Communicating Religious Disaffiliation: A Study of the Context, Family Conversations,
and Face Negotiation among Young Adults

by

Megan R. Fisk

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Pauline Cheong, Chair
Anthony Roberto
James Gee

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated how young adults communicate their decision to religiously disaffiliate to their parents. Both the context in which the religious disaffiliation conversation took place and the communicative behaviors used during the religious disaffiliation conversation were studied. Research questions and hypotheses were guided by Family Communication Patterns Theory and Face Negotiation Theory. A partially mixed sequential quantitative dominate status design was employed to answer the research questions and hypotheses. Interviews were conducted with 10 young adults who had either disaffiliated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or the Watch Tower Society. During the interviews, the survey instrument was refined; ultimately, it was completed by 298 religiously disaffiliated young adults. For the religious disaffiliation conversation's context, results indicate that disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses had higher conformity orientations than disaffiliated Latter-day Saints. Additionally, disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses experienced more stress than disaffiliated Latter-day Saints. Planning the conversation in advance did lead to the disaffiliation conversation being less stressful for young adults. Furthermore, the analysis found that having three to five conversations reduced stress significantly more than having one or two conversations. For the communicative behaviors during the religious disaffiliation conversation, few differences were found in regard to prevalence of the facework behaviors between the two groups. Of the 14 facework behaviors, four were used more often by disaffiliated JW than disaffiliated LDS—abuse, passive aggressive, pretend, and defend self. In terms of effectiveness, the top five facework behaviors were talk about the problem, consider the other, have a private discussion, remain calm, and defend self.

Overall, this study begins the conversation on how religious disaffiliation occurs between young adults and their parents and extends Family Communication Patterns Theory and Face Negotiation Theory to a new context.

For Kameron, Peityn, Madison, Kailey, Emma, Taiylor, and Mason

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My mom called one afternoon in early April 2008. I told her. I told her we no longer believed the [Mormon] church was true. It was awful. The only way I can describe it was as if it were a train wreck. I knew how my parents believed because I had been there once myself. In their eyes, I was destroying the forever family. From that moment on things between us have not been the same. They don't want to hear about why I don't believe. I respect this and understand where they are coming from. It's painful for all of us.
     —From the blog of 4 Monkeys

If you ever leave the truth or get disfellowshipped that'll be that—we'll be finished." I clearly recall my Mum laying it on the line. I was 14. … So I knew where I stood with regard to my family relationships 23 years later when I decided I would be exiting the Jehovah's Witness religion. No matter—the die was cast and I was leaving...I felt obliged to call Scotland to tell my Mum that we weren't going back. This was received very poorly indeed. I can't recall all the details of that first call but Mum ended up in tears … On this and a few subsequent calls my mother and brother both let me know exactly what they thought of me—weak, spineless, proud, arrogant, stubborn, lazy, had dragged [my wife] down to my level—the compliments were effusive.
  —From the blog Watchtower Documents

In 2008, Pew Forum found 83.1% of Americans were affiliated as a member of

an organized religion, and 16.1% were unaffiliated with an organized religion (Pew

Forum, 2008). By 2012, the unaffiliated with an organized religion rose to 19.6% (Pew

Forum, 2012). Additionally, one in four individuals will disaffiliate from the religion in

which they were raised at some point in their life (Pew Forum, 2008). This means that

one in four people potentially could be having as stressful and heart wrenching of a

conversation in the near future with their parents as the quotes above demonstrate. This

dissertation is about how religious disaffiliators communicate their decision to their

parents, as well as the context in which the religious disaffiliation conversation occurs.

Communication research has the potential to lessen the emotional impact of the conversation by suggesting more beneficial communicative behaviors. To that end, this study uses the theoretical frames of Family Communication Patterns Theory (FCP) and Face Negotiation Theory (FNT) to understand both the various types of family communication styles and the rhetorical options available during the disaffiliation conversation. The study's rationale and justification are explained below, followed by a summary of each chapter.

Rationale

At its heart, religious disaffiliation conversations are a particular type of family conflict. This dissertation aims to understand how the religious disaffiliation conversation can be less stressful and families can emerge from the conversation stronger. Given the wide range of religions and their varying beliefs, two religious organizations were chosen based on their strictness, or the degree to which their beliefs and cultural values vary from mainstream religions. It is beneficial to have participants from both a high retentive organization and low retentive organization to generate comparative data that more fully illuminates the disaffiliation conversation. Pew Forum (2008) found that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (CJCLDS) retains about 70% of their members who were raised in the church. The Watch Tower Society (WTS) retains about 34% of its members who were raised in the church (Pew Forum, 2008). Both CJCLDS and WTS are both classified as strict churches and they have different retention rates; thus, their disaffiliated members will be used as participants in this dissertation (Iannaconne, 1994). Members of the CJCLDS are referred to as Latter-

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day Saints (LDS) and members of the WTS are referred to as Jehovah's Witnesses (JW) throughout the study.

Since this study will use participants from two different religious groups, it is important to have a framework that accounts for in-group and out-group comparison. FCP provides this study with the framework for understanding how families differ in their approaches to communicating overall. FNT provides this study with the framework for understanding the various communicative strategies available for enacting, supporting, or challenging situated identities. Disaffiliating from a religion may be an enormous disruption to a family's status quo, and the communicative strategies that are used during the conversation are critical to interpreting the outcome. Together, FCP and FNT more fully explain both the context for the religious disaffiliation conversation and the communication that occurs during it.

This study explores the religious disaffiliation conversation's context and the specific communicative strategies used during the conversation. Young adults, aged 18–35, are the focus of this investigation because of their propensity to disaffiliate from organized religion. The conversations disaffiliated LDS and JW young adults had with their still-affiliated parent or parents will be the main focus. The following hypotheses and research questions are examined:

RQ1: What is the context in which young adults communicate religious disaffiliation to their parents?

RQ2: What facework behaviors are used during the disaffiliation conversation by young adults?

RQ3a: How does the disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses' conformity family communication orientation differ from disaffiliated Latter-day Saints'?

RQ3b: How does the disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses' conversation family communication orientation differ from disaffiliated Latter-day Saints'?

RQ4: How does perceived stress differ during the disaffiliation conversation between disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses and disaffiliated Latter-day Saints?

H1: Family conformity orientations of young adult religious disaffiliators are positively associated with their perceived stress during the disaffiliation conversation.

H2: Family conversation orientations of young adult religious disaffiliators are inversely associated with their perceived stress during the disaffiliation conversation.

RQ5: How does disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses' face behaviors' prevalence differ from disaffiliated Latter-day Saints' when communicating their disaffiliation?

RQ6: How do disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses' face behaviors' effectiveness rankings differ from disaffiliated Latter-day Saints' when communicating their disaffiliation?

RQ7: Does planning the conversation in advance decrease perceived stress of young adults during the disaffiliation conversation with their parents?

RQ8: Does having multiple conversations about doubts before the final disclosure of religious disaffiliation decrease perceived stress of young adults during the conversation with their parents?

To answer the research questions and hypotheses, this study utilized a partially mixed sequential quantitative dominate status design (Creswell, 2003; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). Both the data sets are used to complement and clarify one another based on the theoretical framework of the study, the hypotheses, and the research questions. The mixed method design was chosen because neither qualitative nor quantitative data would fully be able to explain the religious disaffiliation conversation at this time. In an effort to move the religious disaffiliation literature forward, this study relies on both types of data to ensure a robust analysis that takes into account the strengths of each method (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006). Additionally, it should be noted that RQ7 and RQ8 emerged after the qualitative data was collected.

Significance of Study

The context in which the religious disaffiliation conversation takes place is a fruitful area of study because it is the moment in time when young adults more fully embrace their new religious status by sharing with their still-believing parents that they will no longer be affiliated with their religion. This study has the potential to discover how to make the religious disaffiliation conversation less stressful for young adults as they disclose their new beliefs to their parents. Methodologically, the mixed method design of a partially mixed sequential quantitative dominate status has not often been used by researchers (Ivankova et al., 2006). Theoretically, this study extends FCP to a religious context, which has not previously been done.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter One—Introduction

Chapter One introduces the key concepts of this dissertation, as well as the research questions and hypotheses it seeks to answer about how young adults communicate religious disaffiliation to their parents. Additionally, it provides an overview of each chapter.

