| Article | **Regulating Visibility:** Secrecy and Surveillance in Insular Religious Communities |

Deirdre McDonald

Carleton University, Canada
deirdremcdonald@cmail.carleton.ca

Abstract

Insular religious communities offer significant insights into some of the issues facing contemporary Western societies, including the issues of religious secrecy and surveillance. The role of secrecy in these communities involves dynamic strategies invoked for many reasons in equally numerous contexts. The behaviours and practices of these groups often reflect much larger issues present in today's society. In this way, they can guide us in understanding the role of surveillance from a sociological perspective in the current climate of tensions and anxieties. These communities are especially useful for thinking about questions of why some religious groups rigidly control and restrict access to bodies of secret, sacred knowledge or activities and in turn how religious secrecy is viewed by the wider social worlds in which their degree of visibility fluctuates. Here, I suggest an opportunity emerges for the study of secrecy in relation to the notion of regulating visibility by reorienting the focus from the roles of secrets and of secretive practices to one that also considers the more visible forms and strategies through which secrets and secretive practices come to be and are sustained.

Introduction

Secrecy and surveillance are critical features of the social world, influencing and structuring human behaviours and interactions at individual, group, organization, and government levels, and, more significantly, the social relationships that emerge between these levels. Current societal preoccupations with questions of religious privacy and government surveillance have led to the development of distinct strategies and practices of secrecy and surveillance in some religious groups (Urban 2006; Lininger 2004; Birchall 2016; Scheid and Teeuwen 2006). One reason why a sustained scholarly study of religious communities is so compelling and so important to surveillance scholarship is that these groups often reflect much larger issues present in today's society. Insular religious communities are especially useful for investigating why some religious groups rigidly control and limit access to bodies of sacred and secreted knowledge, practices, or activities, and, in turn, how religious secrecy is viewed by the wider social worlds in which it occurs. This area of study also has practical implications for disrupting and deterring religious groups utilizing secrecy and surveillance strategies to subvert legal and constitutional systems. Thus, these communities can guide us as we set out to understand the role of secrecy and surveillance from a sociological perspective in the current context of social, cultural, political, and religious tensions and anxieties.[1]

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[1] To be clear, the following discussion differentiates between an intentional community—one in which members can join and leave voluntarily and easily (e.g., The Simple Way in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States), and an

Perhaps one of the more remarkable examples of secrecy and surveillance strategies and practices at work in an insular religious community is the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS) community in Canada known to its members as Bountiful. The practice of polygamy features prominently in this community, which is characterized by intense, well-managed secrecy and resistance strategies in the face of investigative journalist accounts and growing governmental scrutiny in both the United States and Canada in the last several decades. These inquiries are the result of ongoing concerns regarding provisions for the protection of religious freedoms and those of basic human rights of the members of this community. In response to growing public and government scrutiny and criminal investigations, the community's leadership began to undertake its own strategies to reduce the community's visibility to those on the outside and to demand total loyalty from its flock.[2] This loyalty is embodied in the concept of visibility, one that is ultimately unidirectional, with the leadership demanding complete visibility of its members. Yet, at the same time, the leadership remains cloaked in secrecy itself, and the community remains veiled from the rest of society. Thus, with loyalty comes visibility, a feature that is negotiated by secrecy and surveillance strategies within the community and between its members.

Due to both its remote and concealed location and its lack of many of the taken-for-granted modern day technologies (e.g., televisions, computers, and other internet-capable devices), I suggest that this exemplar of secrecy and surveillance in an insular religious community raises serious challenges about the study of religion in an era of increasing, technologically driven surveillance. Moreover, studying insular religious communities like Bountiful prompts the question repeatedly raised by others (Barkun 2006; Urban 2006; Mathewes 2006): What is the proper position of the critically reflexive scholar, particularly if we are at the same time interested in maintaining the right to religious freedom and in ensuring the protection of other rights and laws, for both those living inside the community and the wider population?

Through a dialectical framework and analysis of secrecy and surveillance practices in the context of this insular religious community, this article seeks to answer the following question: Do practices of secrecy and surveillance cause religious groups to regulate their visibility both internally and externally as a result of increasing governmental scrutiny, and if so, by what processes?

First, this article presents an impartial glimpse inside Bountiful, available only through its limited and censored public exposure, by sketching a very tentative historical outline of Bountiful's culture of secrecy and surveillance practices. Second, the article examines how secrecy has been conceptualized in the literature and how secrecy in the context of Bountiful makes theorizing surveillance strategies challenging. Third, by examining FLDS–government conflicts, the article illustrates how practices of secrecy are dialectical and have been related to regulating visibility by various scholars. Finally, this article unpacks the concept of visibility by differentiating between two forms of visibility—total and

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insular community—one in which membership is almost certain by birth, void of external influences, and those who attempt to leave the community risk being ostracized or cut off from family members. Examples of extremely insular religious communities include Scientology, Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) Jews, Hasidim, and Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS) sects. For example, when Scientology labels someone a suppressive person, their family (i.e., those still in the church) is required to cut ties with the non-conformer; a woman who wants to leave a Haredi community is faced with being cut off from her children or being compelled to stay in the community in order to maintain contact with them; and FLDS communities, especially the sect run by Warren Jeffs in the United States and the sect run by Winston Blackmore in Canada, are well-known for excommunicating individuals and then forcing their family members (i.e., those still in the church) to cut off all contact. Intentionally missing from this list is the Amish community, since the function of the Anabaptist movement is for adults to make an informed decision to accept the faith. Amish youths participate in the rite of passage called Rumspringa in order to learn about the outside world before they make that choice.

