

LEAVING THE FAMILY:
EXIT FROM TOTALISTIC ORGANIZATIONS

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Leaving the Family: Exit from Totalistic Organizations

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore how members exit totalistic organizations. Existing organizational communication research has treated employee membership in an employment institution as the universal organizational relationship. This study argues that certain organizational relationships are best understood not by the presence or absence of pay, however, but in relation to the extent of organizational reach into the member's life outside the organization. This study advances the notion that such totalistic organizations share important characteristics including value-based memberships, centrality of organizational values to the member's life, the involvement of primary relationships, and a requirement of organizational fealty. This study advances the study of organizational exit within this totalistic context. A microstoria narrative analysis was used to examine the exit narratives of members of both paid and unpaid totalistic organizations (police officers and firefighters: $N = 50$, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: $N = 50$) to gain a better understanding of exit from totalistic organizations.

The findings of this study suggest several contributions to the study of organizational communication and exit. First, the findings of this study expand our definition of organizational memberships beyond current literature, which defines memberships based on payment. Second, consideration of totalistic exit challenges existing models of role/vocational socialization, suggesting that foundational values can originate from an organizational source. Third, the process of exit revealed by the narratives of this study suggests a view of exit that was unlike both current phasic models or considerations of volunteer exit. The process of exiting a totalistic organization was less linear and more prolonged than exit describe by existing literature, and was marked by deep personal doubts and fears. Finally, members of totalistic organizations

described active concealment of both their decisions to exit, and the doubts about both the organization and the self that contribute to exit, suggesting a communicative pattern during the exit process that diverges from the expected announcement/exit phase of Jablin's (2001) model.

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I came to NDSU in 2006 to be a forensics coach. After a decade in public relations, I had no thought of academics beyond the M.A. that I knew would allow me to coach. I leave, still with my heart in forensics, but as a far different kind of coach than I could have imagined. I entered as an inexperienced coach; I leave an academic. The years I have spent at NDSU have been some of the best of my life. I will always be grateful to the remarkable people I have encountered here.

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DEDICATION

It was all for the ducks. Quack.

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CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

Existing organizational communication literature tends to treat the paid employee and employer as the universal organizational relationship. Literature that has challenged this notion has been limited to an examination of organizational volunteers (e.g. Ashcraft & Kedrowicz, 2002; Kramer, 2011). Such studies, however, draw a demarcation between paid and unpaid relationships, thus still privileging pay (or lack thereof) as the defining aspect of organizational relationships. This definition of the member relationship to the organization on the basis of pay shadows consideration of other organizational attributes related to the member's attachment to and behavior in the organization. Such a distinction of membership restricts our understanding of organizational phenomena in several ways. First, it ignores value-based organizational relationships such as faith communities. Second, it binds our observation of organizational experiences to the exchange of resources and does not allow for consideration of reverse pay (e.g. tithing) memberships. Lastly, it limits our ability to engage in comparative studies between organizational memberships of unlike pay status.

This study advances the notion that certain types of organizational memberships may be best understood in relation to the extent of organizational reach into the member's life outside the organization rather than pay status. While all organizational memberships may be seen as potentially influential in the member's life, this study argues that some memberships are totalistic, i.e., the values, practices, and rituals, and relationships associated with membership not only extend into the member's everyday life, but play a primary role. Several characteristics define such organizational memberships as totalistic. First, such memberships are value-based, even when the member is paid for her service. Second, such values and beliefs are central to the member's life and identity, and thus extend beyond the member's time in the organization and

are carried into both his everyday life and other organizational memberships. Third, totalistic memberships involve primary relationships in the member's life. Such relational involvement ties the member's family and primary friendships to his membership. Finally, totalistic organizations tend to require complete organizational fealty. Such loyalty is usually publicly declared upon induction of the member such as the oaths sworn by police officers, firefighters, and soldiers, or confirmation ceremonies for new members of faith groups.

To begin, totalistic memberships are value-based, even when the member is paid for his membership. Existing research has tended to treat value-based memberships synonymous with volunteerism (e.g. Ashcraft & Kedrowicz, 2002; Kramer, 2011). This study, however, advances a view that paid memberships can also be value-based. In such cases, the paid member accepts and retains her role not solely because of pay, but rather because of internalization and acceptance of organizational values to the point of immersion. Such an employee is willing to accept personal danger or other occupational hazard as part of the praxis of organizational mission and values.

Unlike traditional paid or volunteer group memberships, the totalistic organizational beliefs and values are key to the member's identity or worldview, and may guide the views, values, and beliefs she holds in all facets of her life. Conceivably, traditional employment and volunteer memberships involve an inherent level of identification wherein the member accepts the beliefs, norms, and values of the organization such as a non-profit shelter worker who internalizes the values and organizational mission of helping those in need. Such identification becomes part of the member's personal identity (i.e. introducing oneself to a stranger as an accountant for XYZ Corporation). In certain organizational memberships, the level of identification may be seen as more intense than others. Such identification, however, is usually

not central to the core beliefs and worldviews of the member, nor does it guide the member's daily actions in other organizations of which he is a member. The totalistic membership, in contrast, is defined by the beliefs and values the member holds in other areas of his life, which carry over into other organizational memberships. In a religious group, for example, the member accepts and internalizes core beliefs and values that shape the way she thinks about and act in all other contexts. Such a distinction is important in defining totalistic organizations as an organizational form.

It is not the member's identification with the organization that defines the totalistic organization, but rather the organization's structure that requires complete identification with and fealty to its values and practices. Members of service clubs, for example, might strongly identify with the missions, values, and practices of the club, in effect making the club part of the member's identity. The club, however, is unlikely to require complete identification and loyalty of all members, allowing members to believe some values, but not others, or to practice parts of membership, but not others. A religious membership, by contrast, requires absolute belief and adherence for fully metamorphosed members. The values of the totalistic organization are those that are foundational in the member's life, that bleed into other areas of the member's life; the values of their other memberships do not bleed into the totalistic group. This one-way permeability of value boundaries is an important feature of the totalistic organization that distinguishes it from other organizational forms.

The relationships associated with totalistic memberships, likewise, are more central to the member's life. While employment or volunteer organizations usually involve friendly relationships with coworkers, such relationships are rarely central to the employee's life, nor is a close friendship forged at work usually threatened by one of the friends quitting the job. By

contrast, the totalistic membership usually involves the closest friends and family of the member's life. Moreover, exiting the totalistic organization can risk significant relational costs by threatening these primary relationships. Leaving a religious organization that the member was born into, for example, risks ideological disagreement with the primary family, and risk of family rejection.

For totalistic organizational members, absolute fealty is expected, enforced, and communicated regularly and often publicly. Such loyalty to the values of the organization is frequently displayed publicly upon gaining full membership. Paid totalistic members such as firefighters, police officers, and military personnel, for example, all swear formal oaths before assuming their role in the organization. Faith groups, similarly, usually include a publicly witnessed ceremony when formal full membership is attained. Such ceremonies might include confirmation rites or a public bearing of testimony. Beyond the swearing of fealty, totalistic organizations often hold the member to formal honor codes that represent prescriptions for the praxis of organizational values. Additionally, members may display artifacts of commitment that signal their loyalty to the organization (e.g. badges or clothing). Such expected fealty precludes other memberships in other organizations with values or beliefs that conflict with the totalistic group. Moreover, such a requirement of fealty precludes partial identification with, or partial practice of organizational values for full member standing.

It is important to note that, much like the different forms of volunteer and corporate organizations and their reach into the member's life, totalistic organizations can vary in the extent to which they exhibit these totalistic qualities. Residential occupations such as soldiers living on military bases or firefighters living in the firehouse, for example might be seen as more encompassing of the member's life than other totalistic occupations that allow the worker to

return home after his shift. While all totalistic memberships require an inherent level of loyalty to organizational values and practices, the consequences for dissidence might be seen as variable, a distinction that becomes important in the consideration of organizational exit.

This study seeks to further our understanding of the process of organizational exit from totalistic organizations. Like other organizational phenomena, existing literature in organizational exit has focused primarily on leaving paid employment. Literature has examined employee turnover (e.g. Danielson, 2004; Golden, 2007; Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Maertz & Griffeth, 2004; McNatt & Judge, 2008; Peterson, 2004) and the reasons for employee exit (DiSanza, 1995; Myers, 2005). Kramer (2011) extended the study of exit to volunteer organizations with his examination of a community choir. Volunteers, Kramer (2011) found, experience a far more passive process of exit than the phasic model Jablin (2001) advances for corporate employees. Kramer's (2011) choir members simply stopped showing up, often returning at a later time. This finding suggests not only a process of exit that varies amongst types of organizational relationships (e.g. paid versus unpaid), but an exit process that may be related to the costs of leaving. Where the stakes of exit were lower for volunteers who did not stand to lose income like employees who leave a job (Kramer, 2011), the process of leaving was not marked by the same stages of contemplation of the decision to exit and post exit sensemaking Jablin (2001) describes. If the exit process is observably different in such low-stakes situations, presumably higher stakes will also result in a unique process of exit.

In order to advance the view of organizational memberships in terms of the reach of values and relationships into the member's life, this study will compare the exit narratives of members of two types of totalistic organizations, one paid, the other unpaid. While these two organizational types do not represent the only totalistic organizational memberships, these

groups were selected to represent a totalistic volunteer or value-based membership (the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), and a totalistic employment membership (high-reliability organization workers). In each of these, the reach of values, beliefs, practices, and relationships into the member's life is totalistic in nature, thus, presumably complicating the process of leaving such an encompassing membership behind. The particular totalistic qualities of each of these groups are discussed below.

Totalistic Qualities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Faith communities represent a unique opportunity for the study of totalistic organizations. Such memberships, while voluntary and unpaid, represent a far more encompassing membership experience than the volunteers studied by Ashcraft and Kedrowicz (2002) or Kramer (2011). Faith values and practices are fundamental to the member's life in a way that other organizational values are not. It is through the lens of faith values learned in the faith-based organization that the member views his world. It is likely through the faith organization, for example, that the member likely gains his views and understanding of gender roles, family structures, and ethics of right and wrong. He is likely to apply these faith values to other organizational memberships, and to his daily life outside organizations. He is likely, for example, to judge his civic duty or educational content in terms of his religious beliefs and values. For the faithful such values and beliefs guide decisions, action, and family life. The primary relationships of the member's life, likewise, are usually tied to the faith community. For "cradle" members, those born in a faith, parental and sibling relationships are likely interwoven with such faith values. Relationships with the spouse and children are also likely tied to the faith.

While all faith communities might be considered totalistic to a degree, certain faith cultures certainly foster a more totalistic membership than others. Communal residential faith groups might be seen as the extreme, a membership that requires the faithful to live within the confines of the church, both physically and spiritually. Faiths that meet for a weekly sermon, but have few other formal gatherings might be seen as occupying the opposite end of the totalistic spectrum, as such faiths still work to instill foundational values in the member's life, but represent a smaller time commitment. For this study, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, whose members are often referred to as Mormons, was selected as an example of a totalistic faith. While the mainstream Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with 14.4 million members worldwide (*Statistical Report, 2011, 2012*), is not a residential or communal religion, the faithful of Mormonism, arguably, engage in highly structured and institutionalized faith practices that are far more totalistic than many other mainstream religions.

To begin, Mormonism's history is tied to communal living, and scholars argue, influences the current faith. Early members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints lived in communal towns built and maintained by the Church in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. Following the death of Church founder Joseph Smith in 1844, members separated from the then incorporated states and settled, again communally, in the Salt Lake Valley of Utah. This history of communalism, of a faith that created their cultural norms as separationists, is particularly important in considering the totalistic nature of the current Church. Shipps (2000) argues for a Mormon ethnicity, referring to the Church, even in modern times, as an American diaspora. In Shipps' (2000) view, early Mormons survived through community, as a group who not only went to church together, but who lived their daily lives together.

Shipp (2000) connects this communal history to the current Mormon sense of community, which, she observes, is much stronger than in other faith communities. She writes that early Mormons were Saints in both religious and secular life, a complete intertwining of faith in everyday existence that has been retained in the current Church. She writes that Mormon community practices including the Church's private welfare system and teachings that encourage members to serve one another create tightly knit Mormon communities. Givens (1997) similarly notes that Mormons spend more time in Church activities than other faiths. Where many Protestant sects attend weekly services, the Mormon faithful engage in additional weekly meetings, home teaching, Family Home Evenings, and Church service. Such time together, Givens writes, is a holdover from Mormonism's communal roots.

Givens (1997) supports Shipp's view of a Mormon ethnicity, writing that the Mormon identity was created by the Church's separation from the American community. Seeing communal and polygamist life practices, non-Mormons in the early history of the Church not only criticized the faith, but, Givens (1997) writes, but actively Othered Mormons. Such Othering involves, Givens writes, a cultural self-confirmation based on constantly practiced differentiation of the self from the criticized other. Givens sees evidence of this rhetorical Othering in the newspaper and pamphlet cartoons produced in early Church history showing Mormons as exaggerated caricatures. This constant Othering from the outside community, Givens (1997) writes, set up an identity for the Mormons, who were forced to assume the Othered role. He, like Shipp (2000) sees a strong hold-over of this separationist identity in the current Mormon culture. He notes that such a complete faith community identity is unique amongst American religions, different from other communalists like the Shakers because the

Mormons actually struck out onto the Western plain to colonize territory, and proselytized abroad to bring others into their faith and lifestyle.

The 2011 Pew Research Center report on Mormons in America (*The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2011*) supports the modern Mormon communal identity Givens (1997) and Shipps (2000) promote. The report notes that while Mormons do not still live in communal settings, 82 percent still say that their religion is very important in their everyday lives, and 77 percent say that they wholeheartedly believe all of the teachings of the faith. This connection to the Church is, perhaps, demonstrated even more starkly in the Pew report's finding that 85 percent of married Mormons are married to other Mormons; a percentage higher than that of other faiths including Catholics (78 percent). Further, 57 percent of Mormons surveyed at large, and 73 percent of those living in Utah said that most or all of their friends are also members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Pew report (*The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2011*) notes that while Mormons indicate high levels of community and religious commitment, non-Mormons still criticize the faith, most frequently using the word "cult" to describe it. Shipps (2000) and Givens (1997) both attribute public perceptions of Mormonism as a cult in modern society to the communal and polygamist history of the faith, and note that this modern criticism, like early criticism, serves to create the modern Mormon identity.

Davies (2000) relates the totalistic nature of Mormonism to a culture of salvation, an intense focus on eschatological goals. Mormonism, more than other faiths, Davies writes, has a highly ritualized afterlife theology. The Mormon faith enacts beliefs on the afterlife in such ritual as eternal marriages, beliefs on the eternal family, temple sealings of families, baptisms for the dead to bring the Mormon gospel to departed ancestors, genealogical research to identify ancestors who await in the afterlife, and encouraging marriage for women who need a husband to

reach through the ephemeral veil to pull them into the highest level of heaven. Davies (2000) also notes that Mormonism is rooted in millennial rhetoric. The name of the Church itself, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, denotes belief in an approaching apocalypse, that these are the latter days. The cultural practice of Mormon families retaining food storage for their families is rooted in this millennial teaching. Davies (2000) notes that such ritualized eschatology keeps the modern Mormon ever mindful of faith, constantly striving for a life worthy of temple attendance, which requires a recommendation from the local bishop.

These historical and doctrinal roots of the Mormon faith make the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints an appropriate selection for study of a totalistic organization. To an extent, all faith communities may be considered totalistic, insofar as their members presumably identify with religious values and beliefs that become foundational to their everyday lives. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, however, represents a faith community with an enacted culture that is more community oriented, or more totalistic than most. As an organization, the cultural practices and doctrinal teachings of Mormonism are far more institutionalized than other faith organizations. Lessons taught both in the Church and through home lessons to members are standardized, distributed to local Church wards from the Church headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah. This standardized and highly communal religion presents a distinctive opportunity to study exit from a totalistic organization. In such a communal organization, the stakes of leaving are higher than leaving a traditional employment relationship. In a faith so entwined in family values, those who exit risk losing friends and family relationships. On a doctrinal level, Mormons who leave the faith are considered apostates, banished from the Mormon afterlife of heaven. Scripture teaches: “But whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to

come” (D&C 84:41), and members “that are found to have apostatized, or to have been cut off from the church, as well as the lesser priesthood, or the members, in that day shall not find an inheritance among the saints of the Most High” (D&C 85:11).

Totalistic Qualities of HROs

Certain occupations, like faith communities, encourage a far more totalistic membership than most jobs. Such occupations tend to be those where reliance on coworkers is central to performance of the job, such as high-risk jobs — those researchers (i.e. Weick, 1995; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001; 2007) refer to as high-reliability organizations (HROs). HRO members, like faith community members, carry the values, beliefs, and identity assumed in the organization into their daily lives. Like the faith community, the primary relationships of the HRO member’s life are often centered around the organization (Regehr, Dimitropoulos, Bright, George, & Henderson, 2005). Like the faith membership, children of HRO members are often socialized into the culture of the HRO for which their parents work (Gibson & Papa, 2000; Willis, 1977), thus tying primary relationships to the organization. This study will focus on two HRO occupations: police officers and firefighters. These two were selected as representative of the totalistic nature of HRO occupations as each involves an inherent level of danger, reliability on peers, and a sworn oath upon beginning service. Firefighters, moreover, represent a residential working environment.

Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) write that the culture of an HRO is, by nature, encompassing. Members of an HRO, they write, make sense of their roles through shared values and constant mindfulness of error avoidance. Assumption of such a sense of mindfulness infuses the HRO worker with a sense of error management, a way of thinking, that extends beyond their time spent in the organization. In this way, the HRO, like the faith community, might be considered

totalistic. Like the faith community, the HRO instills foundational values and norms into members that pervade their everyday life. Like the faith community, the HRO requires complete loyalty from its members. Paoline (2001), for example, notes that police officers undergo training that reinforces an absolute requirement of complete fealty to the department and other officers at the academy. Loyalty is actually sworn by many HRO positions including police officers and firefighters, who swear oaths before they become full members of the organization.

Police work and firefighting might be seen as significantly more totalistic than the office or corporate environments represented in most organizational communication research. The community-oriented approaches to organizational structure in the HRO necessitate a deep level of identification with not only the values and missions of the organization, but also the team. Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2002) coin the term “collective mindfulness” (p. 8) to describe the propensity of HROs to work as a single unit under pressure. They describe this as “the capacity of groups and individuals to be acutely aware of significant details, to notice errors in the making, and to have the shared expertise and freedom to act on what they notice” (p. 8-9). In a system of collective mindfulness, the entire organizational workforce cooperates like a single organism, each part working in harmony with the others. Weick, et al. (2002) write that the presence of constant mindfulness in an organization requires each member to be not just identified with the group, but to think and exist as an inherent part of the organization. In high-risk situations, Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) write that unlike decision-making in corporate environments, time is of the essence. In emergency situations such as fires and police actions, decisions must be made split-second. Further, such situations involve multiple split-second decisions by multiple players of varying levels of responsibility (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). It is

collective mindfulness (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2002) that allows these multiple and instantaneous decisions to work, and to avoid catastrophe.

Supporting the notion of HRO positions as totalistic, researchers have found that the attitudes and traits assumed in the high-reliability job carry into the members' everyday lives. Paoline (2001), for example, found that the occupational attitudes of police officers including suspiciousness of other people, and constant assessment of other people in terms of their potential threat pervaded police officers' lives. During family time, days off, and time away from the police force, officers exhibited the same suspiciousness and threat assessment that they showed on the job. As Paoline (2001) writes, the officer is *always* an officer. Beyond carrying job skills and traits into everyday life, Paoline (2001) writes that police officers, more than most professions, tend to adopt the police identity in a way that sets them apart from the general public at all times. The officer lives as an officer, whether on or off duty, with an assumed crime fighter identity. Paoline relates this bleeding of the officer identity into life to the constant expectation that officers maintain authority at all times. Officers must anticipate an inherent sense of danger at all times on the job, and this constant assessment of threat tends to affect the way these officers assess all situations and people (Paoline, 2001).

Assuming such an identity requires an assimilation process that replaces or changes formerly held beliefs. Stojkovic, Kalinich, and Klofas (2008) write that the process of socializing new officer recruits into police work is designed specifically to strip away the newcomer's old identity. They term such formal socialization techniques designed to separate the newcomer from his past self "divestiture strategies" (p. 248). Stojkovic, et al. (2008) point to the police academy as a divestiture approach. Rookies at police academies are required to conform to police cultural norms with regulation haircuts, uniforms, and often, separation from

family and friends. Such techniques, Stojkovic, et al. (2008) argue, are taken to an even greater extreme in the military. Divestiture strategies of socialization serve to ready the new recruit for the acceptance of the police or soldier identity. Stojkovic, et al. (2008) argue that such training instills in the newcomer not only technical information, but also the “ethos of the organization” (p. 249). The result, however, is not an “organizational automaton” (p. 249), but rather an individual who makes sense of the new role of officer or soldier by integrating the self into the organization’s rigid structure. The personal identity becomes inextricably tied to the officer or soldier identity (Stojkovic, Kalinich, and Klofas, 2008).

The extension of HRO organizational life into everyday life is, perhaps, most clearly demonstrated in its effects on the family. In their study of firefighter’s wives, for example, Regehr, Dimitropoulos, Bright, George, and Henderson (2005) found that firefighters’ reactions to trauma and unpredictable shift work greatly affected firefighter families. Most suggestive of the totalistic nature of firefighting was the finding that firefighter’s families lived within a firefighting culture marked by loyalty to the “brotherhood” (p. 429) as a first priority. The firefighter’s wives studied reported that their partner’s camaraderie with fellow firefighters defined their family social circles, with couples rarely socializing with friends outside the firehouse crew families. The result was a totalistic feeling of living as a firefighting family (Regehr, Dimitropoulos, Bright, George, & Henderson, 2005).

Roe and Schulman (2008) relate the carry-over of HRO work traits into everyday life to emotional responses to crisis. They write that the HRO is unable to test the boundaries of reliability because there is no room for trial and error in the HRO. The constant avoidance of error is not only necessary to the functioning of the HRO, but becomes an emotion trait so ingrained in the employees of such an organization that the constant management of emotion,

assessment of threat, and immediate judgment and reaction become inherent to the personality of the worker. In essence, for the HRO worker, there is no down time. Where misjudgment on the job can be fatal, the worker assumes the identity of risk manager, which pervades life outside the job. Roe and Schulman (2008) note that this carry-over is even more pronounced in HRO members who have experienced an organizational failure. Where fatalities, injuries, or failures have occurred, the worker, they write, carries the emotional effects of such catastrophe into their everyday being. As Roe and Schulman (2008) write, the constant reinforcement of organizational values and missions, the consistency of procedures, and the team trust and identification necessary for an HRO to function effectively teaches a way of thinking that becomes impossible for the employee to separate from their existence outside the organization.

Rationale for the Present Study

This study seeks to add to the body of literature on organizational exit by extending research to totalistic organizations. Totalistic organizations represent some of the largest organizational memberships in the world. The Pew Forum reports, for example, that 84 percent of Americans claim affiliation with a faith organization (*U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, 2008). Police officers and firefighters represent some of the largest paid occupational fields in the U.S., with nearly 800,000 police officers and over 300,000 firefighters (<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>). The U.S. Department of Defense reports that there are currently 1.4 million Americans serving in the military (<https://kb.defense.gov>). Beyond membership numbers, such organizational ties warrant consideration for their potential to carry-over into other organizations to which the totalistic member belongs. A corporate manager, for example, might make business decisions rooted in his faith values, such as Sunday closures (e.g. Hobby

Lobby and Chik-Fil-A). A police officer, similarly, might carry the values and traits of his job into his participation in a local sports team.

Further, existing research into exit has focused primarily on corporate environments, and has treated exit predominantly as a failure to metamorphose (e.g. Carr, Pearson, Vest & Boyar, 2006; DiSanza, 1995; Gibson & Papa, 2000; Jablin, 1982; 1984; Myers, 2005). Kramer (2011) extended the study of exit to volunteer organizations, finding that volunteers experienced a far more passive process of exit where they most frequently just stop showing up. To date, the study of exit has not been extended to totalistic organizations. This study begins to address totalistic exit through examination of the narratives of both paid and unpaid members of totalistic organizations. Such a move adds to the understanding of exit from an organizational relationship where leaving arguably presents a risk of greater relational and cultural cost than either traditional employment or volunteer group exit.

Existing research has shown that the process of assimilating into jobs requiring high levels of employee loyalty such as dangerous blue collar environments (Gibson & Papa, 2000; Willis, 1977) or HROs including fire departments (Myers, 2005) or police departments (Stojkovic, Kalinich, & Klofas, 2008), differs from traditional corporate organizations. Such high-risk jobs usually include a longer period of anticipatory socialization (Gibson & Papa, 2000; Myers, 2005; Myers & McPhee, 2006; Willis, 1977), and/or an encounter phase that strips away the newcomer's previous identity, rebuilding it as a conforming member of the group (Lande, 2007; Stojkovic, Kalinich, & Klofas, 2008). Such findings indicate that where the stakes of membership are higher, the process of assimilation into the organization is both more prolonged and more complicated than traditional employment organizations.

Some of the prolonged period of anticipatory socialization into such a totalistic organization as the HRO or faith community might be attributable to the process of internalizing totalistic values, which often begins in childhood. Jablin (2001) refers to vocational socialization as a predecessor to organizational anticipatory socialization, a period of time when children are socialized into occupations through family, school, friends, and the media. Kramer (2010), similarly, refers to this childhood period of learning about the meaning of work and occupational skill building as occupational role socialization, which he separates from organizational socialization. Such a division assumes that socialization into underlying values, such as those that define the individual's view of work and work ethic, are learned from sources independent of the organization for which he will ultimately work. Exit, considered with this division of value and organizational socialization in mind, removes the exiter from the particular job, but she carries with her the values instilled separate from the organization she has quit. The process of exiting a totalistic group that constitutes the foundational values, beliefs, and relationships of the member's life is, arguably, a process that differs from leaving a traditional job. The underlying values that guide the member's world view, unlike in Jablin's (2001) or Kramer's (2010) view, are intertwined with the organization she is leaving.

In totalistic organizations such as faith communities and HROs, presumably, other stakes of leaving are also higher. Where leaving a traditional employment situation, the employee stands to lose economic security and relationships with co-workers. These relational costs, however, do not usually extend to the foundational relationships of the exiter's life (i.e. spouse, family, and friends). Such relational costs are inherent in departing from the totalistic organization. HRO literature has pointed to the organization constituting the basis of most or all of the primary relationships in the not only the member's life, but also their family's lives

(Huebner, Mancini, Bowen, & Orthner, 2009; Regehr, Dimitropoulos, Bright, George, & Henderson, 2005). Leaving the organization risks losing these primary relationships. Similarly, the stakes of leaving a faith community, particularly one as totalistic as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are significantly higher where relationships are concerned. Leaving the Church risks the status of the eternal marriage to one's spouse, and the disapproval and rejection of friends and family members who are members of the Church. Further, the risk of relational loss extends beyond the bonds of mortal life. Mormon doctrine denies the apostate a place amongst her ancestors in the afterlife. Those who apostatize are cast out from the eternal togetherness of family in heaven, and are instead cast into eternal deprivation of both God and family. The stakes of exit are higher than the monetary and social network losses feared in a job transition, risking, for believers, the very fate of the eternal soul.

This study will explore the process of exit from totalistic organizations through the comparison of both unpaid totalistic memberships in a faith community, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and paid totalistic memberships in law enforcement and firefighting agencies. Such a move considers organizational exit in terms of the place of the organization in the member's life and potential costs of exit, rather than the division between paid (e.g. Carr, Pearson, Vest & Boyar, 2006; DiSanza, 1995; Jablin, 1982; 1984; 1987; Padgett, Gjerde, & Hughes, 2005) and volunteer (Ashcraft & Kedrowicz, 2002; Kramer, 2011) relationships. Where existing literature has marked payment for service as the primary distinction between organization types, this study moves toward a consideration of both paid and unpaid memberships categorized as totalistic. The data examined in this study will compare both the paid totalistic memberships of HROs and the unpaid totalistic memberships of a faith

community. Such a move allows a richer consideration of exit from a totalistic group, regardless of payment for membership.