Chapter Two—Theoretical Framework

Chapter Two defines religious disaffiliation and outlines the overall religious disaffiliation trends present in the United States. Next, the chapter summarizes FCP and FNT, the two key theories used throughout the dissertation. The chapter ends by situating the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Watch Tower Society as strict churches with very different retention rates.

Chapter Three—Method

Chapter Three articulates why a partially mixed sequential quantitative dominate status design was chosen as the framework for this dissertation. Additionally, the two phases of data collection are detailed. Phase One consists of interviewing 10 disaffiliated LDS and JW young adults about their disaffiliation conversations. The interview procedures are explained, as well as the researcher's role and the analysis of the results. Phase Two consists of a large-scale survey. Its design and instruments are detailed in this chapter.

Chapter Four—Qualitative Data Analysis

Chapter Four describes the disaffiliation communication conversation context and the facework behaviors used during the conversation by the10 disaffiliated young

adults. The analysis was performed using an etic and emic approach that took into account the sensitizing concepts of FCP, perceived stress, and FNT; additionally, this approach allowed for additional themes to emerge from the data. The additional themes led to RQ7 and RQ8 being poised in the Phase Two.

Chapter Five—Quantitative Data Analysis

Chapter Five reports the analysis results for the quantitative phase of this study. In total, eight cross-group comparisons were conducted to understand the differences between disaffiliated LDS and JW young adults when disclosing their religious disaffiliation to their parents. Additionally, two hypotheses were tested for the relationship between family communication patterns and perceived stress.

Chapter Six—Discussion and Implications

Chapter Six serves as a conclusion for this study. First, the results of both phases are summarized and then triangulated to further interpret the results. Next, the theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of the study are outlined. The chapter ends with a discussion of the study's strengths and weaknesses, as well as future directions.

CHAPTER 2

THEORTICAL FRAMEWORK

Increasingly, people are choosing to leave their childhood religions (Hout &

Fischer, 2002; Newport, 2012; Pew Forum, 2012). In 2008, Pew Forum found 83.1% of

Americans affiliated as a member of an organized religion, and 16.1% were not affiliated

with an organized religion (Pew Forum, 2008). By 2012, the unaffiliated with an

organized religion rose to 19.6% (Pew Forum, 2012). Additionally, one in four

individuals will disaffiliate from the religion in which they were raised at some point in

their lives (Pew Forum, 2008). While there are many hypotheses for why more

Americans are choosing to be religiously unaffiliated now, less is understood about the

process and communication that occurs surrounding the disaffiliation choice (Sterk &

Sisler, 2015). In fact, Sterk and Sisler (2015) state, "The cutting edge, the uncharted

territory however, will be with the *nones* the term used by the Pew to name those who

claim no religious affiliation" (p. 279). Furthermore, Sterk and Sisler (2015) point out

that "communication research addressing the intersections of family communication and

religion remain sparse" (p. 279). Soliz and Warner Colaner (2015) explain that while

most of the literature to date about family and religion assumes "that religious identity

and religious behaviors and practices are similar across the family" (p. 402) much less is

known about religiously heterogeneous families. To address the literature gap, this study

seeks to understand more about how young adults communicate religious disaffiliation to

their parents by drawing on family communication patterns and face negotiation theory.

The following chapter first defines religious disaffiliation and then outlines the

overall trends in religious disaffiliation in the United States. Next, family communication

patterns and face negotiation theory are defined as key theoretical concepts for understanding the communicative behaviors available to an individual when discussing religious disaffiliation. Finally, the study's context of disaffiliated Latter-day Saints (LDS) and disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses (JW) is explained. The chapter ends with the study's hypotheses and research questions.

Definitions of Religious Disaffiliation

Before explaining the rise in religious disaffiliators, it is important to understand the reasoning for the label "disaffiliator." The act of leaving one's religion has several labels from which to choose. Cragun and Hammer (2011) outlines a list of available labels and each of their connotations by explaining that "words such as apostates, dropouts, disaffiliators, and switchers frames religious association and high religious commitment as the norm and exiting and non-religion as deviant" (p. 24). Cragun and Hammer (2011) recognizes that it is impossible to remove all bias from a term, but that scholars should be more cognizant of the label they chose. The terms apostates and dropouts carry negative connotations that some may wear as a badge of honor, but do tend to classify this group as overtly deviant. Disengagement is used to describe a lack of participation in church events and does not necessarily imply a change in beliefs (Bahr & Albrect, 1989). Switchers are individuals who have left one religion for another. Vernon (1968) uses the term *nones* to describe people who answer none to a question about religious preference/association on a survey. While *nones* has become more popular recently because of the Pew Forum's (2008) findings, it also includes people who have never affiliated with a religion. Disaffiliation is typically used to describe individuals who have formally resigned their church membership (Bahr & Albrect, 1989). This study

slightly expands the term *disaffiliation* to describe the act of no longer participating in a prior religion and no longer believing the church's doctrine. While formal resignation may occur; it is not necessary for someone to have disaffiliated. *Disaffiliators* are individuals who no longer participate or believe in their prior religion. Therefore, it is not enough for someone to have merely disengaged from their church by not attending; they must also no longer believe in the church's doctrine as the word of God.

Religious Disaffiliation Trends

Three of the largest population surveys in the United States—The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, the Gallup Organization and the General Social Survey—have all found an increase in the number of people who report no religious affiliation. Pew Forum (2012) reported a 5% increase in the number of people reporting no religious affiliation from 2007 to 2012. Hout and Fischer (2002) found a similar increase with 8% of respondents to the General Social Survey selecting "no religion" in 1990, 14% in 2000, and 18% in 2010. While this trend is clear, understanding who is leaving, the religions that have seen the largest change, and why people are choosing to leave are more opaque.

Pew Forum (2012) analyzed Pew Research Center surveys from 2007 to 2012 to understand more about who becomes religiously unaffiliated. Religiously unaffiliated refers to both individuals who were never part of a religion, as well as those who have left or disaffiliated from their prior religion. Interestingly, the trend to be religiously unaffiliated is seen across gender, income, and educational attainment. Pew Forum (2012) did find age as a distinguishing characteristic stating "one-fifth of the U.S. public—and a third of adults under 30—are religiously unaffiliated today" (p. 21).

Besides being young adults, religiously unaffiliated individuals are twice as likely to describe themselves as political liberals than conservatives (Pew Forum, 2012). Additionally, the religiously unaffiliated are more likely to be white, non-Hispanic, as those identifying as black and Hispanic have seen no change in religious affiliation (Pew Forum, 2012). In summary, younger, white liberals report being religiously unaffiliated more often than other groups.

Pew Forum (2008) conducted a nationwide survey of 35,000 Americans over the age of 18 to describe the U.S. religious landscape, including which churches retain the most individuals throughout their lifetime. While 7.3% of adults reported being unaffiliated with a religion as a child, 8.8% of adults reported being affiliated with a religion as a child and unaffiliated at the time of study. Pew Forum (2008) created a measure of retention for each religion by "comparing the distribution of the current religious affiliation of U.S. adults with their childhood religious affiliation" (p. 23). Of the 18 religious groups captured in the study, the five with the highest retention rates include Hindu (84%), Jewish (76%), Muslim (76%), Greek Orthodox (73%), and Latter-day Saints (70%) (Pew Forum, 2008, p. 30). The five religions with the lowest retention rates are Reformed Protestant (42%), Presbyterian (41%), Jehovah's Witness (34%), Congregationalist Protestant (37%), and Holiness Protestant (32%) (Pew Forum, 2008, p. 30).

Given the information on who is leaving and from which churches, the next logical question is why. The first plausible answer is that the increase may be attributed to generational replacement, meaning that the younger generation is not as religious as the older generations overall (Pew Forum, 2012). However, the generational hypothesis

does not explain the whole story, because multiple generations have seen an increase in the number of unaffiliated between 2007 and 2012. Newport (2012) proposed a second plausible answer by analyzing the Gallup Organization's data, which is collected daily from 1000 Americans. He argues that even though the religiously unaffiliated are increasing, the increase is due to a changing societal norm: individuals feel freer now to label themselves as not affiliated with a religion then they were in the past. The basis of this is that the people who are now not affiliated were not regularly attending church or performing other markers of religious affiliation in the past (Newport, 2012). Pew Forum (2012) agrees with Newport (2012) that overwhelming the number of Americans are more religious and that most markers of religious, such as frequency of prayer, remain unchanged. However, other religious markers that the Pew Forum tracks have decreased, including that the number of Americans who say the Bible should be taken literally and the number who never doubt their belief in God have both decreased about 8% since the 1970s (Pew Forum, 2012). A third plausible answer is provided by Hout and Fischer (2002), who draw on the General Social Survey data and found that politically liberal Americans increasingly report no religious affiliation, while politically conservative Americans continue to be associated with a religion.