[2] The group's leaders—"the leadership"—are adults who sanction and engage in violations of Canada's constitutional and legal statutes. This label (the leadership) is not a title ascribed elsewhere, but it is a manageable way of addressing specific individuals with self-imposed titles, such as Prophet, Bishop, Priesthood Head, or Priesthood Brethren.

selective—in order to demonstrate how visibility is conceptualized and what some of the relevant theoretical findings are for surveillance studies. The analytical emphasis throughout the article remains focused on secrecy and surveillance because they are the methods by which visibility is regulated in order to manage and negotiate conflict and contradictions in the real-world context of Bountiful.

FLDS Bountiful

In 1946, during what Fundamentalist Mormons call the "priesthood split," a sect that split off from mainstream Mormonism (established around 1830 under Joseph Smith) nearly six decades earlier founded a community near the town of Creston, British Columbia, Canada. These were a small group of people following a man named Harold Blackmore (dates unknown). Blackmore had been shunned and threatened with excommunication from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) in 1945 for his continued support of the "Work" or the "Principle," that is, plural marriage. Blackmore revealed to his followers that he had a "vivid dream about a valley where he established a community of like-minded families who would live the Principle, hidden away from prying eyes" (Bramham 2009: 62). In this way, secrecy is simultaneously premised in the nature of the FLDS teachings and doctrines themselves (Thurman 1988) and informed by socially and historically dynamic contexts for the emergence of such a community (Davidson 2002) where the role of secrecy is instrumental to concealing crimes.

What Blackmore was proposing speaks directly to the enhanced effects to secrecy offered to those engaging in illicit activities (Erickson 1981) by way of isolation (Simmel 1906), because the members of this community are more isolated from counteracting influences and thus more susceptible to reaching a consensus and obeying their leader and the rules. What also emerges from this account of Bountiful is evidence of the "historical layers of secrecy" within the FLDS tradition, a feature also found by Paul Johnson (2002: pt. II) in Candomblé, an Afro-Brazilian religion. As the FLDS shifted to its new social setting in Bountiful, more formalized practices and strategies of secrecy were established in order to offset its increase in exposure in the public domain. With time, these layers of secrecy have been maintained and added to. An interesting paradox emerges from Blackmore's proposal: the more likely a community is to break the laws of society the more stringently they will follow their own laws. In other words, for individuals wishing to continue to engage in illegal activities, secrecy became the means for invalidating personal responsibility and offsetting the intense scrutiny of "prying eyes" into this community. This place was Bountiful.

Unlike most well-established Mormon communities, one will not find Bountiful on any map since its official name is Lister. This intentionally isolated community comprises an assortment of houses, schools, barns, and modular homes. Within the FLDS, only one Prophet presides over the flock, regardless of where they live in the United States (e.g., Utah, Arizona, Texas, or a few other pockets) or Canada (e.g., Bountiful or Cardston in British Columbia and Rosemary in Alberta). The role of the Prophet is both financially and personally lucrative because the FLDS is organized around hierarchical access to and control of secret and sacred information and, more importantly, a property trust established in 1942 valued at more than \$114 million.[3]

Both access to and control of secret knowledge and the community's purse strings put the Prophet in an advantageous position. The lack of centralized control within secret societies, including religious communities, is captured in the literature, where community members become focused on an individual, highly charismatic leader (Johnson 1991: 29). In Bountiful, these same conditions allow for the collection, control, and authentication of secret knowledge under the watch of the Prophet. The Prophet's ongoing

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[3] The land on which the community was established eventually came to fall into the hands of the United Effort Plan (UEP), a property trust establishment in 1942 valued at more than \$114 million under the control of a distinct group of upper-level FLDS male members controlling the purse strings—the leadership. In November of 2012, the US Federal 10th Circuit Court of Appeals (Denver, CO) upheld a previously vacated order concerning the UEP and returned administrative control of the approximately \$114 million UEP trust to the state of Utah (Whitehurst 2012).

need to establish his claim to both the community's secret knowledge and its finances in order to legitimize his authority reveals his true intentions and, in turn, leads to internal conflicts and struggles for power. When a Prophet dies, prominent men often seek the position of Prophet for non-religious reasons—personal gain in both social and economic status.