The chapters that follow will present a review of relevant literature, an explanation of the methods used in this study, narrative results of analyzed data, and a discussion of these findings. First, a review of literature is offered to situate the current study in the context of current assimilation and exit literature. Next, a methods chapter will explain the narrative microstoria analysis employed. In the final two chapters, results of this data analysis, and a discussion of these results in the context of existing exit and assimilation literature is presented.

CHAPTER TWO. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study uses an organizational exit framework to compare individual exit experiences from a religious community and from high-reliability organizations. Such a move is intended to shed light on the process of exit from totalistic organizations, those that permeate areas of the member's life beyond the role in the organization. It is the intent of this study to explore the process of exit as it is expressed in the narratives of those who lived the experience. While there is an inherent element of deep identification involved in assuming either a religious role, or a high-reliability job, and such identification is part of the process of assimilation, this study will focus on the process of exit after the assumption of such a role.

Arguably, the process of exit from an organization might be seen as one of disidentification, and the line between identification and assimilation literature is often blurred. The author of this study recognizes that there is an inherent element of identification involved in the assimilation process, especially in a totalistic organization, and thus, an element of disidentification in exit such as Abrams & Randsley De Moura's (2001) finding that identification was a factor in employee turnover. The narratives examined here are from members who are, arguably, metamorphosed into the organizations. While there is an inherent element of disidentification in such an exit, the concern of this study is to examine the process of exit as it relates to the totalistic organization. The author contends that this choice of lens, the phase model of assimilation (Jablin, 1982; 1984; 1987; 2001), uniquely captures the different phases of organizational attachment, and provides insight into how exit is related to the other phases. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, viewing exit through an assimilation framework allows exploration of both the socializing influence of the organization on the member and the member's individualization or personalization attempts that occur when the

organizational member attempts to change the organization to meet her needs (Hess, 1993; Jablin, 2001). The present study focuses on organizational exit as a process that incorporates the individual's failed efforts to individualize. Therefore, this study embraces organizational assimilation as a dual-dimension communication phenomenon that allows exploration of the individual and organizational communication processes simultaneously. Thus, communication between the individual and the organization are considered both reciprocal and interactive, though not always of equal magnitude (Jablin, 1982).

Scholarly work in the communicative theory of organizational socialization explores the process of entering, becoming part of, and leaving an organization. Based in earlier sociological work that explored this phenomenon from a behavioral perspective (i.e. Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), communication scholars added depth to theories of assimilation by the assertion that individuals become members of an organization through a process of seeking, receiving, and internalizing information (Jablin, 1982; 1984; 1987; 2001; Jablin & Krone, 1987). To date, the bulk of communication research in organizational assimilation has focused on the process of becoming a member, or assimilating into, corporate organizations (e.g. DiSanza, 1995; Gibson & Papa, 2000; Jones & Crandall, 1985; Morrison, 1995; Myers, 2005; Myers & Oetzel, 2003). This study seeks to contribute to the understanding of the process of leaving an organization, or voluntary exit, through comparison of narrative data from totalistic organizations.

Understanding the place of voluntary exit within an assimilation framework first requires a basic understanding of organizational assimilation as a whole. This chapter that follows will, therefore, begin with a cursory overview of organizational assimilation literature, followed by a review of current literature related to exit in both corporate and volunteer organizations. Literature in assimilation, and particularly in exit, to date, has examined both corporate (e.g.

DiSanza, 1995; Gibson & Papa, 2000; Jones & Crandall, 1985; Morrison, 1995; Myers, 2005; Myers & Oetzel, 2003) and volunteer (Kramer, 2010; Kramer, 2011) organizations. The review that follows, thus, will trace literature throughout these contexts. Next a review of contextual information on high-reliability organizations (HROs) and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints follows to situate the narratives of this study. Kramer's (2011) study of exit from volunteer organizations began to differentiate the process of exit for different organizational types, showing that the process of leaving followed by volunteers was far more fluid than corporate exit. Most members simply stopped showing up, leaving room for future return. This study extends the study of exit to a third type of organization: the totalistic group. Where the roles of members of corporate and volunteer groups involve financial and relational elements, leaving the totalistic organization represents exit from organizational values, beliefs, and relationships that extend far beyond time spent in the organization. Totalistic groups extend to all other facets of the member's life. HRO jobs such as soldiers and firefighters conceivably require a deep level of identification and a process of assimilation that prepares members to accept high levels of risk and responsibility (e.g. Myers, 2005; Myers & McPhee, 2006; Myers & Oetzel, 2003; Scott & Myers, 2005). Such organizations involve a far more totalistic experience than an office or corporate job, often requiring members to live and work within the organization, as in the case of firefighters and soldiers. Religious organizations, similarly, represent memberships that permeate all facets of the members' lives. The values, beliefs, and cultural norms of a religious organization, once accepted, influence all areas of the member's life. As the process of assimilation into the HRO, a more totalistic organization than traditional corporate jobs, differs, this study seeks to uncover ways in which they exit process also differs.

Organizational Assimilation

Jablin advanced a four-stage model of organizational assimilation: anticipatory socialization, encounter, metamorphosis, and exit. Jablin divided each stage into two distinct dimensions: 1) attempts of the organization to influence or socialize the new member (socialization); and 2) attempts by the individual to influence the organization to meet his/her needs (individualization) (Jablin, 1982; 1984; 1987; 2001). The study of organizational assimilation as a dual-dimension communication phenomena allows researchers to simultaneously explore the individual and organizational communication processes. In this framework, assimilation includes both socialization and individualization. Both socialization and individualization occur during all phases of assimilation. What follows is an overview of literature in each of Jablin's four phases.

Anticipatory Socialization

Prior to the actual entry point, an organizational newcomer experiences a period of learning and building expectation about organizational membership. In the anticipatory socialization phase of assimilation, the potential newcomer forms expectations about the organization and the role he/she will assume within it. Communication scholars have explored how individuals seek, receive, and evaluate information about the organization to build a vision of what he/she believes the organizational reality will be (Gibson & Papa, 2000; Jablin, 1982; 1984; Jablin & Krone, 1987; Myers, 2005). Researchers have explored the anticipatory socialization phase of assimilation in relation to metamorphosis, determining that the ability to reconcile the expectations built in anticipatory socialization with the reality met inside the organization is important in determining the newcomer's identification with, and thus full

acculturation into an organization (DiSanza, 1995; Jablin 1984; Jablin & Krone, 1987; Myers, 2005).

The anticipatory socialization phase of assimilation has been related most closely to the exit phase, the subject of this study, as a predictor of intent to leave. If the expectations from anticipatory socialization are not met, an individual is far more likely to disassociate with the organization and exit (DiSanza, 1995; Gibson & Papa, 2000; Jablin, 1982; 1984; Myers, 2005). Studies of anticipatory socialization have treated the expectations built before organizational entry as indicative of likely metamorphosis. Unmet expectations have been identified as a factor in failure to metamorphose, and thus exit from an organization before fully assimilating (Jablin, 2001). In his assimilation study of bank tellers, for example, DiSanza (1995) found that newcomers who built inflated expectations that were not met during the encounter phase of organizational entry were likely to quit after only a short period of employment.

Much of the research on assimilation assumes anticipatory socialization occurs over a short time period, such as the time between learning of a job posting and entering the company as an employee (Ashforth, Saks, & Lee, 1998; Bullis & Bach, 1989; Comer, 1991; DiSanza, 1995; Jablin, 1984; Jones & Crandall, 1985; Morrison, 1995; Myers & Oetzel, 2003). Prolonged periods of anticipatory socialization, however, have been linked to quicker and more complete metamorphosis upon entering the organization, and a lower instance of exit during the introductory phase of employment (Gibson & Papa, 2000; Myers, 2005; Willis, 1977). Such prolonged periods of anticipatory socialization have been observed primarily in high-risk jobs (Myers, 2005) or blue-collar work environments (Gibson & Papa, 2000; Willis, 1977).

Myers (2005) studied the assimilation process experienced by firefighters, finding that the process of assimilation was marked by a prolonged period of anticipatory socialization. This

period, including physically rigorous tests and ride-alongs to experience the urgency of a real fire call, prepared potential firefighters for the danger and physical demands they would meet upon encounter. Myers (2005) found that such a period of prolonged anticipatory socialization followed by enforcement of a rigid hierarchical structure upon encounter led to a more complete and rapid metamorphosis into the high-reliability position of firefighting. Her finding that this prolonged period of anticipatory socialization produced less inflated expectations about organizational reality has implications for the study of exit, particularly in high reliability fields of work. In Myers study, incoming firefighters were socialized to expect a tough work culture riddled with danger, personal harm, injury, exhaustion, and body-punishing training. Unlike other jobs, the firefighters of Myers study both lived and worked in the organization, creating an environment that was not only high reliability, but also totalistic. Taught during anticipatory socialization to respect seniority and hierarchy within the organization, these firefighters entered the firehouse with an expectation of both danger and subordinate social position within the organizational structure. Just as other researchers have observed a link between realistic expectations built in anticipatory socialization and a propensity to metamorphose rather than exit, Myers' (2005) firefighters quickly metamorphosed into the encompassing organizational life that awaited them both living and working inside the firehouse.

Dangerous factory work, likewise, has been linked to prolonged periods of anticipatory socialization. In their study of a blue-collar manufacturing firm known for demanding long hours, body-punishing hard work, and complete company loyalty, Gibson and Papa (2000), for example, describe an anticipatory socialization process that begins in childhood. Children were taught the norms, culture, and strenuous work environment from parents and grandparents who worked for the corporation. Through daily talk at home, children built realistic expectations, a

process Gibson and Papa term “indoctrination at the dinner table” (p. 79). The children, in turn, grew up to accept jobs for the same firm, despite working conditions described as extremely unpleasant, making workers “push their physical limits” (p. 76) in a work culture described as hot and dusty, without time off or sick days, and irregular shift hours. Upon encounter, Gibson and Papa (2000) described a seemingly effortless and quick metamorphosis into the organization, an “organizational osmosis” (p. 79), which they attribute to the prolonged period of anticipatory socialization building realistic expectations.

The seemingly effortless organizational osmosis witnessed in the Gibson and Papa (2000) and Myers (2005) studies replicates the findings of Paul Willis’s (1977) foundational study of English working class youth. Willis studied youth from blue-collar or labor-class families in their final year of school. Willis’s observations detailed a period of expectation-building about a tough working culture that began in childhood. Like the multiple generations Gibson and Papa (2000) observed working for the same corporation, Willis’s “lads” metamorphosed into and remained part of a tough working culture. Such studies point to a far more intense period of anticipatory socialization when assimilating into a demanding or encompassing position in an HRO.

Beyond building realistic expectations, however, anticipatory socialization has been treated as a period that can help the newcomer begin to identify with, or attach to the organization, also easing the encounter phase for the newcomer. Allen (2006) termed such attachment to the new job role “embeddedness” (p. 241). In his study of financial service employees, Allen found that those organizations that used socialization tactics to embed, or help newcomers more closely identify with the organization beginning in the anticipatory socialization phase, decreased their turnover rates in the first year of employment. Such studies

suggest, at a practical level, that organizations that intentionally use techniques to help potential members build realistic expectations, especially over a longer period of time, might decrease the propensity for turnover and early exit (e.g. Allen, 2006; DiSanza, 1995; Gibson & Papa, 2000; Myers, 2005; Myers & Oetzel, 2003, Willis, 1977).

Myers (2005) and Myers and Oetzel (2003) suggest that this decreased likelihood of exit following a prolonged period of anticipatory socialization, and, indeed, a corresponding higher level of early identification with the organization may be due to the likelihood of lower intensity individualization attempts. Following a prolonged period of anticipatory socialization, the potential member builds more realistic expectations about the reality he will encounter inside the organization, even if that reality is tough and dangerous. In the case of the firefighters of the above studies, for example, the potential newcomer learns during anticipatory socialization to expect a rigid and demanding role upon accepting a firefighting position. Like Gibson and Papa's (2000) blue-collar workers, Myers' (2005) firefighters learned to expect to mold themselves to the organization, not the other way around. Conversely, during a shorter or less intense period of anticipatory socialization, as in most typical employment organizations, potential newcomers build vague expectations based on their own previous experiences and perceptions of the organization (Jablin, 1982; 1984; 2001). Individualization attempts help the member in efforts to reconcile organizational reality with vague expectations (Jablin, 2001).

It is upon entry into the organization that the potential member moves from outsider to insider, facing the reconciliation of expectations built in anticipatory socialization with the reality met. As the newcomer enters the organization, a process of communicative negotiation begins wherein the newcomer seeks and processes information about the organization (Jablin, 1982; 1984, 2001).

Encounter

Upon formal entry into the organization, the newcomer begins to define, label, and socially map his or her place in the new environment (Jablin, 1982; 1984; 2001; Jablin & Krone, 1987). As the new member encounters his/her new role, expectations built in anticipatory socialization must be reconciled with the reality met in the organization. Communication plays a key role in encounter as the newcomer seeks and receives information that helps her define her role and learn organizational norms and culture (Jablin, 1982; 1984; 1997; 2001; Jablin & Krone, 1987). Jablin (1984) refers to encounter as a destructive phase, a time period that serves to detach the newcomer from formerly held beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. During this period, the newcomer must reconcile formerly held values and ideals with the reality of the organization, while simultaneously learning and accepting new norms, values, and beliefs (Jablin, 1984; Jablin, 2001).

It is in the encounter phase of assimilation that has received the most scholarly attention. Reconciliation of the expectations built during anticipatory socialization and finding a place in the organization, both part of encounter, have become the heart of organizational assimilation research (e.g. DiSanza, 1995; Gibson & Papa, 2000; Jones & Crandall, 1985; Morrison, 1995; Myers, 2005; Myers & Oetzel, 2003). Research in this phase has pointed to a propensity to metamorphose, or fully accept the role and become part of the organization, when the member is able to both reconcile anticipatory socialization expectations and individualize norms to suit their needs (Jablin, 2001).

The encounter phase of assimilation has been linked to exit in existing research predominantly as a period of time when exit is most likely if the newcomer experiences an inability to synchronize expectations built during anticipatory socialization with the reality of the

organization (Ashforth, Saks, & Lee, 1998; Bullis & Bach, 1989; Comer, 1991; DiSanza, 1995, Meyer, 2005). In these cases, exit is viewed as the result of a failure to metamorphose. In DiSanza's (1995) study of bank tellers who left the job after only weeks or months, for example, early exit is treated as failed metamorphosis after expectations built in anticipatory socialization were unmet.

Jablin (1982) described the period of encounter as potentially traumatic to the newcomer as he exercises individualization strategies as a means of reconciling incongruent ideas, values, and behaviors brought from previous experience with organizational expectations. If individual expectations are radically different from organizational reality, the newcomer may experience a kind of culture shock (Jablin, 1984). If, however, expectations from anticipatory socialization are accurate and congruent with the reality of the organization, the encounter phase is one of reaffirmation and reinforcement of existing beliefs and behaviors, as seen in the cases of the Willis (1977), Gibson and Papa (2000), and Myers (2003) studies. The newcomer who finds his values, beliefs, and expectations challenged, however, faces a process of changes to mold the self around the organization, and attempts to mold the organization around the self. When the member balances these attempts, this process might be seen as one of ebb and flow, of deciding when to bend and when to remain steadfast. The inherent tensions between the self and the organization can result in an internal struggle of wills for the newcomer (Jablin, 1984; 2001). Such struggle can be expressed in individualization attempts, or individual endeavors to change small parts of the organization to suit the self.

Jablin (2001) treated individualization as attempts by the newcomer to personalize small parts of the organization while the organization simultaneously attempts to socialize the newcomer. Kramer (2010) suggests that individualization occurs as a communicative

negotiation between organizational members. In this process, the newcomer communicates with coworkers, superiors, and others to first inquire about organizational policies and places where individualization might be tolerated. A communicative process then ensues wherein the newcomer expresses their desires or displays individualization attempts as a means of testing their acceptance. As the newcomer learns of office norms, for example, she may attempt to personalize her space with personal photographs or mementos. Such low-intensity individualization attempts are rarely of consequence to the organization, nor do such attempts signal intent to exit (Hess, 1993).

Jablin (2001), however, also described higher-intensity individualization attempts that may range from attempts to individualize the work schedule to ignoring or attempting to change organizational policies. Such high-intensity individualization attempts may signal to the organization that the newcomer is having difficulty metamorphosing. Such attempts can be a precursor to exit. Morrison (1995) notes that individualization attempts are likely to be of higher intensity to the point of outright rebellion if the newcomer is overwhelmed with socialization attempts. If the newcomer receives too much information at once, he may feel overwhelmed. Such overwhelm may feel, to the newcomer, like too radical a departure from their expectations, and tends to lead the newcomer to return to previously held beliefs and attach to them more strongly (Morrison, 1995). An employee who undergoes a period of training that overwhelms her with new expectations and values, for example is likely to resort to the beliefs and norms of their past position or education when faced with new challenges in the encounter phase. Such a return to the known can result in strong individualization attempts as the newcomer tries to make the organization fit her previously held beliefs. DiSanza (1995), for example, has linked high intensity individualization attempts to intense socialization attempts. In his study of bank tellers,

the expectation for highly structured, efficient, and rule-governed work was communicated to tellers through an intense and rigorous training program. When tellers encountered a work environment that was disorganized, inefficient, and cumbersome, they individualized by ignoring training and inventing their own systems of accomplishing tasks. Such employees, DiSanza found, were likely to exit.

As the individual newcomer attempts to individualize, the organization simultaneously attempts to socialize the member (Jablin, 2001). Such socialization attempts may include training, literature, or social events designed to teach the member the norms, values and beliefs of the organization (Jablin, 1984; Jablin, 2001). Myers' (2005) study of firefighters, for example, draws attention to the organizational methods of socializing the newcomer to accept the norms and values of the firehouse. In this case the new firefighter was subjected to harsh treatment from senior firefighters, often ridiculed, and taught to respect a strict hierarchical structure. Such constant reinforcement served to socialize the newcomers into the expected acceptance of rank, role, and responsibility for the lives of fellow crew members (Myers, 2005). Where traditional office or corporate socializations might include training events (e.g. DiSanza, 1995), Myers' (2005) study of HRO assimilation shed light on a socialization process that left little room for the newcomer to individualize.

Understanding of individualization attempts in encounter is important to the study of exit insofar as failure to make the self congruent with the organization in the encounter phase has been treated as the primary reason for exit (DiSanza, 1995; Jablin, 1982; 1984; Jablin & Krone, 1987; Jablin & McComb, 1984; Jones & Crandall, 1985). In this sense, individualization has been treated as a response to the destructive phase of encounter. As the newcomer deconstructs their own beliefs, values, and expectations to become more congruent with the new environment,

individualization attempts are expressions of small ventures to shape the organization around the self. For the organizational member who metamorphoses and remains within the organization, such attempts have been assumed either successful or abandoned in favor of new organizational values or norms (Jablin, 2001).

Metamorphosis

In the metamorphosis stage of assimilation, the newcomer becomes fully acculturated, or metamorphosed, as an organizational member and internalizes organizational beliefs (Bullis & Bach, 1989; Jablin, 2001; Kramer, 2010; Myers, 2005). At the point of metamorphosis, newcomers move from “outsiders’ into functioning ‘insiders’ or members” (Bullis & Bach, 1989, p. 273), or are fully committed to, integrated into, or identified with the organization (Bullis & Bach, 1989; Jablin, 1982; 1984; Jablin & Krone, 1987; Myers, 2005). Attaining full metamorphosis requires newcomers to carry adapted behaviors and values learned in the encounter phase of assimilation into the acceptance and fulfillment of a new role.

Metamorphosis, however, is not a finite state, even for members who remain in an organization. Jablin (1982) notes that the metamorphosis and encounter stages of assimilation may be re-experienced by an organizational member who changes roles, such as in the case of a promotion within the same company, or a job transfer (Jablin & Kramer, 1998). In these cases, the member encounters the new role, and, making sense of the new position, again metamorphoses into it. Metamorphosis may also be deepened if the level of attachment to the organization is intensified (Bullis & Bach, 1989).

In their study of graduate students, Bullis and Bach (1989) refer to turning points of socialization, or particular moments that affect the members attachment to the organization. Such Turning points may deepen identification with the organization, or they may negatively

affect the member, beginning a process of disassociation. Bullis and Bach (1989) noted these turning points occurred almost exclusively in the encounter stage of assimilation, either moving the newcomer toward a state of metamorphosis, or turning him toward exit before metamorphosing. The graduate students they studied, for example, showed decreased identification with the organization when they experienced turning points such as disappointment in a low grade received, or feeling alienated from the other graduate students. Students showed higher levels of identification when they experienced positive turning points such as gaining formal recognition of success from a faculty member or finishing a big project (Bullis & Bach, 1989).

It is noteworthy to recognize the importance of identification in the assimilation process. As in the case of turning points (Bullis & Bach, 1989), moments of identification or disidentification have an impact on the assimilation process. The identified member moves toward metamorphosis, the disidentified member away, or toward exit. Cheney (1983) notes that members experience identification as feelings of membership or belonging. Such an internalization of the beliefs and values of the organization is vital in the anchoring of the self within the organization (Cheney, 1983). As in the Bullis and Bach (1989) study of turning points, events may strengthen or weaken the member's feelings of attachment to the organization. These feelings of attachment then serve to turn the member toward the organization, moving her into metamorphosis, or away from the organization, moving her closer to exit.

Organizational Exit

Exit has been treated predominately as failure to metamorphose (e.g. Carr, Pearson, Vest & Boyar, 2006; DiSanza, 1995; Gibson & Papa, 2000; Jablin, 1982; 1984; Myers, 2005), or the

“inevitable conclusion” (Kramer, 2010, p. 186) of the assimilation process. Originally, Jablin’s (1982; 1983) work on assimilation advanced a three-phase model that ended with metamorphosis. Jablin’s addition of exit as a final stage of his phasic model of organizational assimilation recognized exit as a final and inevitable end to organizational membership (1987), extending exit as the conclusion of assimilation as members quit, retired, or left the organization. Jablin advanced the study of exit (2001) with addition of a staged model of exit. His three-stage model of exit includes preannouncement, announcement/exit, and post-exit organizational sensemaking. Using this model, the actual experience of member exit is observable only as a period of communication to close peers/friends/family about the exit (preannouncement), and the actual and final act of leaving (announcement/exit). The final phase (post-exit), was described by Jablin (2001) as a process of sensemaking by the organizational members left behind after the member departs and they learn to adapt to daily life without the leaver.

Research into member exit, arguably, has departed from the phasic model of exit framework, extending the study of exit to include elements of disidentification and disassociation (Bullis & Bach, 1989; Carr, Pearson, Vest & Boyar, 2006; Danielson, 2004; DiSanza, 1995; Golden, 2007; Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Maertz & Griffeth, 2004; McNatt & Judge, 2008; Peterson, 2004). Recent research has also begun to differentiate employment and volunteer exit processes (Kramer, 2011). The inclusion of the internal process of disidentifying along with the observable steps of exit, make the study of exit distinct from either assimilation or identification. Existing exit literature has focused on both employee and volunteer organizational relationship dissolution. Kramer’s (2011) extension of exit to the volunteer organization pointed to a process that was far more fluid than Jablin’s (2001) three-phase model. Volunteers in Kramer’s (2011) study of a community choir did not formerly announce their exit, but most often simply stopped

showing up, leaving the door to a future return open. The post-exit sensemaking phase was also absent, as remaining members expected a membership in flux, and the future return of members (Kramer, 2011). This differentiation of the process of exit for different types of organizations becomes important to the matter of this study: exit from the totalistic organization. As Myers' (2005) study of firefighters shed light on an assimilation process into an HRO that differed from other corporate environments, this study seeks to understand the process of exit from such totalistic organizations as a process that differs from Jablin's (2001) phasic model of exit, or Kramer's (2011) passive method of volunteer exit without announcement. Understanding exit in context of different organizational types requires a fundamental understanding of literature in current exit literature as it relates to corporate employees and volunteers.

Employee exit. According to Kramer (2010), "organizational exit is an inevitable conclusion of the assimilation process as individuals leave all the organizations they join at some point" (p. 186). To this end, organizational exit can be voluntary or involuntary (Jablin, 2001; Kramer, 2010). Involuntary exit occurs when the organization initiates the exit, such as in the case of layoffs or downsizing. Such exit has been studied mostly from the point of view of those employees left behind after a downsizing (e.g. Reinardy, 2010; Tourish, Paulsen, Hobman, Bordia, 2004). In such studies, employees working under threat of layoff after a company downsizing effort is announced tend to exhibit lowered levels of trust in the company (Reinardy, 2010; Tourish, Paulsen, Hobman, Bordia, 2004). Such lowered trust has been shown to impact productivity after a downsizing, as survivors of the layoff continue to mistrust the company and their colleagues (Tourish, Paulsen, Hobman, Bordia, 2004). Reinardy's (2004) study of a newsroom post layoff, for example, found that remaining reporters experienced lowered levels of commitment to the paper, and responded with decreased productivity. Voluntary exit occurs

when the individual initiates the separation (e.g. Carr, Pearson, Vest & Boyar, 2006; DiSanza, 1995; Kramer, 2011). In contrast, involuntary exit results when the organization severs the connection, as in the case of a layoff or firing. Most frequently, voluntary employee exit has been treated as a failure to fully metamorphose into workplace culture, norms, and roles, or a reversal of metamorphosis (Carr, Pearson, Vest & Boyar, 2006; DiSanza, 1995; Gibson & Papa, 2000; Jablin, 1982; 1984; Myers, 2005).

Most existing literature on exit has examined the voluntary exit process of corporate employees (Carr, Pearson, Vest & Boyar, 2006; DiSanza, 1995; Padgett, Gjerde, Hughes & Born, 1995), including corporate turnover (Danielson, 2004; Golden, 2007; Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Maertz & Griffeth, 2004; McNatt & Judge, 2008; Peterson, 2004). Most of these studies have focused on reasons for turnover and exit, rather than the actual process of leaving. Such reasons have included unmet expectations when encountering the new role (DiSanza, 1995; Myers, 2005), dissatisfaction with the company, and low levels of identification (Danielson, 2004; Golden, 2007; Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Maertz & Griffeth, 2004; McNatt & Judge, 2008; Peterson, 2004). The exception is Lee, Mitchell, Wise, and Fireman (1996), who propose four paths to voluntary exit: 1) Planned exit, a process of anticipated exit, which usually includes open communication to other organizational members about the planned leaving, such as in Jablin's (2001) announcement phase of exit. Examples of planned exit include retirement, pregnancy, or intra-corporate transfers. 2) Shock leading to exit, wherein an organizational action or event causes the member to disidentify and quit, sometimes immediately. Examples of such events may include sexual harassment, bullying, or extreme misconduct. 3) Shock resulting in a job search before quitting, like the above stage, is assumed to be an organizational action or event that causes the member to disidentify and leave, but only after searching for and usually

obtaining another job. 4) Gradual disenchantment, or a slow process of disidentification and eventual exit.

Disidentifications have been treated as the factors that set members on the path to exit. Lee, Mitchell, Wise, and Fireman (1996), for example, cite a series of slow disappointments or disenchantments as a path to exit. As an employee is disenchanted first, for example, by lower pay or benefits than expected, then lower recognition, his path to exit is built (Lee, Mitchell, Wise, and Fireman, 1996). Bullis and Bach's (1989) study of turning points, similarly, points to negative turning points such as graduate student disappointment with a grade, lack of recognition for work, or being left out of departmental activities as events that lead to disidentification. Unmet expectations have also been studied as reasons for exit, finding that unmet expectations from anticipatory socialization during the encounter phase leave the newcomer more likely to disassociate with the organization and exit (Carr, Pearson, Vest & Boyar, 2006; DiSanza, 1995; Gibson & Papa, 2000; Jablin, 1982; 1984; Myers, 2005). Dissatisfying organizational relationships, such as those between employee and supervisor, have also been studied as a source of dis-identification (Scott, 2007), and thus catalysts to exit.