Given these inconclusive findings about the nature of the increase, further research is needed to more fully understand if the increase is based on generational replacement, a changing social norm, motivations based on political beliefs, or something else. Regardless of why the trend is occurring, the three population surveys described above illustrate that there is a decline in religious affiliation in the United States. Furthermore, one can conclude that younger, politically liberal and white

Americans are the mostly likely to leave the religion in which they were raised.

Additionally, some religions do a better job of retaining members than others.

Application of Religious Disaffiliation Trends to Study

Since one third of 18 to 35 year olds are religiously unaffiliated, this age group

was chosen as the participants for the study at hand (Pew Forum, 2012). Additionally,

their parents have a higher chance of remaining religiously affiliated; thus, this dynamic

creates a religiously heterogeneous family, which is an understudied subject in family

communication literature (Soliz & Warner Colaner, 2015).

Because so little is known about religiously heterogeneous families, this study

chose to examine the moment at which a family goes from religiously homogeneous to

religiously heterogeneous. This moment is when the religiously disaffiliated young adult

discloses his or her disaffiliation to his or her religiously affiliated parents. Family

communication patterns and face negotiation theories are key theoretical concepts that

may help explain the context in which the religious disaffiliation conversation occurs.

After explaining these two theories, the following section further defines the study

context.

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Family Communication Patterns

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Family communication patterns (FCP) is considered to be one of a handful of

"grand theories" of family communication because of its ability to be applied to almost

all family interactions (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). Based on the psychosocial process of

sense making and creating shared realities, FCP describes patterns families use when

communicating. These patterns are considered universal and applicable to all cultures

(Schrodt, Witt, & Messersmith, 2008). The patterns' dimensions, known as orientations,

are labeled conversation and conformity. The conversation orientation is characterized by the degree of open communication in a family. The conformity orientation is defined by how much emphasis a family puts on ensuring all members have similar beliefs. This section outlines the history of FCP and describes the four patterns in FCP, as well as FCP's application to religious contexts and stress.

Family Communication Patterns History

The theory originated with McLeod and Chaffee (1972) who were seeking to explain how external information, particularly mass media messages, was processed by families and their children. McLeod and Chafee (1972) used the concept of co-orientation to explain how families create and share social reality. Co-orientation refers to a "situation where two or more individuals focus their cognitive attention on the same object in their social or physical environment and form beliefs and attitudes about the object" (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014, p. 3). Once similar beliefs and attitudes emerge about the object, a shared social reality develops because the dyad or group recognizes that they agree. Families achieve agreement in two main ways. The first is the concept-orientation, which is based on an object's perceived attributes (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972). The second is the socio-orientation that is based on one family member defining the object for the rest, or put differently, "this process emphasizes the relationships between family members rather than the attributes of the object itself" (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014, p. 4).

For McLeod and Chaffee (1972), the object was a media message. Families who were concept-oriented would discuss the message, as well as its properties, characteristics, and outcomes. For families who were socio-oriented, a parent would

define and interpret the message for the rest of the family. Together, these two communication strategies create a shared reality and agreement among families. Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1994) reconfigured concept orientation and socio-orientation to be applicable to family communication behaviors at large, instead of only media messages, by relabeling the two orientations as conversation and conformity. The two orientations are not mutually exclusive. In fact, most families use both strategies in some way. After explaining the reconceptualization of the two strategies, the four patterns of family communication are outlined below, as well as a summary of FCP's application to religious contexts and stressful events.

The Four Patterns of Family Communication

The conversation orientation replaced concept orientation in the Revised Family Communication Patterns (RFCP) instrument created by Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1994). The conversation orientation is marked by the "degree to which families create a communication environment in which all family members are encouraged to participate in unrestrained interaction about a wide range of topics" (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014, p. 5). A higher conversation orientation in a family is discernible by frequent and spontaneous interactions, as well as sharing activities, thoughts, and feelings with one another (Schrodt et al., 2008). A lower conversation orientation in a family is discernible by infrequent interaction and discussion of limited topics, as well as less of an exchange of feelings and opinions (Schrodt et al., 2008). Additionally, belief that open communication is necessary for an enjoyable and rewarding life is also associated with a high conversation orientation (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). The reverse is associated with the low conversation orientation (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002).

The second orientation, socio-orientation, was replaced with the label of conformity orientation by the RFCP. The conformity orientation is defined as the "degree to which family communication stress a climate of homogeneity of beliefs, values, and attitudes" (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014, p. 6). Families who are at the high end of the conformity orientation are characterized by standardization of beliefs and attitudes, as well as belief in the traditional hierarchical family structure (Schrodt et al., 2008). Families who are at the low end of the conformity orientation are characterized by having differing beliefs and attitudes, as well as valuing equality in decision making (Schrodt et al., 2008). Furthermore, families who are high in conformity orientation value family relationships over other relationships, while the reverse is true for those families who are low in conformity orientation (Schrodt et al., 2008).
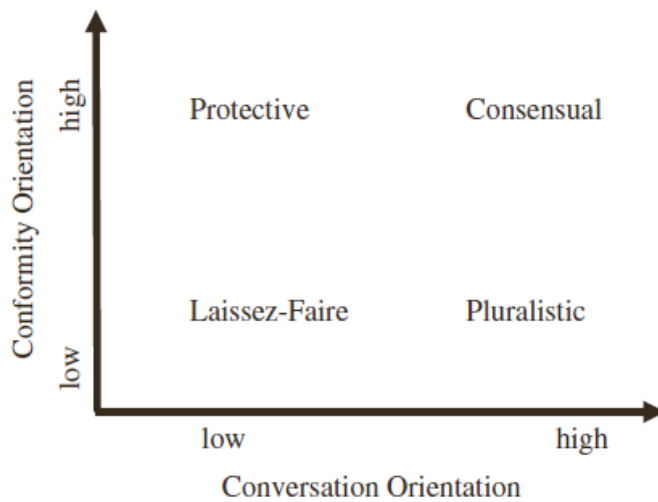
Figure 1. Four family communication types in the conceptual space created by conversation and conformity orientation. Adapted from "An Introduction to the Special Issue on Family Communication Patterns," by A. F. Koerner and P. Schrodt, 2014, *Journal of Family Communication,* 14, p. 6.

As stated above, the two orientations are not mutually exclusive and should be investigated together by researchers (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). The interactions of the conversation and conformity orientations lead to four patterns of family communication (see Figure 1). Each pattern is explained in detail below.

Consensual family communication type. Families with a high degree of conversation and conformity orientations are called consensual families. Consensual families are marked by parents with an interest in listening to their children, but also the belief that parents should make the decisions for the family (Schrodt et al., 2008). Koerner and Schrodt (2014) explain that "children in these families usually learn to value family conversation and tend to adopt their parents' values and beliefs" (p. 7).

Pluralistic family communication type. Families with a high degree of conversation orientation but a low degree of conformity orientation are labeled pluralistic. While open and free-flowing communication between parents and children occurs in this pattern, there is not the pressure for all to agree with one another (Schrodt et al., 2008). This pattern produces children who are more independent and autonomous, as well as have high communication competence (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014).

Protective family communication type. Families with a high degree of the conformity orientations and a low degree of conversation orientation are labeled protective families. Very little open communication occurs between parents and children in this pattern, and emphasis is placed on children obeying their parents (Schrodt et al., 2008). This pattern produces children who distrust their own decision-making abilities and do not value family conversations (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014).

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Laissez-faire family communication type. The final pattern, labeled laissez-faire, occurs when there is a low degree of both conformity and conversation orientation. Very little involved interactions occur for this family type, and the number of topics discussed is limited in scope (Schrodt et al., 2008). This pattern leads to children who place little value on conversing with their family and make their own decisions (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014).

Family Communication Patterns and Religion

As noted earlier, family communication literature sparsely examines religious contexts (Sterk & Sisler, 2015). In fact Schrodt et al.'s (2008) meta-analysis of family communication patterns lists no studies examining religion. In the past year, however, several scholars have drawn attention to family communication patterns' relationship with religion. Fife, Nelson, and Messersmith (2014) conducted the first study of FCP and religion. Then, Sterk and Sisler (2015), as well as Soliz and Warner Colaner (2015), provided in-depth literature reviews of work done in the family communication field related to religion. These literature reviews point to findings outside the scope of FCP that may still be beneficial for the study at hand.

