal network trends.

These summations help frame why firms and the literature are trending this way. Franken and Thomsett also note that in such complex environments, reason alone is not base enough for a strategy that will inspire others to action. It takes other motivators and relationships help foment these. An example of this can be found in Beach, Keast, and Pickernell’s (2012) article exploring the connections between network and stakeholder management in road infrastructure networks. The role of government as the sole provider of infrastructure has changed, and now alternative models of delivery involving governance networks have emerged. One might just as easily say the role of the denominational authorities has changed, and now alternative models of delivery involving governance networks have emerged. The problem arises that “little is known about how the connections between these networks and their stakeholders are created, managed, or sustained” (Beach et al., 2012, p. 609).

In Beach et al's article, an analytical framework was used synthesizing network theory with stakeholder management theory. This reflects the synthesizing of theories that are occurring in various areas in which network theory has contact.

Synthesizing of theories allows for the overlaying of knowledge and methodologies necessary to deal with the ever-increasing complexities found in both the literature and in the practice of these theories. Allee (2003, p. 62) discusses these growing complexities in an application of balancing organizational mechanistic systems (such as linear thinking, control functions, and task specializations) that help increase efficiencies with whole-systems thinking. This whole system thinking helps us understand dynamic relationships with a better understanding of larger picture. Only under the umbrella of network theory can the complexities of static processes and dynamic elements be weighed properly. To help navigate the dynamic relationships, it therefore becomes necessary to look at elements of Social Network Analysis (SNA) for the tools to handle the social elements of network theory. This is also where crossover with Social Exchange Theory is to be found.

SNA developed its roots from its relatively non-technical form in the 1930s through to the 1970s. This was done primarily through anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown (Scott, 2013). In the 1950s it began to gain more formal transitions that allowed for wider application via more complicated models. As time passed, the body of work grew. The last two decades have seen an explosion of interest through the impact of social networking sites that have leveraged the concepts of social networks to a profitable end. Complicated analytics and mathematical formulas are now required to data mine the complex and vast information available from these social network sites. It is in this SNA setting that a discussion on culture is best nestled. The

role of culture as a social synthesis of the factors mentioned above should not be dismissed.

Schein (1996), a leading writer on culture and organizational dynamics states:

Even though I have worked on culture as a variable for over 10 years, I keep being surprised by how little I understand its profound influence in situation after situation. I believe our failure to take culture seriously enough stems from our methods of inquiry, which put a greater premium on abstractions that can be measured than on careful ethnographic or clinical observation of organizational phenomena (p. )

Schein is correct to state the importance of culture, as even Drucker (2008) famously quipped “culture eats strategy for breakfast.” This brings SNA into contemporary times with all of the ethical concerns wrapped around privacy and confidentiality of information, as well as understanding the environment of culture where these dynamics reside.

These trends help frame our understanding of institutional and representative linkage behaviors in regards to boundary-spanning behaviors and their impact on organizations.

### [Network Theory: Institutional Linkages](#)

To understand institutional and representative linkages, we must ask why organizations initiate efforts to interact outside of themselves. Institutional linkages by definition are formal and as such they are mandated by governing bodies and affiliations. These demands on the organization from larger networks represent legal, fiscal, and covenantal bonds. Institutional linkages are the most rigid and inflexible, and they represent ties from the governing society or culture the organization identifies with. Examples include affiliations, denominations, synods, conferences, and covenants that have legal expectations for continued relationship. A hierarchal power dynamic is present in these connections. Penalties for breaking these ties can lead to the loss of a historical name or to extreme actions like the loss of a property or building due to

requirements in bylaws. Some denominations currently struggling with this include the Episcopal, Mennonite, and Presbyterian. Depending on the founding documents of local congregations, a deviation from a theological decision at higher levels may lead to the loss of a congregation's church building. In some cases, the local church uses the denominational affiliation in name only.

To understand these rigid linkages better, it is helpful to know why people would cross boundaries. This has been posited for a while in the literature; Aldrich and Herker (1977) attempted to frame the argument for understanding this very topic. While this work is foundational in looking at boundary-spanning roles, it still leaves many questions for later works to explore. As to why organizations need to engage in joint venture type activities, the primary assumption is that “ matches are voluntary and entered after actors estimate the benefits to be positive” (Lin, 1999). Whatever terminology is chosen to reflect these formalized relationships (joint venture, alliances, network, collective, partnership), the outcome is the recognition that the power of two is greater than the power of one. Lorange & Probst (1987) note the importance of self-organizing as an important key to success in joint venture design and implementation. Identifying this feature is an important signpost when studying a network of organizations. Other efforts in the literature further define levels of interaction. Rogers (2009) mentions three proposed categories; networking is at the informal end, cooperation with mutual agreement and joint goals in the middle, and coordination is the third representing formal agreement and specific goals. This last category exists with limited mutual investments. These more narrowly defined goals are beyond the scope of specificity in this study, but they can help define causality. This causality is where Resource Poverty Theory (RPT) resides. RPT is similar to Resource Dependence Theory in that both look at the impact of an organization's

strategy, structure, and survival depend on its resources and dependency relationships with external institutions (Hodge & Piccolo, 2005). Understanding these themes in relation to cross-denominational interactions can help establish best-practices for successful relationship building in institutional linkage levels.

### Network Theory: Representative Linkages

Representative linkages involve more of a meeting of community, and can be either formal or informal, but tend to be more in the formal category. This is due to the nature of the relationship. Organizations' reasons to engage in joint ventures can vary greatly, but certainly assumptions are required that are similar to those needed by matching theory. Representative linkages reflect the interactions of the churches interacting with other churches at the organizational level. This level of linkage, specifically related to organizational dynamics, consists of elements that are not as high or formal as institutional demands, but more rigid than the personal demands discussed later. As such, these dynamics can be formal or informal. An example of this duality is a local Mennonite church that is acting in the community like a Mennonite church through its theology, practices, and structure. This local congregation may not be acting on behalf of the larger conference (and may disagree with some of the larger official stances). It has the right to act as a formal agent, and have its own informal stance at the same time. One of the schools of thought that exist in the literature is the strategic network approach. This tradition views networks as purposeful organizational arrangements by entrepreneurs to obtain competitive advantage for their firms (Tikkanen & Halinen, 2003). This strategic approach at a representative level by its nature would include the full range of formal or informal linkages. Representative linkages impact both external and internal organizational composition as well. Some of these compositions are communication frequency, relationships

(non-social exchange related), and issues of organizational trust, as opposed to personal levels of trust looked at later in SET. For this study, these components will be reviewed due to their relevance to the findings. The themes for institutional and representative linkages are now framed by lived experiences of the participants at the inter-organizational and intra-organizational network levels.

#### Representative: Flexibility

The concept of organizational flexibility is closely associated with the ability of organizations to excel at learning and adapting to changes in both macro and micro environments. Organizational flexibility as a concept must exist within the organizations leadership for it to fully be effective. By recognizing social, fiscal, cultural, and emotional cues both internal and externally, leadership's ability to respond to change is a strategic advantage. This flexibility in relational terms can create more stable exchanges, increase network ties, and help adopt tailored innovation (Shipilov et al., 2014). Schein (2013a) explores the strengths of leadership relationally flexing in his exploration of the topic through his work *Humble Inquiry*. In it he discusses how positioning oneself in relational exchanges at an equal or lesser standing can build trust and disarm negative relational consequences. As mentioned earlier with Joint Venture Theory and RPT, the ability for organizations to lean upon a larger network provides flexibility and speed for organizations to respond to uncertainty and dynamic environmental pressures (Tikkanen & Halinen, 2003). Flexibility is a key component of this strategic management approach to network theory.

#### Representative Roles and Frequency: Communication Network Theory

The institutional linkages elements discussed earlier also include some of the roles mentioned later in this section, specifically, roles and frequency of relationship. The difference



between institutional elements and the representative is that the institutional linkage role is much more formalized. This often hinders flexibility by nature of its rigidity. The representative role allows more opportunity for flexibility, which in turn allows for a greater chance of both quality and quantity of role and frequency. Before we review frequency, let us examine what network roles exist. Four types of communication network roles located within an organization exist: the isolate, group member, bridge, and liaison (Eisenberg et al., 2006). Within each of these roles exists dynamics that need to be understood by leaders in order for change and management to be effective.

These roles do not necessarily exist in isolation to each other. Actors may exhibit multiple characteristics, or a single characteristic depending on what dynamic is being studied. The isolate has little contact within their organization, either by their choice or the structural limitations imposed by their job conditions. Group members are more integrated, although they are most active within the small informal cliques they create. Bridge members have significant contact with at least one member of another informal clique; their role could also be that of the weak links that appear when linking networks to other networks. Liaisons are those who have significant (two or more) connections with cliques but are not exclusive members of any one group. Some people informally call these floaters, in that they float between different social groups. When organizational improvement efforts fail, it is most often a result of the improper mobilization of liaisons (Eisenberg et al., 2006). Network design considerations of these roles is important, as they appear more relevant for businesses desiring to move beyond traditional supply chain models than for the radically different open-community model (Franken & Thomsett, 2013). The cliques mentioned above can also come in different forms; as mentioned before they can be both formal and informal. Some may refer to the difference as hard power or

soft power. Another way of looking at these terms is to categorize *formal* as more transactional and structured, while *informal* is more relational and socially oriented. Within any given church, staff, members, or volunteers can represent any of these roles. This can be held against Eisenberg's or Salzer's typologies as well, and through these typologies the filters are in place to understand the lived experiences within organizational context. For the personal context, it is necessary to bring in Social Exchange Theory.

#### Background: Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET) helps frame linkage dynamics by handling the personal drivers and influencers of the individual in a way that network theory cannot. Network theory excels at the quantitative relationships to be explored in the linkages. While it can study the qualitative elements, it is better suited to do this through organizational approaches mentioned previously. SET helps the understandings of qualitative element of these linkages by bringing in the personal particulars. These are the personal drivers that people bring into these relationships and they speak into the softer, more intangible elements. This allows a more granular review of personal dynamics that would be potentially dismissed as too anecdotal. However, these are important variables that must be considered when studying the linkages that occur between networks and organizations. SET is actually a multidisciplinary family of perspectives rather than one single model (Colquitt et al., 2014). As such, elements of network theory and some of the theories reviewed earlier in this review can overlap SET theories. Where Network theory has a literature base built on science and mathematics, SET has a history rooted more in its related fields of sociology and social psychology (Cropanzano et al., 2017). The impact of these pedagogical heritages on each of these two theories is this: Network theory analysis tends look at the linkages in broader catholic ways, and SET stresses the exchange aspects of all ties (the

arcs) and requires that any analysis of any network must contain all relevant exchange relations. In short, SET is needed to fully look at all dynamics in play, especially if one is looking at the linkages in a rural community, which enhances the role of personal drivers. SET's foundational works start to appear in the literature in the 1960s, about the same time as network theory's more technical sub-theories are introduced.

#### History: Review of Early SET Works

The early works of Social Exchange Theory are framed around the same time that much of the social impacts in business were being explored (referenced earlier), started by those looking into psychology and social communication, relationships, and interplay. Some works that stand out are those by Homans (1958), Thibaut and Kelly (1950)(1980)(2013)(2017), and Blau (1964). While these works started talking about the components of social exchange, others directly laid the groundwork for SET to move forward as its own theory. A review of these earlier works can be found by Emerson (1976) in his work *Social Exchange Theory*. He makes a point that SET is not a theory at all in one sense, but a frame of reference within which many theories can speak to one another (Emerson, 1976, p. 338). Emerson explores how Homans dwelled more upon the psychology of instrumental behavior, while Thibaut and Kelly start with psychological concepts and build upward to the dyad. Once the dyad is established, they then move upward from there to the small group. In network terms, the dyad is equivalent to the nodes, and building upward represents the arcs and small clusters of nodes. Homans moves in the opposite direction and reduces the small groups and clusters down into their individual parts. Blau takes a different approach than both previous groups and focuses more on the emergent aspects of social exchange (Emerson, 1976). All of these elements of SET are important for this study in how different network, social, and communication theories overlap in

terms and ideas. In understanding SET, it is important to see how the micro factors surrounding an individual's decisions are also qualitative drivers related to personal linkages. Some of SET's social components discussed by early authors' works allowed others to center on the role of emotions in social exchange (Lawler & Thye, 1999). Other works delve into elements of justice, fairness, and equity (P. M. Blau, 1964) that then could be quantified into scale indicators of relationship (Colquitt et al., 2014). Work has also been done to explore the impact of power and trust in social exchange (Schilke et al., 2015)(Lioukas & Reuer, 2015). The work by Lioukas and Reuer not only studies isolated trust outcomes, but seeks to understand the role of prior ties in alliances and how that trust is affected. The current research trends in the direction of understanding the aforementioned dynamics, but these works place the relationships into a larger setting in which network theory has been expanding for years: inter-organizational dynamics. This crossover can be seen in Whitmeyer and Cook (1992), Lin (1999), and Brass, Galaskiewicz, and Greve (2004). While there are many others, these examples serve as great markers of the merging of these two fields. Each of these recognize the emerging reality in that in order to understand even the largest organizational structures and dynamics, relationships and social interplay must be factored into the discussion. The power of basic relational interactions in which linkages play, as arcs and nodes (seen by us as institutional or representative linkages) or as people seeking relational communication and roles (personal linkages), should not be ignored if one is desiring to truly understand networks, alliances, or joint ventures.

Morgan's (2000) study of the New York Capital region regarding the top reasons evangelicals and charismatics are willing to cooperate can help provide valuable context to this study of church networks. Morgan references general principals as being important to help set the stage of regional unity and networks (priority of prayer and the law of love being mentioned

specifically). His six recommendations for consideration are appropriate to bring into this study. These six recommendations are:

1. A unity task force
2. Prayer for key public officials
3. Lighthouses of prayer
4. Coordinated student ministries
5. Prayer teams to overcome area strongholds
6. Interchurch celebrations

These recommendations are useful in understanding network institutional and representative linkages. From a SET approach, specificity regarding personal linkage factors are missing details. However, it is possible to see the three levels of linkages having applicable and achievable outcomes being associated with each of the recommendations. These recommendations also each deal with the sub-dynamics of boundary spanning, trust, frequency, and the other individual factors, which we will explore through the literature mentioned below.

#### SET: Personal Linkages

Several exchange indicators tend to impact personal linkages. These indicators act as social currency in the social exchange marketplace: frequency, relational capital, flexibility, trust, and relationships. As each is reviewed, keep in mind the interplay between these internal factors and the previously explored factors, especially in the overlap of relationships. Some of these factors are located in network theory, some through SNA, and others are housed in SET. While this list is not exhaustive, these particular internal dynamics are important to understand this study. They were picked to represent the most applicable indicators likely to be encountered in the narratives of the participants.

Engagement Exchange Indicators

### *Frequency*

Frequency in any social exchange is an important variable. In looking at relationships, no matter the level at which those relationships exist, communication is a key variable impacted by frequency. Communication is complex, irreversible, and involves the total personality (Hackman & Johnson, 2004). For any social exchange to occur, some type of communication must be present. While this seems like a simple concept, SET would require a transactional model of communication that is iterative. Even in simple communication between two people, there are really six types of people being represented (Hackman & Johnson, 2004, p. 11). In this study, it is important that the lived experience of the pastors is pulled in, and by their input through the research process, the complexity of the communication has a greater chance of being navigated successfully. Frequency of communication does not correlate directly with improved relationship. Instead, frequency acts as a multiplier of the quality of the relationship. If a relationship is positive, it can act as a positive multiplier. For relationships that are viewed as negative, increasing frequency may have an inverse relationship. Either way, understanding the role that frequency plays in a relationship, with a note of the role on communication in particular, is vital.

Another element of communication as seen through a SET lens is the role of dialogue as an equitable transaction (Eisenberg et al., 2006, p. 48). An equitable transaction from this perspective is one in which all participants can voice their opinions and perspectives. In this study, pastors with their various linkage types (institutional, representative, and personal) may not feel full freedom to use this voice. As leaders of their organization, they are not being restricted by many of the hierarchal blockages that their followers would have in limiting their

own communication. Dialogue is by its nature an increase in communication, and it implies a completion of the feedback loop by its definition. While dialogue can also be defined as empathic conversation and real meeting, the equitable transaction lens is most appropriate as we seek to understand dialogue through SET. Blau (1964, 2017) explores the concept of equitable transaction in his books *Exchange and Power in Social Life* and *Justice in Social Exchange*. He explores the concepts of exchange, reciprocity, imbalance, and power in a way to help broaden understanding of the simpler processes of social structure and move toward complex processes. Blau uses issues of social support, differentiation of power, expectations, and other issues to help explain the social network economies at work. The challenge in building relationships through communication is also found in a closely linked variable discussed next: relational capital.

#### *Relational Capital*

Relational capital contains some of the variables discussed elsewhere (trust, frequency), but at its root represents some form of power. Position power is a written, spoken, or implied contract that also may use coercive or noncoercive behavior as an acceptable way of achieving desirable results (Daft, 2008, p. 18). In human capital theory, capital is conceived as investment with certain expected returns (Lin, 2017). In some cases, the relational capital exchanged may be information, trust, an increase in communication, a stop in communication (silence), or various other social capital responses. Schein (2013b) discusses the challenges of navigating just the trust element in his study *Humble Inquiry*. It is a good example of understanding the economy of any network. Each network has its own capital that it can trade in, and that capital may not look traditional to the forms of currency that we expect in other sectors. Other works discuss the challenges of balancing relational capital so that alliances can be formed without one

partner abusing another partner (Kale et al., 2000). It is shown in the literature that power and trust can have an inverse relationship (Schilke et al., 2015). In this sense, power is also an important variable to the relational equation, as it has the ability to act as a multiplier to the quality of the base relationship. The trust element will be discussed later, but as power increases and social, resource, and positional equity become uneven, pressure and strain increase on all three forms of linkages. Schilke et al. discuss this through the lens of Power-dependence theory, but they mention that the impact on behavior in social exchange is “significantly affected” by power inequalities that involve one actor depending on another. Their study tested the competing predictions about how having low vs. high power many impact people’s tendency to place trust. The results showed that people low in power are significantly more trusting than more powerful people, and that these effects can be explained by the constructs of hope and perceived benevolence. One could also expect that those with more power have more to lose through an engaging of relationship (i.e. loss of power or position), especially with an agent of equal or lower power position.