Turnover literature has studied the process of disidentifying leading to exit. The reasons for exit after member metamorphosis recognize that metamorphosis is not a finite state (Bullis & Bach, 1989; Danielson, 2004). Rather, metamorphosis can be weakened over time, leading to exit. Researchers have identified factors that weaken member assimilation including: burnout (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004), low levels of familiarity with supervisors (Myers & Oetzel, 2003), dissatisfaction with leadership or organizational goals/mission (DiSanza, 1995; Maertz & Griffeth, 2004; Myers & Oetzel, 2003), work-family imbalance (Padgett, Gjerde, Hughes, & Born, 2005), telecommuting (Golden, 2007), lack of recognition and acculturation (Maertz &

Griffeth, 2004; Myers & Oetzel, 2003), and high levels of uncertainty (Kramer, 2004). Each of these factors was shown in the cited research to weaken member attachment to the organization, giving the member a path to exit, similar to Lee, Mitchell, Wise, and Fireman's (1996), gradual disenchantment.

Volunteer exit. Kramer (2010; 2011) distinguishes volunteer organizations from employment relationships, noting that the distinction of voluntary and involuntary exit (Jablin, 2001) may be somewhat contrived for organizational volunteers (Kramer, 2010). In his study of a community choir, Kramer (2011) found that, unlike paid employees, volunteer members' exit processes were "ambiguous" (p. 67). Members left most frequently as a result of other time commitments, often with a promise to return that was not fulfilled, or "simply quit coming" (p. 67). Other members simply became inactive, thereby allowing for a return later. Kramer's study highlights the fluidity of voluntary memberships and how volunteers rarely exit an organization with the same finality of an employee's departure. The absence of a pay relationship, according to Kramer, allows the volunteer more leeway in maintaining identification with an organization while not actively participating in the group. Such maintained identification during periods of inactivity with the propensity to return is distinct from research on employee exit, which has treated exit as a zero sum game where the employee is either in the organization, or out.

Kramer's (2010; 2011) distinction between employee and volunteer exit marks a move in assimilation literature toward recognizing that the paid employee/employer relationship does not universally represent the process of either assimilation or exit. In his move toward studying unpaid organizational members, Kramer (2011) discerns not only reasoning behind the decision to exit, but points to a different process followed by leaving members. Employee exit literature has assumed Jablin's (2001) phasic model of exit is universal; that is, that exit occurs as a

communicative process of pre-announcement communication of the intent to leave, announcement of the decision, and exit that leaves the remaining members to make sense of the organization without the member. Kramer's (2011) work, however, suggests that for volunteers, the process may be less linear, and may skip the announcement phase entirely as volunteers simply stop showing up. Kramer's work suggests the relationship between volunteer and organization is a looser and more informal association than employee/employer. For Kramer's volunteers, exit was not a finite state as choir members expressed intent to someday return. Such recognition of a different relationship and process of exit calls into question the assumed universality of the phasic exit model (Jablin, 2001).

This study explores the exit process experienced by members of totalistic organizations, that is, those that are far more inclusive of all facets of the member's life than the traditional employment or volunteer group. The totalistic organizational identity might be seen as one which is intimately tied to the member's life, making it difficult or impossible to extricate the organizational part of the member's life from other dimensions. The process of assimilation into the HRO has been differentiated from corporate organizations (Myers, 2005; Myers & Oetzel 2003). This study seeks to shed light on the process of exit from similar organizations, arguing that the process of exit also differs. HROs are included as a sector of work that may be seen as far more totalistic than traditional employment relationships. This study furthers understanding of exit from totalistic organizations by also including narrative of a faith community. Religious memberships, like HROs, represent assumption of roles that extend beyond time spent in the organization. Like the volunteer organizations studied by Kramer (2010; 2011), religious memberships represent a reverse-pay relationship. While Kramer has divided exit from Jablin's (2001) phasic model based on this type of volunteer relationship, this study places both reverse-

pay and paid HRO memberships together to examine exit as separate from pay; rather, this study argues for a third sector of organizations based on the reach of the internalization of organizational beliefs in other areas of the members' lives. The stakes of exit from such a totalistic organization, arguably, are much higher than the pay loss of corporate exit, or the social losses of volunteer exit. Those leaving a totalistic organization risk loss of core identity, the values and beliefs that drive all other areas of the members' lives.

This study examines the narratives of individuals exiting a faith community and those exiting high reliability jobs. This study of exit from such memberships is a move intended to shed light on the process of exit from totalistic organizations, extending Myers' (2005) and Myers and Oetzel's (2003) study of assimilation into high reliability organizations, and Kramer's (2010; 2011) work on volunteer exit. Understanding the lived experience of exit from totalistic organizations through the narratives of former organizational members requires a cursory understanding of the organizational context these exiters leave behind. This chapter, thus, will next give a brief overview of both the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and organizational literature on high reliability organizations.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, like most, or all religions, has a rich and complex history. Perusing any bookstore will yield a handful of the many books, films, or articles that have been written about the Church and its members. While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide a full accounting of the Church¹, a cursory understanding of the

¹ For a more complete understanding of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, see Givens, T. (2002) *By the hand of Mormon: The scripture that launched a new world religion*. New York: Oxford University Press. More information and digital copies of Mormon scripture are available at the official Church website: www.lds.org.

fundamental ideals of the faith will give a deeper insight into the narratives of exit that follow, and understanding of the totalistic nature of the organization. While the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, like any religion, has its own doctrinal peculiarities, many of which have been the target of such critics as Ed Deckert (2007) and Fawn Brodie (1995). In context of the narratives examined for this study, it is necessary for the reader to understand the particular cultural practices and basic doctrinal teachings unique to the faith that pervade all areas of the members' lives.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints represents a unique opportunity for the study of exit from a totalistic religious organization. Unlike most religious affiliations, which place much of the control over particular sermonic teachings at the local level, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is highly institutionalized. Lessons, teachings, and cultural practices are determined at the organizational level and distributed to local congregations. What follows is a brief overview of organizational, cultural, theological, and historical factors that will give an understanding of the practices that influence member socialization into and exit from the faith, and of the highly institutionalized nature of this totalistic organization. This overview of the faith is offered to situate the Mormon narratives of this study and provide a context from which the narratives can be understood.

Fundamentals of the Faith

With worldwide membership of 14,441,336 (*Statistical Report, 2011, 2012*), the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only uniquely American faith to gain broad worldwide membership. In relation to other world faiths, Mormonism is comparatively new, its history less than 200 years old. The Church was founded in upstate New York with Joseph Smith's 1830 publication of the *Book of Mormon*. Despite its worldwide presence, the Mormon faith is one of

the least understood and most often criticized religions (Johanson 2002). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, unlike other Christian faiths, Mormonism's founding is in recent memory, making its doctrines easier targets of criticism (Maffly-Kipp 2007). The particular rhetoric of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints follows the rhetoric of other Christian religions through the King James Bible, but also adds three additional scriptures: the *Book of Mormon*, *Pearl of Great Price*, and *Doctrine and Covenants*. These documents are foreign to most outsiders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Johanson 2002). Chief amongst them is the *Book of Mormon*, the work that launched the religion. The *Book of Mormon* "is a record of God's dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas and contains, as does the Bible, the fulness [sic] of the everlasting gospel" (*Book of Mormon*, Introduction, p. 1). It is this work that divides the Mormon faith from its Christian cousins, and has often opened the Church to criticism and persecution. Such criticism is important to understanding the substantial body of anti-Mormon writing that is often marketed to members of the faith as reasons to leave the Church, including autobiographical accounts of former Mormons such as Einar Anderson's (1966) account of leaving the faith, *I was a Mormon*, or Martha Beck's (2005) book *Leaving the Saints*. Understanding the place of the *Book of Mormon* in the faith, and its critics, helps illustrate the struggles of faith that those exiting the Church experience.

Since its publication, the *Book of Mormon* has incited the passions of both believers and critics. Scholars, anti-Mormon writers, and Mormon apologists alike have studied the origins of the *Book of Mormon*, making textual, archaeological, historical, sociological, and psychological inquiries into the book to prove or disprove its authenticity. Believers in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints adhere to the book as canonical scripture, believing it is the work of ancient inhabitants of the American continent, which they buried upon the collapse of their

civilization. Mormons believe the book was later divinely given to Joseph Smith, along with divine tools and power to translate the work. Critics have long maintained that the book is neither scripture nor divine, but the work of Smith, his associates, or another source from whom Smith plagiarized. Criticism of the work as a plagiarism of an unpublished biblical romance written by a farmer, Solomon Spalding, arose shortly after publication of the book (Bush, 1977; Cowdery, Davis, & Vanick, 2005). Such criticism is cited by both Beck (2005) and Anderson (1966) in their autobiographical accounts of Mormon exit.

History of the Church and the Book of Mormon. A basal understanding of the history of the *Book of Mormon* will help later understanding of the language used by writers of the exit narratives analyzed for this study. Like any organization, of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has its own set of linguistic terms and phrases, both doctrinal and cultural. A brief history of the Church and its culture, therefore, follows to enrich understanding of the narratives in this study.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints tells their own history in two books, *Church History in the Fulness [sic] of Times* (2003) and *Our Heritage: A Brief History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1996). These works cover Church history from the time of Smith's first vision to current membership and temple constructions at the time of publication. These volumes, combined with Joseph Smith's personal history as excerpted in *Pearl of Great Price* offer the official Church version of the coming forth of the *Book of Mormon*. As told by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the 1830 publication of the *Book of Mormon* was the culmination of a decade of work for Mormonism's founder Joseph Smith. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints traces its roots to the spring of 1820, ten years prior to the publication of the *Book of Mormon*, when Smith, then age 14, entered a grove of trees near his home in Palmyra, New York to pray for guidance from God about which church

he should join. Smith's account of the answer to his prayer is referred to in Church historical accounts as "the first vision" (*Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 2003; *Our Heritage: A Brief History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1996). In answer to his prayer, Smith wrote that God the Father and Jesus Christ both appeared to him in a pillar of light and spoke. Smith wrote, "I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong) — and which I should join" (Joseph Smith — History 1:18²). In answer to his question, Smith wrote of his instruction from God not to join any existing church. "I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong" (Joseph Smith – History 1:19).

It is from this first vision the faith defines the Holy Trinity as separate beings, one of the most common sources of criticism from anti-Mormon writers who claim Mormonism is not a Christian faith (Abanes, 2003; Ostling & Ostling, 1999). While traditional Christian churches view the triple godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as parts of the same whole, Mormonism believes that God the father and Jesus the son are not only completely separate and independent, but both embodied beings. Church doctrine records that these two members of the godhead are somatic, with flesh and bone. It is written in Doctrine and Covenants, "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 130:22).

The Mormon story of the reception and translation of the Book of Mormon is important to understanding both Mormon doctrine and criticism. Mormonism records that Joseph Smith was divinely led to the book and allowed to translate it. It is this point that has drawn the most consistent criticism, and has inspired the most doubt in writings about leaving the faith

² Joseph Smith – History is a chapter of the Mormon scripture, *Pearl of Great Price*.

(Anderson, 1966; Beck, 2005; Marti, 2012; Robertson, 2001). In the Mormon story, three years after his first vision, Smith again prayed to God for direction in worship on September 21, 1823. In answer to this prayer, Church historical documents record that an angel, Moroni, visited Smith and told him of the existence of a book written on gold plates that gave an account of ancient inhabitants of North America. Smith wrote, “he also said that the fullness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants” (Joseph Smith — History, 1:34). Moroni related that he is the son of Mormon, the ancient American prophet who wrote the book contained on the gold plates. Moroni added to the work of his father, then buried the plates on the Hill Cumorah in present upstate New York along with the Urim and Thummim and a breastplate, ancient translating devices. Moroni instructed Smith on the location of the plates, and that they would be given to him for translation when the Lord was ready for Smith to receive them. Smith then met the angel Moroni at the Hill Cumorah once each year for further instruction about God’s plan for Smith and his church. On September 22, 1827 Moroni gave the gold plates to Smith for translation. Smith and his assistant, Oliver Cowdery, spent the next two years translating the plates to bring forth the *Book of Mormon* in 1830. The gold plates were returned to the angel Moroni after being shown to eight witnesses, the testimony of whom is printed in the beginning of the *Book of Mormon (Our Heritage: A Brief History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1996)*. It is from this divine granting of the rights to the plates of the *Book of Mormon* that the faith draws its supposition that Smith was a modern-day prophet, chosen by God to bring forth the scripture. All subsequent Presidents of the Church are also considered profits of God (www.mormon.org).

Oddly, both defenders of the *Book of Mormon* and its critics have turned to the same source to make their arguments: Smith’s personal history. Smith, born in Vermont in 1805, grew

up in meager circumstances in a family with nine surviving children. The Smiths were failed farmers who moved frequently, landing in Palmyra, New York by Joseph's tenth year. Joseph and his brothers were tasked with helping the family survive, and hence received little or no formal education (Brodie, 1995; Bushman, 2005). At the time of his first vision, Smith was just 14 years of age, 17 when he learned of the gold plates. Mormon believers and apologists have frequently claimed that a boy of no education could not have been capable of producing the *Book of Mormon*. Defenders point to the complexity of the *Book of Mormon*. The work, for example, contains 300 references to chronology and 700 geographical references, all of which are self-consistent (Givens, 2002). While critics have claimed several links to other literary forms and pieces to point to possible sources Smith may have plagiarized, defenders claim that these links show a subtlety and richness to the *Book of Mormon* that Smith could neither have fabricated nor constructed from multiple sources given his level of education (Givens, 2002).

The proverbial smoking gun that could prove the *Book of Mormon* is as it claims to be, a divine translation, is conspicuously missing. The canonized version of Joseph Smith's history indicates that the gold plates from which he translated were returned to the angel Moroni who removed them from Earthly sight, just as they had been hidden in the years before being conferred upon Smith. As evidence of the plates' existence, Mormon apologists have always pointed to the two testimonies of witnesses who claim to have seen the plates printed in the front of the *Book of Mormon*. The first testimony was signed by Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, all of whom served as scribes while Smith translated the plates. The second testimony was signed by eight additional witnesses including four members of the Whitmer family, three members of the Smith family, and Hiram Page. In the first testimony, the signers claimed that "an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes,

that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon” (*Book of Mormon* 1981). The second set of signers declared “as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle with our hands” (*Book of Mormon*, 1981). Both Cowdery and Harris were later excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as dissenters after they each struggled with Smith over both doctrinal beliefs and the leadership of the Church. Believers in the *Book of Mormon* draw attention to the fact that although excommunicated, neither of these witnesses ever recanted their testimonies of having seen an angel reveal the gold plates to them (Bushman, 2005; Givens, 2002). For non-Mormons, however, these official Church arguments for the divine origins of the *Book of Mormon* have never been sufficient proof of God’s hand in the work.

Mormon practice and culture. Conceptualizing the totalistic nature of the Mormon faith requires an understanding of the cultural and lifestyle elements taught by the organization. The Church is organized with a very rigid organizational hierarchy that is distinct from other faiths. Members of the faith do not choose which local houses of worship they will attend. Instead, the Church headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah, divides areas into geographical Stakes, each with their own Stake Center, led by an unpaid Stake President. Each Stake is then further divided by geography into Wards, or individual congregations, each led by an unpaid Bishop. Members are assigned a Ward based on their address of residence, and are to attend all worship services and activities within their Ward. It is at the Ward level that members learn both doctrinal and cultural practices, but these teachings are given to Ward leaders from Church headquarters.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is unique in its adherence to formal and institutionalized lessons that teach these cultural and doctrinal practices to members in the same

way, in every Ward worldwide. Whereas affiliates of other religious associations have Sunday school programs that are locally controlled, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints prescribes lessons for Sunday lessons to adults and children alike, and also structures lessons to be taught in the home. Church assimilation is advanced through very structured and institutionalized teachings that begin in early childhood and continues through a member's lifetime. Lessons taught both in and outside the church building are highly scripted, published in manuals by the Church headquarters in Salt Lake City. Lessons taught to all age groups from cradle to grave are the same in every ward and stake throughout the world. Adult church members engage in such Church education through home teaching, weekly lessons in church, Family Home evenings, and Visiting Teaching. During weekly services members receive specific educational training based on their age and gender. For example, women attend Relief Society, men attend Priesthood Meetings, and children attend Primary (www.mormon.org). The weekly education component typically lasts two hours and is considered an obligatory part of the faith. Such an institutionalized system of teaching is of note, as it relates to member identification with the organization as a whole, not just the local ward.

Formal exit from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, like the lessons the faith provides to all Wards, is a highly structured and institutionalized process. Practically speaking, both those born into the faith, and those converted, become full members through full-emersion baptism after the age of eight. Records of the individual's membership are kept, thereafter, at the Church headquarters in Salt Lake City. Formal exit from the faith requires an official recognition of the member's departure by the Church headquarters. A member who simply stops attending services is still considered an inactive member, and may thus return. Those who wish to voluntarily sever all ties with the faith must write a letter to the Church headquarters

requesting that their names be removed from the official rolls (www.exmormon.org). Name removal constitutes a final action that is difficult to reverse. Once name removal has occurred, returning to the Church requires receiving lessons from missionaries or clergy, and rebaptism (www.lds.org).

Members are expected to uphold the principles of their faith, including the cultural teachings, in all areas of their life. Such cultural teachings are passed to members through both scripture and semi-annual conferences at the Church headquarters, the transcripts of which are published. In addition to the King James Bible and *Book of Mormon*, Church doctrine includes two additional scriptures: *Pearl of Great Price*, which includes the Mormon creation narrative, and *Doctrine and Covenants*, which contains Joseph Smith's revelations and dictates many of the cultural practices of the faith (Abanes, 2003; *Church history in the fulness of times*, 2003). It is important to note that the faith considers all Presidents of the Church to be prophets of God, and therefore capable of divine revelation. Such direct communication between the President and God means that Presidential declarations become canon in the faith, and it is through these revelations that many of the cultural practices of the faith are passed down to members. Such divine revelation and declaration from the head of the Church begins with Joseph Smith, who laid down many of his declarations in *Doctrine and Covenants* and *Pearl of Great Price*. The thirteen articles of faith (*Pearl of Great Price*) were written by Joseph Smith, offer a summary of the faith, and are now considered scripture. Among the articles is information about principles and ordinances, salvation, church organization, sin, and atonement. Integral to the Mormon faith and experience are beliefs about the eternal family, austerity, duty, and education. Acceptance of such cultural teachings is a fundamental part of assimilation into the faith.

One of the cornerstones of assimilation in the Mormon faith is the Church's conceptualization of family as being linked for eternity in temple rituals (*Doctrine and Covenants*, 131:1-8; 132:15-16). This conception of family as eternal drives many of the cultural practices of the faith that relate to strong family values. This attachment to strong families extends to public perceptions about the faith; even those who know very little of the faith's particulars recognize, for example, the Family First public service announcements that ran on television and radio throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s (Johansen, 2002). The covenant of eternal families typically occurs in the temple marriage ceremony and links future children and entire family ancestries together. Marriages that occur outside the temple may later be sealed for eternity in a "sealing ceremony". Such after-death togetherness can be extended to even long-passed ancestors through retroactive baptisms for the dead, a ritual performed in a temple where a living proxy stands in for the deceased and is baptized, thus extending the Mormon gospel to a dead ancestor who did not receive it in life. The eternal family bond prompts the Church to maintain meticulous genealogical records, and encourages members to raise large families (Givens, 2002). Such family togetherness drives many of the cultural practices of the faith, and the strong family values that are constantly reinforced by the faith. Families are instructed to hold Family Home Evening, a weekly family night that includes a lesson from a Church manual available to members (*Family Home Evening Resource Book*, 1983), and family togetherness activities that might include games, dinner, movies, crafts, or music.

It is noteworthy that such eternal family rituals as sealings and marriages must be performed not in local houses of worship, but in one of the 136 temples the Church has built worldwide (*Statistical Report, 2011, 2012*). While the sight of towering Mormon temples

adorned with a gold figure of the angel Moroni at the apex serve as visible symbols of the Church to the public, few outsiders realize that these structures do not house weekly services, but are reserved for holy temple ordinances, open only to members who have received a recommendation from the bishop of their local ward deeming them worthy for temple rituals. Weekly church services are held in local churches on Sunday and include a sacrament meeting where baptized members over age eight receive sacrament (bread and water), and separate classes for men, women, and children. These weekly worship buildings are austere and unassuming, often unnoticed in American neighborhoods. Most are single-story brick structures, and all are unadorned, the Mormon faith promoting a modest aesthetic that does not include art or symbols. Unlike most Christian churches, houses of worship do not use the symbol of the cross, nor are the members of the faith to wear a cross, as believers of the faith consider it a symbol of Christ's death, and themselves symbols of a living Christ (Hinckley, 1975).

The value of austerity goes beyond the aesthetic of houses of worship, extending to the lives of members of the faith. Most outsiders of the faith are familiar with the idea that Mormon doctrine forbids drinking coffee, but do not realize that the commandment come from Section 89 of Doctrine Covenants, understood by followers as The Word of Wisdom, divinely given to Joseph Smith in 1833. In addition to discouraging abstinence from "hot drinks," interpreted as coffee and tea, The Word of Wisdom emphasizes health and wellness, commanding members to maintain healthy lifestyles free of alcohol and tobacco, and abide by the laws of chastity. A healthy diet with sparing consumption of meat and greater consumption of vegetables, fruit, and grain, is also commanded. Givens (2002) notes that The Word of Wisdom is a code for members to live a long and healthy life. Obeying The Word of Wisdom, tithing ten percent of income, and regular worship attendance are compulsory for a member to obtain a recommendation from the

local bishop to attend temple. Church practices dictate that only those members who follow the God's commandments "are worthy to enter" (www.mormon.org). This sense of austerity also extends to Church administration. Local clergy are unpaid, and lessons and classes are taught by member volunteers, who consider teaching appointments callings from God.

Member volunteering is a key part of Mormon culture. Such volunteers teach Primary classes, the Sunday instruction classes for children, serve as youth leaders and teachers, and serve as Home Teachers who make regular visits to other members with a lesson in the evenings. Members of the Relief Society, the women's group of the Church, also engage in Visiting Teaching to other female members, usually in the afternoons, to bring a lesson and offer any assistance to members who may be ill, elderly, or in need of help. Relief Society and youth groups often meet during a weekday evening to engage in lessons, church and community service, craft, or baking projects, all led by volunteers ward members. Member volunteers also operate local genealogy centers, which help members research their family histories.

A strong sense of duty is also an integral part of Mormon culture. The ten percent tithe is taught as duty (*Doctrine and Covenants* 119:4). Members are also taught to give freewill offerings, called Fast Offerings, monthly. Commanded by *Doctrine and Covenants*, 42:30 to "remember the poor and consecrate of thy properties for their support that which thou hast to impart unto them with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken," Church members are instructed to fast one day per month, giving the amount they might have spent on food as a Fast Offering, a welfare program of the Church. Such offerings are collected by young men of the Church who go to ward members' homes to collect monthly. Such a duty to the poor is also enacted through donations to the Church thrift store program, Deseret Industries. Women are taught that they have a duty to keep the home, raise a family, and instill a sense of values and

duty into their children. The third volume of the Church's Relief Society Study Guide instructs women that good mothers "talk of *when* their children go on missions, not *if*. They help their children understand that they do not decide *whether* they want to serve but how they will respond to the Lord's call when it comes" (p. 160).

It is this duty, the responsibility of young men to serve a mission, that is, perhaps, most recognizable to those outside the faith. Most male members raised in the faith serve a two-year mission, a convention taught as duty. They are not paid for their services to the Church; rather, the missionary conducts his work at his own expense, commanded to live a Spartan existence, without luxury, time off, or a car. Missionaries share information about their faith around the world and baptize new converts. The importance of mission work is found in many official church documents including song lyrics and coloring activities for children (*Primary 2: Choose the right A.*, 1995; *Primary 3: Choose the right B.*, 1994).

The sense of duty to do missionary work, however, goes beyond the young man's duty to serve a two-year mission. In his 1959 General Conference report, then President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints David O. McKay related one of the most often quoted phrases of the Church when he proclaimed that every member of the faith bears a duty to recruit new members. "Every member is a missionary. He or she has the responsibility of bringing somebody: a mother, a father, a neighbor, a fellow worker, an associate, somebody in touch with the messengers of the gospel" (*Teachings of the presidents of the Church, David O. McKay*, 2003, p. 53). McKay's proclamation that every member of the faith is to spread the gospel is often enacted by referring names of friends and acquaintances that may be receptive to hearing a lesson on the Mormon gospel to active missionaries, or by bringing a guest to a weekly worship service.

The Church preaches very defined gender roles. Men are holders of the Priesthood, women are taught that their duty and purpose is to the home and family. Key in Mormon belief and culture is the male member power of the Priesthood. Mormons believe that the Priesthood is the source of God's eternal power and authority on Earth, and was granted to ancient prophets and worthy males beginning with the Biblical Adam (*Church history in the fullness of times*, 2003). Jesus ordained all of his Twelve Apostles into the Priesthood, bestowing upon them the power to lead his church and serve the people (*Primary 2: Choose the right A*, 1995). Following the death of Jesus, Mormons believe that people began to forget the true teachings of Christ and the Apostles. The failure of people to follow the commandments of Christ resulted in a deterioration of the faith and loss of the Priesthood from Earth for hundreds of years, a period Mormons refer to as the apostasy (*Church history in the fullness of times*, 2003; *Our heritage: A brief history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1996). When God the Father and Jesus commanded Joseph Smith to join none of the existing churches (*Joseph Smith — History*, 1:18), Mormons believe God chose Smith as the modern-day prophet who would restore the power of the Priesthood and Christ's true church (*Church history in the fullness of times*, 2003). Young men of the faith who have studied are worthy to receive the Aaronic, or lesser Priesthood, which gives them power of the laying on of hands, a blessing power for the sick, infirmed, or suffering. At 18, men of the Church receive the high, or Melchizedek Priesthood. Holders of this high Priesthood have the additional power to perform temple ordinances, name and bless children in blessing ceremonies, administer to the sick, and give patriarchal and paternal blessings (*Duties and blessings of the Priesthood: Basic manual for Priesthood holders, part B*, 2000). Holding the high Priesthood is seen as a blessing for the family. Each family head, the

father, holds the Priesthood, and thus ability to bless his family. To exit the faith as a man is to lose this holy power of Priesthood both for himself and his family.

This review of the doctrinal, practical, and cultural practices of Mormonism has been provided to give insight into the ways in which doctrine and teachings are enacted in the members' lives beyond time spent in church. This study suggests that the Church, similar to many faith communities, is best considered as a totalistic organization wherein doctrine and cultural practices are mutually reflected and enacted. Assimilation into the Church is an ongoing process that encompasses all aspects of a member's life. As members become fully assimilated into the organization, they embrace and enact behaviors that are consistent with the beliefs through daily acts (e.g. prayer, service, education) that provide outward and inward reaffirmation of their commitment to the Church and its teachings. Thus, when exiting the faith former members leave behind not just doctrine, but the ways of life that are normative as part of organizational membership.

The totalistic nature of organizational membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is unlike the traditional corporate employee relationships represented in most organizational communication research. Whereas exit from the traditional employee/employer relationship risks a loss of income and work relationships, this study examines exit from organizations that are far more intertwined in the members' lives. Faith memberships, such as belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are an encompassing experience, and thus leaving means risking a different set of losses. Faith membership involves an inherent value component, identification with both practice and beliefs, that extends to all parts of the member's life. Studying the narratives of former members of this faith community is intended to shed light on the process of exit from a totalistic organization. Such a totalistic organizational

experience, however, is not unique to a faith community. Arguably, there are certain employment relationships that are totalistic in nature. Unlike the corporate employment relationships studied by most organizational scholars, a totalistic employment organization, like a faith community, is far more consuming the members' lives. Such employment situations involve far reaching values, living situations, and internalized beliefs that extend beyond the hours spent at work. Like a faith community, a totalistic employment relationships requires a total life commitment to the principles and missions of the organization.