Fife et al. (2014) found that the RFCP scale predicted several dependent variables related to religiosity, including extrinsic and intrinsic orientations toward religion, along with strength of religious faith. Extrinsic orientation toward religion means that a "person holds religion as a means of serving additional personal needs" (Fife, et al., 2014, p. 74). This includes social connection, status in a group, and comfort during difficult times. Intrinsic oriented people "view religion as a priority in life" with others' needs being secondary to their religious faith (Fife et al., 2014, p. 74). Both the

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conforming and conversation orientations equally predicted extrinsic and intrinsic orientations toward religion. This led Fife et al. (2014) to conclude that extrinsic and intrinsic orientations will likely not be a fruitful area of study for understanding differences between family communication patterns and religious motivation.

In- depth literature reviews authored by Sterk and Sisler (2015) and Soliz and Warner Colaner (2015) point to several other family communication variables that may be influenced by young adults' decisions to religiously disaffiliate. First, religious differences in parent-child relationships are related to decreases in relational quality (Mahoney, 2005). Also, religious differences in parent-child relationships are associated with an increase in parent-child conflict (Sechrist, Suitor, Vargas, & Pillemar, 2011). While only one study looks explicitly at FCP and religion, there is interest among family communication scholars in developing this line of research further.

Family Communication Patterns and Stress

Schrodt et al. (2008) performed a meta-analysis of 56 studies to examine the association of family communication patterns and three types of outcomes—information processing, behavioral, and psychosocial. Information processing refers to variables such as political socialization and media use. Behavioral variables include physical and symbolic acts of aggression, parental confirmation, and affection, as well as demand/withdraw patterns. Psychosocial variables include items such as self-esteem, mental health, and perceived stress. Perceived stress may be a particularly noteworthy dependent variable for the current study because of its inverse relationship with the conversation orientation. Schrodt, Ledbetter, and Ohrt (2007) found that conversation orientation was inversely correlated with perceived stress, $r = -.29$, and positively

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correlated with the conforming orientation, $r = .15$. Therefore, the more a family uses the conversational orientation the less stress is perceived during conflict; the more a family uses the conformity orientation the more stress is perceived during conflict.

Application of Family Communication to Study

Family communication patterns will help explain the context in which the disaffiliation conversation occurs by providing insight into how a young adult perceives his or her family's communication. Furthermore, the scarcity of research on religion and family communication further demonstrates the timeliness and importance of the current study. Additionally, FCP's relationship with perceived stress was discussed because of the potential for some young adults to experience severe stress during the religious disaffiliation disclosure conversation and the potential for FCP to be associated with stress. Next, Face Negotiation Theory is discussed in relation to the communicative strategies young adults might use during the conversation.

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Face Negotiation Theory

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Face Negotiation Theory (FNT) is a broad theory born out of the sociocultural tradition within communication theory that uses face as an explanatory mechanism for understanding different facework behaviors (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). Face is always present in social interactions and provides individuals with a resource that can be enhanced or threatened in an interaction (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Facework behaviors are the ways in which individuals manipulate their verbal and nonverbal actions to gain favor or show disfavor in an interaction (Domenici & Littlejohn, 2006). The following section explains FNT and facework behaviors and situates the theory's use in the current study.

Overview of Face Negotiation Theory

Face as a concept originated in Hu's (1944) seminal work to describe the respect a group member loses in a community when not following the norms. Around the same time, Goffman (1959) used theater productions and actors as a metaphor to describe a concept similar to Hu's (1944), that of presenting an inauthentic self during some interactions in order to meet social expectations, known as front of stage. Backstage, then, is where the individual can be more authentic and not necessarily meet social expectations (Goffman, 1959). Brown and Levinson (1987) developed the concept of face further through the creation of Politeness Theory, which adds the idea of positive and negative face. Positive face is presented when an individual wants to connect to others and create interdependence. Negative face is presented when an individual enacts autonomy and individuality to try to stand out in a group. As the concept has further developed, face has been defined as "the conception of self that each person displays in a particular interaction with others" (Cupach & Metts, 1994, p. 3).

Conflict situations are one of the most frequent applications of FNT (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011; Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, Yokochi, Masumoto & Takai, 2000). Conflict is defined as the "perceived and/or actual incompatibility of values, expectations, processes, or outcomes between two or more parties over substantive and/or relational issues" (Ting-Toomey, 1994, p. 360). During conflict, face is particularly vulnerable and can either be affirmed or challenged by another person (Domenici & Littlejohn, 2006). If the face is reinforced or recognized, the interaction is face-affirming (Cupach & Metts, 1994). If the face is challenged, then the interaction is a face threat (Cupach & Metts, 1994). Facework is used to remediate the effects of a face threat. While facework may

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occur after a face threat, it is also used for maintenance of face. Scholars typically use three conflict styles—dominating, avoiding, and collaborating—to describe how an individual communicates face during a conflict (Ting-Toomey et al., 1991). Dominating conflict style is marked by competitive conflict tactics, while collaborating strategies are based on cooperative tactics (Ting-Toomey et al., 1991). Avoidance is marked by the desire not to engage in the use of either dominate or collaborative tactics (Ting-Toomey et al., 1991). However, conflict styles are not the equivalent of facework behaviors.

Facework Behaviors

Tracy (1990) defines facework as the "the communicative strategies that are the enactment, support, or challenge of situated identities" (p. 210). Most prior research has treated facework as the equivalent to conflict styles incorrectly (Oetzel et al., 2000). Oetzel et al. (2000) explain, "Facework can be distinguished from conflict style in that the former involves specific behaviors that focus on a person's (or other's) claimed image as it relates to relational and substantive goals above and beyond the conflict situation, and the latter involves a general pattern of behavior during conflict to address and resolve substantive issues" (p. 401). Put differently, conflict styles detail the strategies used to resolve a conflict, not the behaviors used to promote and protect a particular self-image. In an effort to differentiate between facework behavior and conflict behavior, Oetzel et al. (2000) conducted a comparative study across several different cultural groups to systemically identify the various ways people negotiate face during conflicts. Table 1 provides the typology of facework behaviors Oetzel et al. (2000) identified.

The typology was developed based on open-ended responses to a recent conflict participants had with either a friend or stranger. Each behavior has three descriptive statements that explain it further. For instance, "talk about the problem" includes the statements of 1) "I talked things out one at a time and listened to what the other was saying to resolve our conflict," 2) "I talked thoroughly with the other person about the trouble to find a solution," and 3) "I worked with the other person to find a mutually acceptable solution."

Table 1

Typology of Facework Behaviors

Name of Facework Behavior	Description of Facework Behavior
Abuse	Put the other down. Tell the other he/she is stupid, etc.
Apologize	Admit that you made a mistake and tell the other person
Avoid	Withdraw from the other person
Compromise	Give a little and get a little
Consider the other	Take into consideration the other person's feelings to show respect
Defend self	Defend one's side without giving in—generally in response to a perceived attack
Express feelings	Express how one is feeling without defending or attacking the other
Give in	Accommodate the other person and let them win
Involve a third party	Involve an outside person to help to resolve the issue
Passive aggression	Attack the other through subtle means. Not outwardly abusive, but the result is similar.
Pretend	Pretend there is no conflict or that you are not upset or hurt by what has happened
Private discussion	Avoid talking about the problem in public
Remain calm	Attempt to stay calm and unemotional
Talk about the problem	Directly discuss the issue of the conflict with the other person. The focus is to resolve the problem.

Note. Adapted from "A Typology of Facework Behaviors in Conflicts with Best Friends and Relative Strangers," by J. G. Oetzel et al., 2000, Communication Quarterly, 48, p. 408.

Application of Face Negotiation Theory to Study

FNT contributes the understanding of face and facework behaviors to the current study because it explains the positive and negative communication strategies available during conflict. Since literature is scarce on how someone communicates religious disaffiliation, Oetzel et al.'s (2000) facework behavior typology provides a robust framework to use as a starting point for examining religious disaffiliation. While conflict styles would enable the researcher to know about a disaffiliator's typical communication behavior during conflict, using the facework behavior typology will allow for a deeper understanding of what is actually said during the religious disaffiliation conversation between young adults and their parents.