### *Flexibility*

As mentioned in a previous section, a leader’s ability to handle change, to learn, and to flex with problems directly impacts the larger organizations ability to do the same. These two areas are symbiotic, and the works presented previously also inform this section. Other works that explore leadership’s ability to flex include works discussing transformational leadership (Stevens, 2011), an exploration of flexibility ingrained within church servant leadership models (Scuderi, 2010), and absorptive capacity in joint venture (Lane et al., 2001). Each of these studies hits a facet of leadership’s ability to flex or change in relation to the desired outcome:



successful leadership and organizational survival. This frames another attribute that is tied into good leadership: the ability to manage trust.

### *Trust*

Trust is a core variable that influences many other factors. Trust helps inform the quality of such factors as risk aversion, flexibility, and capacity for cognitive dissonance. These are issues that the literature has been exploring more in depth in recent times. One area where these factors have been applied is how they relate to both inter- and intra-organizational interactions. Peter Blau (1964) approaches the role of trust as it is informed through the exchange process. He mentions that voluntary actions of individuals are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring, and typically do bring, from others. This expected normative behavior and response can be viewed as a definition of trust. The more the response is positive, the higher the trust. As Blau's earlier works started to explore the expected justice (another lens for which to view normative exchange), other works started to look at the interplay of trust and relationships on the larger networks or organizations. This is supported by the works of Fang, Palmatier, Scheer, and Li (2008), Babiliute-Juceviciene, Jucevicius, and Krisciunas (2012), as well as others. Fang, et al. focus on the role of trust at three distinct levels, but it is the focus on one of these levels that applies most to this study: trust between collaborating firms' representatives. Their findings point out that the presence of trust does not always lead to success, especially if it was created in isolation between certain parties. Trust can also be counterproductive if it leads to a perception of invulnerability and excessive closeness/ insularity with the involved partners (E. (Er) Fang et al., 2008). Other works propose theories that say mistrust develops among individuals with few resources who live in places where resources are scarce and threat is common (Ross, 2011), and mention that this mistrust can develop for those who feel powerless

to avoid or manage the threat. A side effect of this powerlessness is that it can also lead to increased isolation, self-perpetuating the system.

Teton county demographically and geographically meets some of the macro conditions that Ross's work mentions. The inverse relationship of power and trust is important for us to discuss as well, especially in terms of SET. Trust is a critical ingredient in successful social exchange (Schilke et al., 2015) and power-dependence theory explores how the role of power significantly impacts the dynamic of trust. Dependence is often a requirement for trust to have a positive function, and power inequalities can erode the necessary trust required for successful exchange activities. Power does decrease trust in social exchange, but it is most notable when that power is unequal. Low power individuals invest more cognitive resources in processing trust-related information than high power individuals (Schilke et al., 2015). This is likely due to issues surrounding the unequal power relationship. If this is applied to organizations power footprint (think small church to large church) it makes sense. The smaller church has much more to lose proportionally should impropriety and breach of trust occur (members, resources, etc.). Corcoran's (2013) study on divine exchanges and SET applied to religious behavior presents some very important insights as well. Corcoran found that there are several interrelated ways to reduce uncertainty in exchanges: trust, repeated exchanges (frequency), reputation, knowledge of the exchanges of others, and institutions. These factors are important to look for as present in the results of this study.

#### SET: Economy of Relationships

While this would initially be found in the network theory section, the crossover between network theory and SET is apparent when one looks at the crossover of the relational interplay seen in some of the sub-network theories. In looking at social exchange economics, the role of

relationships must be explored, as these are the conduits in which these social economies must pass through. It is important at this point to mention a component of relationships that greatly impacts SET, but is not often directly discussed in the literature as being linked: emotions. Lawler and Thye (1999) review the infusion of emotions into SET and conclude that at any linkage level (personal, representative, or institutional), emotions pervade the social exchange processes. They use the example of friendships, which often bring feelings of affection or feelings of joy. The opposing examples they discuss are corporate mergers, which can bring fear or anger. The impact of these emotions can set the environment for good or ill. It is in this environment that the social economy exists. With this factor present in the environmental backdrop, we can look at some of the more structural elements, bringing it back into a social network setting. The economy of relationships viewpoint presents a perspective that allows observation of certain roles. Who are the relational consumers in these relationships (takers) and who are the developers and investors (givers) of relationships in this economy? These positions may change based on the perspective from which they are viewed. However, of these two groups, the literature speaks to the latter through the works centered around executive coaching and mentoring. These coaches and mentors invest and trust in the relationships, especially at the leadership development level. One of these works is *Coaching for Leadership* by Marshall Goldsmith and Laurence Lyons (2011), a collection of writings on executive coaching. The second work is *First Among Equals* by Patrick McKenna and David Maister (2002). This book is centered around purpose and relationship building from an equal (or close) power structure position. Both of these works offer helpful tips and approaches to understanding the delicate efforts that are needed to motivate, inspire, and mobilize a group of professionals who are not required to engage in boundary-spanning behaviors. When placed in the economy of

relationships, these coaches and mentors bring value into the economy through their investment of time and knowledge.

Dynamic network theory (DNT) is useful in understanding some of the complexities associated with this change in thinking about networks. The traditional network approach is to focus on the structural linkages themselves (the communication, data, frequency, etc.) and not on how social relations are linked to specific goal pursuits (Wesaby et al., 2014). According to Westaby et al., there are relatively few comprehensive theoretical perspectives in psychology that explain how social networks influence goal pursuit and resistance process within an organizational and business context. With the three typologies of linkages mentioned previously, SET allows a framework for starting to look at goal pursuit and resistance process. As both goal pursuit and network resistance are both involved in matters of strategy implementation, any hope for success in strategic initiatives rests in these processes being considered. DNT assists in processing the complexity that the literature has acknowledged exists in networks. The autonomy brought by a self-governed system (an informal network within an organization would count) can impede implementation and have a negative impact on the capacity for control. Conversely, they can enhance the efficiency of policy implementation depending on the alignment of the smaller group within the larger organization (Montenegro, 2014). This can be seen in practice when unions and management differ on implementation of goals within a company, as happened with Hostess in 2012 when their bakers union went on strike. Management could not get them to agree to a settlement, and Hostess went into bankruptcy (Isidore & O'Toole, 2012). Alternately, when a union and management are aligned, as Ford and the United Automotive workers were in their November 2007 deal, the success for major organizational change has a much higher chance of success (Yoshikane, 2011). While

unions are a formal organizational entity, informal networks can hold just as much power through social means. In some ways this can be more difficult to deal with, as there is not a clear delineation as to who are the power brokers in the network. In this role, risk interaction and prioritization enter into the discussion. It is challenging to prioritize and understand the risk involved to internal stakeholders when informal power brokers exist within a system that has not been identified. Other elements of DNT described in the literature include structural holes (Burt, 1980) and strong, weak, or absent ties (Granovetter, 1973). Structural holes represent gaps between networks in which there are no current connections, though being aware of them is important due to possible exploitation by people willing to gain power by bridging the flow of information. One research need identified in network theory is in this very area, sometimes described as increasing communication across diverse networks. This study will be able to provide some insight into this area of literature.

Open communication relationships can be difficult to fully understand due to the complexity of human relations (Eisenberg & Witten, 1987). Even our conceptions of open communication versus closed communication can be challenged when we look at what the data says. Eisenberg and Witten (1987, p. 420) discuss different types of openness. These are personal and nonpersonal information, and clear or ambiguous. The choices involved in these forms of openness can be applied with a SET lens. For example, how much social capital is at risk (gained or lost) by which type of openness in communication? In social exchange (as well as our linkage typologies) we see how the public's perceptions of personal, professional, and community relationships (close to our linkage typologies) significantly affected the public's evaluation of overall satisfaction with the organization (Ki & Hon, 2007). The roles of the public and of members may as well be exchanged with the term *stakeholders*. Internal

stakeholders are also important in these SET relationships. Each relationship exchange represents a psychological contract that reflects an exchange partner's belief that certain benefits are promised by another (Colquitt et al., 2014, p. 603). Pastors dealing with other pastors in a community setting will reflect this mental contractual balancing, as they bring the linkage roles with them into any exchange. This is reflected in Morgan's (2000) study inversely by the three greatest barriers for pastors to work together: theology, personal spiritual issues, and pastoral suspicions. The pastoral suspicions include insecurities, territorialism, jealousies, fear of "sheep stealing," and competition. This echoes exactly what is mentioned above through SET's trust, relationships, and frequency issues. It also is a good sign post that this study is ideally positioned to help add to the field in some key areas.

Now that we can see how network theory and SET provide the backdrop for this study, let us look at how the methodology must proceed.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

#### Research Design and Rationale

In dealing with human subjects and potential issues of confidentiality, care and concern must be used. It is also important to ensure that the right research approach is used. The research is based on a phenomenological qualitative approach of inquiry using an interpretivism paradigm, a relativistic ontology, a subjective epistemology, and a research purpose that is descriptive and exploratory. The research strategy is interpretive type of interview. This allows for the stories and the lived experience of the pastoral leadership to be organically explored and documented, while also identifying themes of the lived experiences of this group of interconnected pastors. Qualitative analysis is the best way to hear the stories of the pastors while still keeping the context of network theory. Phenomenological research draws heavily on the writings of Edmund Husserl and those who expanded on his views such as Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty. The foundational writings by those men state that phenomenology is the study of lived experiences of persons, these experiences are conscious ones, and the development of descriptions are of the essences of these experiences, not explanations or analyses (Creswell, 2013, p. 77). The interpretivism paradigm assumes that individuals are understood to form their own reality of the world, and subjective values (Khan, 2014). Choosing this paradigm for this research allows the researcher to listen to the subtle “hidden voices” of the participants. The relativistic ontology was chosen for this study as it allows the participants differing views of the nature of reality (although they will share some commonality by being Christian pastors) to be handled accurately and respectfully. This follows with interpretive rigor that is necessary when dealing with conceptions of validity and reliability regarding participants’ responses from the interviews (Graham et al., 2008). The subjective

epistemology assumes that reality is created and discovered; this is useful as epistemology is concerned with the way knowledge is acquired (Khan, 2014). The research purpose as mentioned is descriptive and exploratory due to the desire to understand the experience of pastoral interactions in Northwest Wyoming.

### Participants and Site

As the pastors and organizations represented in this study all exist within one particular community it is important to understand the environment through a review of relevant facts. As such, Teton County descriptives are important to understand the setting where the participants work and reside. According to the 2009 Teton County Health Assessment, the population of Teton County is estimated to be over 20,000 people (*Teton County Community Health Assessment*, 2009). What geographically makes Teton County so different is that less than 3% of the land that is Teton County is (or can be) privately owned. It is a resort community tucked just south of Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks and surrounded by national forest and wilderness areas. Tied into this lack of available land is an infusion of money. Teton County, Wyoming ranked number one for the third year in a row (2005-2007) with the highest per capita income of \$132,728. ("50 Counties With Highest Per Capita Income," 2009). This infusion of cash, with limited land, and geographical isolation equals a high cost of living. This also makes the Jackson metro area (both sides of the pass) as the most economically unequal metropolitan area in the entire United States (Dunfee, 2017). This also impacts the community in a predictable way: the rich bring their social problems and resources into a town where the majority of individuals are dealing with more subsistence living, which also have their own challenges. This is clear when we look at the Median Income for Immigrants: \$26,400 (*Teton County Community Health Assessment*, 2009). To ensure that we are understanding the setting



as compared to neighboring communities, look at Teton County vs. Wyoming in regards to housing differences. The difference is clear in the median value of owner-occupied housing units with a mortgage: \$639,900 vs. \$158,900 (*Teton County, Wyoming*, n.d.). These statistics point out the vast difference in the community between the really rich, and those just getting by. This creates a social condition of latchkey children with access to extensive resources (whether from parents earning the higher incomes, or friends who have access). Included in these resources are mobility (car availability allows escape into the 97% of Teton County publicly owned), money, and access to alcohol and drugs. A rough estimate of the number of Christians can be tallied from the combined congregational sizes, anywhere between 2,500 to 3,000 people. This is a total count from all ten churches in town, even the smallest congregations, and represents between 12.5 percent and 15 percent of the overall population. The actual percentage is probably on the lower end due to each of the Jackson congregations having elements from Sublette County, Wyoming (Alpine) and Teton County, Idaho (Victor and Driggs) being represented. Both of these areas are outside the population count for Teton County, Wyoming. These areas are reliant economically upon Jackson and have few sizable congregations. As this number represents a real capability to meet worship needs and not the reality in attendance, the actual percentage of effective Christians in Teton County, Wyoming, is probably much lower. Other resort communities that Jackson Hole has been compared to are Steamboat Springs, Colorado; Sun Valley, Idaho; and Park City, Utah. A review of Routt County (the county that houses Steamboat Springs) using the same methodology of population estimation shows over a dozen active churches with a similar percentage of the population of active Christians compared to the county population (G. Prechtyl, personal communication, November 28, 2017)(NaCo,

2017). These statistics present a challenging environment within which these pastors and congregations exist and operate.

### Target Population Sample

The target population sample for this study is the pastors in Teton County, Wyoming. The churches that these pastoral representatives come from should have an established presence and history in the valley. A cursory look at the five of the churches shows a representative total of over 95 percent of all Christians attending local churches in Teton County. For this study, the Catholic Church and Latter-Day Saints are not included. Part of this is due to doctrinal issues, another reason is the leadership turnover experienced within the last few years that does not provide a suitable candidate to interview. The pastors provide a unique perspective in that they can share experience from a personal level, as well as a representative experience for their organizations. For the churches that meet the initial criteria, the ideal size is a census of senior pastors or associate level pastors should turnover have occurred within the organizations immediate history. Smith et al. (2009) discuss that for a qualitative paradigm (and interpretative phenomenology analysis in particular), samples must be selected purposively because they can offer a research project insight into a particular experience. To achieve this for this study, pastors from each church will be selected (and all churches as stated that meet the criteria should have a representative pastor) based on their ties and tenure to the community and their organizations. Selecting these representatives to share their experiences provides multiple levels of insight: as controllers of institutional implementation to their congregations, as representatives of their local church in their community, and as an individual free to act as their own agent. Each of these insights potentially provides the essences that are looked for to

understand the experiences. Creswell (2013) recommends five to twenty-five individuals to interview who have experienced the phenomenon. Smith et al. (2009) recommend for a doctoral student four to ten interviews. This study hopes to satisfy both of these opinions and have ten to twelve participants, each with one interview.

### Measures

The measures and methods necessary to ensure no harm occurs to the participants involve first, informed consent, then ownership into the process of research by the participants by being able to be co-researchers. This will occur (as mentioned below in more depth) with opportunities in the transcription, writing, and finished phases to review and correct the language used regarding their interviews. This informed consent and production consent will allow correction throughout the research process of the information provided by the participants. This follows the measures recommended by Smith et al., (2009).

### Data Collection Procedures:

The data collection will occur through Heuristic Inquiry. The interviews are recorded, transcribed, reviewed with insight from the participant, categorized, confirmed by the participant, written, confirmed, and finished. This is similar to the processes laid out for interpretive rigor by Graham et al., (2008) and Djuraskovic & Arthur (2010). This ensures triangulation of data, plus the participants end up being co-researchers that have power and insight to ensure that their experiences are being recorded correctly. This is based on triangulation recommendations found in the literature (Creswell, 2013; Khan, 2014; Kleining & Witt, 2000; Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010) (Smith et al., 2009). These methods have been used in similar studies regarding issues of spirituality (Graham et al., 2008), pastoral communication skills (Lim, 2012), and psychology of religion (Hanford, 1975). There are three other types of

triangulation besides data triangulation. Denzin (1978) also identifies theory triangulation, investigator triangulation, and methodological triangulation. Theory triangulation has occurred by the use of both network and social exchange theories allowing the triangulation of the concepts, as well as the Eisenberg and Salzer typologies. Investigator triangulation occurs by having the participants be co-researchers in the process. Methodological triangulation occurs by the use of various tested methodologies, not just relying on one researcher's method. Each of these ensures the combination of two or more academically accepted approaches to help negate or balance any deficiencies that might occur through any single strategy (Thurmond, 2001). This study uses theories and practices that are grounded in the literature and have already gone through the triangulation process. The results from the data collection are then to be analyzed apart from the method and means in which they were collected.

Interview question formulation will occur following the best practices listed by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009, p. 60). The questions most useful for in-depth interviews are descriptive, narrative (through the lived experience of the participants), structural, and have elements of compare and contrast, circular, prompting, and probing. It is best to avoid over-emphatic, manipulative, leading, and closed questions. By creating the interview questions with the aforementioned in mind, the dialogue should help uncover the themes, components, and primary influencing agents in the collection of churches in Teton County, Wyoming. A schedule of six to ten open questions for both network and SET factors with the associate linkage typologies is used to set the interview schedule. These limited, open questions allow the interviews to be kept to a manageable 45- to 90-minute blocks. Pointed questions will be employed to help reveal specific instances of cross-denominational interactions and communication, should open ended questions fail to prompt enough detail and recollection.

Additionally, artifacts will be requested from participants to validate their lived experience. This request will include such evidences as brochures, pamphlets, notes, sample communications (emails, texts) and screenshots of social media posts or websites that documents interactions and provides insight into the quality and quantity of the interactions. Also, the notes from the researcher will be reviewed by the interview participants to ensure that the intentions and narrative is correctly documented. This is a validation ensuring ownership in the data from the participants. This will aid in the triangulation of data. Triangulation of the data is important to help provide validation strategies (Creswell, 2013, p. 201). The application of triangulation (multiple sources of data) will help enhance the reliability of the results (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

#### Data Collection Praxis:

The researcher preliminarily met with many of the pastors to informally hear how ministry in Jackson was progressing. The researcher noted interesting themes and topics that might help in further interviews, and confirmed contact information. Participants were encouraged to share any artifacts or information regarding collaborative church interactions, issues in the community that impacted churches, or any general information that would help give insight into the community in the years the researcher had moved away. Periodic checkups with the participants occurred to ensure their future willingness to interview occurred in the year between the preliminary inquiries. The researcher gathered demographic information and consent forms for the interviews, and scheduled these interviews in a manner to be supportive of the pastors and their schedules. Communication occurred in person, through email, phone calls, text messages, and video conferencing. Due to the researcher's extensive time in the valley, knowledge of the subject matter, and personal ties to the community, the interviews were able

to effectively hit the issues and concerns of the participants without large amounts of ice breaking. The pastors were encouraged to share any new stories or information after the interviews occurred. The interviews were conducted in person and over the phone over a period of two months. The participants expressed excitement to see the themes that emerged shared with them at a future time.