In 2002, Warren Jeffs (b. 1955) succeeded as the Prophet of the FLDS following the death of his father, and then Prophet, Rulon Jeffs (1909–2002). Secrecy surrounded this non-traditional Prophetic succession and members who questioned Jeffs's seizure of power received threats (Bramham 2009: 138–39). Winston Blackmore (b. 1956), the foremost rival for the coveted position of Prophet at that time, challenged Jeffs's prediction that the world was going to end. Jeffs perceived this act as a lack of devotion and he excommunicated Blackmore and symbolically stripped him of his title of Bishop of Bountiful. The FLDS leadership supported Jeffs and his extreme measures in securing his spot at the top of the hierarchy. These actions highlight that the ways practice and knowledge should be passed on are in themselves less important than are the secreted processes by which Prophetic succession actually occurs.

It has been more than sixteen years since the 2002 division of Bountiful into two separate factions under the dual-leadership of Warren Jeffs (American Prophet and a convicted felon currently serving a sentence of life plus twenty years) and Winston Blackmore (Canadian Bishop and a convicted felon who was given a conditional sentence for six months to be served in the community and 12 months probation for a polygamy conviction on June 26, 2018). Within the now divided community, the leadership's scrutiny of its members is further entrenched with the duality of self-serving agendas because each leader demands total loyalty from his respective followers. This loyalty comes at a cost for the members of the community whose every move is now observed by fellow community members and reported to the leadership in order to curry favour with the leadership and, more importantly, the Prophet. In this way, loyalty to the leadership is manifested in various forms of secrecy, visibility, and surveillance.

Secrecy Conceptualized

The study of secrecy in religious communities and movements tends to be from a comparative perspective, emphasizing secret beliefs and practices in certain religious communities and the practical function of secrecy in the goings-on of a community and its members (Williams Duncan 2006; Simmel 1906; Tefft 1980; Erickson 1981; Scheid and Teeuwen 2006). For example, in his seminal work on the sociology of secrecy and secret societies, Georg Simmel (1906: 463) argues that "Secrecy is a universal sociological form, which, as such, has nothing to do with the moral valuations of its contents." While this "discovery of society" was adequate for early sociologists tasked with theorizing the massive changes occurring during their own lifetimes, modernity challenges such broad generalizations in the context of individuals and groups. And, the ever-increasing bureaucratization of society challenges such broad generalizations in the context of organizations and governments. Indeed, as will be shown, moral discourse plays a critical role in this insular religious community's secretive practices and surveillance system much like it does in Western societies (Ericson and Haggerty 1997).

That is not to say that the important studies noted above fail to suggest that secrecy is a feature of modernity; they do indeed point in their respective arguments to secrecy, which has always been practised by humans and will continue to be. Rather, the argument here is that many of these studies are heavily descriptive and ethnographic, focusing on how secrecy practices develop and how secrets are revealed, so that questions of secrecy as a critical condition of regulating visibility across contexts remain unanswered. What is significant from the work of these comparative studies is the underlying argument that isolation (Simmel 1906) and the engagement in illicit activities (Erickson 1981) add to the effects of secrecy, directly contributing to the "discourse of secrecy" (George 1993; Tefft 1980; Ulin 1986; Jones 2014). In doing so, these studies encourage us to raise interesting questions regarding the nature and character of secrecy in modern societies where surveillance is prevalent and social and political resistance commonplace.

As pointed out by Hugh Urban (2008: 67), "while social and political resistance is indeed one key aspect of religious secrecy, it is by no means the most important or most common form that secrecy assumes among contemporary new religions." This is an important point to consider because, as we shall see, religious secrecy in the insular community of Bountiful involves dynamic strategies invoked for many reasons in equally numerous contexts. Here, I suggest an opportunity emerges for the study of secrecy in relation to the notion of regulating visibility by reorienting the focus from the roles of secrets and of secretive practices (Erickson 1981; Fine and Holyfield 1996; George 1993; Hornstein 1906; Iannaccone 1994; Johnson 1991; Lowry 1972; Murphy 1980; Piot 1993; Simmel 1906; Tefft 1980, 1992; Ulin 1986) to one that also considers the more visible forms and strategies through which secrets and secretive practices come to be and are sustained.

With a few notable exceptions (Barkun 2006; Bolle 1987; Urban 2001a, 2006, 2008, 2017), the comparative nature of the above noted studies had led to a curious lack of depth and theoretical grit in examining contemporary religious communities that present idiosyncrasies not generalizable to religious communities across various contexts. This challenge presented by the literature is ever more evident in the context of insular religious communities like Bountiful to which few outsiders are ever granted nonpartisan access. Many insular religious communities are sects, that is, offshoots of mainstream religions. These sects have not necessarily been transformed through the encounter with advances in science and technology as some of their mainstream counterparts nor with the prevailing surveillance practices in use in wider society. Yet, there has been little research to trace out the forms and roles of secrecy and surveillance and regulating visibility as dialectical processes in insular religious communities.