High Reliability Organizations

Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) define high reliability organizations (HROs) as those where employees regularly face high levels of risk. Such risk usually involves life-or-death situations, placing employees in the position of facing death or injury to themselves or to their clients/customers. Literature on HROs has included such high-risk professions as firefighters (Myers, 2005; Myers & McPhee, 2006; Scott & Myers, 2005; Scott & Trethewey, 2008), police officers (Bochantin & Cowan, 2010; Cowan & Bochantin, 2009), 911 dispatch operators (Tracy, Myers, & Scott, 2006); doctors/surgeons (Agarwal & Dutta, 2009), and soldiers (Roderick, 2009). Then number of such organizations has risen, a phenomenon LaPorte and Consolini (1991) attributed to a rise in technology that has created more HROs including nuclear power plant operators, more highly technical medical professions, more dangerous forms of warfare, etc. Such professions require of the worker a level of constant watchfulness to avoid catastrophic consequences. Such an assumption of risk has consequences for both the organization and the newcomer who is socialized into the organization.

Assimilation in the HRO

Assimilation into organizations involving this level of risk for both the newcomer and their clients has been differentiated from traditional employment situations (Myers, 2005; Myers & McPhee, 2006). The process of socializing into HROs requires that newcomers garner a deep understanding of both the risk they face and their responsibility to prevent harm to other workers and/or clients. Such responsibility is unlike the roles faced by newcomers in office, volunteer, or most corporate organizations because HRO workers literally face life-or-death situations that risk both their own lives, and the lives of others. This extension of danger beyond the self, and the resulting responsibility to protect others from harm, is of primary concern in the consideration of newcomer assimilation into the HRO. The assimilation process must both prepare the newcomer for his dangerous role, and instill into him a sense of responsibility for the lives of other team members or clients.

The assimilation process includes preparing newcomers to take on a role that minimizes error far more than other jobs they might have held. LaPorte and Consolini (1991) point out the paradox of such an organization; where error making and error management are the normal condition of most organizations, the HROs cannot make such errors. The stakes are too high. For the organization, newcomer understanding of these stakes is of dire consequence. Where most organizational newcomers learn their roles by trial and error, the member of the HRO must learn by “trial without errors, lest the next error be the last trial” (LaPorte & Consolini, 1991, p. 20). The process of encountering the high reliability role, then, must be accomplished without catastrophic error. Such a mistake-free role encounter means that the period of anticipatory socialization must prepare the newcomer for the danger and responsibility she will face. In such a high-risk environment, there is little room for individualization. Weick and Sutcliffe (2001)

note that high-reliability cultures are, by necessity, highly structured, requiring the member to learn a rigid role from which he cannot deviate lest catastrophe ensue. Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2002) note that the error-free functioning of the HRO is dependent on each member's ability to intuitively predict and depend on the other members, and such a collective dependence requires strict adherence to predictable and structured responses.

Myers (2005) study of firefighters exemplified an HRO socialization process designed to hasten metamorphosis upon encounter. The study found that a prolonged period of anticipatory socialization better prepared newcomers for the role they would face moving into the firehouse. Through rigorous and physically demanding tests, potential members became acculturated to the idea of a punishing environment. Ride-alongs on fire calls gave potential newcomers a sense of the urgency and responsibility required of veteran firefighters. Upon encounter, the newcomers' roles were cemented by harsh treatment from peers that enforced a strict hierarchical structure. Such a structure reduced errors as newcomers encountering their role were kept under the watchful eye of more senior members.

Researchers have linked assimilation into HROs with commitment and identification with organizational missions and goals. Myers and McPhee (2006) found that acculturation into the beliefs of a fire department predicted assimilation outcomes including involvement in department discussions and activities, commitment to the department, acceptance of the individual role, and trustworthiness as a coworker. Myers (2005), similarly, found that identification with the fire crew was important for newcomers in a fire department, and crew members tend to identify first with the crew, then later with the organization as a whole. Myers and McPhee (2006) note that such identification at the team level is particularly important in a high-reliability role, where the member's performance is highly interdependent with the

performance of crew members. Such interdependence of roles is an integral part of the HRO culture into which newcomers are socialized.

High-Reliability Cultures

The culture of an HRO is unlike a traditional corporate culture. Defined by high levels of risk or danger (LaPorte & Consolini, 1991; Weick & Roberts, 1993; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001), becoming an employee in an HRO requires assumption of a dangerous culture that risks injury and death to the member and/or clients of the organization. Avoidance of fatal errors as an organization requires members of an HRO to each perform their roles, while simultaneously relying on fellow members. This high level of role interdependence amongst members serves to connect members so that the group functions as a whole (Weick & Roberts, 1993). Such a seamless group functioning is an innate part of the HRO culture. Roberts, Stout, and Halpern (1994) advanced a model of HRO decision-making that drew attention to high levels of interdependence as a factor in hastening the decision process. Where teams of aircraft carrier personnel worked as highly interdependent units, the decision-making process was highly decentralized and rapid. Where distrust of team members or doubt about the politics of deciding high-risk actions was present, decision-making was slowed and centralized. In such cases as the aircraft carriers crews studied by Roberts, Stout, and Halpern (1994), interdependence is necessary for the fast and accurate decisions that prevent catastrophe. A shared focus on organizational goals and trust were vital.

Researchers have emphasized that communication between HRO team members and a strongly held shared vision of the organization's mission and goals are vital to minimizing errors in high-stakes environments (Fetterman, 2002; Heinrich & Lynn, 2002; Langer, 1989). Having a shared vision serves to unite team members into a unit capable of functioning as a whole. Weick

& Roberts (1993) characterize the culture of interrelated functioning in an HRO as “collective mind” (p. 358), or a group consciousness in which the work team functions and seems to think as a single unit. Such collective thinking is not groupthink, but rather a team of workers socialized to be attuned to the same values, beliefs, processes, and approaches to problems. Weick and Roberts suggest that such collective mind requires higher levels of identification with such ideals, values, and processes than is necessary in other organizations. Worker knowledge about process is not enough. For the collective mind to function, the team to think as a unit, each member must interrelate his/her actions with other team members, and interrelating requires an almost instinctive knowledge and trust in what other members will do. Weick and Roberts (1993) note that the quality of the collective mind of the HRO is highly dependent on the socialization of newcomers. If newcomers are not brought into the inner circle and included in important conversations, the collective mind is likely to develop incompletely, leaving room for errors. As Weick and Roberts (1993) write, “if insiders are taciturn, indifferent, preoccupied, available only in stylized performances, less than candid, or simply not available at all, newcomers are in danger of acting without heed because they have only banal conversations to internalize” (p. 368).

Such internalization of beliefs and HRO culture, however, requires more than task-related communication. Scott and Myers (2005) point to the need for coping mechanisms that allow the HRO team to collectively manage the inherent emotional strain of high-risk work. On any given day, firefighters and police officers meet numerous emotional situations that might include saving a life or pulling injured or dead victims from crash sites; such emotional days are often alternated with days of waiting in boredom for the next emotional event. Doctors, emergency call dispatchers, soldiers, and other HRO members regularly deal with similar life and death

situations. HRO workers must enact cultural mechanisms to cope with such situations, temper emotions, and reframe events, thus finding a way to stay identified with organizational ideals despite emotional events. Research has pointed to humor as one of the primary such coping mechanisms employed by HRO members (Scott & Myers, 2005; Tracy, Myers, & Scott, 2006). Tracy, Myers, and Scott (2006) cite humor as a form of sensemaking. After tragic events, humor is employed as a means to reframe unthinkable experiences in terms of the absurd. In observation of an emergency dispatch call center, for example, Tracy, Myers, and Scott (2006) noted a process of HRO members differentiating their own identities from those of callers through humor. By making fun of callers in tragedy, 911 dispatchers reclaimed their own identities, making sense of the events described as something relatable to their own experiences that could be laughed about.

The totalistic nature of the HRO is suggested in the very core identity traits that members assume, which permeate all areas of their lives. Scott and Myers (2005) note that humor in the face of tragedy and emotion management are sensemaking and identity maintenance techniques that extend beyond time spent at work. The new firefighters they studied entered service without experience managing the intense types of emotional situations they would face. These “booters” were socialized into a culture of emotion management through rough treatment by their more senior peers that discouraged emotional display. Scott and Myers (2005) observe that after repeated exposure to such emotional events and time spent in the culture of emotional temperament, new firemen not only began to temper their own emotion inside the firehouse, but in all areas of their lives. A sort of desensitizing to tragedy occurred that became a part of the individual’s identities both in and out of the firehouse.

It is in the member's formation of identity that the HRO might be seen as most totalistic. Scott and Trethewey (2008) note that there is not only a work identity, but a strong personal identity built by high-reliability workers. They contend that high-reliability workers build interpretive repertoires of identity (for example, what it means to be a *real* firefighter) that they draw upon to make sense of risk and threats. Such repertoires are built through everyday discourse about hazards at work, but over time, are applied in all areas of life. The discourse of hazard permeates beyond work life to form core identities for the high-reliability worker. Such a totalistic experience of identity affects the life decisions that HRO workers make. Researchers have found that female police officers internalize the identity of officer, which includes outright discrimination about motherhood. Many women on the force studied chose not to have children, and those who did faced an internal struggle between the assumed officer identity and a private life with children (Bochantin & Cowan, 2010; Cowan & Bochantin, 2009).

Research Questions

Researchers have examined the process of voluntary organizational exit from traditional corporate environments (e.g. Carr, Pearson, Vest & Boyar, 2006; DiSanza, 1995; Padgett, Gjerde, Hughes & Born, 1995), and corporate turnover (Danielson, 2004; Golden, 2007; Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Maertz & Griffeth, 2004; McNatt & Judge, 2008; Peterson, 2004). Existing research has advanced Jablin's (2001) three-phase model of exit (pre-announcement, announcement/exit, post-exit sensemaking), and examined the reasons for exit from corporate environments. Kramer's (2010; 2011) work extended the study of exit to volunteer organizations, shedding light on a far more fluid process of exit that did not exhibit Jablin's (2001) phases. Rather, volunteers experienced a more passive exit process as they simply stopped showing up, leaving the door open to future return.

This study seeks to extend the study of exit to totalistic organizations. The organizational narratives chosen for this study represent those of former members of a highly institutionalized faith community, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and former members of high-reliability organizations. Both faith organizations and HROs represent a unique opportunity for the study of exit. The experiences of members in these organizations is totalistic insofar as the internalized values, beliefs, norms, and cultural practices of membership extend beyond time spent in the organization to permeate all other areas of the member's life. Leaving such a totalistic organization represents identity, cultural, and relational costs that go beyond the traditional employment situation.

Exit from a faith community represents loss of not just doctrinal, but cultural beliefs and practices which have been part of the member's daily life, possibly since childhood. In the case of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, doctrine teaches that those who leave deny the true gospel. Exiters are apostates, and damned for eternity, as laid down in D&C 84:41: "but whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come." Leaving the faith is to accept eternal separation from the eternal family, banishment from the Latter-day Saint afterlife. At a cultural level, leaving represents loss of family activities, and often support. The assimilation process into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints begins, often, in childhood. Like any religious community, children born into Mormon families are taught the practices and doctrine of the faith from birth. Converts to the faith undergo a process of lessons and Church attendance prior to baptism. Even converts baptized in another faith must undergo baptism by full immersion to signal complete acceptance of the faith. Insiders of the faith practice their faith through weekly Sunday attendance, other weekly activities at local churches, temple ordinances,

and teachings in the home. Leaving the faith, thus, represents waking away from daily practices, deeply ingrained values and beliefs, family/friend relationships, and doctrinal belief over the fate of the eternal soul. The process of leaving such a totalistic community has not received significant scholarly attention. Thus, this study first asks:

- RQ 1: How do former members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints describe the process of leaving the faith?

While most research on exit has focused on employee exit, the focus has been on corporate or office environments, with the notable exception of Myers (2005). The Myers (2005) study, while alluding to a decreased proclivity for exit following a prolonged period of anticipatory socialization, is primarily concerned with entering an HRO, not leaving one. Driven by an inherent element of risk to life and limb, the culture of an HRO, by necessity, centers around minimizing catastrophic errors. Researchers have noted particular assimilation practices that create a deep and far reaching attachment to organizational beliefs in the HRO. Like a faith community, membership in an HRO involves acceptance of practices, norms, beliefs, and values that pervade the member's life outside the organization. The HRO, thus, presents an opportunity to study the process of exit from a paid totalistic organization. This study, thus, asks:

- RQ 2: How do former members of high-reliability organizations describe the process of leaving their positions?

Including narratives from a faith community and high-reliability organizations is a move designed to shed light on the process of exit from totalistic organizations. Kramer (2011) furthered the study of exit from previous research in employment organizations with his study of exit from a volunteer group. His findings of an exit process that departed from Jablin's (2001) phasic model calls into question the differences in leaving unpaid versus paid organizational

relationships. This study seeks to study these differences within totalistic organizations.

Inclusion of these two particular groups present an opportunity to examine how members exit both paid and unpaid relationships in totalistic organizations. This study, thus, next asks:

- RQ 3: How does the process of exit from a paid membership differ from an unpaid membership in totalistic organizations?

CHAPTER THREE. METHODS

This study seeks to answer how former members of totalistic organizations describe their exit experiences. Such an investigation, the author contends, is best undertaken in a manner that allows individuals who have lived the experience of leaving such an organization to explain their experiences in their own words, gathered free from researcher intrusion. This study analyzes the narratives of 50 former members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and 50 former high-reliability employees. These micro-stories, or individual narratives from individuals who live within organizational confines, are qualitatively analyzed to give voice to the individuals who have experienced exit from a religious or high-reliability organization. This chapter outlines the research design and methods of data collection and analysis used in this study.

Research Design

This study uses qualitative narrative methods to further our understanding of the process of exit from totalistic organizations. Such qualitative methods support research that answers questions of *how* and shed light on social processes and “stress how social experience is created and given meaning” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 13). In its focus on processes and lived experiences, qualitative research recognizes that human interactions are value-laden. This acceptance of valued interaction is, perhaps, most recognizable in narrative analysis. Fisher, (1984; 1985) for example, stresses the importance of values as expressed in narrative, which he considers the primary form of natural human communication. It is this acknowledgment of value-laden discourse, and the desire to explore processes and answer questions of how social phenomena are experienced and communicated, that drives the methodological choice of qualitative narrative analysis used in this study. Narrative methods, moreover, best allow

emergence of the antenarrative (Boje, 2001), or story organizational reality not as told by the organization, but as experienced by the member, to emerge. Metaphor is considered an important element of such antenarrative, as it plays a “crucial role in the production, understanding, and communication of human thought and action (Smith & Eisenberg, 1987). Through a qualitative approach that examines the lived stories of members, such metaphors emerge to give insight into not official organizational rhetoric, but the lived experience of organizational members.

This study examines microstories, or single, condensed tellings of lived experiences. Such analysis places emphasis on narratives as a means of communicating lived experience. Stories are woven together, “constituting the fabric of social reality for those who compose them” (Fisher, 1985, p. 7). The immediate nature of the lived microstory gives researchers an inside glance at the lived experience of the storyteller. Narrative helps the teller create context, convey meaning to others, and through the telling, decode the meanings of their own lived experiences (Peterson & Langellier, 2006). Such narrative accounts of lived experience will best allow the researcher to uncover the meanings and descriptions of the voluntary exit process from totalistic organizations through incomplete tellings, or microstories.

Originally a historical method of collecting and analyzing small snippets or stories of everyday people about everyday life, microstoria analysis has become a full and rich method of current social science research. Boje (2001) advanced the use of microstoria narrative analysis in organizational communication research as a means to examine the processes and lived experiences of the everyday members within an organization. Such a perspective steps away from examining official organizational rhetoric or analyzing data from managers, owners, or other official organizational sources. Instead, the microstories, or narratives of the

organizational members, employees, volunteers, and other everyday affiliates are studied for clues to the way the organization is experienced from the bottom up.

Boje (2001) defines microstory narratives as separate from complete stories, which must contain plot, setting, scene, etc. Microstory narratives may be seen as small accounts of lived experience, microplots that set the teller as part of the lived story. Boje (2001) advanced the use of microstory narrative analysis in organizational communication research, extending such analysis beyond its traditional historical context. Where historical research has examined microstories to reconstruct everyday life, Boje advances such analysis to current organizational situations to examine narratives of organizational members in context of organizational culture and norms. Boje describes such analysis as a rich reading and analysis of stories not of the elite of an organization, but of the “little people” (p. 45) who live within organizational confines.

Such stories are often antenarrative, that is, forward-looking stories that are incongruent with official organizational rhetoric, and represent departures from the grand narrative of the organization. Boje (2008) uses the term antenarrative as a play on both meanings of “ante,” calling antenarratives a bet (or ante, as in a poker game), on a future that the story will bring into being. The antenarrative is also an ante-story (before-story), or a narrative that is told as events are unfolding, when the complete story including plot, scene, protagonist, and antagonist, is incomplete. Story, with complete information, can be told only after an event. The antenarrative happens before story has completely formed, and therefore looks forward. Boje (2008) asserts that these antenarratives, thus, wager or bet on a future that the teller will enact. The narratives of this study represent both microstories of exit after the writer has left the organization, and antenarratives, or narratives recorded while the individual is still in the process of leaving. This allows a view of the process as it happens, and as the former members make sense of their

decision to exit, looking forward to a future outside the organization, anticipating costs of exit, and weighing those costs against continued organizational membership. Such consideration of exit narrative is particularly important in exploring exit from totalistic organizations, where exit may never be considered complete. The internalization of the values, missions, norms, and worldviews of the totalistic organization becomes foundational to the member's life, and therefore, may be impossible to completely leave behind.

This framework is also appropriate for study of exit from totalistic organizations because the stakes of exit might be considered higher than leaving a traditional job. Such stakes may make members in the process of leaving reticent to speak freely to a researcher. Such a situation, then, is best accomplished through the stories of those experiencing the exit in a manner largely void of researcher intrusion. This freedom of voice gives individuals expressing beliefs counter to the grand narrative of the organization an open space to tell their story. This approach allows a view of exit as told not by the official organizations, but from the individual members who live the experience of leaving.

Data Collection: Exit Narratives

Boje's (2001; 2008) calls for microstory narratives to be collected free from researcher intrusion to avoid introduction of outside researcher influence on the story and preserve remnants of organizational influence in the telling. Consistent with this call, the narratives of this study were collected from online sources that are publicly available. A total of 100 narratives were analyzed for this study. Narratives from two categories were analyzed: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ($N = 50$), and high-reliability organizations, HROs, ($N = 50$). Narratives were drawn from online sources that are freely available for public viewing without login or subscription. Only personal narratives told in the first person were selected. Each

represents a personal narrative from an individual who has left, or is in the process of leaving, a totalistic organization.

Exit Narratives From the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Narratives from individuals who have left, or are leaving The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ($N = 50$) were drawn from two websites: postmormon.org $n = 25$ and exmormon.org $n = 25$) to create a representative sample for narrative analysis. A total of 277 narratives are available from these two websites, 172 on postmormon.org, 105 on exmormon.org as of October 21, 2012. The sample for this study was drawn from these available narratives by printing a list of all available narratives on each site, numbering the titles, then using a random number generator in a spreadsheet program to select the sample for analysis. Members of each of these websites post their personal biographic narratives detailing their exit from the faith. The exmormon.org website is “a site for those who are questioning their faith in the Mormon Church and for those who need support as they transition their lives to a normal life. We are not affiliated with any religion and we do not advocate any religion” (www.exmormon.org). The site was founded in November 1995 in Cleveland, TN. Postmormon.org’s mission is “to provide and maintain systems that facilitate the growth and development of a safe and supportive community for those who leave or are considering leaving the Mormon Church” (www.postmormon.org). It is a 501(c)(3) organization with 6,154 members and is affiliated with the ExMormon Foundation and the Foundation for Reconciliation. Narratives are publicly available and may be viewed without site membership.

Numbers have been assigned to all narrative writers in this study to both increase readability and protect the narrative writer’s confidentiality. Writers on both the Postmormon and Exmormon websites may provide either full names or screen names, or narratives are posted

with their member number, such as “Mormon345.” Member numbers and screen names were referenced by the researcher to ensure that no single writer was represented more than once, or duplicated among the narratives in the sample. Gender-appropriate personal pronouns were used in reference to each numbered narrative writer where gender was apparent from references in the text.

Exit Narratives From High-Reliability Organizations

A purposive sample of narratives ($N = 50$) detailing exit from high reliability positions including police officers and firefighters was collected from online sources. Unlike the two websites from which Mormon narratives were drawn, no single collection of police officer or firefighter exit narratives exists on the web. In order to obtain narratives from a wide range of such high-reliability jobs, the researcher completed several internet searches with terms including: quit law enforcement, quit firefighting, leaving the police force, I quit the police force, etc. Searches were completed on both the Internet at large, and on YouTube. Personal narratives included both textual and video stories of leaving police officer and firefighter positions.

Narratives were taken from discussion boards, member sites that allow personal narrative posts, personal blogs about leaving high-reliability jobs, and video narratives. Textual narratives were printed for analysis. Video narratives were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. All narratives used for this sample were freely available to the public without site membership or subscription. Narratives were selected to create a purposive sample. Only personal narratives in first person that detail the process and/or reasons for leaving a high-reliability position were included. Garnering this purposive sampling meant that the results of each web search were evaluated for relevance. Results that did not meet the criterion of first-person narratives about

the reasons or process of exit from police or firefighting positions were eliminated. For example, YouTube clips, blogs, or discussion posts that gave generic advice on how to quit law enforcement or firefighting were eliminated. Inflammatory narratives about why others should quit such professions that did not contain personal stories of the narrator's exit were also eliminated.

Like the narratives of former Mormons, the high-reliability narratives of this study were assigned numbers to both protect confidentiality of the narrative writers/videographers. Pronouns were assigned with gender appropriateness in mind where the gender of the narrative author was apparent. In instances where more than one narrative is drawn from a single website (as in the case of youtube.com or discussion boards), the researcher referenced screen names or provided full names to ensure that no single author was duplicated in multiple narratives.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This microstoria study analyzed online microstories ($N = 100$) from individuals who have left, or are in the process of leaving a totalistic organization. Consistent with Boje's (2001; 2008) method of microstoria narrative analysis for organizational communication research, the narratives of this study were abductively analyzed. This particular method of narrative analysis is a form of "abduction" (Boje, 2001, p. 50). Abductive analysis is neither strictly a deductive test of theory, coding with theoretical constructs as an *a priori* guide, nor is it the inductive process of theory building of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Rather, abduction is a middle ground between inductive and deductive analysis, between post-positivist truth and strict social construction (Boje, 2001; 2008). Abductive microstoria analysis assumes an organizational truth as members experience it, and an approximate truth of theory's ability to predict and explain based on previous literature, then codes collective narratives for

emic typologies to compare to existing research. In this way, microstories are to be seen as intertextual, existing within the context of the larger organizational grand narrative.

Microstoria narrative analysis recognizes that the constructed realities of organizations become “truth” for those who live within the societal confines they have constructed. Abductive narrative analysis supports an interpretive epistemology, requiring a deep, interpretive, and rich reading of personal narratives for both organizational context and discovery of lived experiences. Such a method embraces Mumby’s (1989) recognition of power relationships between competing organizational memberships. Narrative analysis, and microstoria analysis in particular, considers the “deep structure” (Mumby, 1989, p. 293), or competing discourses and power structures that characterize the individual and organizational realities for members. Microstoria abductive analysis, unlike open and axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), examines not only the lived experience narrative for emergent themes, but considers these themes in terms of organizational and cultural structures. It is through the lens of the cultural structures of both The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and high-reliability organizations presented in the previous chapter that the narratives of this study are analyzed. Such a consideration of culture is particularly important in exploring exit from a totalistic organization where the culture of the organization becomes deeply ingrained in the member’s identity. Considering only the process of exit without inclusion of the cultural factors that underlie the decisions described by the exit narratives ignores the very elements that make the totalistic organization distinctive from other membership organizations.

The first stage of analysis of this abductive analysis involved a broad initial reading of the narratives to develop general impressions. In this first reading, the researcher read all narratives from both The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and high-reliability

organizations, taking notes to record general perceptions of recurrent concepts. In this first read, narratives from both The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and high-reliability organizations were treated as a single group.

In the next phase of analysis, a second reading of narratives was completed to develop a coding schema, drawing specific repeated emic, or emergent themes in the narrative writer's voices (Boje, 2001; 2008), from the narratives. The second reading divided narratives and developed coding schemas for exit narratives from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and high-reliability organizations separately. This move, consistent with Boje's call for microstoria analysis to compare emic themes to known organizational cultural factors, allowed the researcher to consider emergent themes in context of organizational cultures. Coding schemas for each group of narratives were developed considering the recurrent themes identified in the first phase of analysis, and comparing emergent themes to known cultural factors about the appropriate group.

Consistent with Boje's (2001) method of microstoria analysis, the researcher completed a third phase of analysis that included a detailed reading of the narratives to code specific lines of text within the themes identified in the coding schemas developed in the second phase of analysis. In this third reading, the researcher employed an abductive process of analysis, interpreting narrative text in context of both Mormon/high-reliability culture and norms, and in context of known research on organizational exit. Lines of text were extracted and placed into a spreadsheet under the appropriate code. Some lines of text were allowed to overlap, or be coded in two different themes. These coded sets then were reviewed to provide a clearer picture of the process of exit described by narrative writers, garnering a larger picture of the emerging grand narrative of the exit process.

Following these three phases of analysis corresponding to Boje's (2001; 2008) method of microstoria narrative analysis, the researcher completed a fourth and final stage of analysis. The nature of this study required comparison of two categories of narratives. In the fourth phase of analysis, the researcher compared the thematically coded data and emergent grand narrative of exit from the two groups of data. This fourth phase specifically compared the processes of exit detailed from the religious narratives to that of the high-reliability narratives to shed light on the larger process of exit from a totalistic organization.

Summary of Methods

This study analyzed narratives of individuals who have left, or are in the process of leaving a totalistic organization (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, $N = 50$ and HRO workers, $N = 50$). Narratives were collected in two groups: personal stories of exit from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and from high-reliability positions. These microstories, or individual tellings from the "little people" (Boje, 2001, p. 45) living within the organizational confines under study, were abductively analyzed using Boje's (2001) method of microstoria narrative analysis. Narratives were analyzed in a four-phase process that involved a first reading to form general impressions, development of coding schema for the two groups of narratives, detailed coding of text into the developed schema, and comparison of the two groups of narratives. The chapter that follows will detail the results of this analysis procedure.

CHAPTER FOUR. RESULTS

This study examined narratives from individuals who have exited, or are in the process of exiting totalistic organizations. Exit narratives from both paid and unpaid totalistic groups (members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, police officers, and firefighters) were analyzed and compared. The research questions of this study facilitate and understanding of the process of exit from both paid and unpaid totalistic memberships:

- RQ 1: How do former members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints describe the process of leaving the faith?
- RQ 2: How do former members of high-reliability organizations describe the process of leaving their positions?
- RQ 3: How does the process of exit from a paid membership differ from an unpaid membership in totalistic organizations?

The reported narrative results below use numbers to denote identities of the narrative writers. Numbers were used, rather than names, as a means of protecting the privacy of the writers to the extent possible. While all narratives used in this study are freely available to the public online, in the interest of providing maximum privacy, any provided names or screen names have not been used in the reporting of these results. Narrative writers, rather, are labeled by group (Police Officer, Firefighter, or Mormon) and a number assigned by the researcher. Gender appropriate pronouns have been used where gender was apparent in the narrative. Each narrative writer has been given a unique number.

The story of exit below is told in the words of the actors, or those who lived the experience and wrote the narratives analyzed. This emergent grand narrative of exit may be seen, consistent with Boje's (2001) method of microstoria analysis, as grand antenarrative, that

is, the story of totalistic organizational exit told by unofficial organizational sources, or the “little people” (Boje, 2001, p. 45) living within organizational confines.

Analysis of the narratives revealed a grand antenarrative of prolonged and non-linear exit, of leaving behind the member’s “family.” Diverging from Jablin’s pre-announcement, announcement/exit, and post-exit phases, the story of exit that emerged from the narratives of this study, detailed below, was one of concealing the intent to leave while struggling with deep personal doubt for both paid and unpaid totalistic exiters. Data were coded into categories, which are described in-depth below. The chapter that follows organizes these categories into preannouncement experiences (HRO worker categories: Trauma, PTSD, Disillusionment, Administration, and Family Pressure. Mormon categories: Personal Trauma, Doctrinal Disbelief, and Clergy); preannouncement behaviors (HRO categories: Seeking Reasons to Stay, Testing Exit, Doubting, and Suck it Up. Mormon categories: Seeking Reasons to Stay, Testing Exit, Doubting, and Concealing); and Aftermath of Exit for both HRO workers and Mormons. A brief description of these data categories is available in Table 1.

