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1. The initial HISTORICAL TOPIC I wanted to explore early in the course was . . .

I wanted to explore Mormonism as it related to the events surrounding California's Proposition 8.

2. I narrowed down by topic — and made the project more manageable -- by deciding to focus on . . .

My initial idea was to look at the many ways Mormons were involved in passing Proposition 8. I wanted to look at the propaganda and statements used by Church leaders that argued against homosexuality and gay marriage. I quickly discovered that my topic was too recent and my approach lacked depth. So, I decided to focus solely on the statements made by LDS Church leaders that dealt with homosexuality from 1970-2010, and track the changes in the way they described and understood same-sex attraction.

3. I developed a sound interpretive approach to the topic by analyzing the subject from a particular perspective — which was. . .

My approach consisted of gathering all the statements by LDS Church leaders I could find from 1970-2010 that dealt with homosexuality. I chose the period 1970-2010 because all of the Church's publications during this period are "correlated" implying that they are the "official" position of the Church, and importantly, they are accessible for research. My main primary sources were LDS General Conference talks, articles published in official Church magazines such as *Ensign* and *New Era*, and also press releases and online statements. I organized the statements in chronological order to see if I could detect patterns of change in the way Church leaders described homosexuality over time. Interestingly, I found that the way Church leaders described homosexuality has changed dramatically since 1970. As I looked at the way LDS leaders described homosexuality in the 1970s 1980s 1990s and 2000s I could not help but notice how changes in American society (e.g. the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s and 1980s, gay marriage movements in the 1990s, and Proposition 8 in 2008) played a major role in influencing the way Church leaders spoke about, and understood same-gender issues. My paper ultimately turned out to be a short history of how Mormon leaders have described homosexuality in relation to social change in the United States from 1970-2010.

4. The final THESIS presented in my paper argues that . . .

The way leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormon Church) have dealt with homosexuality has changed over time and has corresponded to social changes in the United States. Statements made by Church leaders attempting to describe and discourage homosexuality from 1970–2010 evidence shifting perceptions of homosexuality.