Moving forward, I follow Hugh Urban (2008), who draws on the work of Richard Posner (2004), in defining privacy and secrecy. Posner argues that the two concepts are not fundamentally different but closely related—secrecy is one form of privacy, the other is solitude. Echoing earlier studies' linkages between secrecy and isolation (Simmel 1906), solitude involves individuals distancing themselves from others. Secrecy is a communicative, social relationship from which other individuals are excluded (Posner 2004, 88). Secrecy is also a mechanism through which information can be exchanged and accumulated, making it both a strategy and form of symbolic capital (Urban 1998; 2001b). In keeping with this journal's special issue exploring the interplay between religion and surveillance, I take the religious secrecy characterization a step further by framing it as a mode of visibility—that is, of being seen—explored at length later in this article.

For the purpose of analysis, I consider one of the five typologies of secrecy in religious movements: "secrecy as a dialectical process and feedback-loop between the religious movement and law enforcement" (Urban 2008: 68). This form of secrecy is seen in the conflicts between FLDS sects and both the United States government and the Canadian government. As a result of what its members perceive as persecution of their religious beliefs and practices by mainstream society, the FLDS has recourse to secrecy as a tactic of preservation amid social and legal controversy. This form of secrecy is not a new invention as secrecy as a dialectical process is well-documented in the literature. For example, Stanton Tefft (1992) employed a dialectical framework to analyze the conflicted relationships and tensions between secret societies and government powers by highlighting the conditions under which secret societies emerge and challenge government power structures. Following Tefft, the analysis offered here is concerned with the underlying structural conditions and sets of social relationships that characterize the FLDS–government conflicts in Bountiful. What is of additional interest here in order to contribute to surveillance scholarship are the ways in which low- or no-tech, human-based strategies of secrecy are invoked by the FLDS in today's technologically driven, modern society in order to (successfully I add) limit and control their visibility to the outside world and, more importantly, to governmental scrutiny.

Theorizing Surveillance inside Bountiful

Theorizing surveillance inside Bountiful in the context of mainstream literature emphasizing the "technical" aspects of surveillance is challenging because the community is not fundamentally

technologically advanced. By this, I mean that its members are not necessarily monitored or controlled by cameras, radio-frequency identification (RFID), or any other technologically driven surveillance measures. Rather, Bountiful is organized both externally and internally as an old-school, authoritarian, hierarchical-based society relying on the most basic of surveillance practices—fear and anxiety—to accomplish its mission of social control and, often, gender-biased divisions.

By building on Bountiful's surveillance practices and strategies, I challenge the characterization made by many scholars, for example Gary Marx (2016: 20), that the type of surveillance that we commonly experience today is the "scrutiny of individuals, groups, and contexts through the use of technical means to extract or create information." Unquestionably, mainstream surveillance studies have contributed to an intense development of critical analysis and theory through their focus on the computerized and networked systems of modern surveillance and dataveillance that are, in many circumstances, replacing hierarchy-based human-centric approaches (Lyon 2007; Smith 2015; Haggerty and Trottier 2015; Jenkins 2012). But, I argue, because surveillance is so often associated with sophisticated technologies, this leads to the possibility that other methods of social control may be overlooked when sociologists attempt to understand the interplay between the dialectical processes of secrecy and visibility in insular religious communities such as Bountiful. Thus, the following examination of non-technical surveillance in Bountiful can help us better understand surveillance as a concept by offering us an opportunity to move beyond seeing surveillance as technology in order to reveal the human practices that underlie all forms of surveillance.

Within the strict hierarchy of Bountiful, the flow of information for the members at the top is unidirectional, whereby the leadership need not be visible to its highly surveilled members. Rather, the leadership's secrecy and privacy are paramount to the social organization of this sect. As a result, community members are not permitted to question or challenge the head of the FLDS and his cohorts as they present their flock with a most opaque representation (Palmer and Perrin 2004: 82). The community's motto of "perfect obedience produces perfect faith, which produces perfect people" enforces the notion of not questioning authority and the leadership's relentless indoctrination of the flock to subjugate their will, needs, and desires to those of the Prophet under the leadership's intense and unrelenting scrutiny.

This form of secrecy exercised by the leadership is then used to evoke perpetual fear and anxiety in the community, which in turn leads to new methods of surveillance undertaken by community members in order to demonstrate one's loyalty to the leadership and, in turn, new strategies of secrecy by the leadership and the community more generally. In this way, members are not just under surveillance but often engage in surveillance themselves in an assemblage of social and knowledge control.

Here, surveillance, much like secrecy, acts as a feedback-loop between the community and its leadership, whereby certain forms of surveillance are turned back on themselves so that individual surveillers are being surveilled at the same time. The intersection between secrecy and surveillance is evident in the ways in which community members attempt to appease the leadership by providing knowledge of other community members secreted through surveillance strategies, but, at the same time, these individuals attempt to subvert or make secret their own activities so as not to have their information passed along to the leadership by other surveillers in the community.