The results below report each of these categories within the grand antenarrative of exit. First, an overview of the exit process will orient the reader with the grand antenarrative of totalistic exit. In order to highlight the contrast between the narrative of exit that emerged from the data with previous exit research, the data categories are next organized to correspond with the preannouncement, announcement/exit, and post-exit phases Jablin (2001) describes. Data categories are reported to allow contrast between the HRO and Mormon narratives, similar categories within each area (preannouncement, announcement/exit, post-exit) alternating between the two groups. The table below presents the categories without this alternating structure, showing emergent themes for each group distinctly.

Table 1

Data Categories and Descriptions

| <i>Group</i> | <i>Category</i> | <i>Comments Included in Category</i> |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Preannouncement Experiences | | |
| HRO | Trauma | Witnessing deaths, injuries, and accidents; injury or threat of death to the officer or firefighter; or injury or death to suspects inflicted by police officers |
| | PTSD | PTSD symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, and effects |
| | Administration | Disagreements with officers of higher rank, struggles with departmental policy, or feelings that judicial or government systems were not supportive |
| | Disillusionment | Disappointment, a lack of accomplishment, unmet expectations, and a sense of career stagnation |
| | Family Pressure | Pressure from spouses or significant others, work interfering with family time, and effects of the HRO job on family life |
| Mormon | Personal Trauma | Personal tragedies such as family deaths, illnesses, suicides, and crimes or sexual assaults |
| | Disenchantment with Clergy | Seeing the fallibility of Church leaders or feeling mistreated by Church authorities |
| | Doctrinal Disbelief | Disbelief in doctrine or history, the growth of such disbelief, research that led to disbelief, and the initiation of such research |
| Preannouncement Behaviors | | |
| HRO | Seeking Reasons to Stay | Anticipating losses and negative consequences of leaving, listing benefits of remaining a police officer or firefighter, and seeking justification to stay in the organization |
| | Testing Exit | Changing jobs or positions, neglecting duty, taking leaves of absence, and returning to work before the final exit process |
| | Doubting | Doubting the decision to leave, doubting the self, and questioning one's abilities |
| | Suck it Up (in vivo) | Concealing emotions, repressing feelings, and dealing with emotional events |
| Mormon | Seeking Reasons to Stay | Seeking particular reasons to remain in the faith, family pressure to remain, and fear of negative consequences of exit |
| | Testing Exit | Quitting certain faith practices, leaving or returning to church, and selecting parts of the faith to practice |
| | Doubting | Doubting the ability to be faithful or personal worthiness, feelings of personal inadequacy, failure, or not being a good enough Mormon, or doubts about the decision to exit |
| | Concealing | Hiding doctrinal doubts, concealing the decision to exit or self-doubt, and working to maintain a visible appearance of faith |
| Post-Exit | | |
| HRO | Aftermath of Exit | Time period after exit, and both positive and negative consequences of leaving work at the HRO |
| Mormon | Aftermath of Exit | Effects on family relationships, joining other churches, and both positive and negative effects of exit |

Leaving the Family: The Grand Antenarrative of Exit From a Totalistic Organization

Analysis of the narratives of this study revealed a grand antenarrative of a long and non-linear process of exit from totalistic organizations, driven by a metaphorical view of the organization as family, and the exit process as leaving behind or losing the family. Both HRO members and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints experienced exit as a long and difficult interval in their lives, marked by deep personal doubt, internal struggle, and an intentional concealment of the decision to leave. While the narratives of each group explained a similar process, each group described unique reasons for exit, points of doubt, and reactions to their exit.

While both groups wrote about a similar long and oscillating process of exit that occurred in a series of small tests or partial exits, each described unique catalyst and reasons for their decision to leave. The antenarrative of exit that evolved for each group began with a moment of decision when the member began to question his membership in the Church or her position as a police officer or firefighter. Such catalysts to exit were the beginning point to the long and non-linear process of exit described.

Preannouncement: Beginning the Process of Exit

Prior to their actual exit, the totalistic organizational members in this study described a long process of consideration and contemplation of the decision to exit. This time period was marked by experiences that made both HRO members and Mormons reconsider their organizational membership. As the decision to exit was weighed against reasons to leave, both groups described enacting behaviors that tested the exit decision. The data reported below, thus are divided into preannouncement experiences and preannouncement behaviors.

Preannouncement Experiences

The story of exit that emerged in the narratives began with experiences that spurred a consideration of breaking organizational ties. In the time period prior to leaving both the HRO and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the narratives describe experiences that served as the catalyst to exit, and experiencing doubts about the exit decision. Preannouncement experiences included those events and experiences that contributed to the decision to exit. These experiences included both those inside and outside the organization that made the member question his/her membership.

All 100 of the narratives analyzed in this study described contemplating reasons for exiting. Such reasons developed following experiences that catapulted the member into a period of reflection about both the self and the organization. Following such events both faith-based and HRO members described a period of contemplation about the organization and their roles within it. The impetus to exit was described in terms of a particular event in 80 of the 100 narratives analyzed. Such events were described by both HRO members and Mormons as engendering a sudden change in the member's attitude toward the organization such as "that was it," "I just snapped," "I was shocked," or "that was the breaking point." Such events were also described in terms of an enlightenment, or "the veil lifted," "I saw clearly for the first time," "I saw the light," or a "light bulb moment." Preannouncement experiences that contributed to exit were expressed in several categories (HROs: Trauma, PTSD, Disillusionment, Administration, Family Pressure. Mormons: Personal Trauma, Doctrinal Disbelief, Clergy).

Experiencing trauma in the HRO. The first preannouncement experience category that emerged from HRO data was experiencing trauma, present in 28 of the HRO narratives. This category included comments about experiencing particular events that the narrative writer saw as

traumatic. Such traumatic events included deaths, injuries, accidents, and shootings officers and firefighters witnessed; injury or threat of death to the officer or firefighter; or injury or death to suspects inflicted by police officers. Unsurprisingly, such traumatic events were often the catalyst to exit for police officers and firefighters. As one police officer described, such events are “just part of the job.” Most police officers and firefighters described multiple events. But, in such narratives one particular event still served as the catalyst to contemplating exit.

One police officer, for example, described a series of traumatic events including violent deaths and shootings that occurred before he ever considered exit. He wrote, “death had never really bothered me. I could eat a ham sandwich and process a suicide scene at the same time” (#25). He experienced a catalytic trauma, however that changed his view of such events and stress. He describes responding to drowning of a seven year-old boy who he watched die at the scene after an hour of paramedic work. “Looking at the pain in his parents’ eyes and feeling so helpless became overwhelming and I lost control. Once the tears started flowing, I couldn’t stop them and had to leave,” he wrote.

Responding to traumatic events involving children served as a catalyst to exit for police officers and firefighters alike. Six narratives describe child death as particularly traumatic. In each of these six cases, the narrative writers mention the child trauma as the primary impetus to exit, even when other traumas were reported. Firefighter #40, for example, reports responding to an infant drowning.

When we got on the scene, the mother was waiting for us at the curb with her dead baby in her arms. It was only recently that the image of her — the look in her eyes that said, ‘Please save my

baby!' came back to me. I can see it as clearly as if I was still there.

While he remained a firefighter through many subsequent traumatic calls, he wrote that it was this particular death that remained vivid and began his questioning of his position.

Traumatic events that affected individuals known to the police officer or firefighter were listed as particularly traumatic. Three police officers reported beginning the process of leaving their jobs after fellow officers were killed. Responding to calls involving friends, family, or acquaintances was listed in the narratives of three police officers and two firefighters as the reason for leaving. Firefighter # 41, for example, responded to a call where he found “the father of a close friend from high school dead on the floor of a massive heart attack. It then fell on my shoulders to call him and let him know.”

Large-scale tragedies were also listed as particularly traumatic. One police officer, #22 “decided to walk away from law enforcement” when he was dispatched to the scene of a large-scale tragedy, “pulling bodies out of the Potomac River at 5:00 AM” after a commercial airline crash. Police Officer #24 first began to question his career after “having responded to three hangings, in three weeks, and another attempt to kill oneself by Carbon Monoxide asphyxiation.” This string of suicides led the officer to experience symptoms of stress that made him question his ability to continue working in this environment.

I guess I'm not as tough as I thought! The first hanging, no big deal. The second, a lot tougher. I don't know why. Maybe because it was an 82 year old man... [sic] I mean, come on, why did he need to go and do that? As if death wasn't lurking around an unforeseen corner anyway? That night was very tough to sleep.

Not only could I not get the face of the latest victim in my death parade out of my mind, but it brought back all the rest!

Such witnessing of traumatic events was not the sole impetus to exit described by officers. Physical injury to the officer or threat of death was described as the catalyst to exit in five of the police narratives analyzed in this study. One female officer (# 21) was shot in the line of duty. Police Officer #14 described a string of traumatic events including the death of two co-workers in the line of duty and witnessing a child's death. The catalyst to his considering leaving police work, however, came when he killed a man at the scene of a domestic disturbance. The man took the officer's gun. The officer describes the scene:

He pulled the trigger three times. The weapon did not fire. I was able to wiggle out from underneath him and pull out my back up weapon. Just before I shot him — I thought he was able to get my weapon to fire because I thought he had shot me in the back of the head. He was beating me with my pistol across my head. I shot him three times with my .38 and he died at the scene.

The officer described a dramatic change in his attitude toward his job following this shooting. He wrote "I began to see his face on traffic stops and on calls." He described this as the event that made him begin questioning his job, which he eventually left.

Experiencing PTSD in the HRO. Both police officers and firefighters described symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after experiencing repeated traumatic events. This category was reported by 20 of the HRO narratives, and included comments related to experiencing PTSD symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, and linking PTSD to the member's reason to exit. PTSD was described as a catalyst to exit for both types of HRO workers.

Firefighter #48, for example, wrote about responding to a number of “gruesome calls.” While still working as a firefighter at the time of writing his narrative, he described questioning if he could continue to work in the department much longer after witnessing “so many deaths.”

Firefighter #39, similarly, reports that seeing a number of human tragedies as the catalyst to departure. After a string of fire calls involving tragedy during his four years of service, he wrote, “if I’m honest with myself, I believe it’s why I walked away from it.” He reported diagnosis and treatment for PTSD as the main contributing factor to his decision to exit.

Officers and firefighters responding to emergencies involving people they knew were particularly prone to list PTSD as a reason to exit. Police officer #11 wrote about responding to a vehicle accident involving a woman who was his fiancé’s neighbor and friend. He describes attending to her at the scene: “As I knelt, she looked into my eyes and spoke my name asking me to help. I remember at that moment feeling like the most worthless individual on the face of the earth.” The officer wrote that two of the passengers in the accident died, while this acquaintance survived. After this accident, the officer began to suffer stress and PTSD symptoms, eventually leaving his job. He later reported seeing the woman in public, a few years after he had left his job. He reported this traumatic event triggered PTSD flashbacks, even years later: “Now she is sitting across from me in McDonalds and I feel like I am going to vomit. She does not recognize me, which is probably a good thing, but how can I ever forget her?”

Events that harmed the officer or firefighter were often the impetus to PTSD, and thus, exit. Police Officer #13, for example, describes his ordeal after he was abducted and held hostage when he was an undercover narcotics officer.

I was apprehended by a regional drug gang, held against my will, physically beaten and mentally abused and tortured. My captors

took my pistol, buried it into the side of my head and pulled the trigger repeatedly. They beat me so bad that I was numb all over and knew that death was very close at hand.

This officer describes his return to work, and the development of PTSD symptoms that were “worse than the incident itself.” These symptoms led the officer through a slow process of exit from law enforcement.

Experiencing trauma in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. While human trauma is, perhaps, unsurprising as an impetus to exit in HRO positions, the narratives of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also listed experiencing traumatic or tragic events as the catalyst to departure. The types of trauma were distinct from those experienced by HRO workers, however. This data category included comments about personal tragedies such as family deaths, illnesses, suicides, and crimes or sexual assaults perpetrated against either the narrative writer or a close loved one. Such events were not reported in any of the Mormon narratives as the sole reason for leaving, but rather as catalysts that initiated a questioning of membership. Such a personal tragedy served as a catalyst to exit in twelve of the Mormon narratives examined in this study.

Death or illness of a close family member spurred the exit process in five of the narratives. Mormon #2, for example, told about the death of his four-year-old son as the catalyst to questioning Church doctrine. For Mormon #4, her father’s heart attack began a process of questioning. Mormon #35 wrote that her moment of questioning first arose when her husband died and the Church would not allow two of his closest friends, who were excommunicated former Mormons, to speak at his funeral. Another narrative, #48, described questioning the faith

after his father died in the hospital just hours after receiving a priesthood blessing from the Bishop, who assured the narrative writer that his father would be healed.

Divorce or family upsets were also listed as traumatic catalysts. Mormon #7, for example, began contemplating leaving the Church when her marriage broke up. She described a long period of feeling depressed and suicidal in the marriage, and the resulting divorce. After her divorce was final, she described the beginning of her questioning of the faith: “Why would God allow our marriage to break up??? After all, we were married in the temple. Why would he allow our family to be broken apart?” She began questioning first God, then the Mormon doctrine that teaches that only married women may reach the highest level of heaven. After several years struggling with her faith, she finally remarried, and exited the Church.

Another former member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, #14, detailed years of sexual abuse at the hands of her father, who was a bishop in the Church. After she was married and had a daughter of her own, she reported that her father again visited her and made sexual advances. She wrote about her inability to reconcile his behavior with his role as a Church leader:

He was a bishop in the church and yet seemed to have no remorse or guilt about what had happened and was still eager to have sex with me, a married woman and a mother. How he could behave that way I shall never know.

She wrote that a few years after the above incident, her father died of cancer. While still attending the Church, she wrote about her continued struggle to reconcile her trauma with her father’s Church leadership role during his funeral. “When I saw him in his casket, he looked

very sad, dressed in the temple clothes of a ‘worthy Mormon priesthood holder.’” Shortly after his funeral, she and her family finally exited the Church permanently.

Such sexual abuse was reported in four narratives in the Mormon data set. Like the narrative detailed above, others wrote about abuses by Church members that made them question the faith. In the narrative of Mormon #33, the abuse was not personal, but perpetuated against her niece by her younger brother (the victim’s uncle). She wrote that another of her brothers, around the same time, returned from a mission for the Church and told the family he was gay. Her family’s rejection of this homosexual brother, coupled with their acceptance of the brother who raped her sister’s daughter, served as a catalyst to the narrative writer’s exit from the Church. She wrote:

My parents were worried the affect having someone gay living in their home on the other children [sic]. But the rapist can stay, hmmm. That really made my head spin. At this point, I quite literally quit trying to understand, I gave up. The church couldn’t be true if people were treated like this.

In one instance reported in the narratives, Church clergy’s response to a traumatic event served as the catalyst to exit. Mormon #13 described being repeatedly beaten by her husband. When the husband (whom she refers to in the narrative as FSU, Formal Spousal Unit, following her eventual exit from the Church and divorce) turns his violence toward their sons, she visits her ward bishop for help. She describes the encounter:

Somewhere inside me, the thought occurred, “If you aren’t going to do something about what he does to you, then at least do something about these kids.” That day, I couldn’t comfort that

son. He hated me for not protecting him. Of course I turned to the church. I talked to the bishop. His advise [sic] was ‘Go home and make FSU a cherry pie. That will fix everything.’ He told me to pray more and try harder. He asked ‘What do you do to make him have to beat you? My wife would never do that?’

Following this encounter, she began to both pull away from the Church and take steps to leave her husband. She remained a member of the Church for several more years, going through a process of questioning her faith, and finally leaving Mormonism in favor of another Christian church several years after her divorce.

While traumatic events often served as the catalyst to the exit process, none of the narratives analyzed told of a single step exit following such events. A long process of exit involving a change of positions, transfer of departments, leave of absence, or a return to work before leaving was typical of both police officers and firefighters in this study. Similarly, the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who experienced a traumatic catalyst to their departure reported long periods of researching and questioning Church doctrine and practice. During the long process of exit members of all of the totalistic groups in this study considered a number of reasons for exit.

Administrative struggles in the HRO. Police officers and firefighters, particularly after experiencing a traumatic catalytic event, often listed disagreement with their departmental superiors or the criminal justice system as a reason for exit. The Administration category included comments about disagreements with officers of higher rank, struggles with departmental policy, or feelings that the criminal justice system or government systems were not

supporting the police officer or firefighter. Administrative struggles were listed in 15 of the HRO narratives as a reason for exit.

Administrative struggles and departmental politics were listed as a source of stress for both police officers and firefighters. As Police Officer #5 wrote, “everyone says law enforcement is a stress job... [sic] It is but all the stress comes from the politics within the department.” Another police officer, #4, wrote, “it is not the public that makes the job so degrading but the administration.” #4 went on to list particular names of individuals in his department that had committed offenses he considered “unethical” and the “main reason I hate the profession so much.”

Seeing higher-ranking officers and administration as unethical was a theme present in ten police officer narratives. Police Officer #6, for example, wrote:

I just left a department in [location disclosed] for the upper political trash that came from the brass. It’s a true shame that good officers continue to leave departments because they won’t kiss ass or kiss the boots of the command staff that trashes everything law enforcement stands for.

Another police officer, #7, likewise, wrote about unethical hiring practices that left him feeling discouraged. “I’ve seen new hires given absolutely bad direction by their training officer, and then fired for following that direction. Why? #6 on the list is a friend, and we only hired five. Now there’s a spot for my pal.” He later expressed frustration that reporting such unethical behavior resulted in poor treatment at the hands of the other officers. He wrote: “Buck that? Don’t expect timely back-up, don’t expect not to have your locker ransacked. Don’t expect to be invited to that cop cookout — as you’re a snitch bitch.”

A feeling of a lack of judicial support was also present in the narratives. Police Officer #1, for example, wrote about his aggravation with “months spent on jobs to have it wasted for a community order and another slap on the wrist for a 45th conviction.” Such frustration that suspects were not adequately punished or brought to justice by the system was present in five narratives. Four of these wrote that such judicial mishandling of suspects “devalues” police work. As #12 wrote, “why bother?”

A similar feeling of devalued work was present in comments about administrative policies that interfered with work the narrative writers considered worthy. #17, for example, explained at length his frustration with administrative demands and policies. “They make you do things that’s just very corrupt, very immoral. Things you just never do on a daily basis. You’re basically just working as a revenue generator for the City.” He was particularly upset with traffic ticket quotas, which he felt were in place to generate City funding. He explained a particular ticketing incident:

I don’t want to stop that innocent lady in the street just for not having a seatbelt. When the only thing I could tell her is just, ‘excuse me, Ma’am, just put your seatbelt on because you’ve got a kid in the back, and make sure he’s strapped in too. And have a nice day.’ But no. Just because I have got to get this quota done, I have got to give her a ticket, a summons for having no seatbelt, a summons for the child in the back, oh, oh, and you’re tail light is out. Here’s another one. I go home feeling like the biggest asshole in the world.

Firefighters expressed similar frustrations with administration and higher-ranking firefighters. Like police officers, firefighters reported intra-department politics and arguments as a source of stress and reason to leave. Firefighter #31 wrote, “I love doing this work but I’ve had enough of the political crap.” He later wrote about quarrels between firefighters and the Chief, commenting that “the bickering is endless.” Firefighters, in particular, expressed a feeling of inferior monetary support for proper safety equipment. Firefighter # 37, for example, expressed his feeling that the officials who made policy and purchased equipment were out of touch with the reality of the fire crews:

I was tired of all the stupidity. Making a motion one month, voting on it and then resinding [sic] it the next month. Having officer that only show up a the end of the year [sic]. A board that can’t tell you the kind of equipment let alone the makes and models. Selling 2 of 4 pieces of equipment and leaving us with one engine and rescue. The last 4 months at least one piece as [sic] been out of service for 2 of those months.

Disenchantment with clergy. While members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints do not face daily contact with administration like HRO workers, they did experience disenchantment with clergy and Church authorities. Such disenchantment was listed as a reason to exit. As it emerged from the data, the category of Clergy represented comments about seeing the fallibility of Church leaders or feeling mistreated by Church authorities. Fifteen of the Mormon narratives analyzed included disenchantment with clergy as a reason for exit. Such disagreement, like personal tragedies, served as the catalyst to exit in eight of these narratives. The other seven experienced disenchantment with clergy after another catalyst, such as Mormon

#13, whose story above began with an abusive husband, and whose decision to exit was furthered by her Bishop's response.

Like this woman, other Mormon narratives described incidents with clergy during which they felt mistreated, thought clergy lied, or began to see Church leadership as fallible. Mormon #37, for example, began her process of exit after a ward leader insulted the job she held. She wrote, "when this man told me that what I was doing was more like a 'sinking ship' and that I needed to get a REAL JOB — it was all I could do to keep from bursting into tears but I did manage to keep myself together as I said that he'd never see me or my family again."

Another narrative, Mormon #46, described being approached by ward leadership and told "that the bishopric preferred the church services that our family did not attend" because his disabled son was disruptive to services and classes. After this incident, the narrative describes a two-month period of thinking and confusion during which he "even denied the idea that God exists." After this time, he wrote that his family returned to the Church after a time period away. He wrote of a second incident that led to his second and final exit from the faith. After falling ill, he requested a priesthood blessing. He wrote: "I wanted a blessing and it was never possible because my home-teachers (bishop and his son, who happened to be the Elder's Quorum President) were always in a very important meeting. 'Not today, next week'. I would hear this week after week after week." He felt that this denial of a blessing for the sick represented a clergy who had "turned their backs" on him.

Other Mormon narratives described incidents that made them question the infallibility of Church leaders. Mormon #26 wrote that he "heard the 1st counselor in the branch presidency telling a joke in the chapel that had the 'F' word a part of the punch line," and incident that makes him question even further the Church doctrines he was already doubting. Other narratives

described moments when they felt Church leaders silenced dialogue when they did not have divine answers. Mormon #8, for instance, looked for divine proof of the truth of the Church in the printed works and sermons of former Church Presidents and members of the General Authority. When he began to research some lesser-known pieces of Mormon doctrine, however, he wrote:

General Authorities have even counseled members of the church who are historians or academics to avoid topics (facts really) that are not faith promoting. Others who read such material are seen as questioning their faith and inviting the influence of Satan into their lives/studies. If the Church leaders are afraid that members will be too easily deceived, then they should provide honest, clear, complete and systematic rebuttals to all questions and attacks, instead of dismissing the issues with calls for blind faith and references to the wickedness of those trying to tear down God's Kingdom.

One narrative, Mormon #9, wrote that he sent a letter to Joseph Fielding Smith in the 1960s. Smith was then the Church Historian and President of the Quorum of the Twelve, the second-highest governing body of the Church administration in Salt Lake City, Utah. Smith would later become President of the Church. The narrative writer describes sending a letter to Smith asking for clarification of an obscure piece of Mormon history that has come to be known as the Adam-God doctrine, based on a sermon in which Brigham Young declared that the Biblical Adam and God were one and the same being. He wrote that Smith sent him a short letter and "wrote that such an idea was unscriptural and untrue, and completely false. He did not

deal with the evidence that Brigham Young had taught it. He ignored the whole problem as if it didn't exist.” The narrative writer saw this as an intentional deception from the man who later becomes the Church's prophet.

Like struggles with administration in the HRO, disillusionment with clergy and Church administrators served as a catalyst to exit for members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Whereas police officers and firefighters who disagreed with administration were discouraged and described feeling as though their work was devalued, members of the Church experienced an administrative disagreement more as a disillusion with leadership. Such experiences as those described above were described in terms of seeing Church leaders as fallible or untruthful. Such disillusionment with the administration of the Church was described as a catalyst to questioning membership.

Disillusionment with police work and firefighting. Disillusionment with the law enforcement or firefighting fields was listed as a reason to exit in 14 HRO narratives. This category included comments about disappointment, a lack of accomplishment, unmet expectations, and a sense of career stagnation. The narratives described a slow growth of such disillusionment over time as career goals were unmet. Both police and firefighters described such disillusionment in terms of a gradual disappointment both with the public they served, and with themselves and their accomplishments. Distinct from the disillusion Mormon narratives expressed with doctrine, HRO worker disillusionment was expressed as an internal loss of the sense of making a difference, rather than disenchantment with the organizational beliefs that Mormons described.

Police officers and firefighters wrote about their expectations about serving the public prior to entering public service. Such expectations often began in childhood, particularly for

those who grew up in multi-generational law enforcement or firefighting households. Police Officer #32, for example, wrote about the contrast between his childhood conceptions of the police officer identity and the organizational reality:

I can honestly say that I wish I never became a police officer. I did my best to do good during my career, but the administration kept bringing me down. I think I only made a dent in the world. I never moved mountains like I dreamed I would when I was a kid. I had always wanted to be a police officer. I watched all the cop shows and movies, read cop books, and even dreamed about being a police officer when I slept at night. I think I just fell in love with the movie version of a cop, not the real version.

Firefighter #41 wrote about a sense of disenchantment with the expected excitement of being at the firehouse. He wrote that he entered the profession expecting constant exhilaration, but instead found that time in the firehouse was often slow and boring. He writes about attending to a number of fires and accidents, but comments:

My main reason for leaving wasn't due to those bad experiences. It was due to the constant waiting, waiting, waiting. Way worse than any of those incidents, was sitting in the station, waiting for the house gong or the phone to ring.

Another police officer, #8, similarly wrote about an inability to reconcile his notion of serving the public with the reality he met as an officer. He wrote that policing was “not the dream job that some people think it is,” explaining his frustration with the disrespect of the public he was sworn to protect:

Dealing with people day in, day out who have a wash less often than my car, wading through human and dog excrement in somebody's living room to referee their latest falling out, locking people up for the same thing time and time again because they keep getting joke sentences, being stressed out because nothing ever goes to plan, getting snottograms from people in offices who don't trust the word of the officer who attended the job, etc. etc.

At the time of his narrative, #8 was still in the process of contemplating exit. Another officer, #12, wrote about a similar pattern of gradual disenchantment with public service after he had left the job. He describes a ten-year process of disenchantment, after beginning a career with the expectation of serving an innocent public:

I spent 15 years of my life dealing with human garbage. The first 5 years I felt good about who I was and what I was doing until I realized that I was a really some type [sic] of social janitor similar to the ones in the supermarkets. 'Clean up in Isle 9' Some [sic] just vomited on the floor.

Such a sense of gradual disenchantment with organizational reality was described as a slow means to exit. In each of the narratives explaining disenchantment, the writer describes several experiences that add up to a moment of reckoning about membership. In these narratives, it was not the building of trauma, but rather a feeling of the inability to affect change that made the member contemplate exit. Such narratives described unmet expectations that the member had built about law enforcement or firefighting.

Disbelief in doctrine. The Mormon narratives examined in this study also describe a gradual process of disillusionment, or growth of disbelief over time. Unlike the gradual disenchantment experienced by police officers and firefighters, however, Mormon disenchantment was not related to unmet expectations. The Mormon narratives of this study, rather, describe a growth of disbelief in doctrine, or disenchantment with the preached truths of the Church. This data category included comments about particular Church doctrines and history that participants did not believe, the growth of such disbelief, doctrinal research that led to disbelief, and the initiation of such research. All but one of the Mormon narratives examined in this study mentioned disbelief in doctrine as one of the reasons for exit. Such disbelief was listed as the catalyst to exit in 20 of the narratives. In the remaining 29, such disbelief grew following another catalyst. Those who experienced a personal or family tragedy, for example, wrote about the tragedy as the impetus to a period of researching church doctrine and history, which eventually led to disbelief in doctrine and exit.