### Role of Researcher

It is important at this stage to reiterate the role the researcher and the bias inherent in this study. The researcher's role is to be the data collection instrument, and thus cannot be separated from the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). It is important to ensure that the interpretation of the phenomena represent that of the participants and not that of the researcher (Holloway et al., 2010). The researcher will bring their own personal lens, and that bias/worldview is present in all social research, whether intentionally or unintentionally (Khan, 2014). In this study, the researcher brings a decade of personal and professional insight from time working in the community being studied. By the time of the interviews, multiple years had passed to help give some objectivity and distance. It must still be noted that the researcher's ordination as a pastor is helpful in creating commonality in language and experience, and allows participants to connect more readily with the researcher.

### Analysis

Once the data is collected analysis will occur using IPA's common set of processes. These processes are applied flexibly (Smith et al., 2009, p. 79) according to the analytic task needed for this study, and are laid out as follows according to the work referenced above. First is a line-by-line analysis of the claims, concerns, and understandings of each participant. This data is read and re-read until a firm understanding is grasped. The transcription process helps in

this, as the recorded interviews were run through a transcription service, then listened to several times to ensure the transcription wording was correct with the recorded interview. Next is the identification of emergent patterns (or themes) within the experiential material. It is important after this step to open a dialogue with the original participants to validate these patterns and themes based off the first round of data. This then develops into a more interpretative account. After this, the emergence of a structure or framework starts to illustrate the relationships between themes. This structure is then placed into a format that allows the analyzed data to be traced through the entire process, from initial clustering, to finalized themes. Once these themes are coherent, they are submitted to collaboration with the original participants to help test and develop the coherence and plausibility of the interpretation. With this validation, a full-narrative can be developed, referencing detailed commentary of data extracts, and is used to go theme by theme through the refined results. Finally, a reflection of my own perceptions, conceptions, and processes will act as a capstone to the entire process. The above steps are appropriate for writing up studies with larger samples, that is, samples with interviews larger than eight (Smith et al., 2009, p. 114). The limited number of transcript excerpts have been chosen to represent the range of views of the group or an overwhelming consensus or theme of the group.

The eight steps mentioned above will help me navigate the data. Similar processes are mentioned elsewhere (*Technique—University of Huddersfield*, n.d.), but follow similar collection, processing, interpretation, validation, and refining processes adapted to the needs of the study. To assist with the decoding of the data in the process above, Eisenberg's typology will be used to help understand the institutional and representative interactions, and Salzer (1998) is helpful in providing language signposts for assigning responses to the personal linkage. Salzer's three narrative typologies are helpful in navigating the social pieces. As a

reminder, they are dominant culture narratives, community narratives, and personal stories. The dominant culture parallels the institutional linkage, the community narrative the representative linkage, and personal stories the personal linkage. An easier way to identify the appropriate linkage typology is to look for large “we or they” statements (institutional), small “we or us” statements (representative), or “I or me” statements (personal). By finding these language markers in the responses, it is easier to know which linkage type is being discussed. This narrative grouping of linkage types then helps identify what types of barriers and boundaries are being overcome, and at what levels these boundaries exist.

Presentation of the data will occur through taking the identified themes, lived experiences, and the emerging phenomena and making a descriptive, narrative form (Creswell, 2013, p. 211). This will provide a thick description as a vehicle for communicating a holistic picture of the lived experiences of the pastors. The final results will be a construction of the group of pastors’ experiences and the meaning they attach to them. The reader will be allowed to vicariously experience the challenges and victories of these subjects, and provide a lens through which readers can experience the phenomena being explored.

In performing the analysis of the results, it was necessary to aggregate the information into two streams of data. First is the review of the participants, then a synthesis of the re-occurring themes found to run through the narratives. When the corpus of data is from a large number of participants (more than six) it is necessary to implement this approach to analysis (Smith et al., 2009, p. 114). Furthermore, it is important to limit the number of direct quotes due to the large amount of data, and use generalized language to summarize these themes. This includes the use of “most of the participants” or “many of the participants.” This is used to help gain a sense of the whole picture that is necessary when reporting on a large number of



participants (Smith et al., 2009, p. 115). Due to the sensitive nature of the participants' positions, including the desire to protect gender, the participants were not given names, but instead were labelled as follows in the next section. This was validated by another qualitative researcher as appropriate to create enough anonymity to protect the respondents. The population of the church organizations was large enough, that discussions regarding denominational themes and dynamics did not single out any particular church by name. A line was kept between open-source denominational discussions that impact the churches at an institutional (or dominant cultural) level, and sensitive community church dynamics that impact the community-representative level. This line was then kept between the organizational dynamics and the personal narratives shared. When transcript extracts are shared, it is meant to reflect the clearest range of views regarding a particular topic. Other participants who expressed similar experiences may be redundant or unnecessary. This is in line with Smith et al.'s approach outlined in their work on IPA approaches of research for this form of study.

## Chapter 4: Results

The following results are compiled from the interviews and information provided in the collection phase. This population is ready to cross boundaries and work together. A review of organizational profiles occurs first to help provide the setting and scope of the pastors' operational environment. This is followed by personal profiles to provide context to the pastors lived experiences.

With this data presented, it is possible to see elements of diversity and commonality in the participants time before Jackson, early arrival into the community, and call to leadership. An annotated list of the organizations referenced by the pastors is provided in Appendix C. These organizations are mentioned throughout in the shared experiences of the pastors. What these organizations represent is vital to providing context to the conditions in which boundary-spanning occurs. After the pastor profiles, themes are reviewed, following Eisenberg's typology, for network theory findings (institutional and representative linkages) and Salzer's typology, for Social Exchange (personal linkages).

### Overview of Participants

It is important to explore the participants' profiles for their individualized lived experiences as well as their role as leaders in their organizations. The information provided by these pastors in their official institutional and representative roles (Network Theory perspective), allows a unique perspective into organizational dynamics by their leadership positions. Their stories offer insight into why boundary-spanning behaviors occur at the middle and upper levels. The pastors also bring their individual voices and experiences which result in a highly personal perspective (SET perspective). These personal reasons for overcoming

boundaries provide a context that goes beyond formal duties. It is possible for these pastors to act as agents in any of the three capacities, either separately or in any combination of the three.

### Organizational Profiles

This study intentionally includes a broad variety of Teton County's pastors' lived experiences. From a Network theory perspective, a review of the institutional and representative findings in the population of interviewed pastors helps frame the Eisenberg typologies for themes and threads related to the larger organizational boundary-spanning behaviors. Six denominations were identified: two different Lutheran churches, a Presbyterian church, Episcopal church, and a Baptist church. Two others, while officially non-denominational, mentioned strong informal ties to an organization that acts as a form of a denomination by the support it offers through a yearly conference. The remaining two churches had no denominational affiliation or support. This means that if the organization encounters problems, there is no governance or support structure to approach for assistance in mediation or guidance. Two of the pastors were in a state of transition. One pastor after decades of service to the community, had just transitioned ownership of the church to a large external church located outside of the community. The other pastor had closed the church within a few months of the interview. That church had been active for more than five years. The ten pastors in this study represent the leadership of over 95 percent of the total church-attending population in Teton County, with just four of those congregations representing 75 percent of the total number. As a reminder, due to theological differences mentioned earlier in the study, this does not include the Catholic and Mormon congregations. The membership size of congregations ranged from small congregations of just 20 to 30 congregants to more than 500 members for the largest. The churches also ranged from exclusive (closed communion) to inclusive (open communion) in

their approaches to administering the sacraments. It is important to note that the definition of the sacraments also varies slightly, as some included marriage as a sacrament, and others did not.

### Participant Profiles

Participants and organizations are reviewed in a manner that conceals identity to protect confidentiality. Table 1 presents the participants' pseudonyms and demographic information in a way that provides scope and scale of time in the valley as well as the size of the organizations without directly mentioning the organizations by name.

*Table 1. Participant Organizational Data*

Participant	Years of Ministry in Teton County	Denomination Affiliation	Church Size Small, Medium, Large	Church Years in Existence
"John"	Fewer than 5	Yes	Large	Over 50
"Fred"	10-15	Yes	Large	20-25
"Wes"	5-10	Yes	Large	Over 50
"Kris"	Fewer than 5	Yes	Small	Over 20
"George"	15-20	Yes	Small	Over 50
"Adam"	5-10	Yes	Small	Less than 10
"Matt"	20-25	No	Large	Over 30
"Doug"	40+	No	Medium	Over 40
"Joey"	10-15	No	Medium	Over 10
"Brad"	10-15	No	Medium	Less than 10

Table 1 will help organize some of the demographic data to help present the larger picture for the participants and the organizations they lead. In the years of being involved in ministry in the Jackson community category, only two pastors had less than five years of experience. The pastors represent quite a veteran body of ministry workers. Also note that the years the churches existed in the valley reflects different growth cycles of the town, as the town grew, the need for more churches increased. These rhythms and timings help inform optimal windows of opportunity for boundary spanning to successfully occur. Organizations also go through cycles

of growth and decline. The age of the church is but one indicator of where the church is in the developmental life cycle. Other factors that impact growth and decline are church splits, change in leadership, recent building or remodels, or the launching of new ministries. Understanding where the organization is positioned provides insight on the timing of effective boundary spanning. This applies to the pastor's leadership life cycle as well. Upon arrival in the valley as a pastor, there is an initial orientation period. This time presents opportunities for both bridges and boundaries. Early efforts to welcome the new arrival by engrained pastors can build a new ally. That is if the time constraints of learning the new congregation do not present a barrier. In a similar way, as pastors become comfortable with their new role and workflow becomes manageable, they are able to start looking outside of the organization for new opportunities and ideas.

The personal profiles help give meaning to the studies themes and purpose. Their stories show individual diversity and the unique experience each pastor brings.

### **John's Profile**

John is a recent addition to Teton County, but a veteran in ministry. For over a decade John helped plant churches in California. He then transitioned to leading a church in Santa Monica, California for five years. During this time in California a friendship with Fred was formed. Fred was at seminary at the time. When John found out about an opening in Jackson, he decided to pursue it for the opportunities it provided. When reflecting on Jackson versus the community he came from in California, he commented

The difference I found moving here is the population size. There is ten thousand in the town, and twenty thousand in the county, and this valley is financially well resourced. I find that you can do ministry and make a measurable impact on the community, which is

really exciting. So, think it is pretty thrilling, it feels like a kind of a little laboratory, for doing that love spreading, difference making work that the gospel calls us to do.

John's church was already well established in the community. This history provides opportunities to engage the community. This church provides important direct and indirect services such as being a host for a 12-step rehabilitation program, providing food and clothing through ministries, childcare, and helping with housing needs. Meeting community needs is frequently mentioned by John as reason for boundary-spanning. These community needs include social issues, housing shortages, supporting those in need of food or clothing, and immigration issues. The campus is centrally located and houses many non-profits. John is passionate about charitable issues and community engagement is viewed as an important expression of his faith. The church has a role as a leader in the Jackson community. When talking about the role his church plays in the denomination, he says "of the 48 other churches in the Diocese of Wyoming, none come close to our size. And I think that is where you end up finding more of a collaborative process." This organizational leadership in the denomination and the in community keeps John busy. This does not prevent relationships with other pastors. When commenting on the fellowship with other pastors, John says "We certainly are very supportive of one another, and it's a very valuable relationship that I have. I have found that engaging early on some of the pastors and the ministerium group has been helpful." John has a very optimistic approach to living and working in Jackson. This optimism extends to how he leads his congregation. John expressed the desire for congregants to grow in their individual faith and to be healthy. To see this growth John is glad for congregants to move to others churches in the valley, if that is where they could contribute most.

### **Fred's Profile**

Fred's entry into Jackson was initially for personal reasons, such as engaging in outdoor sports and activities. After living in the town for a while, Fred found his relationship with God through a local young adult ministry. He soon started to put this new faith into action by volunteering. This turned into a paid position to be a youth director for a church. One of the outcomes resulted in new relationships and opportunities to collaborate with other youth ministries. Fred soon realized that he wanted to go to seminary for a graduate degree in ministry. This took him to California and during this time he developed a friendship with John. After seminary, Fred returned to Jackson and was placed into a leadership role as an associate pastor. This position soon transitioned to senior leadership of the church when the founding pastor retired.

When asked to reflect on how the Jackson community and culture impacts ministry, Fred stated that

It's expensive and housing is hard, but the changes in the last 20 years enhance it in some ways. There are more people to minister to with the growth. We have people who are able to give more, not just money, but time. I mean it's amazing, I hardly ever have any evening committee meetings. Most of my meeting are during the day because a lot of them have flexible schedules and are retired and can meet during the day. That's actually really convenient. But the downside is that people are in and out of the community and are really busy. They can't commit and people are chronically late in Jackson.

Fred's church is a denominational church that was founded in the mid-1990s. Fred feels supported by the denomination's governing leadership. His church has formal agreements with

other denominational churches in the valley. He says “I’d say the average person coming to our church has no idea what is going on with our denomination and/or they probably do not care.” These issues can include things like the denomination’s stance of homosexual clergy and marriage. These changing positions are viewed as a boundary by some to working with Fred’s church.

Fred believes in collaborating with other churches. This includes those churches fall outside of the formal institutional agreements. He shared that “we have led the Global Leadership Summit, that was a formal partnership with four other churches. We have also done worship nights with others. Those featured the different worship bands of each church playing together.”

Fred values meeting with other pastors. He mentions that “we have pastors who have gotten together on a regular basis, and I was kind of leading that. Because I feel like it is important. But I told the group, ‘I’m only going to get us together like one or twice a year. I don’t think we need to get together every month.’”

Other pastors affirmed this role he plays in connecting them together. Fred used the word *partnership* quite frequently in his discussing relationships with other churches. He expressed a desire to know more pastors. Fred shared that “there are some pastors I’ve never met in town. Some of them are new. I think that’s partly my bad, but I would say that some of these pastors don’t show up to anything that we do together. There is only so much you can do.” With those pastors that do show up a special bond exists. Fred stated that in terms of sheep stealing he “just doesn’t have those fears. I feel like there is a sense of trust with the other pastors that I work with and a sense of security in my own calling. We all have our own kind of unique styles and



emphasis on different aspects of theology or activism. But I'm not worried if someone goes to a Bible study at another church."

Friendships with a few key pastors result in a higher frequency of meetings, sometimes over coffee. Ministries that are mentioned by being supported by this congregation are Turning Point, Habitat for Humanity, the Good Samaritan Mission, various Christian schools, as well as the ministries that this church runs that serve the larger community.

### **Wes's Profile**

Wes lived more than half his life in the southeastern United States. He comments that in that region "there is a cultural Christianity that is pretty pervasive and denominations were very evident and there was a difference. Everyone knew the difference between Baptist and Methodist." When he went to the mission field, he was sent internationally to Mexico. Wes credits this period of his life to developing the broader perspective (ecumenical approach) in dealing with other Christians. He said

I was raised Southern Baptist, but my direct supervisor was a Presbyterian Church of America conservative. One of my lateral co-workers was Apostolic Christian Church, a small denomination from the Midwest that is along the lines of Mennonites. So, I worked between these two guys. And it's interesting that working with them, we never had a theological debate or argument that was sustained for any time at all. The work was done with complete charity, because we had our hands on the work.

The diverse Christian faith backgrounds of coworkers during this time was viewed as a positive experience. Wes took this new perspective into the Jackson community. His time in Jackson started as a carpenter. Entry into ministry began as an internship at a church while completing seminary. Wes said, "I see denominationalism dying." Wes leads a denominational church, but

it is a weak affiliation and the church possesses full discretion on how it wishes to carry out its normal operations. Wes's church has a long history in the valley, positioning the church to support many community organizations, including Young Life, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Turning Point, The Jackson Hole Classical Academy, The Jackson Hole Christian Academy, Timber Ridge Christian Academy, The Good Samaritan Mission, The Food Cupboard, the Latino Resource Center, PAWS in Jackson Hole, Boy Scout Pack and Troop sponsoring, and the Jackson Hole Youth Alliance. Programs and joint venture programs discussed include (but are not limited to) Vacation Bible School coordination, joint worship and service nights, Men's Fraternity, alternate services, Celebrate Recovery, the ministerium of Pastors, sharing human resources (musicians), and joint wedding/funeral occurrences.

Wes is a social conduit to many of the congregations and pastors in the valley. He stated that he "absolutely encourages people to have interactions with other churches in town." The same sentiment is shared for trying to increase relationships with other pastors. He shares that "there's not a lot of infighting, and that has been an intentional focus by each of these pastors." But a person wanting to be part of the group must meet certain criteria. Wes shared a story about an effort to reform the ministerium. The organizer was trying to get the group meeting again and was selling it to Wes. His reply to him was,

The way you just presented it (the ministerium) to me is not just the pastors in town. You mentioned the Mormon bishops and even said the Imans and Rabbis. If I am in a room with all these people who are the spiritual leaders in the community, it's hard to have a meeting. It's a hard meeting. I am concerned for the salvation of some of the people in that meeting. We (the Christian pastors) don't agree that there are many ways to God. That is an awkward position to be in.

Wes shared that the efforts by the organizer eventually turned into an inter-faith gathering and the ministerium was left to meet within its more traditional parameters.

### **Kris's Profile**

Kris is a newer addition to the ministry in the valley and came to Jackson as a seminary graduate. Time in service stands at just over four years. Kris's church is a small denominational congregation. Kris has a strong level of interaction with multiple churches in town, through formal denominational understandings, informal organizational traditions, and personal ties through friendships. Kris's church even has another congregation renting out its space. Verbalized support for other ministries in town includes Habitat for Humanity and Young Life. Very strong ties exist due to denominational arrangements that put several of the other churches in town in full communion, which means clergy can perform duties in each other's churches and be hired without obtaining different ordination. With this open exchange, there is often coordination regarding worship and services, as well as program sharing (such as youth groups and engagement into social needs). This coordination is so strong that Kris often attends the staff meetings at one of the other churches to receive fellowship and help feel part of a larger group. Kris stated that "I think it is a big deal that we share services and I actually go to staff meetings (at John's Church) every Tuesday just for the devotional time." Kris is driven by a strong desire to see faith in action. This desire has encouraged taking risks in collaboration. Kris shared that "we experimented with [two other churches] hosting a book club to discuss race. We decided we were sort of dreaming it together, and decided to host it at the library. We were inviting a lot more community leaders rather than church people, or explicitly church people. It was an intentional conversation on race relations and was a starting point." This effort only lasted for a brief time, but it provides insight into seeing ideological concerns be translated into

tangible actions. The special relationship that Kris described with the pastors was always positive. Once, when clarifying the peer relationships without wanting to sound critical, Kris said “It’s just funny wrinkles of interacting and knowing our own relationships are complex.” This honesty to address the imperfect and complexity shows real insight into the personal exchanges present in these relationships.

