SECRECY IN NARRATIVES

Simmel, the Cycle of Secrecy, and the Socio-Spatial Dimension of Concealing and Revealing in the Gospel of Mark[1]

The first part of this paper considers how secrecy in antiquity can be understood as a form of social communication and interaction, as viewed through the lens of G. Simmel's social theory of secrecy. The second part will consider how the social construct of secrecy – i.e. the cyclical act of revealing, concealing and keeping hidden – is represented in ancient Christian narrative. Using the Gospel of Mark as primary text, we will focus in particular on the socio-spatial dimension of secrecy and how secrecy functions as a communicative strategy in narrative.

While secrecy – both in the modern and ancient worlds – is often considered only in terms of the concealment of certain information, it is perhaps more accurately considered a form of social communication and interaction. According to the social theory of secrecy, it has as much to do with the revealing of information as with its concealment. This cycle of controlled revelation – encompassing the acts of revealing, concealing and keeping hidden – can be leveraged by both individuals and groups to strengthen social bonds, construct social identities and protect group interests. Sociologist G. Simmel even goes so far as to claim that secrecy is 'one of the greatest achievements of humanity'.[2]

In the following, we will approach the study of secrecy in antiquity using G. Simmel's foundational social theory of secrecy, going on to consider how this theory can be applied to patterns of revealing and concealing in ancient narratives.[3] As G. Simmel's theory is complex and lacks a clear methodological presentation, we will take a focused approach and consider only the most relevant theoretical points for understanding secrecy in an

1 The content of this paper is based in part on my PhD project, *Secrecy as Communication: Simmel, the social theory of secrecy, and the literary shape and function of secrecy narratives in the Gospels of Mark and John* (working title), Aarhus University, expected 2015.

2 Simmel 1906, 462.

3 For an overview of secrecy in antiquity, see De Jong 1995.

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ancient context, including: (i) a general introduction to G. Simmel and his theory; (ii) defining secrecy as a universal sociological form; (iii) outlining the three-part cycle of secrecy; and finally, (iv) considering the socio-spatial dimension of secrecy. Based on this overview of G. Simmel, we will then turn to a consideration of the socio-spatial dimension of secrecy in the Gospel of Mark, including examples of how the cycle of secrecy can be replicated in narrative. In conclusion, we will return to the question of secrecy in the ancient world, and how Mark's narrative representation of secrecy reinforces our understanding of secrecy as a form of communication.

I. Simmel and the Sociology of Secrecy

G. Simmel (1858-1918), a German social theorist, was the first to propose a social theory of secrecy in his essay "The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies" (1906).[4] While contemporaries like E. Durkheim found fault in G. Simmel's methodological approach,[5] one could postulate that his argumentative strategy – illuminating statements with examples transcending time and space, from merchant commerce, to Spartan war strategy, to the English Parliament under George III – has a certain modern appeal considering the current trend toward an increased emphasis on interdisciplinary studies in the humanities and social sciences.[6]

G. Simmel's early academic interests were influenced by 'Völkerpsychologie', and he thusly establishes his study of secrecy in terms of social interaction. According to G. Simmel, the social construct of secrecy has everything to do with our construction or understanding of the 'other'.[7] Using examples of reciprocal social relationships, G. Simmel aligns our expectation of truthfulness in relation to the intensity of the relationship: thus, the more intimate the relationship, the more revelation of personal information is increasingly relevant and expected.[8] However, he also points to the dualistic nature of social relationships: that the positive condition (i.e. reciprocal knowledge) must in fact presuppose the negative condition of 'reciprocal concealment', i.e. 'the limitation of the knowledge of one associate by another'.[9]

4 Simmel 1906.

5 See e.g. Durkheim 1964, 359, quoted in Frisby 2002, 142. For more on G. Simmel and his contemporaries, see also Frisby 2002, 139-45.

6 Furthermore, G. Simmel in more recent years has begun to be seen as the founder of modern sociology in general. As D. Frisby points out, already in the 1890's G. Simmel was 'establishing sociology as an independent discipline' – preceding M. Weber by a decade (Frisby 2002, xiii). Indicative of this renewed interest is the relatively recent publication of several English translations of some of his more major works that have been circulating only in German for over a century.