Learning about a particular piece of Church doctrine or history served as the impetus to exit in 20 of the narratives. Such moments of discovery were described in terms of an enlightenment. Narratives repeated such labels for these moments of learning as a “light bulb moment,” a “shift,” or “that’s when I knew.” Such moments were described as powerful, leading the writer to question her entire belief system and worldview. Often such moments came when the narrative writer encountered a particular piece of doctrine for the first time, or read anti-Mormon books or websites that made them question belief. In eight cases, the impetus to doctrinal research was not a piece of Mormon literature, but rather an unrelated reading that contradicted known Mormon doctrine. Mormon # 25, for example, began to question his

Mormon beliefs after reading several books on Native American history, culture, and beliefs. He wrote about his moment of growing doubt:

One day I finally began to come to an awareness of the manner in which the native people of this country viewed the universe and themselves in relationship to that universe — and it was categorically different than the white, Christian/Mormon world view that I had known so intimately. I had a paradigm shift. A category 10 paradigm shift, at that. It crumbled my foundation, because I realized in that moment that if there were two ways of viewing the universe, then there were probably many, many others. And if they were all just different ways in which people sought to explain their existence relative to the bigger ‘all that is’, they why was Christianity or Mormonism any different?

Other narratives described similar moments while reading philosophy, other non-Mormon religious doctrines, and in the case of Mormon #27, J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*. The complexity of the fantasy novels led him to question the authenticity of the *Book of Mormon*. The narrative cites the argument frequently made by Mormon apologists and defenders of the Book of Mormon that Joseph Smith, a boy of no education could not have been capable of producing the a work as complex as the *Book of Mormon*.

The books fascinated me, and I recall clearly thinking when I finished them, that if Tolkien could have created all these worlds, civilizations, and even languages....could it be that Joseph Smith could have done the same? I mean, that was the argument, right?

That neither Smith nor any other man was capable of that level of creativity?

For all but eight of the narrative writers, the first mentioned doctrine or practice that made them question the Church was not an anti-Mormon or unrelated document, but an official Church document or practice. Discovering contradictions in Church documents or historical accounts spurred further doctrinal research for six narrative writers. Mormon # 9 describes uncovering old missionary tracts from his grandfather's belongings. In one of these pamphlets, he describes reading the transcription of an 1850 debate between a Mormon official and a Methodist minister in which the Mormon official denies that Church members practice polygamy. "At that very time, however, Taylor himself was married to twelve living wives. All of the top men in the church also had multiple wives at the time. How could a prophet of God lie so blatantly?" he wrote. This pamphlet inspired Mormon #9 to further research Church doctrine and history. Finding several more contradictions, he eventually leaves the Church.

For seven narrative writers, their doctrinal disbelief began not with a reading, but at the most sacred of Mormon locations: the temple.³ Narrative writers repeatedly described their first visits to the temple as "scary," "cultish," "bizarre," and "weird." Mormon #20 described being "pretty freaked out" by her first temple visit, her endowment ceremony on her wedding day. She wrote that she "felt it was really cultish." She began to doubt the divinity of the ordinance even further when, a few years later, she returned to the temple to find that the ceremony had been

³ Temple attendance is reserved for adult Church members who have received a formal recommendation from their ward Bishop. Regular Sunday services are not held at temples. Temples are reserved for such ordinances as member endowment and marriage ceremonies and posthumous baptisms. Usually, men first attend temple for their endowment ceremony prior to serving a mission, and women when they are married. For more information on temples and temple ordinances, see: <http://www.lds.org/church/temples?lang=eng>

changed slightly. Another narrative, Mormon #26, described his endowment at the temple a year after converting to the faith as an emotionally disturbing experience. He wrote:

My first traumatic experience in the church was when we went for our temple endowments after our first year in the church. I was stunned and slack-jawed over all the symbolism in the ceremony. I couldn't believe that we actually had to simulate gutting ourselves and slitting out own throats, while promising we would never tell anyone about the ceremony. I've been to the temple many times since and have never once enjoyed the temple ceremony.

The narrative describes later developing “cracks in my testimony” that eventually led him to research Church history and doctrine, which he slowly begins to disbelieve. He described a long exit process that eventually led both him and his wife away from the Church while their grown children remained active members.

Family and exiting the HRO. The narratives of both HRO workers and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints included a role for family in the exit process. This role, however, was not congruent for both groups. The role of family in the narratives of former Mormons is discussed later in this chapter. For HRO members, however, experiencing family pressure to leave the job, or feelings of neglecting the family factored into the reasons given for exit. In contrast, for Mormons, family was a reason *not* to exit. The family/HRO category included comments about experiencing pressure from spouses or significant others, work interfering with family time, and effects of the HRO job on family life. Seventeen of the HRO narratives of this study included commentary on family.

Both police officers and firefighters discussed experiencing negative impacts of HRO work on their families. Both the large number of hours required on the job and the propensity to be called away from family plans were listed as problematic. As police officer #15 wrote:

It is little wonder that police divorce statistics are so high. Your home life is non-existent. If you plan a simple meal or night at the cinema then forget it! You never know what time you will get home. Officers on AID often sleep at the police station because there's little point in going home. Is it your child's birthday or Nativity Play? Forget it! You will be dealing with some drunk in the cells even though you promised to be there.

In the long process of exit, HRO workers wrote that their hours were often erratic and complicated family plans. Police Officer #10 wrote that in his early career, he worked "an average of 100 hours per month for free as a special deputy did. This soon became exhaustive and hard to keep up with, but I still pushed myself harder and harder paying little attention to my family." Such extra time on the job led to an eventual divorce. The officer wrote that he remarried, but soon "fell into the same old routine and lost touch with my second wife devoting myself to my work." His second marriage, too, ended in divorce.

Time was not the only factor of HRO work to negatively impact family life. Five officers wrote about "bringing the work home," or letting their own stress, depression, or attitudes affect their personal relationships. Police Officer #11, for example, wrote about the effects of his PTSD symptoms on his children. He wrote about a particular incident with his son after he saw a victim he had once rescued from a car accident in public.

My son asks me a question about something and I totally go into a fit of rage about why he asks me so many questions. I instantly feel bad about my actions. How do I explain to an 8 year old boy what goes on inside my head?

Police Officer #28, similarly, wrote that “a miserable cop’s attitude also impacts their family life. You can give your family all the trinkets you can afford — BUT — if you detest yourself for putting up with the crap you do at home it WILL show at home also.”

Both firefighters and police officers factored the negative impacts of their jobs on the family into their decisions to exit. Firefighter # 36 sought advice from other firefighters in an online forum when time at his job began to affect his home life. He wrote that he had been a firefighter before he met his fiancé. “She knew this when we got together and was fine with it. Now since our daughter had been born, she is a TON less supportive,” he wrote. He expressed his desire to spend more time on the job, but keep his family happy, writing:

Anytime there’s a training class that I want to attend, a shift that I fill, our [sic] any event that I need to be at, she complains, makes me feel like a horrible man, and even throws the kids up in my face saying I put the job before them. Telling them Daddy doesn’t wanna be with them. The guys at work and the Fire Chief think I’m not dedicated enough because she guilts me into staying home when I SHOULD be at the Firehouse helping out or training.

He later wrote that he had decided to back off of a few hours, but remained a firefighter. Police Officer #28 wrote about a five-year exit process, during which time his wife pressured him to

leave law enforcement. He finally accepted an early retirement and began another career. He wrote, “the wife was happier the day I retired than I was.”

Summary of preannouncement experiences. The exit process was fraught with experiences both inside and outside the organization that contributed to the decision to break with the organization for both HRO workers and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Each group described unique experiences that led to their questioning of organizational membership. Both groups shared in common concerns with authority figures (administration and clergy), and the experience of traumatic events that led to a reconsideration of organizational praxis or values. HRO workers described experiencing repeated traumatic events within the organization, and often, subsequent PTSD. Struggles with administrators or superior officers were also reported as contributing to the decision to leave law enforcement and firefighting. Some of the HRO narratives described experiencing a feeling of disenchantment as the officer or firefighter recognized unmet expectations about his job. Outside the organization, HRO workers reported experiencing family strife due to the demands of the job, and pressure from family members to quit.

For Mormons in this study, the experiences that contributed to exit, like HRO workers, involved events both inside and outside the organization. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, members experienced disagreements with clergy that led them to question their beliefs. Similarly, members reported reading Church documents and doctrines that they did not believe. Experiences outside the organization also contributed to questioning Church membership. Doctrinal disbelief was often triggered by encountering information outside the Church including novels, websites, and anti-Mormon publications. Experiencing personal trauma outside the Church was also reported in the narratives as a source of questions about faith

in the Church. As the Church failed to either explain or assuage the personal pain of traumatic experiences, members reported deciding to break membership.

Preannouncement Behaviors

During the time period before exit, the narratives of this study describe a series of behaviors related to the exit process. The preceding section described the experiences that both HRO workers and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints underwent during the exit process. Such experiences contributed to the decision to exit. Once the exit process was initiated, the narratives describe particular patterns of behavior prior to leaving the organization. These behaviors were expressed in the data in several categories: HRO workers – Seeking Reasons to Stay, Testing Exit, Doubting, Sucking it Up; Mormons – Seeking Reasons to Stay, Testing Exit, Doubting, Concealing.

The brotherhood: Seeking reasons to stay in the HRO. Police and firefighters described a process of actively seeking reasons to stay in their jobs, which once garnered, were weighed against the discovered reasons to exit. The Seeking Reasons to Stay data category included comments about anticipating losses and negative consequences of leaving, listing benefits of remaining a police officer or firefighter, and seeking justification to stay in the organization. Twenty-six of the HRO narratives examined for this study described seeking reasons to stay in the organization.

Just two of the narratives of this study listed discussing financial reasons to remain an HRO worker with their families. Police Officer #28, for example, wrote that his work afforded his family a comfortable financial life that he told his wife he did not feel he could sacrifice. Police Officer #8, the only other narrative writer to mention financial concerns, wrote about discussing his salary with his wife, concluding, “leaving the job is not really an option... the cash

is to good [sic].” This officer’s narrative, posted in an online police forum, however, drew seven responses from other police officers criticizing him for using money as a reason to remain an officer. Responses included advice that “money isn’t everything,” and criticisms that “if money is your only concern, you’re no cop,” and “if your heart isn’t in it – get out.”

Both police officers and firefighters actively sought justification to remain in the organization from others in their profession in online forums. These officers asked such questions as “what makes you stay?” and “what makes it worth it?” After posting such questions, these HRO workers all listed their own reasons to remain, in effect justifying their continued work in the HRO. Twelve of the narratives described the “freedom” and “lifestyle” of the job as a reason to stay. This lifestyle was defined mostly in terms of what it was not. Firefighter #49, for example, wrote, “the aint no boring-ass desk job!” Firefighter #36 described the contrast between the fire lifestyle and office work, writing, “I don’t want to be one of those 8-5 stiffs.”

As they justified continued work with reasons to stay, the narratives described a sense of duty to the HRO in familial terms. The narratives describe the relationship to the HRO as “the brotherhood.” A sense of belonging to this “brotherhood” was the most prominent reason to stay listed in HRO narratives, present in 20 of those analyzed. Both police officers and firefighters justified remaining in the job by describing potential exit as “leaving my brothers behind” or “leaving the brotherhood.” This belonging was described in terms of wearing a police or firefighter identity as part of the “family” or “brotherhood.” In contrast to Mormon narratives that described the consideration of primary family members (spouses, children, parents, siblings) in the exit decision, HRO workers described family in terms of their officer and firefighting families. The HRO brotherhood was described in terms that equated co-workers to primary

family. Firefighters working at residential firehouses were particularly likely to refer to co-workers as family. Firefighter #40, for example, wrote, “we become family. We live together for years. We get to know each other very well. No one can hide their faults in that situation.”

As they attempted to inwardly justify their continued work in the HRO, both police officers and firefighters described their attachment to the HRO identity. Wearing the officer or firefighter identity was described in terms of “being one of us,” being a “brother in blue,” or being a “fighter” or “warrior.” The police or firefighter identity Police Officer #27, for example, wrote: “Warrior is on the inside. You can put a three piece suit over it, or a McDonalds uniform, but whats [sic] on the inside isn’t going to change, no matter how much money you’re making.” He later wrote that if a police officer leaves the brotherhood, “the closeness that you feel to them will be diminished, because you’re not ‘one of us’ anymore.” Police Officer #34, similarly, pointed to the police family as a reason to remain in the job. He posited that the connection amongst officers is unique to law enforcement.

Law enforcement tends to create bonds like no other job. We go through things that regular citizens can’t ever fathom. Even if someone in your department gets on your very last nerve, if they need you, you are right there ready to fight for all your life. When you leave, you won’t just be leaving ‘the job’. You will be leaving ‘your family’.

The importance of the officer and firefighter family was highlighted not only in the narratives of exit, but in the response one firefighter received to an online inquiry about how to handle an unsupportive fiancé. Firefighter #36 asked other firefighters for advice when his fiancé, with whom he lived and had a daughter, began pressuring him to quit his job so he could

spend more time with his family. Five firefighters responded that he should put his fire family first. One told him to “send her [the fiancé] packing.” Another counseled: “I don’t know how you roll, but I spelled it out pretty clearly when wifey and I started dating....The FD was here before you were on the scene and depending on how you play your cards...it could be here after your gone.....I’ll be a firefighter in some capacity until the day I die.”

Such pressure from the inside to remain part of the brotherhood was evident in similar responses to police officer inquiries for advice. Police Officer #26, for example, asked for advice to justify his continuance in law enforcement when a family member offered him a private sector job. He received responses indicating that “you’ll be back,” “better think long and hard about your brothers,” and “you won’t be one of us anymore.”

In the act of seeking reasons to stay, the narratives report discussing only financial decisions with their family members. Other advice was sought anonymously online by five of the writers. In each of these online advice seeking ventures, the advice given mirrored the listed reasons to stay that the original poster had given, including remaining part of the “brotherhood.” In other cases, the process of seeking reasons to stay was not communicated to others, either in the organization, or outside.

Seeking reasons to stay in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Like HRO members, after the initiation of exit, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sought reasons to stay in the faith. The Seeking Reasons to Stay category represented comments about seeking particular reasons to remain in the faith, family pressure to remain in the faith, and fear or anticipation of negative consequences of exit. Forty-eight of the Mormon narratives examined discussed reasons to stay.

The Mormon narratives of this study describe a process of internally listing or cataloging reasons to remain in the faith. Unlike the five HRO workers who sought anonymous advice online, none of the Mormon narrative writers asked others for reasons to stay. Rather, the narratives describe reasoning and weighing the reasons to leave with the fear of consequences of exit. Whereas police officers and firefighters described family pressure to quit the organization, Mormon narratives described pressure from family members to remain in the Church as the primary reason to stay. Mormon #1, for example, wrote that he wanted to leave the Church while still on his mission, but refrained because of family pressure.

I felt an obligation to my parents. (After three months in Sweden, I had tried to convince them in tapes and letters that I'd made a mistake going on a mission, and that I'd like to come home, but their startled reactions — emotional letters to the mission president imploring his patience, and tapes and letters to me entreating me to reconsider, caused me to abandon my pleas.) They — my father in particular — had pinned much of their hopes for eternal salvation as well as improved earthly life for themselves and our family on my completing my mission.

This same writer later quit attending Church after returning from his mission, and wrote that family pressure continued. “After I quit going, my father began addressing me as ‘Elder’ trying to shame me back to the fold,” he wrote.

Family pressure to stay was particularly acute for those who were contemplating exit while their spouse remained faithful. Mormon #5, for example, described having numerous arguments with his wife as his doubt in Church doctrine began to grow. Mormon #2 wrote that

his doubts made his wife “uncomfortable, hurt, and even angry with me during this time.” Such familial strife when one partner questioned faith was intricately tied to Church doctrine. In particular, 19 of the narratives discussed fear of the loss of the eternal family⁴. Mormon #5 describes such a disagreement with his wife:

Cindy had grabbed hold of the ‘romantic’ notions of the eternal family doctrine because she was raised in a very bad family and was looking for a method of having a better family of her own. As a convert she was sure the church had the true family system.

Consequently, Cindy was not tolerant of my doubts.

Beyond spousal pressure, narrative writers expressed intense fear of the loss of the eternal family. Mormon #25 wrote, “I knew at a deep, core level that if I abandoned Mormonism, I abandoned my family. So I did not even allow my mind to wander down that path.”

Fear of family rejection was a prominent reason listed to remain in the faith. Narrative writers expressed intense fear that if they left the Church, they would lose all of their Mormon friends and family. Mormon #7, for instance, expressed such fears about losing her grown children. She wrote:

Came to the decision to leave the church and was so afraid. Afraid that my twin daughters would think I was crazy, knew the two older children would think so, was afraid that they would never

⁴ Mormon doctrine teaches that marriages performed in a temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints seal the couple, and all children born of the marriage, together for eternity (D&C 132:19). Only those sealed by a temple covenant may be together in eternity. Breaking the covenant of temple endowment, thus, endangers the eternal family.

speaking to me again because I would be an apostate and ‘son of perdition’ because I had been given the truth and then rejected it.

Such fears were often founded. While he was still in the process of exit, Mormon #9 wrote that he and his wife fought about his doctrinal doubts. “She refused to accept anything I said critical about the church. It was the beginning of the end of our marriage.” While he was still in the process of exit, the couple divorced.

In addition to family pressures, the Mormon narratives described seeking doctrinal reasons to remain, most of which centered around fear for the eternal soul. The narratives expressed fear that doctrinal doubt would lead to eternal damnation if the Church were, in fact, true. Mormon #28, for example, wrote that her prolonged stay in the Church was “motivated by the ‘how long will you be dead compared to how long you’re alive?’ argument — I tried the best I could to ‘live the gospel.’ But my ‘question authority!’ streak was too deep for me to fit neatly into God’s divine, immovable hierarchy.”

Such fears of losing the blessings promised to the faithful of the Church was described as a motivating force behind continuing Church practices such as weekly service attendance and home teaching, even while doubting the truthfulness of the Church. Mormon #26 reported feeling pressure to give time to the Church, even while doubting doctrine. He described a seven-year process of practicing Mormonism while doubting doctrine:

My most stressful experiences have been the constant pressure/guilt I’ve felt to ‘do all’ and ‘give more’. As ward mission leader I was told I should commit to spending 20 hours per week in my calling. At the time I was working one full time job and three part time jobs just to stay afloat. I was also stressed by

the constant reminders that I wasn't going to get all the blessings that were in store for me if I wasn't a 100% home teacher or wasn't regularly involved, in some way, with the missionary program.

Such weighing of the reasons to stay against reasons to exit, continuing to practice as an organizational member while contemplating leaving, was described as process that cause considerable emotional turmoil. Unlike the HRO members who sought reasons to remain part of their HRO "brotherhood," the Mormon narratives of this study sought reasons to remain part of a faith they feared would divide them from their primary family if exited. Mormon narratives described actively seeking reasons to stay in the faith in doctrine and the words of clergy. This process of weighing reasons to exit against reasons to stay prolonged the process of exit.

Testing exit from the HRO. During the prolonged process of weighing reasons to stay against reasons to exit, both HRO workers and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints described a process of testing the decision to exit. HRO workers expressed these tests as backing away from duty, or accepting other positions within the same department with lower responsibility in order to see if being away from patrol or firefighting was an acceptable state. As a data category, Testing Exit from the HRO included comments about changing jobs or positions, neglecting duty, taking leaves of absence, and returning to work before the final exit process.

The process of testing exit involved quitting small parts of the organization at a time, or attempting to sidestep certain duties while retaining others. Finding it difficult to shirk duties that endangered others, this process often involved quitting non-essential parts of the post. Police Officer #3, for example, first quit two professional police organizations he was a part of

while continuing to work in his job. Firefighter #36, who was working for a full time fire department and volunteering for a second department part-time, “tried out” his final firefighting exit by first quitting his volunteer position while retaining his paid position.

The HRO narratives of this study described a process of oscillating exit, or leaving the work environment only to return again, often multiple times. Such test exits were accomplished through either taking leaves of absence from the job, or transferring into administrative or non-patrol jobs that the officer or firefighter thought would be less stressful. Only one of the 50 narratives from police officers and firefighters described a single-step exit, Police Officer #1, who wrote that he retired early to take another job because he had “just had enough.” All of the other 49 narratives described a prolonged exit process that involved alternating between exit and reentry several times. Police officer #44, for example, described questioning leaving the law enforcement field before he decided to start “browsing different department websites looking for that perfect place but quickly realized there is no such thing.” He then decided to take an inter-departmental transfer to administration within the same agency to “recharge the batteries.”

Like Police Officer #44, many of the HRO narratives describe taking different positions within the same department as a means of “easing out of police work” (Police Officer #50), or “trying out the decision” (Police Officer #2). In these instances, the narratives describe attempting different positions that they believed would be less stressful. Police Officer #10, for example, described the stress of working in a patrol job. After visiting several domestic disputes, he changed positions within his department to remove the stress of entering homes. He wrote, “the constant ‘domestics’ were what prompted me to leave uniform assignment and seek my next adventure — vice.” He described working in “vice,” or narcotics, for several years, all the while considering leaving law enforcement. He finally exited the field entirely.

Police Officer #25 describes a ten-year process of exit that began after experiencing several traumatic events on patrol with the Sheriff's office. He wrote:

I was feeling lost and inadequate and did not know what to do next. I was offered and subsequently took a position in another division as a supervisor. This provided a little relief from the trapped feelings but that soon presented problems of it's [sic] own. After only one year, I asked for and was given a transfer back to the patrol division.

Police Officer #25 then described a long process of considering exit. During this time, he wrote about his work deteriorating. "I began doing less and less and trying to rationalize why." As he backed off of duty, he realized the inherent danger in such a move, writing, "a close friend pointed out later that he felt I was trying to commit 'suicide by criminal' by giving them more than ample opportunity to kill or hurt me." He reports another job change within the department before taking a leave of absence. He returned to work for an unspecified time period before finally quitting.

Firefighters described similar trials to exit and oscillation between exit and membership. Firefighter #41, for example, transferred from one fire station to another in the same town where she felt the stress would be less. Finding that her stress level remained constant, she left the department. She later took a volunteer firefighting position when she wrote that she "couldn't stay away." Another firefighter, #38, experienced an altercation with another firefighter from his department that resulted in departmental discipline and loss of rank while he was contemplating exit. He rethought his exit decision, however, and transferred to another department before finally quitting.

Testing exit from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Like the HRO narratives in this study, Mormons similarly explained a process of oscillation between membership and exit involving several exits and reentries, or a series of partial exits. Both groups reported this process of quitting in small stages, or a series of partial exits. In these partial exits, members employed strategies to “test the waters” (Mormon #18) of a final departure. Such testing involved quitting parts of organizational participation, while remaining active in others. As a data category, Testing Exit in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints included comments about quitting certain faith practices, leaving or returning to church, and selecting parts of the faith to practice.

Those exiting the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints tested their exit decision by quitting small parts of the faith, while still practicing others. Mormon #25 and his wife went through the exit process together. He wrote about quitting the faith in small stages while daring or testing doctrinal rules. When they begin to test the exit process he wrote:

It was at that point that the temple garments came off. We slowly began to back away from Church attendance. First I stopped attending Sunday School, and my best friend and I would slip off to Barnes & Noble for a mocha... a newly discovered vice that got us good and amped for Priesthood. (Priesthood was never so fun as it was with a couple of shots of espresso coursing through your system and a fist full of Altoids in your mouth to cover the smell.)⁵

⁵ Temple garments are sacred garments that adult members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints wear after they have been fully endowed as a member in a temple ceremony. Sunday School and Priesthood are weekly meetings held for men during regular Sunday Church

Other Mormon narratives described a process of quitting attendance, only to begin again, then quit a second time. Mormon #18, for example, was raised in the faith, and served a mission. When he got to BYU, he began to question his faith. During his time at BYU, he tested his exit by first writing some questioning articles for a leaflet paper in his dormitory. He reports that he served as “editor for the Helascope (a mimeographed paper for Helaman Halls), which I typed and in which I expressed some rather individual ideas.” He later “intentionally flunked my religion class,” and finally left BYU, intent on quitting the faith entirely. After meeting a non-Mormon woman who he later married, however, Mormon #18 reentered the faith, baptizing his wife and children into Mormonism. He accepted calls to serve in the bishopric, and attended temple. He wrote: “For a few years I tried to live the Mormon dream, tried to believe it, put it at the center of my universe. I accepted some silly calling and even went to the SLC temple with my wife and three sons.” He later left the Church entirely, requesting removal of his name from the official membership rolls. His wife and children, however, remained active, and thus, he wrote, practiced Mormonism in the home.

This oscillating exit process was typical in all 50 of the Mormon narratives examined, none of which described a single-step exit process. Narratives, rather, described practicing parts of the faith, such as attending Church services, while shedding others, such as wearing temple garments or tithing ten percent of income to the Church. Twenty-nine of the narratives examined described quitting Church service attendance, only to recommit and begin attending again, followed by a second (and sometimes third, and even fourth) exit. Unlike HRO members who

services. “Hot drinks,” usually interpreted as coffee and tea, are forbidden by the Word of Wisdom of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (D&C 89:9).

found it impossible to shirk duty for fear of injury or death to the self and others, Mormons described shedding parts of the faith without consequence.

Self-doubt in the HRO. As HRO members struggled with the decision to exit, they described deep personal doubts. As the HRO workers oscillated between membership and exit, the narratives describe a long period of deep personal doubt about the worth of the individual, and the ability to shed the police officer or firefighter identity. This period of self-doubt set the HRO workers on an inward journey as they reflected on the self and the HRO identity. Self-doubt was expressed in 32 of the narratives analyzed. This category included comments about doubting the decision to leave, doubting the self, and questioning one's abilities.

After the exit process had been initiated, both police officers and firefighters expressed doubt about the decision to leave. Police Officer #2 wrote about a sense of guilt for considering leaving. "I feel guilty because there are a lot of guys who would kill to have my job, and I hate it so much." He later expressed doubt that he could find a different job after leaving law enforcement. "The other hard thing is that I don't even know what to do with my life at this point. I am not qualified to do anything else." This doubt of the ability to take another job was present in ten narratives, all of whom expressed their fear that they are "not fit for anything else" or "not qualified" for another career.

Firefighters and police officers that had experienced either a conflict with another worker, or a traumatic event that served as a catalyst to exit were particularly likely to express doubt about their decision. Firefighter #42, whose catalyst to the exit decision was a struggle with administration, expressed concern that he was making a rash decision. "Sometimes I wonder if the same attribute that gives us the ability to make split-second decisions is the same one that moves us quickly to a decision to 'get out,'" he wrote. Police Officer #23, who left after

witnessing several traumatic events, expressed deep doubt over his decision to leave the field. During his prolonged exit experience, he took two leaves of absence, and finally quit. During the time at work between his leaves, he wrote about doubting his ability to continue, while still doubting the decision to leave. “I could not do it. My greatest fear was that I would get someone injured or worse,” he wrote.

Police Officer #21, who was shot in the line of duty, spent over a year doubting her decision to exit. While on medical leave after the shooting, she began to contemplate taking an early medical retirement. In her third month of leave, she wrote, “I can’t comprehend why I would retire.” By the fifth month of leave, however, she was still contemplating retirement. She expressed her doubt that it was the best decision: “The word ‘retire’ has a new meaning to me. I now understand why someone would retire. I frantically search my mind for another occupation. If I quit, would the devil then win the healing game? Would I be admitting defeat?” She eventually returned to work, took another leave of absence, returned again, then finally quit.

Deep personal doubt was not limited to doubting the decision to leave. Both police officers and firefighters expressed extensive doubts about the self. Following the first thoughts of exit, narrative writers described fluctuating between belief and doubt in the self. Such feelings of doubt were particularly prominent in the narratives of those who had experienced traumatic events on the job. Such events both triggered thoughts of exit, and deep doubts about the self, as HRO workers wrote about a propensity to blame themselves for the events that led to their eventual exit. Police Officer #9 wrote about experiencing deep personal doubt about his decisions on the job after a particular domestic disturbance call. Arriving first on the scene, the officer wrote that he called, and then waited for backup before entering the home. Before another officer arrived, however, he wrote that “the husband was shot and fatally wounded. I

remember the event every day. I have lived with the guilt of the decision to wait for backup for several years.” The officer reported seeking medical treatment for PTSD related to this and other incidents, and eventually left law enforcement. Such doubt of his policing abilities and decision-making were typical of others who experienced self-doubt surrounding a traumatic event during their contemplation of exit.