In part because of its practice of polygamy often involving child brides and mainstream society's concerns for the welfare of the community's members, the FLDS has come under intense scrutiny by those responsible for enforcing Canada's constitutional and legal statutes. While Bountiful has not been raided by government officials, some FLDS American communities have been raided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as recently as February 2016 in Utah. For the first time ever in Canada, two prominent members of Bountiful (Winston Blackmore and James Oler) were convicted in the British Columbia Supreme Court in 2017 of violating Section 293(1)(a) of Canada's *Criminal Code* (RSC 1985, c C-46) banning polygamy (*R v Blackmore,* 2017 BCSC 1822; *R v Blackmore*, 2018 BCSC 367). It took over a decade for the courts to reach this verdict, with charges going back as far as 2004 (*Blackmore v British*

Columbia (Attorney General), 2009 BCSC 1299). Several of Bountiful's American counterparts have been convicted of similar offences in the United States going back many years. On both sides of the border, FLDS members continue to find themselves under intense pressure to provide government officials with information about the sect, its members, and its practices. These long-standing legal wranglings highlight the fact that secrecy has in fact been a pervasive feature of the FLDS from its beginnings.

Secrecy as Dialectic

The nature and happenings of Bountiful have become increasingly secretive over the years due to more and more law enforcement criminal investigations and ex-members speaking out about the community's activities. With its profound preoccupation with secrecy and diminished visibility to surrounding communities and government institutions, little is known about this community's practices, though a few illuminating facts have been leaked through various court cases and testimonies of ex-members, typically those who have fled and/or have been excommunicated. Here, secrecy is understood as a surface manifestation of the deep-seated conflicts between the FLDS and the legislation. Secrecy in Bountiful did not necessarily increase or decrease alongside the rise in governmental scrutiny of the community's illegal practices. Rather, within Bountiful, as within other secret religions and secret societies becoming public, "secrets receded to a more protected place" (Johnson 2002: 100), that is, inside the recesses of the community itself where they gained even more legitimacy and status.

In Canada, freedom of religion is protected by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*[4] and the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (RSC 1985, c. H-6). Government laws cannot restrict one's religious freedom unless they infringe on other rights and values in Canada. All Canadians are required to obey the laws. Under its Charter freedoms, the FLDS views religious freedom to include the practice of polygamy, which is a violation of the Canadian *Criminal Code* (RSC 1985, c C-46). As a result of these conflicted circumstances, the FLDS, specifically the leadership, is put in opposition with government authorities. What Tefft (1992: 5) calls "opposing-thought systems" are produced through these struggles and oppositions, revealing the nature of the ideological contradictions on which FLDS–government conflicts are based. Thus, as Michael Parker-Pearson (1984: 62, quoted in Tefft 1992: 6) insightfully notes: "contradictions and conflict are intimately united; conflict is the active realization of contradictions." The FLDS has found a way to avoid these conflicts and contradictions (that is, to subvert the law) when they found doing so to be in their best interest. The reportedly intentional concealments of celestial marriages as well as births and deaths of babies and infants—Canadian citizens—by members of the community is an example of the leadership's attempt to evade and avoid external scrutiny from the public and government agencies (birth records and social services) (Bramham 2009; Palmer and Perrin 2004). Also, under the direction of the leadership, Bountiful is more than willing to "bleed the beast" (the government)—by accepting government funding for schools and businesses, accepting assistance with immigration policies, and receiving welfare benefits for its numerous single mothers and their children—provided that openness and, in particular, visibility are not required (Bramham 2009: 228; Palmer and Perrin 2004: 100, 288, 312, 339).

This characterization of Bountiful reflects Urban's (2008) secrecy typology because the community uses secrecy to manage its exposure or degree of visibility to scrutiny, and secrecy acts as a feedback-loop between the community and those investigating it, whereby forms of secrecy become legitimized and reproduced within the community itself as symbols of knowledge and power. The resultant increasing insularity of the community, which informs its secrecy practices, is a consequence of the feedback-loop from increasing public and government scrutiny into the community's practices. While secrecy is most often configured as that which protects valuable information, it is also as a social process (Costas and

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[4] *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Part I of the *Constitution Act*, 1982, being Schedule B to the *Canada Act* 1982 (UK), 1982, c 11.

Grey 2014) and a form of managing visibility (Birchall 2016). Thus, configuring secrecy as a form of visibility regulation helps us see secrecy and, at the same time, surveillance practices, in a new way.

Visibility Conceptualized

While the term visibility has multiple connotations, in the social context of insular religious communities, visibility presents as two distinct forms. The first form is *total visibility* as a means to maintain social control and conformity within the community by way of the careful extraction of highly-regarded information. This form of visibility is best explored in the Foucauldian (1995) tradition recognizing the pivotal intersection between knowledge and power, and, consequently, resistance. The second form is *selective visibility* as a means of controlling the perceptions of "others"; that is, as a mechanism for regulating and restricting access to and control of valued, secretive knowledge to those outside of the community.