7 Simmel 1906, 442.

8 Simmel 1906, 451.

9 Simmel 1906, 448.

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Secrecy as a Universal Sociological Form

G. Simmel conceptualises secrecy as 'a universal sociological form'.[10] In other words, secrecy is a social construct with no predetermined content, and as such is not influenced by this content; it functions in the same way, regardless of the secret itself.[11] Therefore, secrecy in antiquity need not reflect a contemporarily recognised or institutionalised form of secrecy (e.g. mystery cults, esoteric doctrine, etc.) in order to be recognised as secrecy in this more universal sense. What is culturally influenced is what becomes the secret itself, which is largely informed by the social 'rules' surrounding sanctioned revelation and concealment. Thus, while these rules can be expected to vary geographically and temporally, secrecy can be identified based on certain formal criteria regardless of the cultural context in which it is operating.[12]

Understanding secrecy as a social construct also helps to shed light on the often problematised relationship between secrecy and ethics.[13] S. Bok points out the paradox of secrecy: that that which proves the morality or ethical soundness of a secret is only possible through its revelation, thereby enabling the blanket negative valuation of all activity which remains concealed.[14] Thus, we find that secrecy is often characterised as 'the concealment of something which is negatively valued by the excluded audience, and in some instances by the perpetrator as well'.[15] G. Simmel, however, speaks directly to this characterisation: thus, in understanding secrecy as a universal sociological form, one must accept that it 'as such, has nothing to do with the moral valuations of its contents'.[16]

The Cycle of Secrecy

Turning now to the formal characteristics of secrecy, G. Simmel points to its cyclical nature: 'throughout the form of secrecy there occurs a permanent in- and out-flow of content, in which what is originally open becomes secret, and what was originally con-

10 Simmel 1906, 463.

11 Simmel 1906.

12 Simmel 1906, 441.

13 The ethics of secrecy plays an important role in the reception history of secrecy in the gospels, particularly in research on the so-called 'messianic secret' in Mark (see n. 30). This is enforced, for example, by both the post-Reformation view of Catholic secrecy, and even earlier in the Patristic reception of the so-called 'esoteric traditions' in early Christianity (Stroumsa 1996, 1-2). Considering this negative valuation of secrecy in early Christian tradition, the portrayal of Jesus in the gospels as someone who operates in secret, and who actively conceals what is now considered to be a universal message, is theologically problematic.

14 Bok 1982, xvi. This impression of a de facto equating of immorality with secrecy is further augmented by the fact that immorality is, generally speaking, concealed behaviour (Simmel 1906, 463).

15 Warren & Laslett 1977, 44.

16 Simmel 1906, 463. For more on secrecy and ethics in G. Simmel, see Simmel 1906, 444-8, 463-5. For a comprehensive consideration of the ethics of secrecy, see Bok 1982.

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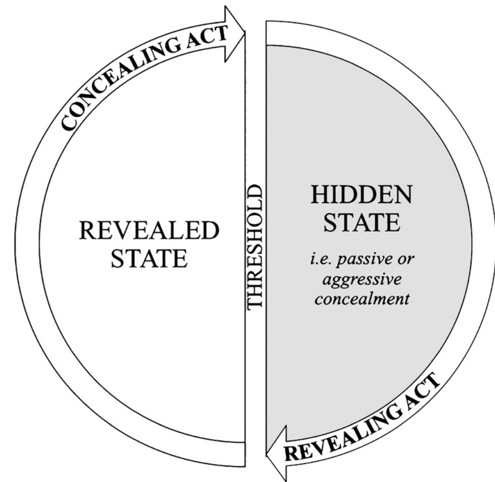

Fig. 1. *A visualisation of the three-part cycle of secrecy, demonstrating how concealing and revealing acts 'move' information between states of hiddenness and revelation (copyright Erin J. Wright).*

cealed throws off its mystery'.[17] B. Nedelmann (1995) elaborates on this idea from G. Simmel, called the 'Interaktionstriade' – what I refer to as 'the cycle of secrecy' – which has three moves or actions: (i) revealing (Enthüllen), (ii) concealing (Verbergen) and (iii) keeping hidden (Geheimhaltung).[18] These moves can be deconstructed as follows (Fig. 1):

(i) Revealing. The stage or move of revealing can take the form of an action or a state. The act of revealing secret information can be communicated through speech or action (including writing), or a combination of the two (i.e. a simultaneous 'telling and showing'). Conversely, the cycle of secrecy can be suspended in a state of revelation – i.e. the information remains in the public domain, whether permanently or temporarily. The revelation of secret information differs from a simple telling in that it is often delivered with an appended enjoinment to secrecy, or concealing act.