<div align="center">

Study Participants: Latter-day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses

</div>

As discussed, there are a variety of individual factors that increase someone's likelihood to disaffiliate from his or her childhood religion, such as age, ethnicity, and political views. Another way of determining the likelihood of someone disaffiliating from his or her childhood religion is to look at the religion itself, particularly the beliefs and practices that may decrease membership over time. Stark (1996) provides a framework to explain why some religious movements succeed and others fail based on how strict a church is in its beliefs and practices. Given this study's interest in how religious disaffiliation is communicated, two similar religions with differing retention rates were chosen in order to better understand the variations that may occur during the religious disaffiliation conversation. They are the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (CJCLDS) and the Watch Tower Society (WTS). The CJCLDS has 6.4 million members in the United States (LDS.org, 2014). Pew Forum (2008) reports that the

CJCLDS has a retention rate of 70% (p. 30). The WTS has 2.5 million members in the United States (Jehovah's Witness Yearbook, 2014). Pew Forum (2008) reports that the WTS has a retention rate of 34% (p.30). The CJCLDS and WTS will be compared using Stark's (1996) theory to both describe their practices and beliefs in more detail, as well as to illustrate the religions' similarities and differences.

Strict Religion Characteristics

Undergirding Stark's (1996) theory is the quantification of how strict a church is in its practices and beliefs. Stark (1996) defines strictness as "the degree that a religious group maintains a separate and distinctive life style or morality in personal and family life, in such areas as dress, diet, drinking, entertainment, uses of time, sex, child rearing and the like, or a group is not strict to the degree that it affirms the current mainline life style in these aspects" (p. 137). Strictness has many benefits. First, it weeds out free riders because the cost is too high to be a casual supporter (Stark, 1996; McBride, 2007). Second, it increases the organization's credibility as the members reflect the values of the organization (Stark, 1996). Finally, strictness increases the degree of resources available to members (Stark, 1996).

Iannaconne (1994) quantified strictness by recruiting 16 religious experts to rank the distinct aspects of 18 major religions, including CJCLDS and WTS. The experts ranked the religions based on the definition above. CJCLDS and WTS ranked highly on the distinctiveness scale, with CJCLDS being a 5.5 and WTS being a 6.0 on a 7.0 scale (Iannaconne, 1994). The WTS was also the highest rated religious organization. More recently, Pew Forum (2008) conducted a large survey of Americans' religious beliefs, practices, and cultural values (See Table 2). These data points are similar to the ones

used by Iannaconne (1994) to evaluate the distinctiveness of various religions. The data

in Table 2 is discussed in more detail below.

Table 2

Summary of Pew Forum's (2008) U.S. Religious Landscape Survey

	LDS (%)	JW (%)	Religiously affiliated Americans (%)
Beliefs			
Many religions can lead to eternal life.	39	16	70
There is more than one true way to interpret the teaching of my religion.	43	18	68
My religion's sacred texts are the word of God.	91	92	63
% believe in God—absolutely certain.*	90	93	71
% say religion is very important in their life.*	83	86	56
I believe in Heaven.	95	46	74
I believe in Hell.	59	9	59
Practices			
I attend church at least once a week.	75	82	39
I pray weekly.	92	95	75
I receive responses to prayer at least once or twice a month.	54	49	31
I share my religion with others at least once a month.	47	84	36
Cultural Values			
I see a conflict between religion and modern society.	36	59	40
My values are threatened by Hollywood.	67	54	42
Abortion should be illegal in all or most cases.	70	77	43
Homosexuality is a way of life that should be discouraged by society.	68	76	40

Note. * indicates response categories other than "agree." Adapted from "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey," by Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2008, p. 4-18.

Beliefs. Latter-day saints (LDS), used to refer to members of CJCLDS, and Jehovah's Witnesses (JW), used to refer to members of the WTS, have many beliefs that differ from most other religiously-affiliated Americans. Most religiously affiliated Americans (70%) believe that there are many religions that can lead to eternal life; however, only 39% of LDS and 16% of JW hold this belief. Additionally, most religiously affiliated Americans (68%) believe there is more than one interpretation of their religion's teachings. Conversely, 48% of LDS and only 18% of JW agree that there are multiple interpretations of their religion's teachings. While both religions differ from religiously affiliated Americans, JW are much lower than LDS. This is in alignment with Iannaconne's (1994) findings that JW are more distinct than LDS. LDS and JW were similar to one another across the other beliefs measured by Pew Forum (2008). For instance, 91% of LDS and 92% of JW believe their religion's sacred texts are the word of God; whereas only 63% of religiously-affiliated adults overall maintain this belief. Additionally, 90% of LDS and 93% of JW are absolutely certain about their belief in God, which is higher than the 71% of religiously-affiliated adults overall. Finally, 83% of LDS and 86% of JW say their religion is very important in their life, which is much higher than the 56% of religiously-affiliated adults overall.

Interestingly, LDS and JW have very different views on the existence of Heaven and Hell. LDS believe in Heaven more (95%) than religiously-affiliated Americans (74%); however, only 46% of JW believe in Heaven. When it comes to believing in Hell, LDS and religiously-affiliated Americans both have a 59% belief rate. Only 9% of JW believe in Hell. Theologically, this makes sense as WTS preaches that Hell does not exist, rather those who do not make it into Heaven are just annihilated (JW.org, 2015).

Additionally, Heaven only exists for 144,000 righteous people in JW theology. Therefore, JW who know their theology should answer that they do not believe in Heaven or Hell.

Practices. LDS and JW are much more likely to attend church on a weekly basis than other religiously affiliated Americans. Eighty-Two percent of JW and 75% of LDS report attending church weekly, while only 39% of religiously-affiliated Americans attend church weekly. Additionally, 92% of LDS and 95% of JW report praying weekly, while only 75% of religiously-affiliated Americans report praying weekly. Sharing one's religion with others is another marker of religious practice that LDS and JW do more frequently than other religiously-affiliated Americans. Some 47% of LDS and 84% of JW share their religion monthly with others, while only 36% of religiously-affiliated Americans report sharing their religion monthly. Finally, LDS and JW are more likely to report that they have received a response to a prayer at least once or twice a month than other religiously-affiliated Americans. Specifically, 54% of LDS and 49% of JW report receiving a response, compared to 31% of religiously-affiliated Americans.

These statistics demonstrate how more distinct religious groups maintain their culture by limiting the time available for members to participate in non-group activities. For comparison, Iannaconne (1994) used average number of services a member attended in a year as another measure of distinctiveness. LDS attended the most, with about 37 services attended, whereas Jehovah's Witnesses attended 33 services throughout the year (Iannacone, 1994). The trend held that highly distinctive organizations had members who attended more services than less distinctive organizations (Iannacone, 1994). Additionally, having a strong identification with the group is the first proposition put

forth by Stark (1996). Strong identification leads to high attachment to other group members and less attachment to non-members. The more a LDS or JW is in church meetings, the less time they have to meet non-church members and develop outside attachments. The Pew Forum (2008) data taken with Iannaoconne's (1994) findings illustrate the second of Stark's (1996) propositions—creating the right amount of strictness in the environment. This is a Goldilocks proposition: some churches are too strict, while others are not strict enough. The key to retention may be in having just the right amount of religious distinction, without having too much.

Cultural values. The third of Stark's (1996) theory propositions is that a tension between mainstream society and a church must be high for a church to be labeled strict. Pew Forum (2008) posed a similar question to this in that they asked participants if they see a conflict between religion and modern society. Pew Forum (2008) found that 36% of LDS and 59% of JW saw a conflict, while 40% of other religiously-affiliated Americans also did. It should be noted that LDS are below the rest of religiously-affiliated Americans for this response. This may be because the question is not asking about their particular religion, only religion in general. This is pointed out because the next question asks specifically if their values are threatened by Hollywood. Here, 64% of LDS agree with the statement, 54% of JW, and 42% of religiously- affiliated Americans overall. A similar pattern is found in more political values, as well. When asked if abortion should be illegal in all or most cases, 70% of LDS, 77% of JW, and 43% of religiously-affiliated Americans agreed. Additionally, when asked if homosexuality is a way of life that should be discouraged by society, 68% of LDS, 76% of JW, and 40% of religiously-affiliated Americans agreed. Taken all together, the cultural values of LDS

and JW are more similar to one another than they are to religiously-affiliated Americans overall.