It is wise to be cautious in this discussion to not apply the term invisibility in lieu of selective visibility due to the finiteness of the definition of invisibility: withdrawn from sight and mind. This distinction emerges clearly in the context of insular religious communities, as well as through the exploration of the internal and external representations of their social actors. Selective visibility, then, is best explored through an analysis of Erving Goffman's (1959) concept of symbolic interaction and the notions of the actor and the audience, and of front stage and back stage, and how they translate to internal and external representations of insular religious communities.[5]

Total Visibility
In the FLDS, two of the most effective means of social control demanding total visibility are found in the simple act of compiling lists of attributes of community members and the application of labels. Lists may include statistics on property ownership, finances, and ancestry. While lists of this nature may seem innocent enough, over time their utility is extended to achieve the leadership's primary goal of identifying whether a particular member is "in" or "out" with respect to the leadership's expectations of both conformity and contribution. Through processes of function creep, such lists may function like a historical sovereign's absolute power—they can be used to reduce a community member's status to that of tenant (property-less) or master (property-holder) at will. For members, being "on the list" is tantamount to complete and total visibility since a person's every move is known by (and reported by other members to) those who access and control the list—the leadership.

As a result of the overlapping roles of surveilled and surveiller by its members illustrated above, the notions of private and public space in this insular community often become skewed so that members have no knowledge of private space. With its open-plan, multi-family living arrangement, this community acts as a surveillance sphere of intense scrutiny and extreme limitations on (or total absence of) personal privacy. Bountiful is, to a much larger degree than the rest of the world, an arrangement in which privacy and surveillance exist in a mutually reinforcing arrangement between secret keeping and secret exposing. Much like workplace surveillance used to monitor productivity, both the nature and the intensity of surveillance inside Bountiful reveal much about how the leadership views its members. Members are closely monitored for the primary purpose of controlling and protecting the leadership's assets—human, property, and monetary (Ball 2010: 87). Evidence of these practices abound in the biographical accounts of life inside this community where the culmination of a high-stakes reward and punishment system, a lack of personal privacy, and well-entrenched community divisions as a result of the leadership split, has turned brother against brother, sister against sister, and ultimately family against family in Bountiful.[6]

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[5] Another theory that I have opted not to include in this study, which also looks at the notion of the actor, is Actor-Network Theory (ANT) that was developed in the early 1980s by Bruno Latour, Michel Callon, and John Law.
[6] See works by Allred Solomon (1984), Bradley (1993), Krakauer (2004), and Spencer (2007).

Much like Michel Foucault's (1995) discussion of Bentham's panopticon, the organization of Bountiful operates as a relationship between the watchers (the leadership) and the watched (the flock). There is an omnipresent internal gaze of the leadership and prominent men (namely, property owners) over the other community members. The community members are cognizant of the constant observation and scrutiny of their actions by those in positions of power in order to ensure obedience and compliance. Yet, this level of scrutiny is also exercised by other community members, so there is an implication that the surveillance infrastructure in this insular community is not an absolute replica of the panopticon.[7]

Rather than try and stretch Foucault's principle of the panopticon, it is critical to draw attention to the intention of the surveillance in Bountiful where the leadership acts as one viewing and collective body whose intention it is to impose social control and moral conformity through observation and fear. For example, close examination of the physical layout of this community reveals a double standard of living where those residents both closest in relation and most obedient to the leadership exhibit a much higher standard of living and wealth than those who live on the fringes (Bramham 2009; Palmer and Perrin 2004). The leadership's manipulative disciplinary system of rewards (e.g., wives, children, and property) and punishments (e.g., public shaming via family reassignment or excommunication) makes the use of firmly rooted, ubiquitous surveillance tactics and the leadership's demand for total visibility distinct in this community. Foucault's ideas of social control, then, are much more effective in addressing the surveillance practices at work in this community.

Autobiographical accounts indicate that fear is a key motivator in this community. Specifically, fear of the leadership, one that desires to maintain and entrench social control for personal gain. The most predominant source of fear rests in public humiliation through a member's loss of family (through family reassignment) and loss of community (by way of excommunication). Through the culmination of a high-stakes reward and punishment system, a secretive and fiercely divided leadership, a vulnerable and exposed membership, the leadership's power relates to one of the two distinct types of power discussed by Foucault—discipline (punishment). The organization of Bountiful makes it an ideal institution for disciplinary power to prevail due to its internal processes of secrecy and its strict and punitive social hierarchy.

Evidence of public shaming in the community echoes the other distinct type of power discussed by Foucault—sovereign power (vengeance). In the face of losing family and status in the community, many members are highly motivated to become "agents of surveillance" or surveillers or what Stanley Cohen (1985: 209) refers to as "small-scale regional panopticons." This point is significant because it highlights the human practices that characterize other forms of surveillance reliant on technology, for example, social media, where visibility and secret confessions are fundamental.

Following Foucault's ideas concerning power, self-policing by the general population of Bountiful is evident.[8] In some cases, community members will go so far as to reveal family secrets to those in power in order to gain favour with the leadership. Recounting her childhood in Bountiful, former member and "celestial wife" Debbie Palmer (Palmer and Perrin 2004: 9) reflects on the importance of self-discipline under the constant scrutiny of "recording angels" who reported her every move back to the leadership. Other sources recall similar experiences. For example:

> By his own admission, [as a youth] Winston Blackmore was "a busybody," keen to listen
> in on semi-whispered schoolgirl conversations. He either knew intuitively or had learned
> by watching his father that knowledge is power. Nothing is more powerful than knowing
> secrets in any community, but this is especially true of a closed community like Lister

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[7] While Bountiful is not physically arranged with respect to the church, gathering spaces, and residence in the same manner as the camp meetings of the American frontier as explored by Anna Andrzejewski (2008), the very nature of the housing arrangements—multiple female adults and their children living in close proximity under the roof of one male—is in and of itself a construction demanding total visibility. Not to mention total dependency.