Another police officer, #14, wrote about his personal struggle with the death of a fellow officer. The officer wrote about an exit process that involved changing from a sheriff’s department to a municipal police force in an attempt to make a new start after his first thoughts of exit occur. A very short time after his move to another job, his friend, who had taken his old position, was shot and killed at work. He wrote about his feelings of guilt: “There are times when I still fee that guilt now. If I would have stayed at the sheriff’s department, she would not have been killed.”

Police Officer #18 wrote about an incident that was particularly traumatic, and the lasting self-doubt it engendered. He responded to a call to a home where a man died in the presence of his five children. He wrote that one of the children, an eight year-old girl, ran to him and hugged him. “I thought about my own daughter, I thought about Katelyn growing up without a dad, I prayed for her. At that time I thought that I just might be in the wrong profession. Who am I to try and console these kids. Who am I to try to justify or explained [sic] the death of their father.”

Self-doubt in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Like HRO workers, Mormons expressed undergoing a period of deep self-doubt as they oscillated between exit and membership. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints expressed deeply personal doubts about both their decisions to leave the faith, and about their own worthiness. The category of Self-Doubt was present in 40 of the narratives analyzed and included comments

about doubting the ability to be faithful, doubting personal worthiness, feelings of personal inadequacy, failure, or not being a good enough Mormon, or doubts about the decision to exit.

Mormon narratives expressed guilt and doubt surrounding the decision to leave the faith. As members of the Church made the decision to leave, they expressed leaving in terms of loss and grief. Such grieving for the loss of the Church included descriptions of doubting the ex-member's place in the family, and in their world. Mormon #34 expressed feeling emotionally wounded by the loss of the Church in her life shortly after making her formal and final exit. She wrote:

Yet it still hurts. Now and then, I still feel guilty. Call it a conscience if you want, but I'll just deny it. It hurts still because I lost a lot when I gave up the LDS church. It hurts because I loved that church, I poured my heart and soul into it, only to find I had been duped, like so many others. It hurts because I still have to watch those I love most, my sisters, struggle with it and with their own self-esteem from church related things. Occasionally when I have flashbacks of old memories, it hurts all the more because I cannot seem to find a heavenly father now. I won't lie; I miss the church. I miss feeling like I belong and being able to depend on the church for stability.

Mormon #15, similarly, expressed a sense of pain and loss during his exit process. He wrote about being part of a family that was still in the Church, and a sense of not belonging amongst them:

Church leaders either don't understand, or don't care how devastating it can be for some people to find out the beliefs that their entire lives were built around, and their security depended on, are bogus. It can approach the pain of a child losing a parent or being taken from family. So many discussions and activities in families and at reunions depend on the assumption that the church is true. It is difficult to feel like you belong when you're considered a disbeliever.

During her process of exit, Mormon #13 expressed deep doubts about how to proceed with her life after leaving the faith:

How does one recover from Mormonism? How does one separate the cultural life as a Mormon from the noxious belief system? What happens when you learn that 'there is no Santa Claus' and everything you have known, felt, or believed is a fraud? What happens when you have raised your children in this belief system and reach a point where you can no longer do that? After teaching and living Mormonism with your family, how do you put the brakes on and say, 'Hey kids, I was wrong?' What happens to you emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and physically when you discover that your life has been based on a lie?

Narratives described doubt not only about leaving the faith behind, but also about the worthiness of the self. Such doubts were expressed as feeling that the writer was at fault for their inability to believe, or that their disbelief was worthy of punishment from God. Such doubts

were expressed as personal failures. Mormon #24, for example wrote that he decided not to serve a mission while struggling with his own sexuality. He wrote about blaming himself for his inability to serve a mission: “It depressed me to go but I wondered what was so wrong with me that I wasn’t thrilled to serve the Lord like my family and the other church members,” he wrote. Mormon #23, similarly, wrote about blaming herself for the inability to feel the Holy Ghost in the temple. Describing her first temple rituals as “bizarre” and “cultish,” she wrote, “but again, I was convinced that the problem lied within me and that one day I would understand.”

Mormon # 11 wrote that he blamed his inability to believe on “not being diligent enough in my study of the scriptures, letting ‘Satan take hold.’” Mormon #21 wrote about blaming her inability to be faithful enough for personal tragedy in her life. She wrote about learning of the doctrine of pre-existence, or the soul’s time with God before birth. When she miscarried her first child, she wrote, “I never told a soul but secretly I believed that maybe God didn’t want me to have children because of my not being valiant in the pre-existence.

Suck it up: Concealing emotion in the HRO. Police officer and firefighter narratives describe a practice of concealing emotion throughout the exit process. HRO workers described a process of concealing both the self-doubts they were having, and their contemplation of exit. The Suck It Up category included comments about concealing emotions, repressing feelings, and dealing with emotional events. Comments about emotion were present in 30 of the HRO narratives examined for this study, and all 30 spoke of such emotion in terms of concealment or repression. The narratives described an expectation amongst HRO workers to quash or hide emotion, or to wear a “brave face.” Narratives repeatedly used the phrase “suck it up” to describe the expectation to maintain an appearance of stoic service in the face of emotional events.

“Sucking it up,” or the expectation to remain emotionless, was both described by HRO narratives, and reinforced in online forum responses between officers or firefighters. HRO workers described hiding their emotional responses to traumatic events, and a fear of appearing weak or incapable if such emotions were released. Police Officer #24 wrote that he felt catharsis at releasing emotions in his online narrative after masking them with others.

I guess the main reason I am writing this is to vent. To release some inner struggle. As sick as cops are, literally, I can not do this with those that I work with, as the all time greatest fear may arise, that they view me as weak. But, weak I am not.....I'm just not as tough as I thought I was.

HRO workers wrote about learning the expected behavior of masking from more senior officers when they were new to the job. Police Officer #20, for example, wrote about his first gruesome experience on the job pulling a body from the river, and his senior officer's advice for him:

Only the clothing on the body was actually holding it together. Getting the body from the water, meant reaching in and actually pulling out hand and armloads of it. This was the first time that I had ever seen a person laugh and vomit at the same time. My off-sider was. Me, I just vomited. He told me to get used to it, son.

As his career progressed, this same officer wrote about a hardening of his emotions. He describes “bottling” emotional responses to repeated traumatic events as he contemplates exit from law enforcement.

I DON'T WANT TO PLAY THIS GAME ANY MORE. There is only one way that I know of to deal with this, short of becoming a

Jeekyll and Hyde, and that is to deaden your emotions. Make yourself perform things robotically, until you get home. And then wanting to take a kick at the cat, to let things out.

While contemplating their decision to exit, often suffering PTSD symptoms after repeated trauma, both police officers and firefighters expressed continued masking of emotion. Narrative writers described both suffering with their own emotional numbing, while, paradoxically, simultaneously reinforcing to other officers/firefighters the expectation to “suck it up.” Firefighter #37, for example, asked for advice from other firefighters about coping with his numbed emotions in his online narrative. While expressing their own emotional issues, firefighters who responded referred to emotional expression at the firehouse as “drama,” and “a morale issue.” One response called emotional outbursts in the firehouse “tears and tantrums,” and another called those expressing emotion “cry babies.” Police officers expressed a similar expectation of emotional numbing. When Police Officer #3, for example, wrote about leaving the police academy when he was unable to cope with the physical and emotional demands, other police officers responded by posting unflattering comments about #3, telling him to “man up,” “grow up,” and “get yourself a can of man along with a straw and suck it up.”

Such a numbing of emotion was described by both firefighters and police officers as both expectation and a coping mechanism. As HRO workers described experiencing repeated trauma, they wrote about hiding emotion at work to avoid appearing weak to other officers or firefighters. Such desensitizing, however, was described as difficult to reverse in time off of the job. Both police officers and firefighters wrote about difficulty expressing appropriate emotions with family and friends outside their departments. Firefighter #40 wrote:

What I mean is that the job is going to make you hardened and numb to ‘normal’ emotions. That doesn’t mean you’ll never feel an emotion again. It just means that, to survive on the job, you’ll have to learn to turn off your emotions and become clinical, just to do your job. To maintain emotional health, you’ll have to use your ability to compartmentalize yourself. Turn your emotions off on the job. And make a conscious effort to turn them back on again as you go off duty. This is easier said than done. Emotions aren’t that simple. There’s no way to process, say, a child fatality, just by ignoring it. Especially if you have children of your own. We become overprotective. We become short-tempered. We become withdrawn from our spouses.

Both police officers and firefighters expressed fear of emotional withdrawal from friends and family, while describing their own emotional masking. Police Officer #2 described concealing his own emotions, for example, while at the same time experiencing frustration with the attitudes of other officers who exhibited hardened emotion. He wrote, “The seasoned officers have put in 20-30 years in one office and they dislike everything from Pizza to President.”

Concealment of doubt in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The data category of Concealment of Doubt was present in 35 of the Mormon narratives analyzed. This data category included comments about hiding doctrinal doubts and disagreement, concealing the decision to exit, concealing self-doubt, and working to maintain a visible appearance of faith. Mormon narratives described a process of contemplating exit while deliberately masking both

the reasons for exit, and the decision to exit. The narratives describe maintaining an outward appearance of faith while experiencing deep personal doubt.

Mormon narratives described a process of continuing to practice the faith while struggling with doubts about the authenticity of doctrine. Mormon #49 wrote, “I went eleven years doubting and studying. I no longer believed, but I outwardly played the TBM [True Believing Mormon] role because I was afraid of being rejected by my friends and family.” Another narrative writer, Mormon #4, wrote “somehow it just never all tied together for me. Internally it never felt quite right, yet I continued to live dualistically, ever the strong, active Mormon under the weight of so many doubts.”

Mormon #27 described accepting a string of callings in the Church while doubting the truth of doctrine:

So I plodded along — Sunday School teacher, Sunday School President, Elder’s Quorum President, Ward Clerk, and other callings I no longer even recall. But I never, ever gained a real testimony. Ever. Oh, I stoop up in F&T [Fast and Testimony] meetings once in a while and bore my testimony. I knew how I was supposed to feel, what I was supposed to say, but I just never got my burning bosom, or my ‘perfect knowledge’ that the Church was true and that Joseph Smith was a prophet. I guess I was in ‘fake it till you make it’ mode.

Mormon #9, similarly, wrote about accepting Church positions and responsibilities in an attempt to appear faithful. He wrote:

I remained a faithful member of the church, fulfilling all my church obligations, attending meetings, observing the Word or Wisdom, wearing my temple garments. But I was struggling mightily to reconcile the church's inconsistencies, lies, and dubious past with my faith in its divinity.

While testing the waters of exit, Mormon narrative writers described engaging in activities that gave the outward appearance of a renewed or strengthened belief in the Church. Mormon # 20, for example, described engaging in gardening, canning, sewing, and other homemaking activities taught by the Church to appear "the perfect wife, mother, and member of the church." Mormon #25, similarly, wrote that he accepted a local clergy position, all the while reading anti-Mormon literature and philosophy that weakened his belief in the Church. He wrote, "so here I am, doubting the very existence of God, but maintaining that the Church is still probably true, and going about the business of being an A-team Mormon." Mormon #23 concealed both his doubts and his decision to exit throughout a mission, and after returning, a temple marriage to the girlfriend who waited for him to return. He wrote that he "spent the rest of my mission doubting the gospel. I kept this hidden."

Mormon narratives described internal turmoil about such concealment of doubt. The process of concealing doubt was described as requiring care and energy to maintain. As such concealment took its toll on the writers, they described moving gradually closer to final exit. Mormon #6 wrote:

I was tired of putting up a front. I was teaching things, not only that I didn't know were true, but even had serious doubts about. I was lying to myself, the people and God. That's a crummy way to

live. I had, many times, when I reached the testimony bearing part of a discussion, gritted my teeth and said to myself ‘Here goes another lie.’ I was a good actor in high school — I think the training helped. I could fool everyone — almost all the missionaries thought I was strong. Yet I couldn’t fool two important people — myself and God.

Mormon #3, who was still practicing Mormonism at the time he wrote his narrative, described hiding his thoughts of leaving from his Mormon family out of fear of family turmoil: “I have tried to keep my misgivings and doubts so myself because, if I didn’t, the pain that would be cause in my immediate and extended families could reverberate for years. He later expressed fear that other former Mormons would judge his decision to keep his exit concealed from his family:

I will probably receive harsh criticism from your other readers for not being true to myself and others, explaining to those I love my current beliefs. However, it’s just not that easy when almost everyone I know (excluding co-workers) is and has been a faithful LDS member and proponent their entire life.

The narratives examined in this study reveal a prolonged and oscillating process of exit for both HRO workers and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints during the preannouncement period. This process was marked by personal doubt, family considerations, and a concealment of emotion, doubt, and the decision to exit. The narratives of both HRO workers and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints described a process of struggling with such self-doubt alone. Such doubts about the self or the organization

were not discussed with other members, or even, in the case of Church members, with family or friends. HRO narratives described a pattern of concealing emotion, while members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints described concealing and masking their doubts about the faith and the self.

Announcement and Exit

The narratives of this study described a prolonged and oscillating process leading up to organizational exit that was marked by self-doubt and concealing the contemplation of exit, even from close friends and family. The announcement of exit was not discussed in any of the 50 narratives of HRO workers analyzed for this study. While HRO workers are paid employees, and there is a reasonable expectation that most or all gave notice to their employers, the narratives do not describe the actual notice or announcement of leaving the job. Rather, HRO workers describe a long process of concealing the contemplation of exit from co-workers, followed by an undisclosed exit announcement.

Similarly, the Mormon narratives of this study, like HRO workers, do not describe a formal announcement of exit either to the organization, or to friends and family prior to leaving. Unlike HRO narratives, however, this is not an omission from the narrative. Rather, Mormon narratives describe intentionally failing to announce their exit. Formal voluntary exit from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a process that requires administrative name removal from Church membership rolls. This step requires sending a formal letter to Church headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah. The Church officially considers those who do not practice the faith, but whose names are still on membership rolls, as inactive members. Of the 50 Mormon narratives analyzed in this study, five mention taking this step toward official name removal.

Eighteen of the Mormon narratives of this study include information about announcing their exit to family and friends. All 18 of these describe announcing exit after they had already stopped practicing all parts of the faith. Five of these narrative writers announced their exit to family in a letter written after the exit process was complete. None of the 50 Mormon narratives describe announcement of exit either during the process, or prior to actually leaving the faith. Mormon #18, for example, describes waiting to tell his family that he was leaving the Church until after his exit was complete. He then wrote letters to his parents, brother, and wife explaining his exit. A similar process of announcing exit after leaving was articulated in ten total Mormon narratives. Mormon #23 first revealed his exit to his father after he had left the Church. He wrote that his father, then, expressed his own doubts about the faith. Mormon #29 describes leaving BYU as his faith wanes. He describes hiding the decision to exit until his transfer to another University was complete.

Happily Ever After?: Post-Exit

Both HRO and Mormon narratives described the aftermath of exit. While both data sets contained narratives from members who were still in the exit process (10 Mormons and 22 HRO workers had not yet exited formally at the time of their narratives), many of those who had exited described the consequences of exit. In the time period after leaving their organizations, narrative writers described changed family situations, reconciled fears, and new organizational memberships.

The Aftermath of Exit from the HRO

Twenty of the HRO narratives examined in this study reported information about the aftermath of exit. The Aftermath category included comments about the time period after exit, and both positive and negative consequences of leaving work at the HRO. Of the 20 narratives

including information about the aftermath of exit, eight wrote that they had taken early retirement following an injury or trauma and PTSD diagnosis.

During the process of exit, police and firefighters described contemplating the job's negative effects on the family. In the aftermath of exit, narrative writers reported changes to family situations. For most, the changes to schedule and stress levels were reported as positive influences on the family. For sufferers of PTSD, however, negative effects on the family were reported. Police Officer #11, for example, wrote about the negative effects of his severe PTSD on his family after taking a medical retirement. He wrote about a typical night with his family:

The family goes in and prepares for bed and eventually drift into deep sleep thinking of wonderful things that have happened in their lifetimes, or maybe dreaming of what success they will have as they grow older. I sit in the recliner and think as well. Our thoughts are not similar, but very opposite. I think of the cruel insensitivity of human beings that leads to sexual abuse of children, rape and murder.

Police Officer #13 reported similar lasting effects of PTSD. After years of treatment and medication, he wrote, "my therapist told me that my illness was severe, chronic and permanent. I could either stay on the medication the rest of my life or learn to live with the illness." He wrote about founding a peer support group for other sufferers of PTSD.

While not diagnosed with PTSD, Firefighter #41 reported a lasting sense of stress after leaving the job. He wrote:

If you are considering becoming a firefighter, know that you will experience stress like nothing you ever imagined. I still (18 years

later) wake up in a cold sweat with my heart going a mile a minute in my chest, if the phone rings while I am sleeping. (I still get it on the first ring though!)

After years of masking emotion on the job, police officers reported learning to express emotion again in the aftermath of exit. Police Officer #10 wrote about coming to terms with the traumatic events he had experienced as an officer:

All in all, I felt my experiences during those first ten years were normal and that I was a classic big city police officer. Apparently normal was not the right word. Recently I have been made aware that these typical daily encounters are exceptionally abnormal. It is not normal for any person to observe and be involved in traumatic violence on a continual basis, despite the commonly perceived Hollywood image of the hardened cop.

Police Officer #19 wrote the he spent time in the aftermath of exit learning to cope with the emotional repression that had dominated his police years. “I am no longer ashamed to admit the feelings I have become accustomed to over the years, and can only hope my thoughts will serve to let others know that we are, afterall, just human.”

Of the narratives reporting information about the aftermath of exit, two wrote that they were considering an eventual return to law enforcement. Three others wrote that they were happy without police work or firefighting, and would never return to the field. Police Officer #16 gave a bulleted list of his four years as a police officer weighed against the job he took after leaving the field:

- Going home stressed every night

- Being stressed at work as not being able to unlock full potential
- Getting stressed out with scum getting away with it day-in, day-out while my resident suffer
- Banging my head against a brick wall because of the stress around politics and bureaucracy
- Stress and dismay of feeling like you are just a number
- Stress of being spoken to/spoken about by the public like I am on the floor

I think the general theme here would be ‘stress’

Current Job

- Turn up, do work, off, get paid

In the aftermath of exit, HRO workers described reconciling trauma and the experiences that led to exit. While just two expressed actual intent to return to police work, 15 of the narratives discussed a sense of loss or missing the work, indicating a continued sense of connection to the values of the organization. Like the Mormon narratives, HRO workers described an aftermath of exit that involved effects on the family. For most, this effect was positive as former police officers and firefighters had more time at home, thus reducing the tensions time on the job had created.

Aftermath of Exit from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Twenty-nine of the Mormon narratives examined in this study included information about the time period after exit. The Aftermath category included comments about effects on family relationships, joining other churches, and both positive and negative effects of exit. Of

those reporting information about the aftermath of exit, just one narrative described joining another faith.

Fear of family rejection and loss of friends in the faith was listed as a reason to remain in the faith in Mormon narratives. In the aftermath of exit, narrative writers wrote about reconciling these relationships. In the case of Mormon #23, his anticipated family rejection never materialized. He wrote that “it was a life changing experience when I had a heart to heart with my dad and he admitted many of the same doubts.” Mormon #18 wrote about mixed family reactions to his exit. He announced his exit to his family in letters addressed to each. He wrote that his eldest brother and one of his four sons supported his decision. He reported, however, a strain on relations with his wife, who remained a member of the Church. He wrote that some of his family simply ignored his exit. He wrote, “My three faithful Mormon sons have not mentioned the letters I sent them, and neither has my faithful Mormon brother.”

Not all family and friend reactions were as positive. Mormon #33 wrote, “my mother found out from my sister, called me and made some wild accusations.” She later wrote that she sent her parents a letter explaining her decision to exit the Church. “So far, I haven’t heard from them.” Mormon #32 wrote that “all the friends just disappeared” after she left the Church. Mormon #16 wrote about a similar loss of friends: “I did however lose all my Mormon friends except one and I hardly ever see her. It’s sad that friendship is treated in such a cheap way. I think now that I never mattered to any of the people who professed to love me within the church and that makes me feel pretty stupid at my own gullibility.”

Mormon #22 reported a similar loss of friends when she and her husband left the faith together. Their loss of friends, however extended to a loss of business clients.

Our names were mentioned over the pulpit in the ward & for people to 'beware' of us. Our accounting firm that we had struggled to develop for over 5 years, was gone in 2 weeks because our member clients were told to stay away from us. I couldn't believe the shunning the children and us experienced. Dear friends, would see us in the grocery store or movie theater & walk out. The children and Bill & I lost every one of our friends but more devastating than loosing [sic] friends & our accounting firm was feeling betrayed by God.

Mormon #7 described a similar loss of all Mormon friends, and the loss of a relationship with her two grown children. While she wrote that she had no desire to return to the Church, she explained a profound sense of loss for the relationships that exit had cost her. She wrote: "I grieve for my children, for losing the friendships of the wonderful people in the church, for losing my best friend who will not talk to me now, for the family atmosphere that permeates the church, for the closeness."

Not all effects of exit were described in such negative terms. Mormon #25, for example, wrote that he felt his family had more time to spend together on weekends without Church services. He wrote, "our family is happier and healthier than we've ever been, closer as a family than most Mormon families we knew when active, and the guilt of being unable to live the perfect Mormon life has been shed forever." Mormon #17 wrote, "I've never felt so peaceful, so free, and so alive in my life."

Summary of Results

The story of exit revealed in the totalistic organizational narratives of this study was one of prolonged periods of contemplation and self-doubt. The narratives of this study describe an oscillation between exit and membership, and in and out process of leaving the organization, only to return. Faith members in particular quit small parts of the Church at a time while retaining other practices. This long, non-linear exit was marked with intense self-doubt and a concealment of emotions and the exit decision for both HRO workers and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

This grand antenarrative of exit was contrary to both Jablin's (2001) phasic model of exit and Kramer's (2011) passive volunteer exit finding. Both HRO workers and Mormons described an exit process that, unlike Jablin's model, did not include a formal announcement of exit. While it may be assumed that HRO workers had, at some point to tender a resignation, their contemplation of exit was kept entirely secret from the "brotherhood" they described as family. Mormon narratives, similarly, described an intentional concealment of the process of exit, even while testing the decision through quitting small parts of the faith. These tests were restricted to practices that would remain invisible to other members and family members such as refusing to wear temple garments, or sneaking a cup of coffee before meetings. This concealment of the exit decision was more than the passive failure to announce exit Kramer describes. Rather, the narratives described an active concealment of exit, fearing repercussions from Mormon family members, or the HRO brotherhood who expected the member to "suck it up." In contrast to HRO members, Mormon narratives described announcing their exit to family and close friends *after* the formal exit had occurred.

Members of both the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and HRO groups described a sense of loss after leaving, but this loss was particularly acute for Mormon narrative writers. Mormon narratives described the loss of the Church in terms of grieving. The deep personal sense of loss that these members described continued long after exit, some former members writing about such grief several decades after leaving the Church. HRO members, by contrast, were more likely to discuss lasting effects of on-the-job trauma in the aftermath of exit. Such trauma was listed as both a reason for exit, and as a lasting after-effect in the years following leaving the HRO job. Trauma, while also present in Mormon narratives, did not play the same role in exit as it did for HRO members. Mormon narratives discussed personal trauma such as deaths in the family or illness, as a decision point that began a period of questioning Church beliefs, but did not remain part of the aftermath of exiting the Church. The following chapter will discuss these findings in as they relate to previous research.

CHAPTER FIVE. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore how members exit a totalistic organization. As defined by this dissertation, a totalistic organization is one in which the values, practices, and rituals, and relationships associated with membership not only extend into the member's everyday life, but play a primary role. The characteristics defining the totalistic organization include: value based-membership, centrality of values to the member's identity, carry-over of values into other areas of the member's life, involvement of primary relationships, and a requirement of organizational fealty. This study examined the exit narratives of members of both paid (police officers and firefighters) and unpaid (the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) totalistic organizational members, allowing the researcher to compare and contrast member exit in two different memberships that share totalistic attributes. The findings of this study suggest several contributions to the study of organizational assimilation and exit. First, the findings of this study expand our definition of organizational memberships beyond current literature which delineates memberships based on payment relationships (e.g. pay vs. volunteer). The findings of this study suggest that certain organizational attachments are defined not by the exchange of resources, but by the organizational structure and its reach into the member's life. Moreover, consideration of totalistic exit challenges existing models of role/vocational socialization, suggesting that foundational values can originate from an organizational source. Second, the process of exit revealed by the narratives of this study suggests a more nuanced view of exit than current phasic models or considerations of volunteer exit demonstrate. The process of exiting a totalistic organization was less linear and more prolonged than exit describe by existing literature, and was marked by deep personal doubts and fears. Finally, members of totalistic organizations described active concealment of both their decisions to exit, and the

doubts about both the organization and the self that contribute to exit, suggesting a communicative pattern during the exit process that diverges from the expected announcement/exit phase of Jablin's (2001) model.

Totalistic Organizational Memberships

While the bulk of existing organizational communication research treats the employee/employer relationship as the universal organizational membership structure, the findings of this study challenge this view. Existing literature in organizational assimilation and exit, in particular, has defined member attachment in terms of resource exchange. Most assimilation research has examined paid employee relationships (e.g. Ashforth, Saks, & Lee, 1998; Comer, 1991; DiSanza, 1995; Jablin, 1984; 2001; Jones & Crandall, 1985; Morrison, 1995; Myers & Oetzel, 2003). Such research has explored exit, in particular, as the process of leaving a paid employment membership (e.g. Carr, Pearson, Vest & Boyar, 2006; DiSanza, 1995; Padgett, Gjerde, Hughes & Born, 1995). Kramer (2011) challenged the ubiquity of the paid employment relationship in his study of volunteer exit from a community choir, which called Jablin's phasic model of exit into question for unpaid organizational memberships with his findings that exit occurred as a fluid and indefinite process for volunteers. Kramer's work called attention to unpaid membership as distinct, but still privileges pay (or the lack of pay) as the defining characteristic of organizational membership. The findings of the present study suggest, however, that certain organizational attachments are defined not by the exchange of pay for service, but by the reach of organizational values, practices, and rituals into the member's everyday life.

The pattern of exit revealed in the narratives of this study did not mirror either Jablin's (2001) phasic model of exit, or Kramer's observed passive volunteer exit. Instead, a grand

an narrative of exit that emerged from this study was a prolonged and non-linear path for both paid memberships (police officers and firefighters) and unpaid memberships (members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). This finding suggests that the organizational type may have more to do with the exit process than previous research has suggested. This process was described in similar terms for both church and HRO members, suggesting that it is not the presence of pay that defines organizational attachment and processes, but rather the extension of organizational culture beyond organizational walls into the lives of the members. While traditional employment memberships have a reasonable influence on the member's life, the results of this study suggest that there are certain organizational memberships that might be considered far more totalistic. Such memberships involve the deep internalization of values and ideals that hold great sway over the member in situations both in and outside the organization. Exit from the totalistic organization, unlike either a job or volunteer group, represents leaving behind the very belief systems that shape the way the member sees her world.

The narratives of both Church members and HRO workers described their exit in terms of the reach of the organization in their everyday lives. The narrative writers in this study described leaving behind the values, beliefs, and practices of both paid and unpaid memberships in terms of a grievous loss. Such deep personal internalization of organizational ideals increases the stakes of exit. The permeability of organizational boundaries was apparent in the narrative descriptions of the aftermath of exit in this study. Members of both HROs and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints described a grieving process in the wake of leaving. The narratives describe a sense of grief, guilt, and loss accompanied by uncertainty about the place of the self in the family, and in society without the organization. Such descriptions deep personal grieving suggest that such organizational types hold a place in the member's life that is more like

a close personal relationship than a job, and leaving the organization more like losing a family member or close friend.

The narratives of this study described a process of exit that was defined by this deep attachment to organizational beliefs as foundational to the member's life. As members contemplated exit, the totalistic nature of their organizational membership led to deep personal doubts, and a prolonged process of quitting small parts of the organization, only to begin again. The narratives described a recognition of the consuming nature of their organizational memberships as the members contemplate leaving. This tenuous and grief-filled exit process contrasts with the exit most employees experiencing, suggesting that the role of socializing organizational members into encompassing value systems has more to do with the organizational exit than previous research has indicated.