(ii) Concealing. The stage of concealing differs from the others in that it is the only part of the cycle that exists solely as an action: e.g. a concealing speech act.[19] A concealing act is the caveat that indicates the special status of this information. It can either precede the revealing act (e.g. "Don't tell anyone, but …"), or follow the revelation (e.g. "… but promise you won't tell anyone").

(iii) Keeping Hidden. Like the stage of revealing, keeping hidden can be an action or a state. It can be more difficult to identify, however, as it can be as simple as doing or

17 Simmel 1906, 467. As we will see in our later consideration of the cycle of secrecy in the Gospel of Mark, it is this 'in- and out-flow of content' that lends itself so well to the construction of suspense in the narrative.

18 Nedelmann 1995. 'Geheimhaltung' is perhaps more accurately translated as 'secrecy', however in order to reduce confusion (i.e. secrecy as one of the three parts of secrecy), I instead will refer to this part as 'keeping hidden'.

19 The act of putting on a disguise could also be considered a 'concealing act'.

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saying nothing (passive concealment).[20] However, when confronted with the 'intent to discover', keeping hidden can also take an active form (aggressive concealment).[21] It is the various social techniques that can be employed to protect a secret – such as lying – on which G. Simmel focuses most of his attention.[22] While G. Simmel discusses this almost exclusively in the context of secret societies, certain elements of this can also extend to more general group dynamics and the construction of identity.

The Socio-Spatial Dimension of Secrecy

An important consideration for studying secrecy in antiquity is the socio-spatial dimension of secrecy. Put simply, for a communicative act to be an act of secreting, certain basic social and spatial requirements must be met. Considering first the spatial dimension of secrecy, in order to successfully conceal, private space must be available for the controlled revelation of information (i.e. to avoid being overheard or spied upon).[23] As for the basic social requirements, we have a second 'Interaktionstriade'.[24] Thus, in order for a telling to be considered secreting, there is a minimum social requirement of three parties: (i) a secret teller, (ii) a secret hearer, and (iii) someone from whom the secret is being concealed.[25] While this 'Interaktionstriade' is the minimum requirement, secrecy is of course used to control the revelation of information within much larger social groupings, for example organised secret societies.

Social groups engaging in secrecy employ an arsenal of techniques or strategies to protect their shared hidden knowledge, similar to secrecy at a more individualistic level. In such cases, the acts of revealing, concealing and keeping hidden are often highly

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20 Passive concealment is typified by the absence of action; i.e. not revealing information to others, whether intentionally or unintentionally. An important take away from this is that not all forms of secrecy require intentionality. However, as G. Simmel explains, intentionality becomes a significant factor when one is confronted by a calculated attempt to discover. This 'intent to discover' becomes a sort of catalyst, and 'thereupon follows that purposeful concealment, that aggressive defence, so to speak, against the other party' (Simmel 1906, 462). Thus, while social relationships naturally abound in passive concealment, G. Simmel asserts that it is this aggressive form of concealment, in reaction to the intent to discover, that is 'secrecy in the most real sense' (Simmel 1906, 462).

21 See above.

22 On lying, see Simmel 1906, 445-7.

23 It is also worth noting that, in the modern world, we have certain advantages for accessing private space; as G. Simmel points out: 'modern life has elaborated a technique for isolation of the affairs of individuals, within the crowded conditions of great cities, possible in former times only by means of spatial separation' (Simmel 1906, 468-9). In the Gospel of Mark, for example, spatial separation is often used as a narrative tool for creating private space for controlled revelations within the storyworld. For other studies on space in relation to secrecy, see Munkholt Christensen and Krag in this volume.

24 Nedelmann 2002. The three-part cycle of secrecy, discussed above, is the other 'Interaktionstriade'.

25 Of these three parties, the third – someone from whom information is concealed – is arguably the most important, as it is this external interest in the concealed information that distinguishes secrecy from privacy. For more on this distinction, see Warren & Laslett 1977.

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organised and ritualised. This group secrecy can be viewed from two perspectives: (i) *inter*group secrecy, i.e. group secrecy in relation to its greater social context (e.g. other social groups), and (ii) *intra*group secrecy, i.e. the internal characteristics and structure of the group itself, (e.g. internal hierarchy, initiation rituals and oral teaching).