### **George’s Profile**

George has spent over fifteen years in leadership in the valley, placed there by the denomination after seminary. George’s denomination is a closed communion denomination, and is viewed as very traditionally conservative. This church has been operating in Jackson since the 1950s. George currently leads two congregations for this denomination, one in Jackson and one in a community over 40 miles further south. George carefully shared the way the denomination works. It is highly structured in its beliefs and George articulated these positions well. When asked about support from the denominational governance, George mentioned a strong support structure. One area they are trying to support local pastors is in helping combat the isolation. Though he felt supported, George mentioned that isolation of service in such a remote community is a real dynamic that impacts their denomination. Even with scheduled regional meetings, the large distances involved create real boundaries for effective fellowship between other pastors of the denomination. He believes that at a community level there is very little that should be formally supported by his church. He stated that “as far as interacting with other local congregations, there is not much at all.” George believes that each individual member of the church can support whatever organizations they wish as a person. In reference to Old Bills Fun Run (a local fundraiser) he mentioned

“we will participate in things, you know the community-wide fundraising drives that benefit somebody for their house burning down, if insurance doesn’t cover it. Things like that. But as a church we don’t go out and make a block presence. The members go according to their own vocation.”

The small size of the congregation limited their actions as a church. There are clear issues that they stand firmly on. When asked about support of Turning Point, George said “With things like Turning Point, we most definitely do support as a church. We sell the tickets for the fundraiser, those kinds of things. But again, we don’t sit together at the banquet, we go, but we don’t make a big splash about our church sponsoring such an event.” This has brought some negative comments by community members thinking the church is non-supportive on some issues. As a church, they do not engage in working with other organizations that contradict their very clear interpretations. This is intentional. George commented that “We don’t participate in those events because we don’t want to give tacit approval to something that is a direct contradiction of Holy Scripture.”

But there is a strong desire to engage when possible. Individually, church members are empowered to make a difference. George used the phrase “commonality of the externals” or *cooperatio in externae* to represent the association in the external issues that happen outside of the theological truths each church holds. It is through this common ground that George ties into the other pastors of the community. George mentioned seeing other pastors at the Turning Point gala (a fundraiser), the Right to Life Sunday that was hosted on the town square, and being active personally in the Teton County Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster group. George also is heavily engaged in performing services and clerical functions at the hospital and Retirement Living Center that is located attached to the hospital.

### **Adam's Profile**

Adam entered Jackson as a recent seminary graduate who felt called to plant a church in Teton County. When asked why he came, he replied, "Not to over-spiritualize, but it was a call from God. Just the need, the demographic need. The demographics I pulled before we moved said that at least three quarters of the population are not affiliated with any faith."

Before bringing in a team to accomplish this church plant, Adam moved to Jackson with his family. For 15 months he immersed himself in the community by working, building relationships, and listening to local needs. This effort was supported by a denomination through training, resources, and financial assistance. The years were challenging for this church plant. Adam mentioned the support he felt from the other pastors as he came into the community. This was through a few key individuals sharing wisdom early on regarding the county's dynamics in regards to the population. When asked how his church interacted with others, he replied "we tried to do as much as we could. Most of it happened on a personal level." He had heard horror stories before coming to Jackson about how church plants are viewed and treated. Adam said "This was not my experience at all. All of the pastors I talked to, all but maybe one or two, were very welcoming, very friendly, and very encouraging. My interactions with them were of that nature, supportive recommendations of people, to our church or other churches." Adam was thankful for his time in Jackson, despite the hardship and stress. The church survived five years, being shuttered in early 2019. Support of community ministries included the Good Samaritan Mission, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Young Life, and Turning Point. Programs supported included worship nights, attending alternate services at other churches, and the National Day of Prayer.

### **Matt's Profile**

Matt's time in ministry in Jackson represents more than two decades of experiences. Matt's early entry into ministry started as a youth and young adult pastor in the southern United States. The first interactions with the valley started years before ministry during a summer visit to tour and enjoy the outdoors. He said "I was 24 and something really struck me about the area, you know being from the southeast. It struck me that it was a very unchurched area, very kind of virgin territory so-to-speak to the Body of Christ." Pastoring in Jackson started in the early to mid-90s. Matt actually served two separate times. From these two occasions, Matt gained insight into large shifts in the town's development and change. On Matt's first stint as pastor, the founding pastor had just departed. After a five-year hiatus, Matt returned to the same congregation. An insight was gained regarding the starting of numerous churches in the community, some ending in failure.

Matt feels strongly positive about supporting other churches. Areas that Matt held personally important are reflected in the roles he played with other ministries in town. Over the years Matt served in leadership with Turning Point, helped at the Good Samaritan Mission, and served on the ministerium. Participation in the ministerium was mentioned positively, though some trepidation was expressed regarding trust and who should be part of that group. Matt was mentioned several times as a key supporter, sometimes in a mentor type role by other participants. As time progressed, Matt's role as a stable force in the community afforded the opportunity to act as a mentor to the many volunteers and workers who came through the community. Some of these rising stars ended up returning to Jackson after leaving to pursue formal education.

### **Doug's Profile**

Doug has lived in Teton County the longest and offers over four decades of unique perspective. Doug's first call to ministry in Jackson was to start a Christian camp and a local chapter of Youth for Christ. This short-term calling eventually turned into a long-term pastoring. Doug commented that in those earlier times "the town only had about 2500 people, so it was a very small town. It was very small rural community type thing, except it was a tourist place, so we would have a lot more people in the summer. But nothing like it is today."

Doug's church is a non-denominational church. It gets a form of support from a network that acts as a quasi-denominational support for professional development and guidance. Doug's church operates multiple large ministries and these keep the church busy. Interactions with the community are centered more around ministries engaging the community than the church. Doug was present and active in the formation of many ministries that now exist in Jackson. Two of the most important organizations by name include Turning Point (formerly the Crisis Pregnancy Center) and the Good Samaritan Mission. Other ministries supported in various ways over the years in different capacities are the Jackson Hole Christian Academy, The Jackson Hole Classical Academy, The Jackson Hole Bible College, Youth for Christ, and the Jackson Hole Youth Alliance while it was active. Joint programs or services are the Easter sunrise service, speakers brought in to the high school, outreach concerts, and baccalaureate services for graduation. Another organization was the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). The role of theology and truth is very important to Doug. He has seen the organizational lifespan of many of the core ministries in Jackson go through various states of growth, decline, and reinvention has created some concern that these organizations are leaving the roots of why and how they were founded. Doug shared that



for me the dividing line on working together has a great deal to do with your view of the deity of Christ, the inspiration of scriptures: whether the Bible can be trusted. If we bring our doctrinal statement out right in front, and they are only a little separate, we can work together in fellowship. But then we need to discuss what is the purpose of working together.

Many of the other pastors are not aware of the creation stories of these ministries, let alone this pastor's role in their formation. Doug fondly reflects on working with the earlier group of pastors. He mentioned in working with these past colleagues that "the one way we worked together was the ability to set aside our distinctives in order to come together for a common goal, yet still having a unity within our theology on conversion and the person of Jesus. In the early days that was strong."

Doug voiced some concerns and wondered if the newer pastors were focusing on unity in efforts over doctrinal purity. Personal interactions with most current pastors are minimal, however, there are few pastors mentioned with strong ties through personal relationship.

### **Joey's Profile**

Joey came to the valley after graduating college. Joey said, "You know, the typical Jackson story, took the year off and came to just play and enjoy the outdoor community." Joey was "a hardcore Darwinian gradualist evolutionist." It is during this time that a relationship with God was formed by a challenge by Joey's future spouse to formally study just the scientific aspect of creation. So, Joey began an intense period of study. The conclusions of much study and wrestling resulted in coming to faith in Jesus. This path that started in Jackson now led away to seminary in California. The seminary/college and affiliated church does provide a

quasi-denominational support through guidance of mother-churches, former seminary professors, and mentoring/accountability relationships through this network. Upon completion of seminary, Joey returned with a team to start a non-denominational church. Joey stated, “I’ve been the pastor of my church for 11 years. It was planted under the guidance of other pastors and shepherds who ordained me to ministry, and a great community-based church and Masters Seminary.”

Joey’s church does not engage in many representative boundary-spanning behaviors, aside from their focus on their members and those that come through their ministries. This church is supportive of Turning Point, but does not have active members supporting groups like Young Life or Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Involvement with the ministerium is mentioned by Joey. A primary source of representative interactions occurs through a counselling ministry that is designed to help those in the church and general community at large. Joey made no mention of joint services or worship. When crisis hits the community, Joey did mention how the church rallies to address the cause. A recent example of this was when a community member had been tragically killed by a bear. Joey shared about the incident that “even though he attended another church in town, he was an acquaintance and friend of many of our churches leaders. So, we just came alongside them and provided childcare during the funeral, and offered whatever other services we could for the families.”

On a personal level, it was very important to Joey the placement of scripture and truth in all things. He stated that “There is really no unity if we are not united to God through His word, by His Spirit, and Truth.” This is used as a filter to help guide how they engage situationally with other churches. Joey noted in a positive way the personal relationship ties with other pastors mentioned in the study.

### **Brad's Profile**

Brad has a history in the valley spanning over 20 years. Brad says "I think of myself as a 20-year resident of the valley even though I was gone for seven years. My heart never left."

Brad's first work in ministry started in working with youth. This was at the same time that Fred was getting his start in youth ministry. After a few years in that role, Brad then left the valley to go to a Christian university and complete two degrees: business and ministry. Brad then settled into ministry in Oklahoma. Brad was then asked to return to Jackson. Brad says "we prayed about it and felt that it was the direction that the Lord had for us to come back and pastor in Jackson Hole." A position as an associate pastor was accepted. A few years later, a decision was made to leave that church and start another church with a different focus. This new position placed Brad as head pastor. Brad is a boundary-spanner by nature and once ran across Mongolia, west to east, in order to raise awareness for orphans. Brad expressed support for organizations such as the Jackson Hole Youth Alliance, Turning Point, Young Life, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Collaborative efforts include Rock the Walk, worship and ministry nights, the ministerium.

The church Brad leads currently and the church that he previously served are both non-denominational churches with no theological or structural ties to larger associations. Close personal friendships were noted with several other pastors in this study, as well as positive relationships between those churches. He mentions that

one of the ways I'm personally made is to be in community. My batteries are charged by being around other people and having lived for a long time in the valley, I developed friendships with a number of lead pastors in the valley before they were even lead

pastors. So, I have almost two decades of foundation, long friendships, that are completely unrelated to the senior pastor leadership level.

Brad tries to meet with other pastors as often as he can work it into the schedule. He trades texts with Wes every five to six weeks and tries to meet one-on-one every four months. When asked if this frequency was enough to maintain the relationships, Brad responded that “it was barely adequate. Once every three months would be better.”

Brad is a networker by nature and always on the move. He said that I really like to win. And so, without knowing this about me (at the time) I started reaching out and building a relationship with other youth pastors in the valley. This was between the years 2001 and 2006. I wanted to network, to see what they were doing, if there was something really effective. And I wanted to learn from them, and maybe they could learn from me.

Knowing this characteristic about himself, Brad stated that “As a lead pastor I’m still the same person. So, I like to compete, and the best way for me to compete is against myself and use the competition with other churches not for the sake of being better than the other churches, but to better versions ourselves.” This dynamic encourages Brad to span boundaries on all levels. The confidence from these deep relationships means that Brad has a sense of trust that other churches are not going to steal his congregants. He does not see that collaborating and joint venturing on issues leads to mass movements of people from one church to another.

### Thematic Findings

From the shared lived stories, patterns, themes, and rhythms start to emerge from the participants and their churches. A surprising finding through the interviews is that this population is ready to cross boundaries and join forces.

Through the lens of Eisenberg’s and Salzer’s typologies, it is possible to identify these commonalities and follow the rhythms of boundary-spanning behaviors and how these play out in the individual pastors’ lived experiences. This offers hope for those seeking to understanding the intricacies that orchestrate groups of people coming together in synergistic relationships. As the title of this study describes, a cord of three is not easily broken. A cord is made of many threads, and this study reveals multifarious threads (or themes) and the conditions in which these threads readily entwine.

In looking to the cord analogy, ties occur where threads intersect, similar to knots. As knots can be studied to understand their composition, so can these ties and intersections. These threads have been understood with two key typologies. Institutional and Representative linkages are inferred through network theory. Eisenberg’s typology helps us understand the overall composition of these higher-level relationships, and though it does address personal interactions, it does not delve into the driving factors behind these interactions. Personal linkages use Salzer’s typology and help provide more clarity, as Social Exchange theory (SET) brings in elements that help us understand the commodities in this social economy.

### Findings Related to Network Theory Interactions

Table 2 below lists the dominant institutional and representative interaction mentioned by the pastors over the course of the interviews.

*Table 2: Network Theory Boundary Spanning Influencing Themes*

Institutional Level Themes	Representative Level Themes
1.0 Syncretism Factors	2.0 Resource Poverty
1a Formal Denominational Agreements	2a Time and Efficiency
1b Commonality of Beliefs	2b Human Capital
1.1 Ecumenical or Unity Minded	2c Space

### Institutional Level Themes

The broad, institutional level findings are considered first. They are the weakest links of the three levels, as they are the most impersonal.

#### Syncretism Factors

Syncretism describes the attempted amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought. One major thread shared by the majority of the pastors with formal governing institutions (denominations), is the impact of formal agreements and arrangements on increasing organizational interactions. This is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Syncretic Relationship of the Jackson Denominational Churches

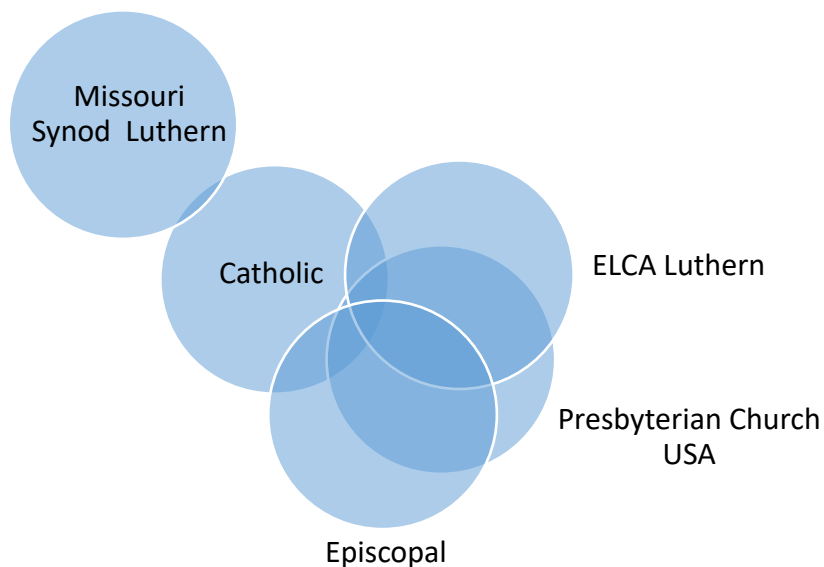


Figure 2. visually represents the relationships regarding theological understandings, agreements, and interactions. These denominations, have a common root based back in the reformation. Early in the histories of these denominations, they split from the Catholic church. That is why the Catholic Church is placed in the center. However, the churches do not recognize

the Pope's authority, but there is a commonality that traces back to this time period. Order of service, many creeds and statements, and many hymns are shared by these churches. The other denominations also split from each other. The ELCA and Missouri Synod churches represent different distinctives with a common early history. There are commonalities to be found, and this is represented in the overlapping areas. The denominations shown in Figure 2 reflect the theological and ideological relationship of these different churches in Jackson. When interviewed, each of the pastors of the four protestant churches mentioned having a tie to the Catholic church in the valley. The ELCA, Presbyterian, and Episcopal church pastors also shared about the broader institutional agreements that their governing organizations have with each other. These arrangements also apply to the representative level as reflected in the overlapping of the circles. It was challenging for these pastors to address the Catholic church's relationship to their own congregations. Some wanted to include them in their definitions of orthodox, but added caveats. Others made sure to not include them for those similar reasons. Statements that use "we" typically referenced those that were within their own denomination or those that overlapped. Each of the pastors of these denominations shared how the relationships encouraged by higher governing structures helped create boundary-spanning opportunities.

The Missouri Synod Lutheran Church has a different relationship than the other three non-Catholic churches in Figure 2. When asked which church in the valley it was most similar to, the pastor mentioned the Catholic Church. When asked why he said "it was due to the conservative theology that both exhibit, and both are closed communion." This means an outsider is not allowed to participate in the sacrament of Communion without being a fully vested member of the denomination. The ELCA Lutheran Church, the Presbyterian Church USA, and Episcopal Church have formal agreements that allow ordained clergy to serve

interchangeably, and any member of one can receive the sacraments at any of the other associated churches.

#### Formal Denominational Agreements

Some of these links are high level denominational agreements decided upon by the governing oversight bodies. It can be helpful to view these denominations in a similar manner to a franchise. The Brand sets certain expectations for a local franchise to operate. The franchise agrees to these rules. But a local franchise also has the ability to behave with certain freedoms depending on the strength of the Brand. Church denominations often behave similarly, subject to strict or loose agreements. In more formalized relationships, clergy are allowed to move freely between denominations. Some agreements even afford coordination of shared services and ministry programming. An example of a loose agreement would be the theological and philosophical beliefs between two different denominational churches. While not binding, shared belief positions guide and encourage interactions between the churches. It fosters numerous boundary-spanning efforts that result in frequent collaboration. This formal arrangement was most common in the denominational churches.

However, it is possible to see formal arrangements between two non-denominational churches. An example would be an agreement on how the ministry of the Holy Spirit operates in believers' lives. Doug shared that

Matt and I had differences on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Our belief is that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is first and primary to lift up the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and Matt's view was that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to promote the Holy Spirit. Of course, at our church we saw the same thing that in the third person of the



Holy Trinity and that they are all to God, the same essence as God. So, our theology was together there.