Vocational/Role Socialization in the Totalistic Organization

The deep internalization of the organizational beliefs exhibited by the narrative writers in this study challenges current assimilation models that divide vocational/role socialization from organizational anticipatory socialization (Jablin, 2001; Kramer, 2010). These models recognize the internalizing of foundational values that guide the worldview of the future worker in childhood, but divide such socialization from an organizational source. This treatment of value socialization assumes that the underlying values that define views of work, work ethics, and beliefs about vocation are learned from sources independent of the organizations for which the individual will ultimately work. Jablin (2001) writes that when children learn about their parent's work, they learn only snippets of organizational information, most of which are relational stories that serve to teach values of working with others. Rather, they are socialized by family, school, friends, and media into a set of values and ethics that drive their future career

decisions. Researchers have supported this view of anticipatory socialization, showing how children are socialized into conceptions of work and career through their parents (e.g. Gibson & Papa, 2000; Willis, 1977). These studies, however, have indicated that even when vocational socialization prepares a child for blue collar work, the particulars of organizational life are learned from the organization, long after such values are instilled. The results of the present study challenge this division of role and organizational anticipatory socialization, suggesting that deeply held values about totalistic memberships may be instilled by the organization itself.

Considering role/vocational socialization from an organizational source suggests a merging of organization and role, thereby offering a definition of “vocation” that goes beyond the set of work-related values and skills that Jablin (2001) promotes. Kramer’s (2010) term “role” begins to address this broader recognition of organizational roles that an individual will eventually fill. Both Jablin and Kramer, however, conceive of this period of value instillation as separate from particular organizations. The present study suggests that fundamental values that are part of the individual’s role identity can be organizational. Totalistic organizational values are instilled in the individual through a socialization process that creates a role that is synonymous with the organizational occupation. In the case of faith groups, this socialization occurs in childhood not through parental or peer stories and talk as Jablin (2001) envisioned, but through the child’s own personal experience in the organization itself. The child learns doctrine particular to the church, not just a view of religion. Likewise, totalistic occupations employ rigorous and prolonged training and preparation programs that are designed to strip the individual of his prior identity and instill foundational values that are particular to the organization (e.g. military basic training or police academy). For the totalistic organizational member, then, role/vocation becomes equivalent with the organizational position.

Such a broad consideration of role linked to organization raises questions about the ability of the member to ever fully leave behind the organization. Where Jablin (2001) and Kramer (2010) both conceptualize role or vocation as a broad set of skills or values that the member carries from one organization to another when he quits a job and begins a new one, the tying of role to the organization presents a unique challenge for exit as the member is leaving a value system that is part of their identity. Where a job can be replaced, no such replacement exists for identity values, and thus, potentially the member is left without a suitable replacement for the totalistic organization upon exit. Such deeply instilled values, moreover, are never fully shed; the member retains vestiges of these values long after exit, as evidenced by the narratives of this study. Many of the narratives examined were written many years after exit. These narratives were posted freely by the former member, without prompting by the researcher for this study. Such an effort to write about the exit experience and post it for others to read indicates a level of saliency of the organization and the exit experience in the member's life, even several decades later.

The childhood socialization into organizational values was most evident in the faith community narratives of this study. The narratives describe not just general religious values taught in childhood, but particular Mormon values, practices, and ethics. Unlike the role socialization described by Kramer (2010), it is not a general set of ethic and values that Mormon children learn, but those of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This distinction is important in the consideration of organizational exit because leaving represents leaving behind not only organizational practices, but the very underlying values that guide the member's world view. Where the employee socialization model advanced by Jablin (2001) and Kramer (2010) conceptualizes fundamental values as separate from the organization, the member is then able to

leave the organization and carry these foundational values to another job. By contrast, such foundational values are part and parcel of membership in the totalistic organization, and leave risks walking away from these fundamental beliefs.

Such a view of organizational value socialization was also supported in the police officer and firefighter narratives of this study. While many of the narratives describe growing up in households with a parent who was also a firefighter or police officer, the organizational values that the HRO workers grieved losing included those gained during prolonged training periods. For firefighters, this included several years spent as a “booter,” or newcomer in the firehouse, and for police officers, years spent as a “rookie.” Researchers have pointed to the difficult and prolonged period of anticipatory socialization that HRO workers face (e.g. Myers, 2005; Myers & McPhee, 2006; Myers & Oetzel, 2003; Scott & Myers, 2005). This prolonged training period serves, like childhood socialization, to instill foundational values connected to the very identity, and thus, supporting the view of an organizational role socialization.

Leaving the Totalistic Organization

The grand antenarrative of exit that emerged from the narratives examined for this study contrasted with both Jablin’s (2001) phasic model of exit and Kramer’s (2011) observed passive volunteer exit in three important ways. First, the process of exit from totalistic organizations was described as prolonged and non-linear. Second, totalistic organizational members recounted stories of deep personal doubts that complicated the exit process. Finally, while Jablin’s phasic model includes a formal announcement of exit, members of totalistic organizations describe an active process of concealment of both the decision to leave and the deep personal doubts that contributed to the process wherein announcements are made in distinctly different ways.

A Prolonged and Non-Linear Exit

The narratives of this exit described an exit that did not mirror the linear phasic model Jablin (2001) advanced. Existing research in paid employment memberships has supported Jablin's staged model of exit that includes a pre-exit period of decision and communication with co-workers, a formal announcement of exit, and a period of post-exit sensemaking for the members of the organization left behind. The totalistic narratives of this study, however, suggest that for members of totalistic organizations, the process of exit is not so clear-cut.

The process of exit that emerged from the narratives in this study suggests a more nuanced view of exit than previous research has implied. For the members of totalistic organizations studied here, exit was not a finite state reached in the clear and single-step severing of ties described in Jablin's (2001) announcement/exit phase. Exit has previously been treated as a zero-sum game where the exiter is either in the organization, or out. The findings of this study, however, suggest a more fluid view of exit that is marked by quitting small parts of the organization at a time followed by a re-commitment prior to exit. Unlike the traditional employment relationships represented in previous exit research, the totalistic members of this study disconnected from the organization in steps that included oscillation between exit and metamorphosis. HRO workers described taking leaves of absence from the job as a test to the final exit, then returning, often serving several more years recommitted to the job. Mormon narratives described quitting small parts of the faith that, to the member, represented either leaving behind or rebelling against core Church values such as ceasing tithing or the wearing of temple garments. Potentially, this oscillating between commitment and disengagement could be represented in a traditional paid corporate environment (e.g. an employee who backs away from certain duties at his job before finding another one and quitting). However, the findings of this

study point to the relational and cultural significance of exit that engendered deep personal doubts and fears connected to the potential exit. Moreover, unlike the employee who tends to find another job, usually within the same field, before quitting, the narratives of this study do not describe such a transition. Interestingly, neither HRO workers nor Mormons in this study describe seeking another job or church before leaving. Mormons, in particular, were likely to exit and not join another faith. This finding is contrary to studies of employee exit where the member uses his time in a job he dislikes to find another position, or leaves because another opportunity presents itself. Opportunities to replace value systems, however, do not simply arise. Nor, it seems from the narratives of this study, does the totalistic member seek a replacement. The member, then, does not leave the organization *for* anything else.

This process of alternating between membership and exit was prolonged, described in the narratives of this study as lasting from six months to 20 years, however this was not because other employment or religious affiliations were unavailable. Such a protracted period of exit has not been reflected in research on traditional corporate environments. This may be because a traditional job allows the employee to seek another position that is a good match for her fundamental values, views, and skills before exiting the organization. The employee leaves behind the job, but carries her foundational values to the next, perhaps similar, position. Leaving the totalistic organization, by contrast, represents leaving behind fundamental values that are particular to the organization, and are not suitable for carrying forth to another group. Previous research has assumed a relatively short period of pre-exit decision-making that includes discussion of the decision with close friends, family, and/or co-workers. In Jablin's model, this pre-exit phase might be seen as an end of metamorphosis, a time when the member detaches from the organization, and ultimately exits in a single and brief step. The corporate

environments represented by previous research leave little room for the oscillation between membership and exit exhibited by the totalistic member narratives of this study.

Kramer (2011) offered a more fluid view of exit in his study of community choir volunteers, observing that they simply stopped showing up, often to return at a later date. This finding suggests that for volunteers, where the stakes of exit and reentry were low, exit was relatively apathetic. Where the volunteer organization played a small role in the member's life, he felt free to simply walk away for a time when membership interfered with other arenas of life such as work or family, then return at a later time when other commitments were lessened. This open-ended exit, however, is far more passive than the oscillating exit described by the narratives of this study. The totalistic members of this study demonstrated a pattern of alternating between membership and exit not as a means of leaving a door open for a future return, but rather as a testing of the final exit decision during a difficult and tenuous exit process. Further, unlike volunteer exit, the narratives of this study describe a process of leaving that damages relational ties that make reentry far more difficult. Where faith community members described often irrevocable damage to family relationships upon leaving the Church, police and firefighters described family relationships that discouraged a return to their dangerous and time-consuming jobs. HRO workers faced added relational damage with co-workers left behind HRO brotherhood, placing the exiter as relational outsider. Such relational costs weighed heavily into the decision to exit, and were often the source of deep personal doubts that led to partial exit, or an oscillation between exit and membership.

Individualization During Exit

During the prolonged period of exit, the narratives detailed numerous failed attempts at exit expressed as quitting small parts of faith practice, or trial separations from the organization.

Such attempts challenged the values, practices, and doctrines of the organization, and might be seen as individualization attempts. This inclusion of individualization attempts in the exit process stands in contrast to existing research, which treats individualization as part of the encounter stage of assimilation, and as a give-and-take between the member and the organization. Whereas Jablin (2001) includes individualization as part of the encounter phase of socialization, treating it as part of the newcomer's process of learning to negotiate role in the organization, this study indicates that attempts at individualization are a pre-cursor to organizational exit and should be considered as part of the exit phase of socialization, rather than solely as a part of the encounter phase. The narratives of this study described attempts to individualize after many years of faith practice, or working as a police officer or firefighter, suggesting that such individualization attempts occur long after metamorphosis, and can be initiated by the contemplation of exit.

Kramer (2010) suggests that individualization occurs as an interaction between socialization and personalization wherein the newcomer attempts to adjust organizational practices to meet his needs, while the organization attempts to influence his behavior to conform to organizational practices. Kramer describes this interaction as potentially intense during both the anticipatory socialization and encounter phases of assimilation as the member accepts and internalizes a new role. The narratives of this study, however, describe an individualization process undertaken not during the reconciliation of a new role, but as part of the process of detachment. Moreover, such attempts to individualize did not involve either the verbal negotiation (such as negotiation of work times), nor the nonverbal displays (such as display of personal items in the workspace) described by Jablin (2001). Rather, the narratives of this study describe assuming individualization attempts as a lone endeavor intentionally concealed from

other organizational members. For members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints individualization attempts involved practicing parts of the faith while secretly abandoning others, a process the narratives describe as difficult to negotiate while retaining the outward appearance of faith. For police officers and firefighters, individualization attempts involved job transfers assumed to allow more freedom to back away from certain parts of the job while masking emotion and doubt.

For members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, such partial membership was expressed as attempting to practice only parts of the faith, such as attending some services, but not others, or attending services, but declining to wear temple garments. During this process of partial membership, some members described intentionally disobeying parts of Church doctrine, such as the Word of Wisdom command to refrain from drinking coffee. Such “testing the waters,” represented attempts at individualization, either by practicing only parts of the faith that did not conflict with newly found beliefs, or through attempting to redefine the meanings of doctrine.

Police officers and firefighters expressed attempts to back away from parts of their duty, but unlike a faith community or traditional corporate job, such partial adherence to policy comes with inherent danger. Danger was recognized in the narratives of this study by HRO workers who, after experiencing trauma, attempted to withdraw from parts of the job. Unable to individualize the highly structured organizational practices of the HRO, the narratives of this study detail partial exits in the form of job transfers or leaves of absence. Transfers were made to jobs or departments that the officer or firefighter deemed less stressful, or a place that allowed such partial practice of duty by remaining in the department, but removed from patrol.

The narratives of both members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and HRO workers detail a failure of such individualization attempts. These failures initiated periods of organizational recommitment, suggesting that exit from a totalistic organization occurs only after individualization cannot be reconciled with practices, norms, and beliefs. The individualization attempts made in these narratives were undertaken in attempts to continue partial membership, even with the praxis of either the faith or job had become impractical, suggesting that such attempts were made to avoid complete exit. In all cases, such individualization attempts failed, leaving the member adrift, oscillating between exit and membership. This difficulty of individualization in totalistic organizations, in contrast to traditional employment situations, may be due to the fact that totalistic values are often both deeply ingrained and highly institutionalized. Faith doctrines and Church practices, for example, are quite literally incontrovertible gospel, whereas practices in a corporate environment are far more changeable and manager-dependent. In the faith-based organization, individualization might be considered hypocrisy, or even apostasy. Challenging corporate practices, in contrast, might be seen as innovative. Like faith groups, police officers and firefighters are guided by strict practices and incontrovertible rules. The narratives of this study suggest that HRO workers see both regulation and cultural norms such as controlling emotion as expectation in life-or-death situations, particularly those where members rely upon one another for safety. Individualization in such situations is viewed by other members as potentially dangerous, and thus, unacceptable.

Self-Doubt in the Totalistic Exit Process

The narratives of this study describe struggling with deeply personal self-doubt after the initiation of exit. Previous research has treated doubt as a source of disidentification with the organization (e.g. Bullis & Bach, 1989; Lee, Mitchell, Wise, & Fireman, 1996). Kramer (2010)

wrote that during the pre-announcement phase of exit, individuals may weigh consequences of exit against their unmet expectations in a job. Such consequences may include loss of income, status, or work-centered friendships. The results of this study, however reveal a much larger role of doubt in the exit process. While those leaving a job may fear the uncertainty of transition, financial insecurity, or leave behind certain work-centered relationships, the deep personal grief at the loss of organizational values described in the narratives of this study suggest that leaving a totalistic organization involves an untethering of the self from foundational beliefs that are not readily replaced with another faith or work environment.

In exiting the totalistic organization, the member leaves behind not only an organizational role and identity, but an elemental part of the self-identity. While corporate employees may identify with their roles, such identifications rarely involve the primary relationships and values of the employee's life. An employee, for example, might strongly identify with her job, and might introduce herself to strangers as a teacher for Smalltown Elementary School, but this teacher is likely to have a network of primary personal relationships outside the school. Likewise, the values that guide her identity are likely to have been learned from primary family members and friends, or other organizational associations. Where the traditional employee carries these values into her job, the totalistic member carries the values of the organization into his everyday life.

The narratives of this study describe profound fears of the potential costs of exit. For the totalistic organizations the narratives of this study describe leaving, the stakes of exit are higher than the monetary and social network losses feared in a traditional job transition. Whereas employees and volunteers may leave behind a network of relationships, this study suggests leaving a totalistic organization gives rise to fears of loss of all support, value, and cultural

networks and outright rejection from both friends and immediate family members. Fears of rejection, moreover, are compounded for faith community members by fear over the fate of the eternal soul.

The relational costs described in the aftermath of exit in this study, particularly from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, suggest that such fears are justifiable. Church members described a loss of primary family support from spouses, parents, children, and siblings. Strain on family relationships and irrevocable severing of ties including divorce and disownment was reported in the wake of exit. The friendship losses described in this study go far beyond the loss of social networks lost in quitting a traditional job. The loss of friends and community reported by both Mormons and HRO workers in this study reflect the reach of the totalistic organization into the member's life. Both sets of narratives report primary friendships within the organizations they depart, and the loss of such relationships in the wake of exit.

The deep personal doubts reported in the narratives of this study extended beyond the fear of relational costs. The fear of loss of a sense of self that was described in the narratives suggests that the stakes of exit from the totalistic organization involve a loss of ideals fundamental to self-identity. Upon leaving the totalistic organization, a fundamental part of the identity is lost. Once the decision to exit is publicly communicated, the former police officer or firefighter is no longer one of "the brotherhood." The former Mormon becomes a non-believer, termed an "apostate." These classifications are different from other former memberships, carrying negative social connotations, and highlight the social and cultural consequences of voluntary exit that are distinct in the totalistic organization.

The relational and esteem costs of exit revealed in the narratives of both HRO workers and Mormons described in terms of guilt, grief, and loss. Such a sense of loss of self advances a

view of exit that is more than organizational detachment. Rather, for members of the totalistic organization, exit is a nearly complete dissociation with the former life. The reported relational and social costs of exit suggest that such dissociation sets the exiter adrift, even amongst her own family.

Concealment and Masking

It is in the active concealment of the decision to leave that the narratives of this study contrast most sharply with both Jablin's (2001) phasic model of exit and Kramer's (2011) passive volunteer exit. The narratives of this study describe an intentional attempt to appear outwardly committed to the organization, even to very close friends and family, while internally testing the decision to leave. Expressing a fear of rejection of other organizational members, friends, and family, both HRO members and Church members described an active concealment of both doubt and the decision to exit.

Based on Jablin's (2001) phasic model of exit, Kramer (2010) wrote that the pre-announcement period of sensemaking includes communication of the decision to exit with family and close friends both inside and outside the organization. The narratives of this study, however, describe a process of intentional concealment that challenges this assumption of communicative sensemaking as part of exit. Rather, the exit process revealed in this study involved a solitary effort to make sense of the doubts to the self and organization while actively attempting to portray commitment.

For HRO workers, the active concealment of emotion and PTSD symptoms was described as an expectation enforced by other HRO members. Wearing the police or firefighter identity involved "sucking it up," or portraying rugged resiliency and focus while controlling emotion. Those who discussed suffering PTSD symptoms, in particular, described a tendency to

mask symptoms with displays of machismo. While the control or masking of emotion was reinforced by other officers and firefighters telling the individual to “suck it up,” those in the process of exit described such emotional concealment as a “numbing” of emotion, and “emotional death.” Employing such terms infers an internal process of anesthetizing reactions to shock and trauma, an intentional paralysis of natural impulse.

The HRO expectation of control over human emotion in the face of trauma extended to concealing the contemplation of exit. As police officers and firefighters tested the decision to exit with trial separations from the organization or job transfers, they simultaneously obscured their thoughts of leaving the profession. Interestingly, the police officer and firefighter narratives of this study discussed hiding the emotions that were making them contemplate exit not only from their co-workers, but also from family members. The narratives described an emotional “numbing” that extended outside the organizational walls, leaving the officer or firefighter unable or unwilling to discuss his thought processes with even his spouse.

The Mormon narratives of this study describe a similar concealment of the exit decision and masking of doubts. Mormon narratives described displaying, in effect, hyper-metamorphosis. As doubts about Church doctrine mounted, Mormon narratives describe accepting additional clergy callings and teaching posts, attending more Church meetings, and bearing testimony publicly. Such displays served to mask the individual’s internal struggle with belief in Church doctrine. Interestingly, Mormon narratives describe a sense of daring at testing the exit decision with invisible cues to exit such as drinking coffee before a church service, or attending services without temple garments. Such an invisible testing allowed the member to internally test their decision to leave while tempering the risk of rejection from other members.

Such a departure from the communicative sensemaking of the exit decision described by both Jablin (2001) and Kramer (2010) suggests that communicative cues may not be universal to all organizational memberships. Where traditional employees and volunteers may quit assuming small responsibilities at a job they are considering leaving, these actions represent visible cues that make other employees aware of the member's detachment from the organization. The narratives of this study detailed actively hiding the intent to leave, sometimes outwardly displaying hyper-metamorphosis such as being a "good Mormon" or "tough cop." These displays were undertaken to mask the internal struggle the member was experiencing, or to save face with other members. Unlike a traditional job, partial practice of an HRO job is unacceptable to other members of the "brotherhood," as backing away from duties potentially endangers the lives of many. Likewise, other members label the partially faithful in derogatory terms (e.g. "Jack Mormons," or "Cafeteria Catholics.") To communicate doubts about the member's position in the totalistic organization, then, risks social and relational costs. While the narratives of this study recognized the potential social and relational costs of exit, concealing the exit decision delays these social penalties until the exit decision is final. The price to the exiting totalistic member, however, is a lack of support from peers during the long and tenuous exit process.

Without communicating either doubts about the organization, or contemplation of exit, the writers of the narratives of this study were left with a solitary process of soul-searching on the way to exit. This solitary struggle with doubts not only about the organization, but also about the identity of the self in the event of exit prolonged the process of exit, often for several years. In contrast to corporate or volunteer environments where the existing member is likely to communicate their intent with family and close friends, HRO and Mormon members in this

study did not share their contemplations of exit with those closest to them. In fact, the exiting member, particularly in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was likely to engage in the most stringent concealment from primary friends and family. Unable to discuss the decision to exit, totalistic members instead embarked on a long and lonely exit process. This suggests that as the stakes are raised, the process of exit is both prolonged and marked by greater doubt.

Practical Implications

The view of exit suggested by this study holds practical implications for totalistic organizations as they consider member retention and growth. The pattern of exit revealed in the narratives of this study suggests that there may be opportunities to retain members contemplating exit. Exit was not a decision reached either quickly or lightly. The narratives described exiting only after a long period of internal struggle. This protracted period of contemplating the exit decision suggests that there is opportunity for organizational outreach to assuage the doubts of those considering leaving. A problem arises, however, in identifying such doubters as the results of this study indicate that they are likely to mask their doubts. A potential opportunity may exist, however, as suggested in the finding that totalistic members considering exit may display hyper-metamorphosis prior to exit. On a practical level, this may serve as an opportunity for organizations to recognize uncharacteristic levels of commitment as a warning sign of potential exit. This may give the organization time to communicate with the member, turning him or her toward the organization, rather than away from it.

The results of this study suggest an opportunity for organizational efforts to reinforce core values as a means to retention. In the totalistic organization, the member's fundamental values are inextricably intertwined with the organization. While the narratives of this study indicate being socialized into such fundamental values, a reinforcement of organizational values

during consideration of exit might serve to turn members back toward the organization. A consideration of the catalysts to the contemplation of exit is here important. HRO workers in this study described beginning their considerations of exit after work-related events that included traumatic experiences and administrative disagreements. Such events, however, are not related to the core values of police or firefighting organizations. While HROs instill values in training and early in the worker's career, reinforcing values throughout the worker's time with the department might serve to better cement organizational practices to these values.

This study also suggests that organizations facing member exit should consider the effects of traumatic events such as those the narratives in this study described. While it is unsurprising that a gradual buildup of trauma in an HRO job may turn members away from their role, this finding is particularly interesting for religious groups where there is a latent expectation that people will turn toward faith and religion after such an event. The narratives of this study, however, showed a propensity for personal trauma to turn the member away from their faith. Faith-based organizations interested in member retention after catalytic events should consider support programs to turn members toward their church, rather than away. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a formal system of home teaching representatives that visit members in the home with a lesson periodically. These opportunities might be used to identify members who are struggling with potentially traumatic events, and to proactively communicate with them in a manner that reinforces the place of their faith values during times of tragedy. HROs, similarly, have opportunity to offer emotional support programs that help mitigate the effects of continual exposure to traumatic events. The narratives of this study indicate a need for non-judgmental counseling, particularly when the HRO worker exhibits symptoms of PTSD. Police officers in this study in particular expressed fear that seeking counseling, even outside the

organization, would lead to negative repercussions on the job. Such fear might be assuaged by carefully articulated policies and available confidential mental health services.

The suggestion that totalistic organizations might consider measures to retain members contemplating exit, however, raises considerable ethical concern. Managers or clergy of totalistic organizations might take up the suggestion to seek members displaying cues to hyper-metamorphosis as potential targets of persuasive strategies. This is particularly concerning in totalistic organizations, where members might have good reason to exit. This dilemma arises particularly with organizations that may not have the best interest of the member in mind. Residential or communal faith groups, particularly those with an interest in controlling member retention to protect the organization, give reason for concern. Such groups might use findings like those of this study to employ reindoctrination techniques such as fear appeals. Coercion to keep members has the potential to turn those considering exit into involuntary members who stay under compulsion. This concern exists for paid totalistic memberships as well, who might coerce members to remain either through additional pay or benefits, or by assuming control of parts of the member's life that make exit more difficult. Company control of an employee's personal life is usually considered a relic of the past, buried with the lives of coal miners owed, as Tennessee Ernie Ford famously sang, to the company store. The rise of such companies as Internet giant Google, whose employees can do laundry, visit the doctor, get a hair cut, and shop all in the company Googleplex, however, reignite the consideration of the delineation between the employee's private and corporate lives, and raise concern for compelling continued membership.

The structure of totalistic organizations, moreover, might make retention of members doubting their organizational fealty both impractical and undesirable. The paid totalistic

memberships of this study place members in life and death situations. Doubts about organizational values, or partial practice of job duties, places both the police officer/firefighter, and the individuals he is sworn to protect in danger. Doubting, or partially practicing faith members, similarly, might be seen from an organizational standpoint as apostates, especially in faiths where doctrine leaves little room for dissent.

Limitations and Future Research

There are limitations to the present study that suggest directions for future research. To begin, this study's use of online narratives limits the ability of the researcher to clarify data with the participant. Research that includes other data forms such as interviews with individuals who have left totalistic organizations might enrich our understanding of the exit process.

Second, this study examined the narratives of two types of totalistic organizations: the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and HRO workers. These groups were selected as examples of both paid and unpaid totalistic organizational relationships. Future research might include other organizations to further our understanding of totalistic organizations. The religious organization studied here, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, represents a totalistic religion insofar as the cultural practices of the faith are, arguably, more far-reaching into member's lives than some other religious groups. Future research might explore residential totalistic groups, or those where members live within the physical confines of the group. From a religious perspective, this might include religious compounds or communal faith sects. While the firefighter narratives included in this study begin to extend to residential paid memberships in a totalistic organization, future research might include other residential occupations such as military troops. Research that is inclusive of a variety of totalistic organizations might yield

insight into how members of different types of totalistic groups experience the process of exit and would provide comparative data.

Lastly, this study is limited by the use of narratives written after the exit process was complete. Future research that collects member experiences as they are considering organizational exit would deepen our understanding of the process of oscillation between metamorphosis and exit and provide a more nuanced view of the reasons and for exit. The findings of this study suggest that members attempt individualization in the early stages of exit. Research conducted during the exit process might better help identify the type and duration of individualization attempts, and might provide information on how members signal rather than announce exit intentions.

Summary

This study examined the exit narratives of both paid and unpaid totalistic organizational members. Existing research has largely treated paid employment as the universal organizational membership. The few studies that have addressed volunteer memberships (e.g. Ashcraft & Kedrowicz, 2002; Kramer, 2011) still treat pay as the defining characteristic of such memberships. This study contributes to our understanding of organizational memberships by comparing both paid and unpaid memberships in totalistic organizations. The findings of this study suggest that a consideration of organizational membership not on the basis of pay, but rather by the reach of organizational values, practices, and rituals into the member's everyday life. This study suggests that these totalistic organizations can serve as the source of role socialization, thus instilling in the member fundamental and life-guiding values that are inextricably tied to the organization.

Findings also contribute to our understanding of the exit process, challenging both Jablin's (2001) phasic model of organizational exit and Kramer's (2011) finding that volunteers exit passively. The narratives of this study revealed a pattern of exit that was prolonged and non-linear, with members oscillating between exit and recommitment to the organization. Unlike Jablin's phasic model, this study found that totalistic organizational members did not announce their exit, even to their closest friends and family. Rather, contemplation of exit was actively concealed, with the member often displaying outward signs of hyper-metamorphosis. The deep personal doubts and fears that marked the exit process were unlike the passive exit Kramer (2011) describes for volunteers even when membership was unpaid, as in the case of the Mormon narratives this study examined.

Totalistic organizations represent some of the largest membership groups in the world. The Pew Forum (*U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, 2008*) reports that 84 percent of Americans are affiliated with a religious group. Totalistic occupations, likewise, are growing. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports in their online Occupational Outlook Handbook (<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>) that there are 794,300 police officer and detective jobs in the U.S., and 310,400 firefighters. The U.S. Department of Defense reports that there are currently 1.4 million Americans serving in the armed forces (<https://kb.defense.gov>). Such occupations represent a substantial portion of the U.S. workforce and population. This study provides a beginning point for research into the assimilation and exit processes of such value-based memberships.

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