Considering first intergroup secrecy, the existence of a secret society or any group engaging in secrecy presupposes a pre-existing, developed society within which it operates, and from which it conceals.[26] This juxtaposition between secret societies and the rest of society can be thought of in terms of an insider-outsider dichotomy: in regular society, which grows organically, 'whoever is not excluded is included'. Thus, unless outsider status is indicated (e.g. lepers or 'untouchables'), one belongs to the ranks of insider. From a non-organic, organised in-group perspective, however, we have the inverse: 'whoever is not expressly included is excluded'.[27] However, while intergroup secrecy acts as a defensive barrier between the in-group and outsiders, G. Simmel also points to the delicate balance required for keeping this information contained within the group.[28]

Thus, while intergroup secrecy is a defensive measure against outsiders, intragroup secrecy is a strategy of internal defence, i.e. protecting against the danger of betrayal. While this internal structure of secret societies can be quite elaborate, there are a number of qualities that can also be observed in more general group secrecy – the type of secrecy we observe in the gospel narratives – including (i) reciprocal confidence between members, (ii) a hierarchical structure,[29] (iii) the oral communication of secret knowledge and (iv) the potential for intragroup conflict.[30]

As we will see now in turning to the Gospel of Mark, we find elements of both intergroup and intragroup secrecy in the narrative.

II. Secrecy in the Gospel of Mark

The social construct of secrecy is observable in all four of the canonical Christian gospels; however, it is a particularly dominant theme in the Gospel of Mark. Often referred to collectively as the 'messianic secret', Mark repeatedly – if inconsistently – portrays Jesus as engaging in various secret activities (e.g. secret healings, teachings and miracles), including the active concealment of his messianic identity.[31] Ever since W. Wrede first

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26 Simmel 1906, 483-4.

27 Simmel 1906, 490.

28 Simmel 1906, 473.

29 For a complex example of such a hierarchical structure, see G. Simmel's description of the Czech secret order, Omladina (Simmel 1906, 478-9).

30 Notably lacking in the group secrecy observed in the gospel narratives are (i) pledges or oaths for the entrance of new group members and (ii) established rituals. Thus, what we find in the gospels is closer to 'transitional secrecy' than a secret society proper (Simmel 1906, 471-2). For a comprehensive overview of G. Simmel on secret societies, see Simmel 1906, 470-98.

31 See Wrede 1901. For a recent and succinct summary of W. Wrede and subsequent scholarship on secrecy and concealment in Mark, see Watson 2010, 2-12.

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proposed that the messianic secret in Mark was a dogmatic invention, as opposed to a historical recounting of events, the majority of research concerning secrecy in Mark has focused on historical questions; i.e. did Jesus conceal his messianic identity, or is this a later invention?[32]

While this historical line of questioning is important from a theological perspective, it overlooks other basic yet essential functions of secrecy in the Markan narrative. More specifically, Mark uses the moves of secrecy – revealing, concealing and keeping hidden – to create suspense and delay the denouement, effectively slowing the plot's forward momentum toward the climactic revelations of Jesus' identity (Mk 9.2-7; 14.62).[33] In doing so, Mark leverages this social construct to communicate essential information to both the reader and certain characters within the storyworld, while still maintaining the delicate balance between knowing and not-knowing in the storyworld. It is this communicative function of secrecy that is our focus here.

Thus, for our purposes, we will set aside historical questions and take instead as starting point Mark as a completed literary text. As we have learned from the consideration of G. Simmel above, secrecy entails both a spatial and social dimension: i.e. private space and at minimum three participants (a secret teller, a secret hearer and someone from whom the secret is concealed). Thus, we will begin with a brief consideration of the socio-spatial construction of the Markan storyworld: a narrative landscape divisible between public and private space, a socialscape divided between insiders and outsiders, and an in-group characterised by an internal hierarchy that privileges some members over others. Following this, we will take up examples of how Mark draws on these socio-spatial elements in his storyworld to reproduce the social construct of secrecy in a narrative context, and how these function as communicative forms.