      Other characteristics. Stark's (1996) other propositions outline the impact of doctrine, leaders, and socialization of youth. Stark (1996) states that "failed prophesies are harmful for religious movements because they put an empirical judgment on the religion" (p. x). The LDS avoid making claims about when the second coming of Christ will occur, but have had policies that were socially undesirable such as polygamy and banning African descendants from having the priesthood. The WTS did make the claim that the world would end in 1975 and had very low conversion and retention rates for several years following the unfulfilled prophecy (Stark & Iannaccone, 1997). Both groups draw on members to serve in leadership roles and maintain the local level meetings. The top levels of the organizations are paid roles. Additionally, both groups socialize children to be "strong" members. The LDS baptize children at the age of 8; while the WTS does not have an official age, it is typically around 12. The LDS encourage young men and women to serve on missions for the church at 18 and 19, respectively. The WTS promotes that, as soon as they are baptized, children spend the same number of hours preaching the good word in communities as the adult (JW.org, 2015; LDS.org, 2015)

      This section outlined the factors that increase a religious movement's success in terms of retention, specifically by comparing the beliefs, practices, and cultural values. The CJCLDS and WTS were chosen to compare because of the different retention rates, and yet they have same classification as a "strict church." The classification of strict church has previously been coined by Iannaconne (1994) and Stark and Iannaconne

(1997). Pew Forum (2008) data was used to reaffirm their status as strict churches in this section.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Based on the purpose of this study and the potential for new understanding regarding the relationship between family communication orientations and face behaviors in the context of disaffiliation from the CJCLDS and the WTS, several research questions and two hypotheses are posed below after a brief rationale.

First, due to the lack of research on religiously disaffiliated individuals and religiously heterogeneous families in general and those who have disaffiliated from the LDS and WTS specifically, an in-depth analysis of the disaffiliation conversation and its context are needed.

RQ1: What is the context in which young adults communicate religious disaffiliation to their parents?

RQ2: What facework behaviors are used during the disaffiliation conversation by young adults?

Family communication patterns theory is one way to better understand the context in which the disaffiliation conversation occurs. Given key differences in the beliefs of LDS and JW, there may be a significant difference between the two groups' family communication patterns.

RQ3a: How does the disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses' conformity family communication orientation differ from disaffiliated Latter-day Saints'?

RQ3b: How does the disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses' conversation family communication orientation differ from disaffiliated Latter-day Saints'?

Additionally, give the strictness and high demands of the two religious organizations, a great deal of stress may occur when disclosing their disaffiliation status.

RQ4: How does perceived stress differ during the disaffiliation conversation between disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses and disaffiliated Latter-day Saints?

Based on prior research, one can expect that disclosing religious disaffiliation will be more stressful for individuals from high conforming families, or those in which parents expect children to adopt their same beliefs, than those from high conversational families, who value the free exchange of ideas.

H1: Family conformity orientations of young adult religious disaffiliators are positively associated with their perceived stress during the disaffiliation conversation.

H2: Family conversation orientations of young adult religious disaffiliators are inversely associated with their perceived stress during the disaffiliation conversation.

Finally, difference between LDS and JW use of face behaviors will be examined in terms of prevalence and effectiveness to further understand the two groups' disaffiliation conversations.

RQ5: How does disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses' face behaviors' prevalence differ from disaffiliated Latter-day Saints' when communicating their disaffiliation?

RQ6: How do disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses' face behaviors' effectiveness rankings differ from disaffiliated Latter-day Saints' when communicating their disaffiliation?

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CHAPTER 3

METHOD

This study explores how young adults communicate religious disaffiliation to their parents. Specifically, this study focuses on the differences between disaffiliated Latter-day Saints (LDS) and disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses (JW) because they are both classified as a strict church, yet they each have different retention rates. The communication of religious disaffiliation is defined by both the context in which it occurs and the choice of facework behavior strategies young adult use during the conversations with their parents. To understand both the context and chosen facework behaviors, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected by using a partially mixed sequential quantitative dominate status design (Creswell, 2003; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). This chapter provides an overview of the method, as well as detailed information about the interview and survey phases.

Overview

The primary goal of this study is to explore what conversations about religious disaffiliation look like; this includes both a deep understanding of the context in which conversations about religious disaffiliation occur and how facework behaviors are used. The secondary goal of this study is to understand what differences in conversation context and facework behaviors exist between disaffiliated LDS and disaffiliated JW, particularly in terms of family communication patterns, perceived stress, and facework behaviors. In order to accomplish these goals, this mixed methods study first conducted interviews with young adults who have disaffiliated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (CJCLDS) and the Watch Tower Society (WTS) religious

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organizations. Next, a survey was conducted with a large number of young adults who had also disaffiliated from the LDS and WTS religious organizations.

This study utilized a partially mixed sequential quantitative dominate status design (Creswell, 2003; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). The two qualitative and quantitative data are not fully mixed, or integrated, in this design (Ivankova et al,, 2006). The two data types were collected sequentially in two timeframes. Both instruments used to collect data complement and clarify one another based on the theoretical framework of the study, the hypotheses, and the research questions. During the analysis, minor integration of the two methods occurred with the qualitative data explaining the process of communicating disaffiliation and quantitative data describing the variation across the two groups and relationships between variables.

Justification

The mixed method design was chosen because neither qualitative nor quantitative data would fully be able to explain religious disaffiliation communication at this time. While there have been several studies and explanations about who is disaffiliating from various religions and why, they have been large quantitative studies that are not interested in the disaffiliation conversation or its context (Hout & Fischer, 2002; Newport, 2012; Pew Forum, 2012). In an effort to move the religious disaffiliation literature forward, this study relies on both types of data to ensure a robust analysis that takes into account the strengths of each method (Ivankova et al., 2006). Specifically, partially mixed sequential quantitative dominate status design is useful in exploring quantitative results in more detail (Creswell, 2003). The qualitative data provides a rich backdrop for understanding the context surrounding the disaffiliation conversation.

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Additionally, collecting participants' stories of the disaffiliation conversation ahead of the survey launch allowed for the survey to be pretested. Numerous scholars mention the relative ease of conducting a partially mixed sequential quantitative dominate status design by a single researcher, as other designs typically require multiple data collectors (Creswell, 2003; Creswell, Goodchild, & Turner, 1996; Caracelli & Green, 1993; Moghaddam, Walker, & Harre, 2003).

This study design does have a few weaknesses that need to be discussed. First, the prioritization of quantitative data makes the importance of finding a significant difference between the variables higher. If the data do not produce results, then the interpretation of the qualitative data loses some transferability power. In addition, as with any mixed methods design, the time it takes to complete and analyze the results tends to be longer than a single method study (Creswell, 2003; Moghaddam et al., 2003). Furthermore, it requires more resources to collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data effectively (Creswell, 2003; Moghaddam et al., 2003).

Phase One: Interviews

This section describes how the interview phase of the study was conducted. It includes a discussion of the context, researcher's role, the participants, interview instrument, and analysis of results.

Context

In the first phase of this project, interviews were conducted with disaffliated members of the CJCLDS and WTS religious organizations. The purpose of conducting the interviews was to understand the context in which the conversation occurs and how various facework behaviors are used when communicating the decision to leave one's

religion to one's parents. Interviews were chosen because they "provide opportunities for mutual discovery, understanding, reflection, and explanation via a path that is organic, adaptive, and oftentimes energizing" (Tracy, 2013, p. 132). Specifically, I used informant interviews by recruiting participants open to providing information about their conversation. The interviews were semi-structured with a guiding list of questions to stimulate discussion and increase flexibility. Tracy (2013) notes less structured interviews allow for a free flow of content and emotion from participants, whereas highly structured interviews lack depth because they discourage elaboration.

Given the retrospective nature of the interviews, one criterion was that the participant told their parents about their disaffiliation decision no more than two and a half years before the interview. To ensure there was no undue emotional stress, participants were only recruited six months or more after the conversation. Besides timeframe, participants were required to have told parents who continue to believe in the religion from which the participant was disaffiliating. For instance, if a young adult disaffiliated from WTS, the parent/s who was told about the disaffiliation needed to still be part of WTS in order to participate in this study. Participants also had to be age 18 to 35 at the time of the conversation as the final criteria. After obtaining Institutional Review Board approval for this exempt study (see Appendix A), a recruitment script with the desired recruitment demographics was sent out to various online support groups for disaffiliated LDS and disaffiliated JW. In total, there were approximately 20,000 people on the different Facebook groups, Sub-Reddits, Meetup groups, and listservs. An email was sent to each group's moderator prior to posting to ensure the recruitment script was appropriate for their forum.