Understanding that differences can be distinctives and have a root commonality of belief is challenging to fully understand. These commonly held, less formal beliefs, though, do not necessarily ensure collaboration. This is evidenced in Jackson, where two churches are nearly identical in every positional statement, but these similarly held beliefs do not translate to any working relationship discussed by their leading pastors. For those churches with formal agreements, institutional engagement was mentioned as a positive collaborative factor when ecumenical or church-wide support was promoted. This generalized mandate from their governing bodies was a weak knot, as the agreement did not provide much inspiration for these Jackson pastors to work together. The knot held the cord together, but it was not a strong knot by its nature. In a generalized way, this support is most easily described in Christ's mandate to seek unity in the body of Christ. The representative ties that were shared with passion held more strength. These threads interacted as knots that could take the weight of risky ventures. Pastors described the most meaningful interactions occurring at levels below the institutional interaction.

#### Commonality of Beliefs

Commonality of beliefs can lead to some relationships developing around institutional level commonalities. The formal agreements discussed earlier represent some of the overlap with commonality of beliefs. At this higher level, they still only represent weak linkages. They do not always reflect a willingness to collaborate. Two of the non-denominational churches expressed support from the quasi-institutional network. This is an interesting finding, as these two churches did not express any collaborative efforts between them on a representative level.

These two churches held almost identical theological positions and received support from the Shepherds conference. Both pastors expressed how helpful it was to visit this conference yearly. Both looked for guidance and indirect support in the form of mentoring, counsel, and fellowship for their staff. But except for the thread centered around Turning Point, there were no knots to discover between the two. Presence in this network was a commonality, but it did not increase boundary-spanning behaviors for these two churches locally. By participating in the larger network, these two churches did participate in boundary-spanning behaviors with other churches. But this occurred through the interactions with the other churches within the network at the conference. This did not include their neighboring local church for whatever reasons. Statements at the institutional level by non-denominational pastors that used “we” typically were centered around those that intersected or matched their described theological limits.

#### Ecumenical or Unity Minded

Being ecumenically minded is less tangible than written formal agreements. It is the synthesis of formal agreements, common beliefs, and the willingness to know each others distinctives, put them aside, and work together. It is a mindset approach, of living out Christ’s mandate to the church to not forsake the fellowship of the saints. Leaders set the precedents for their organizations to follow. Local traditions that have developed between congregations encourage these bonds. Examples of this are the joint Holy week services between the Presbyterian Church and the ELCA Lutheran Church, and the ELCA pastor attending staff meetings at the Episcopal church due to the smaller size of the ELCA congregation. This meets a need and desire for accountability and fellowship with the Episcopal church staff. Yet another example is that the ELCA Lutheran church was encouraged to hold joint services with the Catholic church for the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the reformation, and the desire to move towards

reconciliation after that split. The challenge with those services, as voiced by five of the pastors in the valley, was the basis or foundation of the Catholic doctrine. The Catholic church values the role of Mary and the Pope in the expression of their faith. It also holds a much more rigid view of clergy and service. The Catholic church is very hierarchal. The pastors understand these differences, and at the start of their interviews attempted to define what orthodox faith looked like to them and where the boundary existed on what they were willing to work within from an institutional level. All pastors interviewed considered the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon) as not a valid expression of Christianity due to significant theological disagreements concerning Jesus and the bible. As mentioned earlier, the Catholic Church was considered by some as a valid Christian expression but not others. Caveats and differences were carefully explained to rationalize their positions.

With the institutional level themes unable to provide a full and clear picture as to why boundary spanning is occurring, it is necessary to review the themes that were present at a representative level. These two levels interact and this requires some clarification. Thinking of the denominations as franchises for a moment, the Brands all have their distinctives. The franchises have commonality with other businesses in the same market. One can study the Brand for similarities, but the local franchises must meet the local needs of the city as well as community expectations. This is the case for churches. The clergy-sharing agreement reflects institutional needs to share a shrinking pool of qualified pastors. The most prevalent amount of boundary sharing behaviors mentioned centered around resource sharing capacities. The navigating of resource scarcity, specifically in the major topics listed in Table two, was mentioned repeatedly throughout the interviews. This requires reviewing the overlap of the

institutional and representative distinctives. This can be thought of as the intersection of the Brands and the local Franchises in Jackson.

### Representative Level Themes

The representative themes exemplify moderate and strong linkages in the study. One of these themes, which acts as a strong knot, is resource scarcity. This is unique to the Jackson community in its composition as the resource scarcity is not necessarily money.

#### Resource Poverty

The challenge of operating a ministry in an expensive and demanding community was reflected by the stories shared by the pastors. The pressures on people and scarcity of resources put constraints on the churches' ability to collaborate. These constraints included shortages of volunteers and workers, space to operate ministries, and even time itself. Joint ventures mentioned by the organizations often are trying to counteract these pressures through efficiencies found in pooling efforts.

#### Time and Efficiency

The pastors spent quite a bit of time in the community. Intimacy with the region is a major theme that was mentioned by pastors. These pastors expressed a desire to make an impact on the community, but this desired impact stems from their love of their town and its people. Collectively they described these efforts with "we" statements. The makeup of Christian culture in the community is indelibly imprinted on them with this element of time. This can be traced through the deep roots that some of the pastors had into the valley. Even with the length that each pastor lived in the valley varying, there is a perspective that can be traced back at least 40 years: Doug's.

Doug presents a thread to the cord in his own right, as he has served the longest in the valley. His story reinforces the theme that time is a catalytic factor. His longevity offers a platform on which it is possible to witness the ebbs and flows in the times and seasons of organizational interactions in the valley. As an example, the pastors who have been in the valley ten to twenty years would often cite certain para-church ministries as examples of current interaction between the churches. They often did not know the foundational history of the organizations. Two organizations were mentioned consistently: Turning Point (formerly the Crisis Pregnancy Center) and the Good Samaritan Mission. Most pastors expressed support for these organizations, but only Doug, due to his long standing, was able to personally share how these two organizations were started. These organizations started with a theologically solid group of individuals, and contained of a very ecumenical nature at their beginnings.

Doug's time in the valley offered an insight into this thread reaching back decades before most of the other pastors had even considered moving to Jackson for any reason, let alone thinking about ministry. Matt had the next longest service time in the valley and echoed many of the same threads and stories that Doug mentioned as examples to the historical nature of these churches and pastors working together. The boom cycle for this initial collaborative effort centered around the 1970s through early 1990s. In the mid- to late-90s, new churches came onto the scene as the valley's population rapidly grew. The ELCA Lutheran Church and Presbyterian Church were founded in this time period. This echoed a new phase of individuals entering the valley. Understanding the growth cycles of the town helps provide environmental context to the organizational life cycles of the churches.

The group of pastors that got a start in ministry in the valley about 20 years ago is an echo of the earlier collaborative efforts of the pastors and ministry workers who preceded them.

This cohort of pastors that started 20 years ago transformed into executive leadership ten to 15 years ago. Early in their service, these pastors helped plan and execute events that reached out into the community. The desire and passion were there. What they lacked 20 years earlier was the schooling and education. And so, they left for different seminaries and programs. After returning, trained from their schools, they settled back into the patterns they had witnessed and experienced before: a relational approach to ministry that sought to honor and respect the other ministry workers in the valley.

The representative ties in Jackson are centered around practical expressions of ministry. Both the non-denominational and denominational churches mentioned past involvement with Jackson Hole Youth Alliance, Young Life, support for various primary Christian schools, the Samaritan Mission, Turning Point, and Habitat for Humanity. The desire to support was expressed well by Fred who said, “I get the feeling from people that they love when they know that the pastors are getting together and that we are trying to do things together as churches. There is a real sense of ‘yeah let’s join forces and be a light, a witness to our community.’” Other pastors expressed a similar attitude and expectation from church members for this kind of behavior. A few pastors expressed the desire for this type of unity to communicate to those that are in the community, but are not church affiliated, the ecumenical composition of the faith community.

*Human Capital:*

People are the difference. Doug described early work in the valley amongst pastors centering around the ministerium. Each member understood each other’s differences, but were able as Doug shared “to come together for a common goal. Even with these distinctives, members still had a unity within our theology regarding conversion and the person of Jesus

Christ.” The need for workers in the ministry was central. This desire for engaging in the work of the kingdom was strong in the group. Doug’s use of “distinctives” instead of “differences” is telling language. It connotes positivity and unique giftings, instead of disagreement. During the 1980s and 1990s, efforts were centered on working together to bring in speakers and groups to engage the community for evangelism purposes. Other stories by Doug centered around the different charismatic groups of people that would drift in and out of non-charismatic churches. Eventually enough of these theological distinctives would be large enough to congregate and they would form their own assembly. Doug mentioned various home churches—the Jackson Hole Christian Center (which became the Chapel at River Crossing), and other expressions located in the villages of Moran and Wilson—as examples. These movements were described in a positive manner as the core faith of these groups was not in question. There was much work to be accomplished in engaging the town and its many visitors and there were always too few people to engage them for ministry. Resource scarcity in the valley forces interactions and collaboration in ways that are unique. Two resources mentioned by name by the pastors were human capital and physical space. Both of these are considered scarce commodities in Jackson.

In regards to human capital, there are two stories in particular that exemplify human capital as an asset to the community instead of just at the local congregation level. These two stories are perhaps the most extreme examples, but the need for consistent volunteers, small group leaders, and ministry workers was echoed by each and every pastor in some way.

**Musicians Needed:** The first story centers around the scarcity of piano players. A church in the valley lost its piano player due to his desire to retire from one church. In that retirement he desires to switch churches, and wanted to attend and play part-time for Kris’s church. Kris’s church is a small congregation, and was not in the position to pay this musician, but was more

than happy to welcome the musician once Kris was assured by the musician that the relational aspect of the congregational switch was being handled honorably. During the sharing of this story, Kris made it quite clear the uncomfortable relational dynamic involved, as it would leave a significant gap in the former church's worship capability. While this was happening, Wes, at a third church and unknown to Kris, was encouraging a different piano player in his congregation to go and play for the church that lost the musician. While these two pastors were conscious of the situation regarding the church that lost its musician, they were unaware that the sharing of knowledge workers, in this case skilled musicians, was occurring in the community at large. It should be noted that two of these congregations have institutional links through their denomination, while the third does not have any denomination link to the other two. Even in this community, with a valuable asset like a piano player, the pastors were cautious and careful to ensure that the delicate balance of social expectations were being followed. Wes did not have to encourage the extra piano player to step up playing for the first church. And Kris did not have to go through the extra effort to ensure the retiring piano player met former obligations. But the social balance is important to maintain stability and build good will.

**Ministry Staff Needed:** The second story centers around a childcare ministry at Fred's church. This ministry has hired as one of its directors someone who also serves as the children's pastor from Brad's church. Before that, this individual also was also the children's ministry director for several years at Matt's church. None of the Pastors have a problem sharing this qualified individual, nor do they view this as a conflict of interest. Fred's church also has a long-term, part-time staff member who has served the childcare ministry for years. This employee attends Matt's church and had helped in youth ministry at Matt's church. Again, this



is not viewed as a conflict of interest by the pastors, as they trust the individual's ability to serve both organizations admirably.

Another notable occurrence was when Fred's former associate pastor was hired by Matt's church for several years as an associate/administrator. This level of swapping staff members between churches to support ministries is unique as these churches are within only a few miles of each other. Some churches in other communities have been known to ensure staff members have non-compete clauses to prevent this very type of situation. In this case, the associate/administrative pastor's switch was approved by the two lead pastors, Matt and Fred. This approval ensured that no negative impact on either congregation or misunderstanding would arise. It is important to note that Fred's church has no institutional agreements with either Brad's or Matt's churches in this instance, as the other two churches are non-denominational. This means there are no institutional factors at work to encourage this type of boundary spanning, only the desire to help meet each other's human capital needs. As churches need ministry workers to engage in a larger ministry, it is sometimes necessary to look outside of one's limited church population and be willing to look at the larger church community. Fred commented on this very issue by saying this about the staff member of the child care ministry.

She's great for that, and she is doing a great job. And she is our only [fulltime] staff member that doesn't attend our church. And I think in that position it's okay. Because it's such an outreach to so many other churches. And she does a great job, and she's fully a member of our staff team and personally a really good friend.

Space:

Teton County as a community is in a housing and space crisis. The pastors are well aware of this, and when possible, they support each other by sharing their resources and knowledge to

help offset this limited resource. Several pastors reflected the challenges of housing and physical space for ministries to operate. Kris's church rents out their space to a smaller congregation. Three of the other churches currently rent for their weekly meetings. These three pastors mentioned that they had no choice but to rent due to the high expense and limited availability of purchasing suitable land. Brad's and Joey's churches currently rent space in town. Adam's church rented space for the five years the church was in operation. Adam shared a story regarding the challenges of working with the town Board of Supervisors to get approval to even rent a space. He was told by a former county planner that a zoning variance approval would be just a formality, it should be an easy approval. Instead their church was unilaterally denied by the town council. Matt spoke into this issue, and commented on the challenges that new startups have in the valley due to the lack of space. This forces creative arrangements at times, and not just between the churches. This need for space is not just something that impacts the churches, but all ministries. This need for space is exemplified by three schools.

It started when two private Christian schools decided to launch at the same time. One of them was not able to navigate finding space, so they approached Matt's church, and for a year they rented space from the church during the week to launch their school. It was not an ideal arrangement due to poor timing. An agreement was then reached with George's church to put modular buildings on their property and rent space there.

At the same time as this was happening, Doug's church, while running its own Christian school, rented space to another classical Christian school that needed space to move and expand after the county government shut down their former location. This put Doug's church in the unique position of having two Christian private schools operating within one church building.

Some of these unique arrangements occurred due to the town’s hostilities to rezone spaces for these schools. Other factors to their success are due to the personal beliefs, fiscal win-win arrangements, and personal relationships that this small town has forged through its history.

Findings Related to Social Exchange Theory Interactions

The Institutional and Representative findings for boundary-spanning factors are noteworthy in their own right, but they help paint a broader backdrop to those matters that are much closer to the heart. SET provides a framework for these stories to be delved into deeply, and in that exploration, a social marketplace emerges with specific things acting as commodities. They are the strongest links in the Jackson network. These major themes fall into four areas. These are the discrete setting (culture and economic demands); organizational and ideological ties (mission or purpose); trust; and common threats (external or internal to the community). These themes act as threads weaving in and out of the stories, providing a tapestry of experience for us to study.

Table 3 *Social Exchange Theory Boundary Spanning Influencing Themes*

Major Personal Themes	Social Exchange Theory
3a	Discrete Setting
3b	Organizational and Ideological Ties
3c	Trust
3d	Common Threat

Discrete Setting

The discrete setting is the immediate background for the individual pastor. In some ways it can be thought of as the personal struggle against the nature of the valley. It is listed at the SET level as a re-occurring cultural theme. At times it was mentioned by the pastors almost as a

person in an of itself, as adjectives often used for people would be found in the language. They would say things like “Jackson is beautiful, alluring, busy, tempting, rude, exciting, fun, and fickle.” The setting is described as discrete so as to differentiate it from the general environment that impacts the institutional and representative level operations. The relationship to the community was intimate and shared with passion. A primary theme discussed by the majority of pastors was the cultural environment and its impact on ministry in the valley. This usually occurred with a negative connotation as presented previously in the background statistics for Teton County. Ministering in Jackson is seen as challenging for the individual due to a variety of reasons. Some reasons shared are the limited number of Christians, difficulty in finding leaders, high turnover, increased costs, and demands on time. Adam also commented that:

I think it helps that the nature of Jackson is what it is, in that it is not a friendly place for the Gospel, or for ministering. There is opposition and pushback that you’re going to get from a number of places throughout the community, whether it be the legislation, or the politics or whatever. So, I think because of that, the churches tend to bind together quite a bit more, just because we know we are on the same page.

Outdoor opportunities originally brought some of the pastors into the valley. Joey shared that after college, arrival into the Jackson community was “the typical Jackson story to take the year off, come out, and just play outdoors,” This mindset to enjoy the opportunities and play is one of the challenges for a ministry depending on volunteers for its operation. It seemed to be a point of collective suffering by most of the pastors. It also was credited to increasing the frequency of collaborative interactions, as the organizations consistently look outside their status quo to renew member and leadership positions with new people.

Matt and Doug's descriptions of the discrete setting presented it as a factor that helped temper and forge their relationship over the years. The quality of the bond was described as tested and true by both parties. In story shared earlier in regards to limited space, Adam described the organizational challenges experienced when their church sought a special use permit that was supposed to be easy to get. The church hired a former county planner to help guide them through the process with assurances it was a formality to get an approval from the council. The approval did not happen. It was unilaterally voted down. The town council stated they desired to not have a church in that space, but instead something that would bring tax revenue. Matt had a similar experience, with attempts to change the church master plan at the county level with the county planning board. Interaction with local government was viewed as a personal negative experience. Both of these stories reflect challenging local governance conditions for advancing their organization's needs. It should help present a comprehensive picture of the operating environment. It is easier for a church to seek help from another church, than try to follow the right process dictated by the local governments.

Most of the Pastors expressed some of the complex challenges that a wealthy town brought to the social and cultural fabric of the community. It is a community that lives in the extremes. Distances to travel are far by most communities' standards. Going to Walmart involves a drive of over an hour and a half driving and crossing state lines. A mudslide or avalanche can close roads for weeks, doubling that time. One of the churches had regular attending members that lived four hours apart geographically. For those engaging in outdoor recreation it is difficult to get to trailheads or locations. Distance is a very real boundary and this boundary requires an expense of time. Time is a scarce commodity in Jackson and the wealthy exchange riches for time. The poor exchange time for money to live. That is why this

community has been in the running year in and year out for the most disparate income in the United States (Dunfee, 2017).

#### Organizational and Ideological Ties

Pastors desired to interact with each other when there was a cause or organization that was important to them ideologically. Once a compatriot was identified, it was easier for them to justify future collaboration knowing that they had an ally present. The ministries in Jackson then act as catalytical organizations allowing the friendships and relationships to develop in an organic way, away from the formal demands of ministry. There are several organizations that were formed around these ideological positions in Jackson that were mentioned on a frequent basis among the participants. These organizations (in whatever form) were centered around certain causes that meet needs and inspire action to those called to serve others. These causes are abortion/crisis pregnancy, youth ministry, young adult engagement, and the helping of those in need for resources. Two thirds of the pastors specifically mentioned how crucial the issues of abortion and crisis pregnancy were to them. Most expressed a passion to fight for the unborn child or the woman in distress. Five pastors served on the board of the local crisis pregnancy center and one of them helped launch the organization. The official positions of the churches towards Turning point was even more varied than the pastor's personal positions. This means that some of the churches did not have clear anti-abortion statements or were pro-choice. As such, they did not support Turning Point in an official capacity. Despite this, many pastors chose to engage in support through personal involvement with Turning Point. A specific event that encouraged this personal support is the yearly gala held to fundraise for Turning Point. The majority mentioned attending this, even if they did not support the organization in an

operational capacity. Turning point is just one example in the community; other examples are centered around other community-held ideological concerns.