Markan Landscape: Public and Private Space

In keeping with the spatial requirements for secrecy in an ancient context, Mark often prefaces secret activity with a movement into private space and away from outsiders (e.g. Mk 3.13; 4.10; 5.40; 7.17, etc.). Thus, it helps to imagine the landscape of the Markan storyworld as roughly divided into public and private spaces.[34] Generally, this division adheres to the ancient social distinction between the public and private spheres.[35] Activities like public teaching (e.g. Mk 1.21-22; 1.39; 6.6; 11.17-18) and conflict with religious authorities (e.g. Mk 2.6-12; 2.15-28; 3.1-6; 7.1-13) often belong to the public sphere or *polis*. Spatially, this includes urban areas – e.g. inside cities, marketplaces, etc. – and

32 Some notable exceptions include those who prefer a literary approach (see e.g. Kermode 1979, Tolbert 1989, MacDonald 1998), and those who take a social scientific approach (see e.g. Theissen 1995, Malina 2001, Pilch 1992).

33 See Tolbert 1989, 229-30; see also MacDonald 1998, 153.

34 In my dissertation, I further argue for a 'third space' (or 'group space') within the Markan storyworld. This space borrows from these ancient conceptions of the public and private, while attributing to them a new authority, social hierarchy and special group activities.

35 For more on this distinction, see Slater 1998.

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public institutions like the Temple in Jerusalem (Mk 11.11-19, 11.27-13.1; cf. 14.49) and synagogues in the Galilee (Mk 1.21-29; 1.39; 3.1-5; 6.2-6).

Similarly, private activities within urban areas are largely confined to the *oikos*, the private domicile or household (e.g. Mk 1.29-31; 5.38-43; 7.17-23; 9.28-29, 33-50; 10.10-11). Mark further extends private space outside of urban areas to include naturally remote and uninhabited areas (ἔρημος τόπος, Mk 1.35-38, 45; 6.31-44), spaces associated with the divine (e.g. mountains, Mk 3.13-19; 6.46; 9.2-13; 13.3-37; 14.26-49) and forbidden or taboo spaces (e.g. among the tombs, Mk 5.2-5). It is these private spaces in which Mark sets secret teachings and other Jesus-group activities central to the plot.[36]

Markan Socialscape: Identifying Insiders and Outsiders

As discussed above, secrecy can be used in an organised group context to protect group interests and enforce an insider identity in contrast to outsiders.[37] In terms of the social requirements for secrecy, then, the concealed revelation of information takes place between two insiders – the secret teller and secret hearer(s) – with certain outsiders excluded.[38] There are multiple group identities represented in the Markan storyworld, representing both public identities (e.g. Pharisee, leader of the synagogue, tax collector, etc.) and private identities (e.g. family member, slave, etc.).

Depending on the perspective of the various characters, any one of these groups could be considered an 'in-group'.[39] However, given that the Gospel of Mark is centred on the speech and actions of Jesus, it is the individuals that form a group around him that we will consider insiders in the Markan storyworld.

This leaves the remaining characters and social groups in the storyworld as de facto outsiders. While not all outsiders are central to the plot, Mark paints certain out-groups in the storyworld as antagonists who repeatedly come in conflict with Jesus and his followers (e.g. 2.1-12; 2.15-17; 2.18-22; 2.23-28; 3.1-5, etc.), the most important of these being the various Jewish authorities, including the scribes, the Pharisees, the chief priests, the elders, the Herodians and the Sadducees.[40]

The Markan in-group – i.e. the group that gathers around Jesus – can be observed engaging in both inter- and intragroup secrecy. In terms of intragroup secrecy (i.e. internal social strategies to prevent betrayal), Mark constructs an in-group characterised by its hierarchical structure and the controlled, oral communication of teachings. Entry into the in-group is quite simple: an insider in the Markan storyworld is one who follows

36 For an in-depth study of space in Mark, particularly in relation to mythic significance, see Malbon 1986.

37 In the context of the Gospel of Mark, see Watson 2010, 24-6.

38 In terms of intergroup secrecy, the implication is that the outsider is a member of a different social group (an out-group), while in terms of intragroup secrecy, an outsider is more likely a less privileged member from within the in-group.

39 Like in the real world, one is not limited to a single social identity – for example, one can be a Jew, a father and a leader of the synagogue. However, in Mark, the Jesus-group identity tends to supplant other group identities (especially the religious and familial).

40 For more on Jesus' adversaries and conflict stories, see Hultgren 1979.

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Jesus in a literal, spatial sense (e.g. Mk 1.18, 20; 2.14, 15; 3.7; 5.24; 6.1, etc.).[41] However, all insiders are not created equal.

