

TSehhat

When humans are observed, one can easily identify that group identification is crucial to our existence. "Human beings, after all, are never just individuals; they always belong to something-to parents or relatives, a town or city, a race, a political party, an ethnic tradition, or some other group" (Pals 86). For the purposes of this discussion, the primary concern will be the observation of group cohesion in regards to religious identity. Of the plethora of religious denominations that coexist on this planet, the Assemblies of God denomination will be examined with special emphasis on the role of glossolalia. In order to further the discussion of this Pentecostal denomination, theories put forth by the acclaimed sociologist of religion, Emilé Durkheim, will be utilized. With the main works of Durkheim in mind, close attention will be paid to his theory of "Collective effervescence"; this concept elaborates on the idea that the spiritual/divine experience one has within a religious group, is actually a euphoric feeling that is reaffirming your group identity and strengthening group cohesion. However, for this cohesion to be successful, there must be a mutual acceptance of the dominant social values of the religious group and their perception of the sacred and the profane. Another aspect that will be examined includes the illumination of how the tones and messages pronounced when performing glossolalia differs depending on the Assemblies of God congregation.

Lastly, a third section of this discussion is intended to show that while glossolalia is seen as a ritual that allows for group cohesion within the Assemblies of God denomination, dominant social values can result in the construction of racial boundaries. When examining two Assemblies of God congregations in Detroit, it becomes evident that such boundaries result in the disintegration of a Durkheimian collective unity, and

prevent the feeling of "collective effervescence." As this discussion is further delved into when observing the Assemblies of God denomination, a Durkheimian framework will also be utilized to illuminate how dominant racial values determine the acceptance of African-Americans in two Assemblies of God churches in Detroit that were observed.

Work Cited

Pals, Daniel. *Eight Theories of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.