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Researcher's Role

As a disaffiliated LDS, it was important for me to take a friendship model approach to interviewing. While I did not know my participants before the interviews, I disclosed my status to them before the interviews began and worked to establish a rapport with each participant. I also shared information about why I left the CJCLDS and answered any questions they had. To account for the bias potential, I established an "ethical identity" with each participant (Kong, Mahoney, & Plummer, 2001). Kong et al. (2001) describe three facets of establishing an ethical identity. This section describes each facet and the steps I took as the researcher to establish an ethical identity.

The first facet is continual questioning of oneself: "Am I describing the research correctly? Does this person understand the concepts/language I am putting forward? Am I presenting enough information about myself and my research for this person to make an informed choice" (Kong et al., 2001, p. 104)? I was reflective by practicing the description of my research with a variety of audiences, including current and disaffiliated members of the CJCLDS. Describing my research to various audiences led me to see potential objections to the study and work out the ethical implications. For instance, I was often asked if my goal for this research was to get more LDS and JW to leave their faith. I am strongly against deactivation strategies and believe it is up to the individuals to ask questions and seek answers should they want to leave. My motivation for doing this study was to improve family communication and help disaffiliators communicate their decision in a way that does the least harm to themselves and their family. Furthermore, I would like this study to have a larger impact by making the findings available for a public audience. I communicated this intention to my participants and

ensured that they were comfortable participating. Like me, many of my participants felt the need to share their story with others to better family communication and make the transition less stressful.

The second facet is to construct an "empathic, emotional orientation during the interview process" (Kong et al., 2001, p. 105). In order to construct this orientation, it is necessary for the researcher to self-disclose at an equal level to the participant. I did not ask participants any question I would not answer. While I limited sharing my own experiences to respect the time limit, I did share my experience when asked or to keep the conversation flowing. I was very careful not to probe for more details when I felt it would be extraneous to the study at hand, while balancing the emotional needs of my participants. For example, one participant disclosed an abusive relationship to me. While I acknowledged the abuse, I did not ask for more details because the situation was not directly relevant to how the participant communicated with their parents. I felt that it would be inappropriate to receive more details about such an event without direct relevance to the study.

The third facet to this approach details the borders and boundaries of each relationship. Kong et al. (2001) advise that researchers need to "sense the boundaries and limitations that are associated with these relationships" by becoming "more aware of their own feelings and in turn, us[ing] them to guide the research process" (p. 105). Given the nature of many of the online support groups, I was privy to more information about the participants than just the interviews I conducted. I have chosen not to report any information I received from gaining entrance into the online support groups because consent was not obtained from all members of the groups. Additionally, I chose not to

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report information that was obtained outside of the interviews through additional

correspondence between myself and the participants. Several participants messaged me

to keep up with the study's progress and shared further updates about their family

situations. I felt it was important to maintain the relationships with the participants who

wanted one and not to exploit the relationship for more data.

Participants

Recruitment efforts in the online support groups led to over 30 interested

participants. The 10 final participants, five disaffiliated Latter-day Saints and five

disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses, were chosen based on their gender, age, and time

availability. Table 3 summarizes the demographic information of the participants. Five

females and five males were interviewed with five in their 20s and five in their 30s. They

have an overall age range of 20-34 years old. Participants' names were withheld for

Table 3

Summary of Phase One Participants' Demographic Information

Name	Former religious affiliation	Gender	Age	Time since conversation in months	# of pages in transcript
Jessica	Latter-day Saint	Female	24	24	14
Samantha	Latter-day Saint	Female	33	22	21
Michael	Latter-day Saint	Male	26	27	12
Christopher	Latter-day Saint	Male	28	7	16
Matthew	Latter-day Saint	Male	34	6	16
Emily	Jehovah's Witness	Female	20	13	16
Ashley	Jehovah's Witness	Female	23	12	13
Rebecca	Jehovah's Witness	Female	33	29	17
Brandon	Jehovah's Witness	Male	30	19	10
Daniel	Jehovah's Witness	Male	31	6	11

confidentiality; however, the researcher assigned names for ease of referring to each participant throughout the analysis.

Interview Instrument

The 10 participants took part in 90-minute interviews at a location of their choosing, typically a local coffee shop, or over the telephone. The interview protocol and questionnaire is located in Appendix B. The first part of the interview asked participants to share their experience of communicating the decision to disaffiliate to their parent. After answering, participants were asked follow-up questions to ensure that the context was fully explored. These questions included the participant's age at the time of disclosure, their feelings after the conversation, their advice for others, and several more. The first section typically took 25 to 30 minutes for the participants to answer. Then, about 10 minutes were spent covering missing details about the context.

The second part of the interview asked participants to pretest the survey measures outlined in the Phase Two section below. Participants were given an electronic version of the survey and asked to look carefully at the wording of questions and write down any questions they had throughout the survey to discuss at the end. After completing the survey, participants were asked about the directions, challenging questions, formatting, and for any clarifications. Phase Two's methodology below explains the changes made to the final survey instrument based on Phase One participants' feedback.

The third part of the interview calculated the various scale items and asked participants if the interpretation of the scale items was an accurate interpretation of their experience. Particularly, the family communication patterns items were discussed in great detail to understand if the measure was a valid representation of their family's

communication. Finally, the interviews ended with participants adding any additional

information they felt was important, as well as providing advice to others who may be in

a similar situation.

Analysis of Results

A transcript of each interview was created by a paid transcriber. The transcripts

were read carefully with the audio to ensure quality and completeness. In total, 146

single spaced pages of transcripts were analyzed. The transcripts were then analyzed

with the assistance of NVivo software. The pragmatic iterative approach was used

throughout the qualitative analysis to all for both an emic and etic understanding of the

data.

Tracy (2013) articulates the pragmatic iterative approach as an alternative to

grounded theory because grounded theory, specifically the extension of Strauss and

Corbin (1990), relies only on an emic, or emergent, understanding of the data. By

including an etic understanding, the researcher can bring in and build on existing

literature and theories (Tracy, 2013). Furthermore, the approach is iterative as it calls for

the researcher to engage in "a reflective process in which the researcher visits and

revisits the data, connects them to emerging insights, and progressively refines his/her

focus and understandings" (Tracy, 2013, p. 184). Two distinct phases take place during

the iterative process—primary-cycle coding and secondary-cycle coding.

Primary-cycle coding occurs when the researcher first goes through the data and

begins assigning labels to distinct parts. Some of the labels then become "first-level"

codes, while others are dropped or merged into other parts of the analysis. Research

question asked: What is the context in which young adults communicate religious

disaffiliation to their parents? The sensitizing concepts of family communication patterns and stress were specifically asked in the interviews to yielded responses for these concepts. Therefore, these primary and first-level codes were etic in nature. Additionally, the etic approach was used to answer to research question two: What face behaviors are used during the disaffiliation conversation by young adults? Oetzel et al.'s (2000) typology of face behaviors was used as a coding guide for research question two.

For this study, the emergent, or emic, approach was used to continue to answer research questions one in more depth. During primary-cycle coding, the disaffiliation conversation parts of the interview were broken into chronological chunks of before, during and after the conversation. Then, secondary-cycle coding was conducted with the main questions of, "what else is important to understanding the religious disaffiliation conversation's context?" After several rounds reading and rereading the transcripts, two categories emerged. The first is whether the participant planned to disclose their religious disaffiliation in advance. The second is the amount of doubt disclosure a participant had told their parents in advance of the final disaffiliation conversation. Both of these factors seemed to have a connection with the participants' family communication pattern and amount of perceived stress during the conversation. Therefore, these two codes were turned into variables to be tested during the quantitative phase of this study. The two new research questions created from the qualitative findings for the quantitative phase are:

RQ7: Does planning the conversation in advance decrease perceived stress of young adults during the disaffiliation conversation with their parents?

RQ8: Does having multiple conversations about doubts before the final

disclosure of religious disaffiliation decrease perceived stress of young adults

during the conversation with their parents?

Phase Two: Survey

This section describes Phase Two of data collection. First, the procedure used to

collect the quantitative data is described. Second, information about the participants and

descriptive statistics are given. Third, the instruments used to measure the various

variables are described.

Procedure

Upon the completion of Phase One, the interviews were analyzed and the survey

measures tailored based on interviewee suggestions. The survey was designed to test the

difference between LDS and JW in terms of family communication patterns and

facework behaviors, as well as perceived stress. After the consent page, the survey asked

1) demographic questions, 2) conversation context questions, 3) facework behavior

measures, 4) family communication patterns measures, and 5) facework effectiveness

measures. All measures can be found in Appendix C. To maintain confidentiality,

participation in the questionnaire was anonymous. Participation was also voluntary. As

an incentive, participants did have the option to enter into a drawing to win one of 20

$25.00 gift cards to Amazon.com.