Within the in-group exists a hierarchy of members – with Jesus at its top – which is measured by the level of access an insider is granted to various exclusive group activities (Fig. 2).[42] For example, the apostles – Jesus' twelve named disciples – form the core in-group and are thus the most privileged: they are granted the authority to exorcise demons, heal, teach and preach repentance (Mk 3.14-15; 6.7-13), they participate in the institution of the Lord's Supper (Mk 14.22-26; cf. 14.17), and they receive several exclusive teachings (Mk 4.10-34; 9.35-50; 10.32-34; 10.41-45; 14.17-21; 14.27-31).[43] This hierarchy extends even further among the twelve, with Simon Peter, John, James and sometimes Andrew, even further privileged among this core in-group (e.g. Mk 1.16-20; 1.29-34; 5.37-43; 9.2-8; 13.3-36; 14.33, etc.).[44] Peter is further singled out among these four, and is arguably the most developed character aside from Jesus (Mk 1.36-37; 8.29, 32-33; 9.5, 38-41; 10.28, 35-45; 11.21; 14.29, 37, 54, 66-72; 16.7).[45]

Aside from the twelve apostles, Mark references several other Jesus followers who are excluded from the inner-circle, but who in any case witness similar events (i.e. miracles, healings and exorcisms) and hear similar teachings as the apostles. Thus, on several oc-

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41 E.S. Malbon (1983) argues for such an emphasis on followers and followership over disciples and discipleship in relation to the Jesus in-group in Mark.

42 The misunderstanding of Jesus' disciples (e.g. Mk 8.14-21) and their related conflict with Jesus is a commonly noted theme in Mark (particularly in connection with the messianic secret) and could be interpreted as evidence against their privileged position within the storyworld (Collins 2007, 386-8; Best 1986). However, the understanding of the disciples is primarily a theological problem. From a literary perspective, and in the context of the social theory of secrecy, being witness to revelation does not imply understanding, nor does membership within the Markan in-group appear to require it (it is following, not understanding, that identifies the insider; see Malbon 1983; Hurtado 1996, esp. 25-7; Longenecker 1996, 1-5). Furthermore, one of the qualities of intragroup secrecy outlined by G. Simmel is the potential for intragroup conflict, in which case the misunderstanding of the disciples functions to reinforce group identity as opposed to challenging it.

43 E. Best (1986) argues against distinguishing 'the twelve' as a privileged inner circle within 'the disciples' (Best 1986, 160), while still recognising that 'Mark distinguishes to some extent between the twelve and the disciples' (Best 1986, 157). While Mark does not make the distinction between groupings entirely explicit, I do believe that from a narrative perspective the references to 'disciples', 'the twelve and those who were with them' (Mk 4.10), 'the twelve', the Four/Three (Peter, James, John and Andrew), and Peter represent a clear narrowing of audience, even if the difference between groupings are neither fully developed nor consistently applied. Furthermore, the most important emphasis relies on the distinction between the top (Peter, James, John and Andrew) and the bottom (the crowd) of the internal hierarchy, as opposed to the more ambiguous middle (the disciples, the twelve). It is also worth remembering that the internal hierarchy of the in-group is irrelevant when the intended contrast is with members of external social groups.

44 On the greater authority of Peter, James, John and Andrew among the twelve named disciples, see Collins 2007, 218-20.

45 For more on Peter in Mark, see Best 1986, 162-76.

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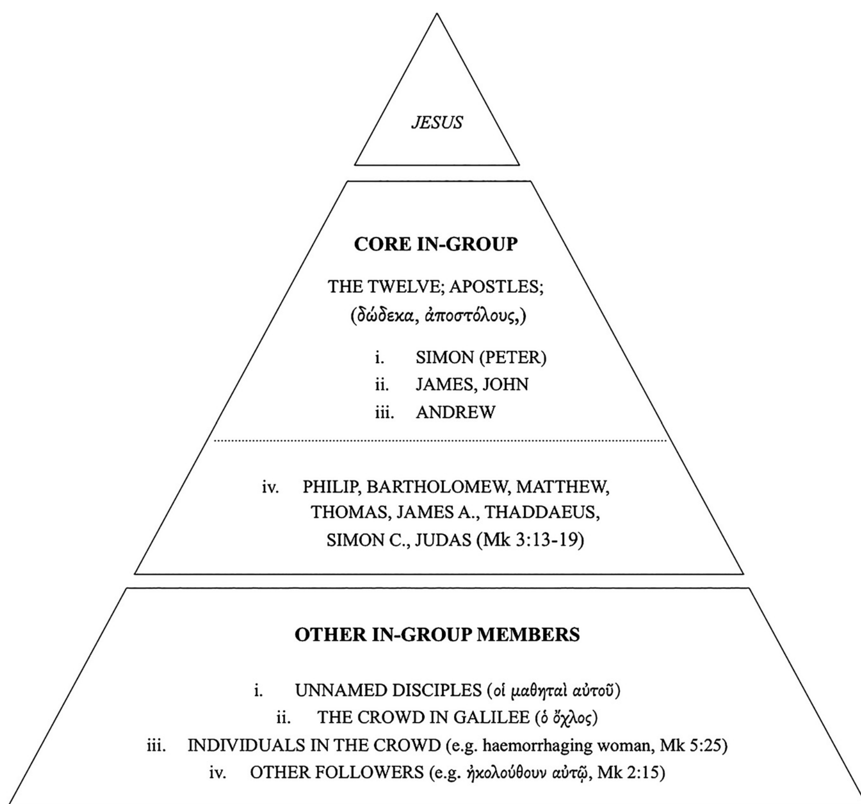