Another issue or concern viewed with importance to the pastors was housing and displacement of housing due to high cost. Two organizations poised to help the housing crisis are The Good Samaritan Mission and Habitat for Humanity. The former is positioned in a short-term capacity, while the latter is a more permanent attempt to alleviate a shrinking affordable housing option. These two organizations were mentioned as being conduits of interactions for personal linkages, specifically in shared work/build days, volunteering outlets for bible studies, and other ways to engage vulnerable parts of the Jackson community. Kris mentioned arranging work days with other congregations. This opportunity arose due to the close relationship Kris has with Fred and John. Kris said, "Housing is a critical issue here in Jackson, and we have other projects, but we are a small church and it is one of those things that helps, it is good. So, we share days." This sharing occurred with John's church on Habitat build days. These days occur twice a year in the summer. It has even sparked some healthy rivalry between the congregations. Kris and John discussed the different amounts the two churches raised for fundraising on a build house. Even in the interplay, a mutual respect and love for the cause came through regarding the shared value of helping those in need, even though one church clearly raised more money than the other.

Areas of ministry pertaining to students and young adults were identified as another area of common organizational and personal ties. Half of the pastors had backgrounds that started as either youth pastors or in a ministry designed to work with youth. Each of these shared examples of early collaboration in their formative ministry years, with three of them starting early in their careers in Jackson. This willingness to collaborate also built trust and this comes

through their stories. A notable event was an outreach run through the Jackson Hole Youth Alliance called “Rock the Walk.” This event was held 15 years ago in conjunction with the Turning Point (formerly crisis pregnancy center). It was a concert with invited speakers who addressed the youth. Though this event only happened twice, the youth workers and leaders that helped put this together built relationships. This event also served as one of the transmission points between the older senior pastors at the time and the next generation of up and coming pastors. The local Bible college was even called on to have their students help act as security. Though not known at the time, the events served as a catalyst for these friendships and relationships. Other organizations that serve in a catalytic role for these personal relationships are Young Life and the Christian schools.

### Trust

Research found that the concept of trust as an exchange indicator played a large role in pastors’ boundary-spanning behaviors. One question that was asked of each pastor in their interview centered around the concept of “sheep stealing.” Sheep stealing refers to the behavior of one church luring away congregants from another church, like a shepherd stealing sheep from another flock. Each pastor was familiar with the concept, and shared interesting perspectives into how trust plays a role in their lives and in their congregations. Most of the pastors expressed an awareness but a lack of concern regarding sheep stealing. Each was confident in their ability to retain their sheep in their flock. It does not mean there was no controversy. John and Kris mentioned an interesting conversation held between the two of them about sheep stealing. In this conversation John mentioned that if Kris could not take care of congregants then “expect him to be waiting to take care of them.” John meant he would be more than happy to have them come to his church. This comment was not meant to be a threat but instead was a



gentle ribbing of trust and honesty that Kris needed to not grow stagnant in pastoral care. Matt mentioned having a habit of talking to visitors that were known to come from other congregations that were going through challenges. Matt would tell them that they were always welcome to visit, but that if they wished to become members they needed to resolve any issues they had with their former pastors first. Some people would choose to move on rather than find that resolution. Others chose to resolve their issues with the former pastors and stay at Matt's church. Fred expressed a similar story about a couple that was attending from a church that was going through a split. The couple, when approached, expressed that they were waiting out the uncertain times that were occurring at the other church. They still considered the other church as their member church, but needed a rest from the drama. They were allowed to attend, and when the uncertain times passed, they went back to their original church. The trust that the pastors have in each other empowers them to allow people to come and go through their congregations, while still feeling confident enough to encourage these people to resolve any issues with other churches.

It is not just congregants that move between churches at times. There are stories of leaders trusting and relying on other ministries to sustain them during hard times. Adam shared a story about one of his leadership team members who was going to Wes's Monday night service. Typically, leadership members do not attend other churches' services. The rigors of Jackson made it difficult for Adam and some of his leadership to be able to attend their own church's events at times. Work schedules were full. Wes's church was so supportive of Adam's, that it went beyond just helping him through a season of busyness. Wes offered to pay for an advertisement for Adam's church launch. This offer shows Wes's confidence in his own ministry, as well as trust that Adam would not act with impropriety and try to lure people

attending Wes's Monday night service. Most of the pastors felt confident in their abilities to manage emotions of distrust that inherently arises from the potential loss of church members. Many expressed that their congregants were not theirs, but God's. They also recognized that their organizations might not be able to meet all of the needs for these people at their current place in life. This acknowledgment of a complex and challenging dynamic in their community shows authentic personal awareness. Out of this, the pastors were able to formulate responses that were complex and exhibited a community leadership that paralleled their peers. There was never a meeting to decide how they were going to act. They just knew it was the right thing to do for the community and trusted each other. Wes shared his experience as a minister coming from the south. In that community, sheep stealing was a very real threat. He shared that some pastors build their churches using a model that involves taking congregants from other churches. Wes felt that Jackson, due to its minority Christian population, had more than enough people in the valley for all of the churches to be full. This was echoed by others in their interviews. This removed a pressure to perform, and removed some of the competition to have a growth driven church.

#### Trust transference:

But trust among some does not translate into trust among all. The ministerium was a meeting of pastors that has a history in Jackson of meeting with differing frequency. After one of the dry spells, an attempt was made by a non-pastor to have the group meet. This individual attempted to have other representatives included in this group. This included the Jewish Community, Mormons, and Catholics. After numerous attempts to schedule a meeting, the individual resorted to tricking the pastors to meet at a retirement home regarding a program affiliated with that retirement home. Upon arrival to the event, the individual came out and said

“now that I have all of you together, let’s talk about the ministerium.” This event was viewed as humorous in its execution to get the pastors together. It was unorthodox and the tone by those sharing it suggests it may have not been successful if handled differently. Many of the pastors expressed trepidation at the fact that the ministerium had strayed away from the core group of Christian pastors that it had started as. However, this meeting, and its unorthodox approach, did inspire this core group to start to meet again more frequently. But though this novel attempt to get pastors together worked once, the level of distrust of an outsider was evident in the sharing of the story from the pastors. One challenge expressed by many pastors in these accounts was where the theological line should be placed in regards to inviting representatives to this group. A clear theological position is one of the factors that these pastors use to help gauge trustworthiness. Frequency of meetings is another pillar that helps build trust. The higher the frequency of the interaction in the ministerium, cross-organizational events, and personal exchanges, the higher the level of trust seemed to be. When periods of regular interaction ebbed, trust stagnated and relationships went dormant. It does not mean that trust declined however. Most pastors expressed a desire for higher frequency of meeting their peers, but only if there was purpose and reason for the interactions. This was largely due to the high time demands on them as organizational and ministerial leaders. The initiating pastors of these meetings expressed weariness of always being responsible for calling the meetings together. When a balance and shared load of initiation efforts occurred, the group seemed to be in its optimal meeting pattern.

#### Common Threats

The last major thread for social exchange theory has to do with the impact of common threats on boundary-spanning behaviors. Two recent events exhibit how the pastoral community

responds to threats. Both of these issues show how spanning frequency increases when a common threat arises in the valley. These threats can be systemic or ideological. The first occurrence involved an outside group called Operation Save America (OSA). Some background on this organization is required. This group is anti-abortion and they protest and litigate to achieve their goals. One of their goals is to shut down abortion doctors. OSA thought that there was only one doctor providing abortion procedures in the state of Wyoming. They believed that this doctor was located in Jackson and by shutting down this doctor, they could make Wyoming the first abortion free state in America. Upon arrival in the valley, OSA sought local church partners. Once local pastors found out about OSAs methods and approach to protest, all decided that this would not be healthy for the community of Jackson. They did however agree to meet with a representative from OSA and speak on behalf of the churches of Jackson. In that meeting, some pastors expressed agreement with the message but not with the method. Others expressed the desire to help both the unborn and the mothers. As a solution, OSA was invited to partner with the community in the existing ministries that were being used in the community. This included helping support Turning Point and personal appeal to the abortion providing doctor instead of protesting and disruption. Matt agreed to deliver this personal appeal to the doctor. The representative from OSA declined the invitation and declared that they would protest the churches as well as the doctor. One confusing element expressed by the pastors was that the most pro-life churches in the valley were the ones that OSA protested. The pastors who were present at that meeting said it was the first time that they saw the Christian community speak with one voice and say we will stand between you (OSA) and the community. Throughout the sharing of this story, pastors used multiple “I” statements, when talking about the importance of the event to them, but they used “we” statements to highlight the unified

voice of the pastors to OSA. John mentioned that although the event happened before he arrived to the valley, he heard how the event had been a powerful display of unity. John saw this both in his own church and in the community at large.

The next issue was a sexual orientation gender identification (SOGI) ordinance. This ordinance acted as a common threat, but opinions and beliefs vary on it. The ordinance prevented workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation or a person's gender identification. Churches often hold a biblical view that man and woman are the only two defined genders, and that normal sexual orientation is heterosexual. Early drafts for the bill did not have provisions to exclude churches in their hiring practices. A real fear existed that someone would try to apply for a job with a church, and when they were rejected, litigation would ensue citing this ordinance. This is a contentious issue both politically and socially. The town of Jackson decided it was going to pass this SOGI ordinance, but it would only apply to those churches within the town limits. A few of the churches have supported this ordinance as an expression of their faith in action of the gospel. Other congregations view this as a threat that will undermine their ability to staff their churches without fear of repercussion from the town. George and Doug view this ordinance as an existential threat to their churches. John and Kris view the ordinance as a way to support a marginalized group of people. Wes, Joey, and Brad also view it as an existential threat, but decided that if it was passed they would prefer civil disobedience as a method of protest to their disagreement to the ordinance. This issue serves as a good example of theology polarizing certain groups around an issue, while at the same time these pastors speak positively of each other due to the trust they mentioned. Most of the pastors expressed distrust in the town governance and the inappropriateness of the town to pass this ordinance to control beliefs.

## Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

This chapter is meant to further the discussion of the themes presented in the previous chapter. The research questions will be addressed first. It is a general discussion around the composition of the Jackson network and the environment in which that network is positioned. It will also include analysis of the findings in light of the literature and discuss the themes' interaction with Eisenberg's and then Salzer's typologies. The secondary research questions are then discussed. This involves reviewing institutional and representative linkage findings with Eisenberg, then Salzer's typologies applied to personal linkages. Finally, recommendations synthesizing all three linkage levels are discussed with the intent of practical application. These are useful tools for building bridges and collaborating with leaders in a community. Opportunities for future research are reviewed last.

The purpose of this study was to better understand the linkages between congregational networks by studying pastors' interactions and boundary-spanning behaviors. A big picture approach is used first to frame the different levels of interactions. The following research questions were proposed:

### Primary Research Question

- What is the composition of Northwest Wyoming's regional congregational linkages, as informed through network and social exchange theories?

### Secondary Questions

- How does Network Theory inform leaders' institutional and representative linkage behaviors by engaging in boundary spanning behaviors?

- What Social Exchange Theory indicators exist for personal linkage engagement in boundary spanning behaviors? What factors inform a pastor's degree of willingness to engage in interdenominational activities?

### Primary Research Question Discussion

What is the composition of Northwest Wyoming's regional congregational linkages, as informed through network and social exchange theories?

Analysis shows that the composition of network linkages is a mix of formal and informal ties that span all three of Eisenberg's levels of institutional, representative, and personal linkages. For this study we have broken away the personal linkages from Eisenberg's typology and applied Salzer's for understanding the personal linkages through a SET lens. These personal interactions provide context and meaning to larger collaborations. The composition of these linkages due to the influence of the cultural and community dynamics is a finding that comes out from the shared lived experiences.

### Network Composition

The network on Jackson congregations is set within an environment with challenging realities. The financial strains on a portion of the population are difficult, and they are coupled with a high level of community turnover of its permanent and semi-permanent residents. This creates a dichotomy that can seem bi-polar at times. Some organizations and individuals have money and resources in abundance. Others are habitually scarce on both of these things. This makes operating ministries challenging. The organizational network has adapted accordingly to this environment. The strength of the linkage potential increases as the interactions get closer to personal interactions.

This can be seen in how the community has learned to value time. The Jackson culture values time as a commodity. To spend time with someone is to invest in them. A dominant shared theme of the majority of the population is that almost everyone is a transplant from somewhere else. This shared social trait means that many people have severed relational and social ties to be in Jackson. Many people have a relational deficit. The pastors expressed that they are relationally wealthy. Many of them have relationships with each other that reach back decades. It is another layer of complexity to the operational environment in which the pastors find themselves.

With a high volume of people moving in and out of the community the pastors are always investing time to build relationships. This can be exhausting, but there are positive elements to this high turnover. Analysis shows that risk taking behavior is mitigated by the high turnover in the community. New people in the organization means any ideas are will be novel to them. Aside from a small minority that is a long-term stable part of the community, high turnover creates a short collective memory. Approaches that were tried in the past that may have failed may be tried again with success later. The pastors shared this pattern when talking about Young Life. Young Life had at least three organizational lifespans in the valley. The first was considered a failure and was barely remembered by the current group of pastors. The second was a joint venture with three churches. This was attempted in conjunction with the Jackson Hole Youth Alliance. It had mixed success, and ended up being more of a partnership with one church. In some ways it was a success as it produced a functional leadership committee and obtained some funding. It failed in its inability to be self-funding and self-led. The last iteration was mentioned by most pastors (especially the new arrivals from the last five years) as being successful, and filling a role needed in the valley.



It is appropriate to use a topological analysis on this network, with the aim of giving complementary information, prioritizing some risks, and risk interactions in relation to their position in the network (C. Fang et al., 2012). In this case, this sub-network between the churches exemplifies how a risky venture (using time, money, and resources to help launch a para-church organization) had a higher percentage of success due to the short-term community memory associated with higher turnover from youth leaders and senior pastors. That goal pursuit in terms of the network studied here is relatively straight forward: the churches desire to see their youth impacted and reached in a lasting way. With the higher level of turnover, ministry workers are forced to rely on systems, processes, or organizations to fill in the gap of reliable human capital. As none of the churches are able to do everything they desire due to limited personnel within their organization, they are forced to go outside the organization to find solutions. This forces boundary spanning to occur. It is logical that the first attempts at going outside of their organization would begin with existing linkages. These higher-level linkages then can be categorized within Eisenberg's typology. Churches with formal agreements will seek to unite for youth activities. This is happening between some of the denominational churches with their youth programs. It also is reflected in the efforts of the Jackson Hole Youth Alliance to schedule quarterly events to gather their "churched" youth together. But these events and activities provide little insight into why powerful interactions occur. Just because the threads overlap, it does not mean a knot is occurring. Matt and Doug had a long-term memory regarding the previous iterations of Young Life and a tone of frustration of past attempts and failures could be detected. The new Young Life leadership, as well as the pastors who arrived during the last iteration, did not have this knowledge acting as an inhibitor to success. In this area, this study provides some very important information. There

are relatively few comprehensive theoretical perspectives in psychology that have attempted to explain how social networks influence goal pursuit and resistance processes (Wesaby et al., 2014).

Salzer's typology is useful for helping understand the personal linkages due to the complex reasons attached to them. These personal linkages are the most powerful guide to how and why pastors choose to interact outside their organizations. They are the knots. Increased frequency can be an indicator of the strength of links, but the pastors in Jackson demonstrate what Granovetter(1973) called "weak" links. This is when individuals can draw upon their lower frequency interactions with others to provide new opportunities in their lives when needed, including linkages to other groups. It means that relationships can occur with less frequency so long as purpose and balance is achieved in the connections. This is a crucial element of Dynamic Network Theory that is present in the participants accounts. The dynamic piece here is the composition of the network relationships. The relational history that these pastors have is a rich opportunity for weak links to be utilized. Some of the pastors came to faith through the guidance of the veteran pastors. Others were peers growing up in ministry together. Joey has strong weak link ties to Doug via Joey's conversion story and a common support network. Brad has strong weak link ties to Matt and with Fred by way of Brad's coming to faith story and working together in ministry in early years. The relational history of these pastors acts as a pool of common reference experience. Fred has weak link ties to John. These ties are rooted in their living and working in another community together years earlier. Many of these ties extend to a time outside of the Jackson community, or to a previous time when they were new believers or new to ministry. Others use the weak ties associated with their institutional association with their formal open communion agreements. This enables Kris to

easily exploitable weak ties with both Fred and John's churches, even though no previous relationship exists. Finding commonality of shared experiences among actors should be a priority to any practitioner performing a network analysis.

Analysis concludes that the network of congregational churches is complex, identifying three levels of interaction that need to be understood. The shared experiences of the pastors point to formal institutional linkages, representative interactions, and personal ties.

### Secondary Research Question 1 Discussion

How does Network Theory inform leaders' institutional and representative linkage behaviors by engaging in boundary-spanning behaviors?

Results highlight that leaders are positively impacted by institutional interactions. Those organizations with a denominational affiliation are impacted positively in their boundary spanning behaviors through these agreements and covenants. It is a weak link, but it is positive. These syncretistic factors have increased in the last few decades (*Full Communion Partners*, n.d.). Three of the churches' governing bodies in this study recently agreed to full communion status. While being a full communion partner does not force interaction, it does lower barriers as the agreeing organizations have met certain standards to come to this position. This increases the likelihood that full communion churches can work with greater ease on joint services, projects, and ministry opportunities at a representative level. Even if status is not in full communion, but barriers are lowered for clergy to move between organizations, an increase in collaboration is observed. This is the case with two of the churches regarding reconciliation initiatives with the Catholic church. In an effort to help heal the schism that occurred half a millennium ago, John and Kris were encouraged by their governing bodies to explore services with the Catholic church. This was not a mandate, but a suggestion. This serves as an example

of how institutional ties can help encourage cross-denominational boundary-spanning activities. John and Kris expressed a lukewarm desire to see this service occur. In order to understand these institutional linkage compositions better, it is important at this time to delineate the institutional factors into four sets. These sets are national contextual, national institutional, local contextual, and local institutional (McKinney & Hoge, 1983). The national contextual and national institutional supported initiatives can act as a gateway to allow boundary-spanning to occur. This is not guarantee to success.