[8] As opposed to brutal displays of authority evidenced under sovereign rule of past eras.

> [Bountiful] where little more than four very large families were becoming ever more intertwined. (Bramham 2009: 102)

Such behaviour echoes the practices and motives of the various types of individuals engaged in intimate forms of human communication—eavesdropping (Locke 2010) and gossip (Johnson 2002). This point is important considering that secrecy in Bountiful is best understood by Albert de Jong's (2006) distinction between secrecy as "social secrets" as opposed to "divine secrets." In Bountiful, secrecy is intentional and social secrets reflect a degree of deviation from the norms, expectations, or standards that are known and understood by its members. Social secrets are at a premium in Bountiful. To those engaged in this behaviour, their motive appears to align with that of the leadership to which they aspire; to them, stolen knowledge directly translates into power.[9] How the leadership deals with this type of information—secretive knowledge—is indicative of its true intention—power.

Power manifests in various forms in Bountiful.[10] Power struggles are evident among sister-wives, especially when the sole male in the household plays favourites among his completely dependent wives and their children (Bramham 2009; Palmer and Perrin 2004). At the leadership level, power struggles are augmented due to the degree of financial security that is at risk. It is common for men, even those in high standing, to be relieved of large sums of money or property, or even family, for trying to assert dominance out-of-step with the current regime.

Following from Foucault's analysis where knowledge and power are central, we can see that several surveillance mechanisms are at work in Bountiful. First, through the requirement for total visibility based on constant scrutiny and the enlistment of community members as agents of surveillance, the leadership—with its infiltrating model of Big Brotherism—is well-positioned to consistently accumulate enormous amounts of secretive knowledge.

Second, this secretive knowledge is then used in such a way that it augments the leadership's control (power) both physically (money, land, wives, children) and spiritually (entry to the celestial kingdom). This knowledge is also used by the leadership to ensure total dependency by women and children on men and by the community on the leadership. While these two processes—information control and dependency—demonstrate a direct connection between forms of knowledge and power, it cannot be argued that the reverse is true. No matter how much power is exerted over the community members by the leadership to be completely transparent, power cannot be used as a means to extract knowledge of equal industry from the leadership. Thus, secrets and stolen knowledge contribute to the accumulation of power and not vice versa.

Third, resistance in the distinct top-down power arrangement of this community is simultaneously evident and futile. Here, resistance is best contextualized by Michael McCahill and Roy Coleman (2011: 47) as opposition to the collection of personal data through micro-level (everyday resistance) and macro-level (political resistance) attempts to directly challenge the surveillance regime. Within Bountiful, potential forms of resistance are easily anticipated by highly and self-motivated surveillance agents located within the community, providing the leadership the opportunity to exact punishment swiftly in order to circumvent dissent and teach the flock a valuable lesson. Thus, fear

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[9] Locke (2010: 3) argues that "[e]avesdropping is communication, and it has two features that make it unusually interesting. The first is the fact that it feeds on activity that is inherently *intimate* and is so because the actors are unaware of the received, therefore feel free to be 'themselves.' The second feature that makes eavesdropping so interesting relates to the way the information travels. It is not *donated* by the sender. It is *stolen* by the receiver."

[10] The Federal Bureau of Investigation has identified a "cultic relationship" between the leader and his followers in polygamist communities due to the fact that the followers are "totally or nearly totally dependent on the leader for almost all major life decisions because that leader has convinced them that he or she possesses some special talent, gift or knowledge" (Bramham 2009: 159–60).

is instituted as a mechanism of social control. Resistance also enforces the leadership's power over its vulnerable members through the inevitable ongoing struggle between the two forces, since one cannot exist without the other.

Selective Visibility

In response to growing government and media scrutiny, the leadership appears to have realized that limiting the flow and availability of information to outsiders produces a marked decrease in visibility, enabling them to head-off and eliminate any outside influence or power over its members. Decreased visibility is accomplished by reversing the in-house practices of surveillance and information gathering discussed above. The active attempt to control the perceptions of outsiders—selective visibility—is representative of Goffman's (1959) concept of front stage. As such, the degree to which Bountiful, in particular the leadership, makes itself visible appears to be directly correlated with its ability to control and manipulate the external audience's perceptions for personal gain and profit.

Due to the insular and secretive nature of the community, very few outsiders have ever been given an opportunity to examine its inner workings on a non-performance basis.[11] The majority of members do not stray far from the community's boundaries unless on FLDS business or when working for FLDS-run companies. Even those who choose to extricate themselves from the community are often unable or unwilling to reveal details about its practices when in the public eye.