Fig. 2. *Hierarchy of the Markan in-group (copyright Erin J. Wright).*

casions, Mark makes general references to large crowds of followers,[46] both named and unnamed disciples (sometimes equatable to the twelve), as well as a number of named and unnamed individual followers;[47] it is these characters who make up the rest of the Markan in-group.

Mark and the Cycle of Secrecy

With a basic understanding of the public-private and insider-outsider dichotomies which characterise the Markan storyworld, we can now turn to consider specific examples which illustrate how Mark manipulates these socio-spatial elements to reproduce the cycle of secrecy. Thus, in the following we will consider two examples that demonstrate how Mark uses secrecy to communicate information both within the storyworld and to the reader: (i) the juxtaposed healings of the haemorrhaging woman and Jairus' daughter (Mk 5.21-43); and (ii) the transfiguration miracle (Mk 9.2-10).

46 See e.g. ὄχλος πλεῖστος, Mk 4.1; ὄχλος πολὺς, Mk 5.21, 24; 6.34; 9.14; 12.37; πολλοῦ ὄχλου, Mk 8.1; ὄχλου ἱκανοῦ, Mk 10.46; compare πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος, Mk 2.13; 4.1; 9.15; 11.18, 32.

47 See e.g. Levi (2.14), Jairus (Mk 5.22) and the haemorrhaging woman (Mk 5.25).

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(i) *Healing the haemorrhaging woman and Jairus' daughter (Mk 5.21-43).* In this scene, Jesus is sought out by Jairus, one of the rulers of the synagogue, whose daughter is dying. Jesus concedes and performs a private healing miracle that revives the girl, who has allegedly died in the interim (Mk 5.37-43). On the way to Jairus' house is an embedded, more public healing of a haemorrhaging woman (Mk 5.25-34).[48] This juxtaposition between the healings – one performed amidst a large crowd, the other before an exclusive audience – helps illustrate the importance of the socio-spatial dimension for identifying the function of secrecy in narrative.

First, the healing of the haemorrhaging woman is performed in a heavily populated and urban setting: a great crowd (ὄχλος πολὺς) meets Jesus beside the sea (Mk 5.21) and 'presses into him' (συνέθλιβον αὐτόν) during the journey to Jairus' (Mk 5.24). Mark goes on to repeatedly invoke the presence of the crowd during the public healing (Mk 5.27, 30, 31). This heavily populated scene abruptly transitions to an exclusive healing scene. Upon arriving at Jairus' house, Jesus only allows the three most privileged core in-group members to follow him into the private space (Peter, James and John; Mk 5.37). Upon entering the house, Jesus further defines private space by expelling most of the mourning household members, only admitting the child's parents along with the three disciples (Mk 5.40). Jesus goes on to perform the healing act of raising the girl from the dead, a revelatory 'showing' of Jesus' abilities – and if not revealing his hidden identity, then at least gesturing toward it (Mk 5.41-42). This healing is immediately followed by a concealing act, with Jesus 'strictly charging them that no one should know this' (καὶ διεστείλατο αὐτοῖς πολλὰ ἵνα μηδεὶς γνοῖ τοῦτο; Mk 5.43). We can only assume that what follows is passive concealment (a state of hiddenness), as there is nothing further narrated.[49]