Analysis shows that theological position is one of the gateways into the Jackson network. These can be a similarity in particular doctrinal stances, or they can act as internal drivers around the mandate to be unity minded. The theological position on the role and person of Jesus is important at both the institutional and the representative levels, and there is overlap with this topic. Multiple pastors described the importance of orthodoxy in their willingness work with other pastors and congregations. It did not automatically become a deal breaker if theology did not match up, but the issues importance needed to be higher to overcome the barrier. When George mentioned the “commonality of the externals” as a way to personally boundary span, a concept was highlighted that allowed local pastors to short circuit some of the institutional and representative barriers to boundary spanning. This is why the local contextual and local institutional factors are so important. For this study the local institutional and contextual factors are the community and representative linkages, which were found to be major threads mentioned by the pastors as a reason the valley operates in the manner it does. Churches that did not have institutional governing bodies guiding them had more freedom to allow the local contextual and local institutional needs govern boundary spanning events. These events can be formal collaborations such as joint program, parent subsidiary, joint venture, and merger.

They can also be informal such as information sharing, referral of clients, and sharing of space (Guo & Acar, 2005). Behaviors described by pastors of both denominational and non-denominational affiliations shared examples of all of the above interactions. Some of this was due to resource sharing demands, and can be best understood by understanding Resource Poverty Theory. Many small firm owners (pastors of small churches would fit this definition) consistently report that human resource practices need to fit their firm's conditions and needs (Kroon et al., 2013). The need of pastors to engage outside their organizations for human capital (ministry workers, musicians) would encourage this type of human resource management approach. The formal collaborative efforts found in Jackson are centered around a few key issues: mainly pro-life/abortion, youth, and social/economic assistance to those in need.

Mitsuhashi & Greve's matching theory helps explain some of these behaviors as it has testable implications. One of these testable implications is that the two actors show a match of high fit for observable criteria. According to the actors' criteria, fit should be high, but it does not necessarily have to be optimal to meet this condition (Mitsuhashi & Greve, 2009). As actors withdraw from matches with poor fit, they discover new mismatches in unobservable criteria. This knowledge is used by the actors to withdrawal from a pairing when better alternative matches become available. We see this behavior described by the pastors in the topic of the ministerium. When matching criteria in work/life balance is perceived as high, attendance in the group increases. As the group's purpose deviates to a lower fit, pastors stop attending.

#### Matching Theory and Youth

Analysis concludes that this phenomenon is also present in relation to Young Life and its support history through its various life cycles in the valley. In its current iteration, many pastors have decided that this organization is meeting the criteria for matching theory. Young

Life was not always viewed as accomplishing a high fit for youth needs. The valley has a long history of different organizations fitting the needs of the congregational requirements for their youth-aged populations. Each attempt sought to create an organization that could meet the needs of the youth. Three organizational efforts within the last 25 years are the Jackson Hole Youth Alliance, Young Life, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Support for each of these organizations waxed and waned depending on the current group of youth leaders, current group of organizational leaders, needed group outcomes, and the support from the senior leadership. With support often came success. This was found with the first iteration of the Jackson Hole Youth Alliance launched by Fred and Brad. This organization then formed a partnership with Turning Point to put on a series of speakers and concerts in the valley, and was viewed as a successful example of collaboration. When Brad and Fred left the community soon after, the criteria of matching theory were no longer met, and the Jackson Hole Youth Alliance was mothballed until a new group of youth leaders came to revive it for its next iteration. Matching theory for that next group was centered around the need to find a space that was neutral for the different youth populations to gather. But these institutional and representative interactions are reliant upon the commitment of the leader for success. I cannot overstate the role that an individual person plays in the boundary-spanning occurrences being positively viewed. This brings us to another secondary research question.

### [Secondary Research Question 2 Discussion](#)

What Social Exchange Theory indicators exist for personal linkage engagement in boundary spanning behaviors? What factors inform a pastor's degree of willingness to engage in interdenominational activities?

Analysis shows that informal collaborative efforts are driven more by social exchange factors. Collaborative efforts hinge on balance for personal conditions. The thematic findings are centered around the impact of the discrete setting on the pastor, organizational and ideological ties, elements of trust, and common threats. The discrete setting is comprised of the immediate demands on the pastor. As the larger Jackson community frames the organizational operating environment, so do the demands of the discrete settings. Weddings, funerals, counselling, leading congregations, and community engagement all impact the personal level linkages of the pastors. They also create opportunities for boundary-spanning. Kris and Fred discussed joint performing a wedding together. Other pastors discussed the impact of a funeral on the whole community. These interactions create a joint pool of experiences that increase familiarity with each other. An increasing frequency of shared work experiences, such as funerals and weddings, did not lower all boundaries between parties. Ideologies needed a semblance of community, both for the organizations the pastors represented and beliefs personally held. Social exchange mechanisms that reduced uncertainty include trust, repeated exchanges, reputation, information regarding the exchanges of others, and institutions (Corcoran, 2013).

Pastors indicated that trust and frequency were important to maintaining a healthy relationship. Each of the pastors expressed in their interviews how they navigated the trust dynamic through their answering of the sheep stealing question, but what also came through was how they managed some of the other factors. One informal rule was do not discuss politics with other pastors. With an increase in political discussion trust is more likely to decrease. Issues that drifted into the political realm could be discussed at a theoretical or theological level,

but only through safe generalizations. Pastors who broke this informal rule ended up self-isolating themselves from the group.

Analysis shows that trust was also navigated in other ways. Kris acknowledged that the positive peer reputation of Wes helped overcome some potential reservations regarding Wes's denominational theology. This reservation was acknowledged by Kris as unfounded once enough exchange interactions occurred and a friendship developed. Similarly, Brad's personal relationship with Fred and with Joey helped mitigate any uncertainty in theological differences that they possessed. Brad and Joey, though strongly disagreeing about certain theological positions, made a point to have dinner with each other's family a few times a year. The personal relationships helped triangulate the information passed on by church members that were moving between organizations. Claims could be tested through direct relationship and communication, avoiding second hand information acquired through rumors and half-truths. This was mentioned contextually on the topic of church splits. A pastor was more willing to give another pastor the benefit of the doubt if they had a relationship with them. This also helped influence the cultural behavior mentioned earlier of pastors encouraging new visitors from other churches to resolve any issues they had with their previous church. These social exchange indicators were in many ways more powerful than any historical representative or institutional ties that existed between any of the churches. Using the social-formations approach to emotions and social exchange allows us to understand how emotional reactions to exchange outcomes impact relationship over time (Lawler & Thye, 1999).

Jackson has a history of positive responses to emotional reactions that predates most pastors' arrivals. The previous positive reactions, even with their challenges, helped forge a culture of that is willing to push past initial resistance and potential negative feedback from



boundary-spanning events. This high level of trust ensures that a working relationship with dissonant information is encountered. Trust becomes a form of commodity, along with purpose and time itself. Sometimes this trust is put into context and action by a unifying force. A common threat faced by all can fulfil that cause. This will be discussed in better context in the recommendations for practical application that follows.

#### Synthesis of Conclusions and Recommendations for Application:

Based on the findings, certain recommendations are presented to help a practitioner navigate the challenges placed before them. These recommendations are synthesized of all three linkage levels combined, as these suggestions require an understanding of how these levels interact with each other. Each linkage level is needed to help understand the balancing act of engaging a fully integrated networking campaign centered around similarly positioned parties. This is discussed separately from the research questions to aide in clarity of application from the more theoretical elements mentioned previously.

##### Recommendation 1: Know your environment

The environmental composition is important to understand should any attempts be made to network a region of pastors. One of the adages in real estate is location, location, location. One could just as easily add culture, culture, culture to this adage. Teton County has various challenges as an operational environment. In the literature this discussion of culture is echoed by Schein (1996) who stated,

Even though I have worked on culture as a variable for over 10 years, I keep being surprised by how little I understand its profound influence in situation after situation. I believe our failure to take culture seriously enough stems from our methods of inquiry,

which put a greater premium on abstractions that can be measured than on careful ethnographic or clinical observation of organizational phenomena.

Schein is correct to state the importance of culture, as even Drucker (2008) famously quipped “culture eats strategy for breakfast.” The pastors in this study correctly understood the challenges of living and working in a resort community with disparate economic realities. The outdoor culture mixed with extreme wealth and poverty makes operating stable organizations challenging. George discussed the challenges to new church startups in this environment. Some pastors mentioned that they were not viewed as a threat to existing churches due to the need to overcome barriers to gain organizational stability. Specifically mentioned as a high hurdle was the lack of space for holding church services due to limited availability and high rent/purchase prices. Adam mentioned this was one of influencing reasons their church folded after five years. He came prepared before he moved there. Adam did his homework on some of these environmental statistics before he moved. He said,

Not to over-spiritualize, it was a call from God and just the need, the demographic need. It illustrated that need when I pulled the demographics just before we moved there. It said only 24 percent of the population attended any sort of religious service, including those that we would consider evangelical Christian, or as cults.

Even with the market and demographic need evidenced by the research, the barriers present in the geographic and social environment were not surmountable for many starting churches. Two of the largest churches in the valley started in 1990s. Even though it was described as expensive then, land was acquired and the building were established. The real estate market has only become more difficult to find land that does not require either a variance or expensive litigation to overcome the not in my back yard (NIMBY) mindset of Jackson. One of the organizations

that has recently gone through this is the Jackson Hole Classical Academy (JHCA), a Christian School that many of the pastors have their children enrolled in. Their story was shared by several pastors as an example of unsupportive local governance. They have recently gone through a very difficult process to purchase, rezone, and build a new campus. We discussed this at length, and described the unity and collaborative efforts of the JHCA as a positive indicator of interaction between ministries and pastors.

Tools exist to help understand the environment. Good market research is available for those seeking to come into a community. Sources for the background statistics in this study are a good example of data that is readily available. Every state has its own version of the Youth Risk Behavior Study which can give insight into youth and family statistics. Sometimes this survey has a different name. In Pennsylvania it is called PAYS, the Pennsylvania Youth Survey. News articles can be searched as to major themes and goals for the community. One successful tactic is to use these statistics as a conduit to increase bridge building opportunities. Several years in a row in Jackson a Jackson Hole Youth Leader Summit was held. At this summit the statistics were presented regarding the youth community. The turnout for that event was always full, as pastors are inherently curious to see data that could validate their observations of life. Jackson is a challenging environment to pin down culturally partly because it is a melting pot of so many cultures. Using Hofstede's (2012) work in culture, specifically with his five dimensions, national cultures can vary in many ways and forms. Jackson is a resort community that has both HB1 and HB2 visa members from all over the world: China, Eastern Europe, Iran, India, and Mexico just to name a few geographically dispersed places. Add to this the different United States sub-cultures represented, such as Northeast, South, Midwest, West Coast, West, and Southwest. Should an individual seek to assume that ministry in Jackson will work the same

(as some have done) as south of the Mason-Dixon line or on the Pacific coast, they will be surprised by the differences they encounter. In a similar way, what is found in the data here is that flexibility and a strategic approach to understanding the environment will help any person looking to take the findings here and potentially export any of these ideas elsewhere. The subjectivity of any local community must be understood and respected. Generalized findings and best practices will help far more than specific tricks and techniques. Communities with a similar makeup and community dynamics, and similar approach may be useful.

*Recommendation 2: Outsiders may be welcome, but insiders preferred*

While it is possible for an outsider to overcome the barriers of distrust and theological reservations, it is easier for networking attempts to come from someone that is within the pastoral community at a peer or near-peer level. In many ways the pastors exhibit behaviors of subsidiary managers, especially for those pastors that represent congregations that are denominationally affiliated. In this capacity, one of their duties is to interact across both internal and external organizational boundaries. In this role they perform a linking function and occupy unique boundary-spanning roles (D. C. Thomas, 2008). The subsidiary manager, with membership in two separate but related organizations (the larger institutional organization and the local organization), is the recipient of role expectations from both. Those pastors not involved in a formal denomination, but existing with a quasi-denominational support structure still have similar social pressures from these two levels. This means that an outsider coming to organize pastors needs to take extra care. They have to fully understand both the local community organizational demands and also the larger institutional expectations. Both roles are putting pressure on the leader. This can be seen in George's situation in his formal and structured denomination. The institutional position is closed communion with other churches.

This limits many official collaborative efforts due to this position. An outsider not understanding what this means would be frustrated in any attempts to have George's church do a joint service with other churches in the valley. Instead, by understanding this theological position, an outsider could use the commonality in the externals approach. Using this style, George could be involved at a personal level while still honoring the other professional expectation placed on him. This is more of a mindset of reorienting than a trick to network people. What is good for anyone is good for everyone. This is the same approach when one seeks to implement stewardship ideas from a servant leader approach (Daft, 2008, p. 175). As viewed from a social exchange perspective, any interactions that seek to put the initiator in a position to take, even if it is something as small as some time, will be perceived a negative if there is not a return on that social investment. As time is scarce, people should not waste this limited commodity. Three of the pastors expressed this sentiment regarding the meetings of the ministerium. After a while it felt it was a meeting being scheduled for its own sake. In Fred's perspective the group had lost its purpose. Brad preferred to have a reason to draw them to that group. In their thinking it was easier to meet with pieces of the group on their own terms, for their own reasons. The ministerium was losing its drawing power. Initially the ministerium had a semi-formal meeting time, and it needed to have a comparable semi-formal reason for gathering. Prayer and fellowship provided weak to moderate ties for this group's continuance. But that did not mean that prayer and fellowship ties could not produce strong bonds. In a personal context, they can create very strong ties. Matt shared that once,

I had met with several of the pastors, and we took off for an entire day. We went away to a cabin and stayed there for the whole day, we went for hikes, sang, and told each other's testimonies. We prayed for one another to build unity with the idea in mind that

we were moving towards doing a large, even, like a three-day event, where we were going to express our unity.

Outsiders attempting to organize pastors for a meeting is possible, but it takes tenacity and sometimes guile. Practitioners may only get one shot. The example mentioned earlier regarding the relaunching of the ministerium group by a member of the hospital exemplifies a successful attempt to relaunch that group. The launching agent was described as an outsider. Reservations were expressed as to the overall value of that group due to the expanding of the definition of who should be invited. Reforming efforts would have brought quicker results sooner if the three organizations most considered outside the scope of the group would have been left out: the Jewish community, the Catholic church, and the Mormon church. This was confirmed by the participants. Some collaboration agents believe that the more involved, the better the outcome, especially when it comes to organizing community events. But purpose of inclusion and event outcomes need to be factored in when compiling the list of participants. If organizers do not understand the importance of orthodoxy and beliefs, central themes to each of these leaders of faith, then effectiveness in implementation of any efforts is being hindered from the start. Finding a gatekeeper will increase the chances of success. In this case a pastor can act as both gatekeeper and recruiter. In the previous example of Operation Save America, Matt took on the role as a personal mission when contacted by the outside group to reach out and organize a meeting with the OSA representative. While Matt did not speak for OSA, he did pull all the pastors together and wrote a letter to the doctor that OSA was trying to shut down. This showed a willingness to lead and engage in the difficult topic at hand. Matt sought resolution and acted as an emissary of peace in this situation. That engagement was risky for Matt personally; an issue like abortion is a charged topic. The chance for miscommunication and misunderstanding

is higher. Matt was willing to risk some of the relational and community capital in an effort to act as a bridge to resolve this issue. Other pastors were also willing to act in a similar manner and they spoke up at the meeting. They also risked this social capital by speaking up.

Identifying key community members who are willing to act as agents for a cause is a challenge for a network practitioner. It needs to be done correctly, for the effort cannot and should not be rushed.

### *Recommendation 3: Overcome personal barriers and build bridges*

The personal boundaries that pastors hold can be overcome by a networker seeking to bridge these boundaries, but it takes intentional study and effort. Personal boundaries of time, trust, and purpose are reviewed as these are the three categories that act most as commodities in the social exchange marketplace of Jackson. These three boundaries were present in all of the interviews in one form or another.

#### *Category One: Time as Social Currency*

Time is a catalyst for building trust or undermining it. It is also a commodity that is in short supply in Jackson, as it is in many communities in our society. Being able to understand the dynamic of time is key to any networking efforts of a local region. Some of the relationships present in the community reach back far into past experiences. Brad mentioned

I have almost two decades of foundation, long friendships with some of these guys that are completely unrelated to the senior pastor church leadership level. Now we are all old lead pastors of different sized congregations, different denominations in the valley. I think it adds a depth or dimension to our friendship that I look forward to nourishing for as long as all of us are in the valley.

This valuing of past relationships and the understanding that relationships change and mature with time helps buffer any inconsistencies that arise in disruption to normal relational patterns. It is also valuable for networkers to realize that rushing relationships will undermine the trust dynamic. The pastors understood this dynamic. Brad stated this clearly when he said “I am slowly working on building a relationship with them (those from a new church).” He stated this was purposeful relationship building. Relationship building times and events can help accelerate this process by being purposeful. One strategy is to use the methods laid out in the Serendipity Bible (“Serendipity Bible,” 2016). This builds in times of vulnerability while keeping fact finding safe. However, even the best relational building programs do not replace the authenticity and trust built by consistent meetings every few months and spread over the years. Any personal interactions that occurred outside of the representative meetings helped keep these relationships healthy. It also increased relational capital exchanges. This relational capital is explored by Foa and Foa (2012) in their work *Resource Theory and Social Exchange*. In particular, they have summarized graphically a useful tool to help understand the risk exchange that occurs.

Figure 3.





Figure 3 helps visualize the flow of social capital that embodies more than just the loss of goods or money. The right side shows some of the interplay with frequency and time. Figure 3 helps explain transactional experiences and transformational experiences. The more concrete an experience is, with the more occurrences, the more a service is being provided. What is helpful with the left chart is the labeling of potential risk/reward for certain actions. The limited concreteness of the pastors’ world limited the effectiveness of transactional management approaches. One cannot simply throw money at a pastor to gain resolution to a problem. Transformational management approaches, coupled with peer and executive coaching techniques, have a higher chance of success. Sensitivity to their own time constraints impacts the pastors. John mentioned that “I would love to spend time with Wes, if time permitted.” If solutions to these problems cannot be found, desires for resolution of this problem can lead pastors to self-shame. They know they should interact more, but they cannot figure out how to make it happen. A practitioner can enter the community and become a problem solver to this conundrum. The increase and success of navigating the time element leads to having a strong foundation by which to navigate the next issue: Trust.