Based on the numerous autobiographies published by former-FLDS members in both Canada and the United States, pressure, coercion, and the threat of punishment for both themselves and their family members who remain in the community, coupled with fear, are causally related to the community's observed practices and methods of concealment. Similar findings are found in unsuccessful police investigations, trials, and human rights perspectives.[12] Secrecy and deceit are taught inside the community from an early age in order to ensure that a well-coached and extremely skewed (selective) visibility is presented to the mainstream population commonly referred to as "gentiles"—the others or the audience in Goffmanian terms—by FLDS members—the self or the actors, also in Goffmanian terms.[13] Andrea Brighenti (2007: 330) recognizes the difficulty in negotiating self-identity and, in particular, the evidence of distortions related to visibility: "[d]istortions *in* visibility lead to distortions in social representation, distortions *through* visibility." In Bountiful these distortions appear to be critical to the leadership's control of public perceptions to their advantage due to their perceived religious persecution, whereby a premium is placed on secrecy, loyalty, obedience, patriarchy, deference, and family (Kent 2006: 8n2).

The leadership's systematic processes of surveillance and control over everyday life in the community are a depiction of Goffman's concept of back stage. The notion of back stage in this community is best understood by returning to the previous discussion on Foucault's ideas of social control. Here, I identified the leadership's mandated control management mechanisms, practices of surveillance, and information gathering techniques in order to elicit total visibility of its flock while achieving the desired end goal of complete social control and gender-biased divisions. Following Goffman's model, FLDS members are

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[11] Marla Peters was an outsider who was allowed to spend several months inside the community to conduct research for her master's thesis while at the University of Alberta. Peters was, however, forced to realize that her study was flawed due to her neutral observer role being transformed to that of a potential wife recruit (Bramham 2009: 225).

[12] See Levesque's (1999) child sex abuse study.

[13] Following the 1993 release of the government of British Columbia's commissioned explosive and damning report *Life in Bountiful*, Winston Blackmore "dispatched some women to dispel the so-called myths and lies about Bountiful. The women not only demanded a meeting with the women's equality minister, they demanded that the government's representative, Penny Priddy, dress modestly for the meeting, preferably in a long skirt, so as not to offend their sensibilities." Many of the women asserted that they "were happily exercising their constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion and freedom of association and would be much happier if people just left them alone" (Bramham 2009: 245–46).

well-informed of what the leadership deems as accepted behaviours both inside (back stage) and outside (front stage) the community's boundaries.

Edwin Lemert (1967) and Richard Jenkins (2000) note how such internal and external moments of the dialect of identification contribute to the remaking of identity and how categorization (by those in positions of power) contributes to group identity and, possibly, to labelling that can result in secondary deviance. When a person's internal self-definition does not match the external definition of others, this is called "internalization." The negative label used within the FLDS that can lead to internalization is that of "apostate." Being labelled an apostate can place a member at the back stage of the community where it is possible to assume that, based on autobiographical accounts and journalistic inquiries, they will be subjected to manipulation, control, exclusion, and even worse, they may be excommunicated from the community. This can be particularly devastating to their futures, which are already bleak due to lack of education, financial resources, and knowledge of the outside world.

Conclusion

Even from this limited glimpse into this veiled exemplar, we can see how the role of secrecy and surveillance leads to the regulation of the community's visibility both internally and externally as a result of increasing governmental scrutiny. Moreover, we see how the function of secrecy and visibility in an insular religious community is both diverse and evolving. This variousness points to the important interplay of knowledge and power, where secrecy and visibility are deployed for a number of ends, from controlling the membership to resisting government intrusion. In both forms identified in this article, visibility fulfills a critical role as this community struggles to navigate a religious choice within the broader socio-cultural, political, and religious landscape of modern society.

Thus, I argue that insular religious communities present a unique opportunity for scholarship in light of both the growing interest in and use of surveillance strategies and technologies and the growing concern about religious freedom and privacy. In many ways, these communities force us to think critically about how we define surveillance and what it means to provide protection of religious freedoms and those of basic human rights of the members of these communities. Consideration of non-technical forms of surveillance can help us better understand surveillance as a concept by focusing on the human practices that underlie all forms of surveillance. I further suggest that these communities offer alternate ways of thinking about secrecy in relation to the notion of regulating visibility by reorienting the focus from the roles of secrets and of secretive practices to one that considers the more visible forms and strategies through which secrets and secretive practices come to be and are sustained. In doing so we are forced to move beyond the critical analyses of these communities in order to consider the role of governmental policies and practices in both surveilling and protecting religious communities. As seen with the FLDS and other religious movements like Scientology, the Branch Davidians, and Jonestown, over-surveillance and the demand for increased visibility have more often than not proven inimical and led to increased secrecy, opaqueness, and fear of outsiders.

Insular religious communities provide an opportunity to enhance the study of religion through their reflection of larger social issues in wider society where questions related to larger surveillance practice and social media abound. While these communities point to the role of secrecy and visibility (or lack thereof), they also point to the proper position of the critically reflexive scholar, particularly one interested in maintaining the right to religious freedom and in ensuring the protection of other rights and laws.

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