The concerted effort to conceal the healing of Jairus' daughter, in relation to the very public healing of the haemorrhaging woman, indicates toward the intrinsic difference in significance between the two healings: in one case Jesus inadvertently heals a medical condition (which is not necessarily observable to bystanders), while in the other Jesus raises someone whose death was witnessed by several people. It is clear that secrecy here is employed, at least in part, to protect group interests and Jesus' own autonomy within the storyworld, while further functioning to communicate certain vital information about Jesus' identity to only the reader and those present in Jairus' house.[50]

This juxtaposition of public and private is a repeated narrative strategy in Mark: following the initial establishment of the core in-group (the calling of the twelve), we

48 A.Y. Collins points to this narrative framing as an example of Markan style (Collins 2007, 276).

49 This could be considered significant in comparison to other instances in which Jesus' concealing command is ignored and the secret information does not remain a state of hiddenness, instead being revealed again and spread widely by others (see e.g. Mk 1.43-45; 7.36-37; compare Mk 1.24-28).

50 C.D. Marshall also suggests that this narrowing of audience between these public and private healings functions to underscore the particularly miraculous nature of the second healing (Marshall 1989, 91).

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find a series of similarly juxtaposed public and private activities (e.g. Mk 3.22-35; 4.1-34; 5.21-43; 6.35-52; 7.1-23; 8.11-21; 9.14-29; 9.30-50; 10.1-16; 10.23-45; 11.12-25; 11.27-13.37; 14.22-42). In these examples, Mark narrates – for example – a more public teaching, followed by a movement into private space where a more exclusive and sometimes related teaching is delivered.

(ii) *The transfiguration miracle (Mk 9.2-10).* In this central scene, Jesus takes aside Peter, James and John, and performs the transfiguration miracle that explicitly reveals his messianic identity – information that has been largely concealed up until this climactic revelation.[51] This scene meets both the basic social and spatial requirements for secrecy. First, there are three implicit parties involved: Jesus (and 'a voice'; Mk 9.7) as secret tellers, the three most privileged disciples as secret hearers and all others as 'not-knowers', as implied by the instruction to tell no one what they have seen (διεστείλατο αὐτοῖς ἵνα μηδενὶ ἃ εἶδον διηγήσωνται; Mk 9.9). Furthermore, the scene takes place in an explicitly private space: Jesus takes the disciples up a 'high mountain' (εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλὸν[52]) where it is further specified that they are 'in private' (κατ' ἰδίαν[53]) and 'alone' (μόνους[54]). This triple emphasis on the private nature of the setting makes this the most explicitly private scene in the Gospel of Mark.

The scene clearly reflects the three moves of the cycle of secrecy. First, we have the revealing act in two parts: (i) an act of 'showing', i.e. Jesus' transfiguration before the three disciples (Mk 9.2-8), and (ii) an act of 'telling', spoken by an unidentified voice from a cloud (presumably God) who states "This is my beloved Son; listen to him" (Mk 9.7).[55] This particular revelatory scene is unique due to the presence of two 'secret tellers'; elsewhere in Mark, it is only Jesus who reveals directly to his followers.

The concealing act is also unique. While coming down from the mountain Jesus enjoins the three disciples to secrecy, instructing them "to tell no one what they had

51 Shortly before this transfiguration scene, Peter correctly identifies Jesus as 'the Christ' (ὁ χριστός) to an audience of Jesus and his disciples (Mk 8.27-29). Jesus responds to this with a negative affirmation of his identity ("tell no one"; Mk 8.30).

52 Mountains provide the setting for several private scenes in Mark, and only members of the core in-group are invited to join Jesus for private teachings and miracles in these spaces (ὄρος; Mk 3.13-19; 9.2-9; 13.3-37; compare 14.26-42). This Markan construction of mountains is consistent with the ancient conception of mountains as naturally isolated places associated with the divine. Mark further invokes the association between mountains and revelation found in the Old Testament (Foerster 1964-76, 475).

53 Mk 9.2; compare Mk 4.34; 6.31, 32; 7.33; 9.28; 13.3. O.J.F. Seitz (1949) argues that the phrase 'κατ' ἰδίαν' is an esoteric device introduced by Mark, and used as an editorial introduction to preface e.g. esoteric logia (Seitz 1949, 218).

54 Mk 9.2; compare Mk 4.10; 6.47; 9.8.

55 Καὶ ἐγένετο νεφέλη ἐπισκιάζουσα αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἐγένετο φωνὴ ἐκ τῆς νεφέλης · οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ (Mk 9.7).

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