*Category Two: Trust as Social Currency*

Any efforts to network a region must have a plan on how to healthily manage trust. Brad's comments earlier about relationship development, and the desire to build a relationship over time with a new pastor who arrived recently into the valley, echoes more of a coaching approach. It is an approach reiterated by Matt and Doug's interactions and relationships. Schilke, Reimann, and Cook (2015) discuss how trust is a critical ingredient in successful social exchange. Power and trust have an inverse relationship. Power and personal positions can conflict if alignment of outcomes is too far apart. The pastors with relationships that predated their increase in power position had an opportunity to build trust that predated their power roles. This relational trust acts as a solid foundation that can be utilized by each other to reach out and boundary span when needed.

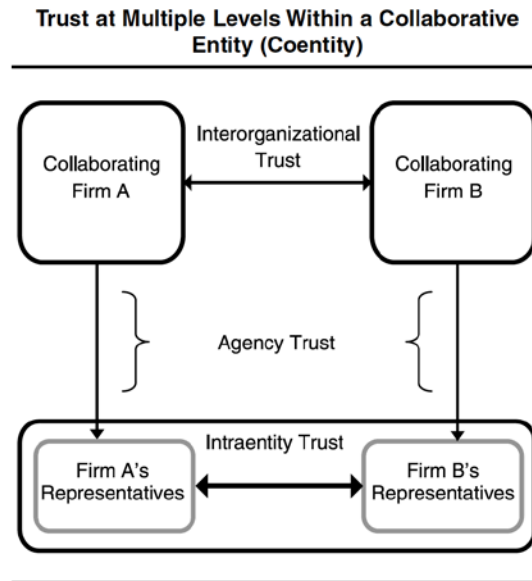
The Jackson pastors shared different methods of trust management. Some managed trust by not discussing controversial topics that would extract from the goodwill stored up. Wes shared that when politics come into play, trust level drops pretty quick. But a negative approach cannot build a positive thing. One pastor, Matt, focused on building trust by promoting others during collaborative events. Matt stated "Whenever I would do an ecumenical thing, I would always make sure that as the organizer I wasn't on the podium in order to build up trust, promote each other, and exhibit a humble (or servant's) position in the relationship." This effort builds trust in the Jackson community of pastors. Another way to look at this is through a management lens, and use power position discussion talking points. This helped prove that the intent of the event was not to advance Matt's own platform. It put Matt in the weaker position. This built up trust in the other pastor who was given the honor of speaking. Matt described another method as "my personal approach was to always expect and think of the good, that

people had good intentions.” This helped keep fear and distrust at bay. These strategies are in line with research suggested models of navigating trust topics between inter-organizational relations in knowledge-intensive firms.

The work by Eric Fang et al., ( 2008) explores the different levels of trust in a co-entity. Any regional networker must understand these levels of trust. A co-entity forms when at least two collaborating firms (in this case churches) agree to contribute designated representatives to an identifiable group with an independent mission that benefits both firms (E. (Er) Fang et al., 2008, p. 81). These co-entities in Jackson were Turning Point, Habitat for Humanity, Young Life, The Jackson Hole Youth Alliance, and other ministries that volunteers and workers from different churches boundary-spanned into from the parent organizations. Often the representatives were the senior pastors themselves, as their organizations were small enough and integrated into the community enough to force them to be the representative. Once enough interactions occurred, personal and ideological hurdles were overcome by common ground established.

Issues easily manipulated, or commonly misconstrued, have a higher barrier of distrust for pastors to overcome. The social and relational capital required by pastors to take a stand is disproportionate to the desired outcome. Figure 4 is helpful for navigating these representative levels of trust.

Figure 4.



In Figure 4, the role of the institutional and representative (collaborating firms) trust is important for the interorganizational trust levels. This is confirmed in the study by the higher formal interactions described by the denominational organizations with standing agreements in place. Interorganizational trust is high because relationship has already been formally established. Successful trust between those types of collaborating firms need only ensure that the firms' representatives build trust centered around the intra-entity level. With the highly relational community and time that the pastors expressed, the personal trust levels are easier to overcome within the smaller environment of Jackson. This smaller environment increases the frequency of interactions (if only for events such as funerals, weddings, and intra-entity functions). Corcoran's (2013) work in social exchange as applied to religious behavior also helps us understand the dynamics of trust that are at play in the pastoral community studied. Her work argues that the same mechanisms that reduce uncertainty in social exchanges also reduce uncertainty in religious exchanges, which result in higher levels of commitment. Commitment is synonymous with trust. This reduction of uncertainty is mentioned in her work echoes the dynamics mentioned in Figure 3. Corcoran mentions trust, repeated exchanges (frequency),

reputation, information, and institutions. These factors are all present in the interviews completed by this study, and those seeking to network a community would be well served to understand these dynamics fully before engaging in any efforts.

*Category Three: Purpose as Social Currency*

Understanding the purpose behind boundary-spanning is important for any effort to have a chance for success. Morgan (2000) found in his study that prayer with a purpose (the capital region) was one of the key uniting factors for pastors in the region on which his study focused. Pastors in this study validated these reasons in their own way. Matt mentioned “the times I felt when it was most successful was when we were interacting on a spiritual level, sharing prayer needs, kind of sharing one another’s burdens, and talking about our common mission in the kingdom of God, that kind of thing.”

It also is a good reminder that in social exchange, there needs to be something to gain for both parties for successful exchange to occur, especially if repeated interactions are going to continue. Purposes beyond prayer mentioned by the pastors are embodied in the quote above. These purposes center around any expressions of the common mission in the kingdom of God. Simply stated, these purposes would look like protecting those viewed as innocent, suffering, in need, or vulnerable. It is also sharing the gospel. These purposes acting as commodities get exchanged in various community outreach. This is the marketplace for these social exchanges. Those seeking to network individuals around a purpose only need to pick a cause that aligns with one of their own and come in with genuine interest to help advance the cause. In regards to the hurdles of theology and spiritual issues, the barriers were easiest to overcome when a common cause was used as a focal point. In Jackson, the pro-life cause acted as one of these focal points. When the political connotations were stripped away and the concern for mother

and child were focused on even more pastors were willing to join the cause. In a similar tone, it is possible to hear this in Wes sharing about a time serving abroad. Wes shared that,

It is interesting that working with those guys, we never had a theological debate or argument that was sustained for any time at all. It was done with complete and total charity because we had our hands to the work. You know, I feel like whenever you get your hands on the work, you are not concentrating on your denominational understandings and difficulties, or quibbling over the details. You are doing the work. I was pleasantly surprised.

This encapsulates the shared experiences of many of the pastors. When ministry was being accomplished with purpose, the differences faded away.

Common threats can act as a purpose as well. In the shared story centered around Operation Save America, that could have been a successful networking opportunity for an outside organization. That story serves as a good example of how listening to the invested local representatives, with all three of their levels of representation (institutional, organizational, and personal) could have brought validity and momentum to an outside group hoping to change a local situation. Instead, these important representatives were boxed out and ignored by the OSA representative, and their efforts, while disruptive to the community, fell far short of the stated goal to make Wyoming the first abortion free state. It was a successful networking case, because the faith community united against a common community threat, OSA. The role of purpose includes theological understanding, or ideology. Doug mentioned that “I speak personally for myself on this, for me the dividing line on working together has a great deal with your view of Christ, the deity of Christ, and the inspiration of scripture.” This is not to say that only purpose of task or engagement is enough. One must also look at theology. Theology is one

component of worldview, and pastors' theologies inform many of the rest of the components of their worldviews. Worldview informs important foundational elements of how one understands the world they live in. Ideas such as where we come from, where we go when we die, do truth and morality exist, and how good and evil are viewed all stem from one's worldview (Nash, 2010). One of the more challenging dynamics for these pastors was their expressing their definition of orthodoxy. All pastors expressed similar understandings of the role of Christ in salvation and held up the importance of the Bible. The challenge was determining what the definition of the terms held in those statements was in comparison to others. John echoed this sentiment by stating, "I mean honestly, the stickiest part is who is included in the kingdom of God, my denomination is pretty liberal when it comes to that, while others not so much. So that is where we find ourselves at odds."

Others expressed that their denomination or personal view was more narrow in who is included in the kingdom of God and this limited their institutional or representative flexibility to boundary-span. This did not hinder their personal ability to boundary-span. No pastor expressed a rigidity on all three levels of boundary-spanning behaviors. Some expressed a willingness to connect at all three. A few would only connect on one or two levels. But all were willing to sit down if the right reason was broached. This openness to sit down and talk requires a thoughtful and strategic approach when desire to network area leaders. In an effort to capitalize on this openness, it is useful to look at some tools that can help guide those seeking to encourage and increase boundary-spanning.

### Areas of Future Study

While these areas of future study are not exhaustive, the data and themes discussed and discovered from this study do reveal a few opportunities that can be explored more in depth.

Some of these areas of study are due to the natural limitations and delimitations of the size and location of the population group.

#### Duplication

There are several areas of future study that would help triangulate the themes and stories shared from these pastors. A duplication of the methodology in Routt County (Steamboat Springs) would provide an interesting similar study that can identify common experiences and themes. The understanding of resort communities' social networks and dynamics, as well as their organizational networking could be a powerful tool for organizations seeking to invest capital and time into those communities. As the previous economic statistics for Teton County validated, the money is there. For those concerned less with the money and more about the people and work of the ministry, knowing the lived experiences of influential community members is important to navigate these social networks without wasting the most precious commodity that these people have: time. Sun Valley Idaho would also prove to be a valuable community to duplicate this methodology.

#### Scale

While the scale of this study was the right size in the larger ten-to-twelve interview sample recommended by Smith et al., it would be possible to use the themes in a quantitative study of a larger sample clustered in different regions. The sample size for this study was optimal in that it was almost a complete census of all pastors in the valley, and the majority of the congregations were represented by the pastors interviewed. Larger communities that have dozens or even hundreds of pastors may be better served with a sampling of pastors along either the denominational or community linkage factors. Once initial screening data is received, then interviews could be set to explore the SET factors that are present within existing linkages. Now



that themes have been identified as social exchange commodities, a qualitative study could be used with these themes in a larger community. This would provide valuable data to triangulate trends in larger populations that are not as accessible for qualitative research.

#### Non-profit factors

While the impetus of this study was centered around understanding the phenomenon of the Jackson church, Salzer's three levels could be used to help understand how the directors of non-church non-profits in a community interact as well. The issues surrounding Resource Poverty Theory, resource sharing, alliance building, and social exchange indicators exist in all communities. Seeing how the levels of trust and using worldview or political spectrum position as a replacement for theology would be an interesting variable to investigate. Hearing more stories from difference directors, even in the Jackson community, would provide valuable lived experiences to include in the discussion.

#### Concluding Thoughts

If the researcher has one desire to be learned as a take away from this study, it is this: individuals seeking to network can use time, purpose, and trust-building to create powerful personal relationships. Busy schedules and responsibilities hinder many relationships from developing into a healthy regional network, but careful and deliberate attempts to work around these boundaries can bring results. The pastors in this study exhibit that a healthy network can exist in a region, but relationships require effort to maintain and grow. The lived experiences of these pastors show that they are engaging in risky social behavior by trusting their peers in these relationships, but the narratives repeatedly show that the risk is worth the gain. The perspective

and social currency gained from these interactions act as a life-giving source when done without ulterior motives.

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**Appendix A**

## Interview contact letter

Greetings \_\_\_\_\_,

As a leader of a church in Teton County, I am interested in meeting with you and hearing your story in regards to your church, interactions with other churches, and your experiences in inter-denominational interactions. I served as a Pastor in Jackson for 10 years, and I am aware of the unique challenges and wonderful blessings that occur serving in that community. Please let me know what day \_\_\_\_\_ would work best for a 45-90-minute interview. I believe the stories from Jackson's churches and church leadership have some important lessons to share on networking, interactions, and engagement into the community. I will follow up to this correspondence, but please respond to this email as to your willingness to meet. Have a blessed day.

Sincerely,

Tim Gray

## **Appendix B**

### **Interview Schedule**

#### **Administrative Procedure**

Research Introduction: This study is related to understanding the institutional, representative, and personal linkages that comprise Northeast Wyoming regional congregational networks.

Introduction: Let's start with some background information first and then I will ask you questions about community, denominational demands, organizational dynamics, and social exchange factors that inform your experience of involvement in regional congregational networks. Finally let's talk about your role as a leader in this involvement (if any).

1. How long have you lived/worked in Teton County, Wyoming?
2. Who do you live with, family members etc.
3. Why did you choose to live here?
4. What is your title in your organization?
5. What is your denomination? History of your church?
6. Does your church interact with other churches in the area? If yes, what type of other churches? What was the nature of the relationship – or how have you cooperated?
7. Have you heard/or have experience about cooperation that has occurred where churches supported each other? If yes, what did you hear/experience?

8. Have you heard about Operation Save America? If yes, what was your experience in the community with that? Can you tell me a story about their presence in the valley?
9. Let's talk a little more about collaboration efforts between congregations. How does it occur, how is contact initiated?

Let's talk about a variety events or causes that your church might have been involved with.

10. Does your church support the Turning Point/Crisis Pregnancy Center? If yes, why? Can you tell me a story?
11. Has your church participated in the Global Leadership Summit? If yes, what was your involvement? Can you tell me a story?
12. Has your church been involved in Old Bills Fun Run, a worship night, or other joint ministry night? Which ones; why? Can you tell me a story?
13. How would resource sharing (you need to explain what this is) impact your decision to work with other churches. Specifically, if you wanted to pull off a large event (like Rock the Walk?) Can you tell me a story?
14. Have you heard of Young Life or Fellowship of Christian Athletes in the valley as organizations? If yes, what is your involvement with them?
15. From your experience, what factors might prevent cross-church interactions and events?

Now let's talk about your role as a pastor in Wyoming regional congregational networks.

1. What is your role as a leader/what are your responsibilities?

2. What types events are personally important to you?
3. Do your staff or members attend events by other churches?
4. How often do you get together with other pastors?
5. What are the reasons for meeting? Are these interactions formal or informal?
6. How often do you attend or support events at other churches? Which ones, and why? How do you decide?
7. Have any of your members or staff helped with Young Life or Fellowship of Christian Athletes? Which ones; how did they hear about it; why?
8. For which types of projects have you worked with other churches? Can you tell me a story?
9. Have you heard of the concept of “sheep stealing”? If yes, what does it mean to you?
10. Historically, churches have had congregational splits. What church splits have happened in the valley? Has this had much of an impact on your organization, or others you are aware of? How was the split navigated? What was the outcome?
11. Are there some churches with which you have had little contact in the valley? What do you think could be done to overcome some of the boundaries, especially with churches that may share similar values/theology? Can you provide some examples?

Is there anything else that you would like to share concerning how the churches interact in Teton County? Do you have any examples (artifacts) that would care to provide?

### **Conclusion of Interview**

## Appendix C

### Reference List of Non-church Nonprofits

1. Turning Point Pregnancy Resource Center, Jackson Wyoming USA: Formerly the Crisis Pregnancy Center, this 501c (3) is an organization that has been in Jackson for decades. It's best summarized by its mission statement: Turning Point Pregnancy Resource Center is a Christ-Centered ministry that demonstrates His love to men and women in crisis pregnancies and respects the sanctity of human life. Turning Point Pregnancy Resource Center promotes sexual purity and healthy relationships, provides pregnancy related education and support, and facilitates spiritual healing for past abortions and other pregnancy loss.
2. Good Samaritan Mission of Jackson Hole Wyoming: This organization helps provide food, shelter, and resources to those in need. Here is what they say about their own organization: Good Samaritan Mission has been quietly serving the physical, emotional and Spiritual needs of the hungry, hurting, homeless people in Teton County for over 40 years. The mission is a true part of the Jackson Hole Community. Good Samaritan Mission began in 1970 from an urging of the Holy Spirit to serve those less fortunate.
3. Latino Resource Center: Started in 2000, this organization is a stand-alone 501c (3) that helps meet the needs of thousands of Latinos in the Jackson Community. It is located on the campus of St. John's Episcopal Church in the town limits of Jackson. Their stated goal is to help facilitate the integration of Latinos into the greater Jackson Hole community, building Jackson into a stronger, more diverse, and better place to live.

4. Jackson Hole Food Cupboard: This is Jackson Hole's community food pantry, it is located on the campus of St. John's Episcopal Church. It opened in 2001 and is a non-political, non-religious organization. It operates on 100% private donation; they receive no government funding. Their mission statement: The Jackson Cupboard provides essential, nutritious food for our community members in need.
5. Habitat for Humanity of the Greater Teton Area: An affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International, Habitat for Humanity of the Greater Teton Area (Teton Habitat) was founded in 1995. Habitat for Humanity is striving for a world where everyone has a decent place to live. Their mission: Seeking to put God's love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities, and hope.
6. Jackson Hole Young Life: A local chapter of a larger international organization for adolescents focusing on what matters to them—fun, adventure, friendship, and a sense of significance. The larger organization was founded in 1941 by Jim Rayburn. The Young Life mission statement: To introduce adolescents to Jesus Christ and help them grow in their faith.
7. Youth for Christ: A worldwide Christian movement working with young people around the globe. They are motivated by their faith, and give young people everywhere the opportunity to be followers of Jesus Christ. Founded in 1944, Billy Graham was the organization's first full-time evangelist.
8. Jackson Hole Youth Alliance: A local (now defunct) 501c (3) that was a collaborative effort by youth pastors of different Teton county churches. Used as



a mechanism for joint events, fundraising, trips, outreach, and supporting Turning Point.

9. Walk Festival Hall: The all-wooden performance facility for the Grand Teton Music Festival. This venture is available to rent year-round for concerts, film festivals, and wedding receptions. This venue was rented for a multi-year event “Rock the Walk” by the Jackson Hole Youth Alliance and Turning Point.
10. Ministerium: This network of community pastors in Teton county was first formed to assist with St. John’s hospital, specifically to help minister to those receiving treatment at the hospital. As the hospital outgrew the church that founded it, this group of pastors was used in less official capacity, but still needed at times to help with meeting the spiritual needs of the sick and dying. The group has been active to different degrees, sometimes meeting outside of any hospital capacity.
11. Operation Save America: A national organization that is pro-life. One of its methods is to protest and attempt to shut down abortion clinics in communities and states it has identified.
12. Old Bill’s Fun Run for Charities: This is an innovative fundraising event in Jackson Hole that is put on each year by the Community Foundation of Jackson Hole. It began in 1997 and to date has enabled Jackson Hole charities to raise over \$121 million.

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