Participants

A recruitment script with survey link was sent to various online support groups

for disaffiliated LDS and disaffiliated JW. The recruitment script outlined the same

criteria as the qualitative phase: 1) 18–35 years old at the time of the conversation, 2)

parents still practicing the faith from which the participant was disaffiliating, and 3) the conversation had taken place recently--between six months and two and a half years prior.

Descriptive Statistics

There were 431 surveys started; however, 48 survey takers did not qualify for the study. Of the remaining 383 surveys, 85 participants were removed from the analysis as those participants did not complete at least half of the measures. The end sample size was $N = 298$. The following section describes the sample based on key demographics. Table 4 provides the total number of participants in each category for each demographic.

Sex. Participants equally represent male and female with $N = 149$ males and $N = 149$ females. Disaffiliated Jehovah's Witness males ($N = 36$) make up a slightly larger percent of the sample than do female disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses ($N = 27$). For disaffiliated LDS, there was one more male ($N = 113$) than female ($N = 112$).

Age. Overall participants were $M = 29.24$ ($SD = 5.24$) years old, with disaffiliated JW being slightly younger ($M = 26.56$, $SD = 5.10$) versus disaffiliated LDS ($M = 29.96$, $SD = 5.05$).

Race. The majority of participants were white/Caucasian ($N = 264$), with Hispanic ($N = 15$) and Multiracial ($N = 11$) being the second and third largest classifications for race. By and large, disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses in this sample are more diverse than disaffiliated LDS.

Education and income. Disaffiliated LDS ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 1.37$) in this sample tend to be more educated than disaffiliated JW ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.32$). Disaffiliated LDS had on average between a 4-year degree and Masters' degree, while disaffiliated JW had

between a 2-year degree and a 4-year degree on average. Also, disaffiliated LDS have

slightly higher incomes closer to $80,000 ($M$ = 3.85, SD = 1.94), while disaffiliated JW's

incomes are closer to $60,000 ($M$ = 3.32, SD = 1.94).

      Other demographics. The majority of disaffiliated LDS participants (N = 154,

65.8%) report being married, while only one in three disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses

(N

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for LDS, JW, and Total Participants

	LDS	JW	All participants
Male	113	36	149
Female	112	27	149
Average Age	29.96	26.56	29.24
Race			
White	221	43	264
African Descent	1	0	1
Hispanic	4	11	15
Asian	2	1	3
Pacific Islander	1	0	1
Multiracial	0	3	3
Other	6	5	11
Education			
Less than High School	0	3	3
High School/ GED	9	20	29
Some College	58	21	79
2-year College Degree	28	11	39
4-year College Degree	92	4	96
Masters Degree	24	2	36
Doctoral Degree	4	2	6
Professional Degree	10	0	10
Income			
Less than $20,000	35	12	47
$20,000–39,999	34	15	49
$40,000–59,999	37	11	48
$60,000–79,999	34	6	40

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$80,000–99,999	39	6	45
$100,000–129,999	26	7	33
$130,000 or more	28	5	33

= 26, 36.5%) report being married. Disaffiliated LDS tend to be from larger families than

disaffiliated JW, with 92.3% of disaffiliated LDS participants having two or more

siblings while only 49.2% of disaffiliated JW participants have two or more siblings.

Finally, the majority of both disaffiliated LDS and disaffiliated JW participants report

being a current atheist (37.2%) or agnostic (34.9%).

Instruments

This section describes each scale and measure used to understand the context in

which the disaffiliation conversation occurs and the specific facework behaviors enacted

during the disaffiliation conversation.

Revised Family Communication Patterns Instrument. The Revised Family

Communication Patterns (RFCP) Instrument by Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) was

shortened from the traditional 26 items to 10 items based on prior studies' findings

(Schrodt et al., 2008). Limiting the number of items was done to prevent participant

fatigue. This scale assesses the family communication pattern from the child's

perspective, not the parent's perspective. The items are measured by a five-point Likert

scale, and responses range from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5).

Traditionally, there are 26 items that factor into two dimensions. Ritchie and Fitzpatrick

(1990) found high internal consistency for both dimensions using Cronbach's alpha

(Conversation orientation .92; Conformity orientation .82). A thorough examination of

articles included in Schrodt et al. (2008) led to the top five items in each orientation

being included. Additionally, items were pretested with the Phase One participants to

ensure internal consistency. One conversational orientation question, "If my parents don't approve of my action, they don't want to know about it," was replaced with a different question after Phase One because each disaffiliated JW participant strongly disagreed with the statement even if they agreed or strongly agreed with other conversational orientation questions. The participants reported that members of WTS are encouraged to report the wrong doings of other members to the church leadership. Overall, Cronbach's alpha for the conversation orientation subscale was .69; the alpha was not increased by deleting any items. The conversation scale included questions such as "In our family we often talk about our feelings and emotions." The conformity items remained the same from Phase One. Cronbach's alpha for the conformity subscale was .84 and had such questions as "In our home, my parents usually have the last word."

Conversation context. Based on the Phase One interviews, five questions were crafted to explain the context surrounding the religious disaffiliation conversation. This set of questions asked participants to answer according to the first conversation they had with their parent/s about leaving their religion. The first question asked participants who they told first, with options being 1) mother, 2) father, 3) mother and father together, 4) mother and stepfather, or 5) father and stepmother. The second question asked if participants planned the conversation in advance. The third question asked if participants had previously discussed their doubts or questions with their parent/s and, if so, how many times. The fourth question asked if their parent/s found out unintentionally about their disaffiliation before the young adult has disclosed. The example of their parents seeing that the participant was part of a Facebook page for disaffiliators or someone else sharing that the participant had doubts with their parents were given. The fifth question

asked participants to reflect on how stressful they found the conversation to be on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being most stressful. This grouping of questions helped participants recall the conversation and set the stage for the next scale about the particulars of the conversation. Additionally, questions two and three were added after the qualitative interviews were analyzed to better understand the role of planning and having multiple conversations.

Facework behaviors. Oetzel et al. (2000) developed the typology based on interviews and then tested the 14 behaviors in terms of effectiveness. In order to understand more about the prevalence of the different facework behaviors, this study used Oetzel et al.'s (2000) typology of 14 behaviors by asking participants yes or no questions about each of the behavior's three items. In total this led to 42 statements. Then, a composite score was created by adding the "yes" responses for each face behavior. Therefore, each behavior has the potential to range from 0 to 3 with 3 indicating more usage of the behavior.

Effectiveness ranking. The last section asked about how effective participants think different strategies are for approaching the disaffiliation conversation with parent/s. The strategies are from Oetzel et al. (2000). There are 14 questions. A five-point Likert-type scale, with 1 = Not at all effective and 5 = Highly effective, was utilized.

CHAPTER FOUR

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

With one in four individuals disaffiliating from their childhood religion,

understanding what happens to families during the disaffiliation process provides a

unique take on this recently-identified trend. To better understand the process, this

exploratory study utilized a mixed methods design and drew on the sensitizing concepts

of family communication patterns, facework behaviors, and both concepts' relationships

with perceived stress. This chapter provides the analysis of the qualitative data. In total,

10 participants were interviewed—five disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses (JW) and five

disaffiliated Latter-day Saints (LDS). Chapter Three described the methodology and

demographic details of the participants. This chapter will discuss first the context in

which the conversation occurred and then the facework behaviors used during the

conversation.

RQ1: Religious Disaffiliation Conversation Context

The context in which the religious disaffiliation conversation takes place is a

fruitful area of study because it is the moment in time when young adults more fully

embrace their new religious status by sharing with their still-believing parents that they

will no longer be affiliated with their religion. The sensitizing concepts of family

communication patterns and perceived stress were applied to the interviews. Family

communication patterns describe the variations of two orientations—conversational and

conformity—families use to communicate (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). Prior research has

found that perceived stress occurs more often when a family displays high levels of

conformity and occurs less often when a family displays high levels of open conversation

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(Schrodt et al., 2007). Given these two ideas from past research, interview participants were asked to take the Revised Family Communication Patterns Instrument, and their results were discussed to probe more deeply into how their families' past communication influenced their choices about how they disclosed their religious disaffiliation. A question about perceived stress was asked during the interview with the request that participants assign a 1 to 10 value on how much stress they perceived during the disaffiliation conversation, with 10 being the most stress they had ever experienced. Given the high number of people disaffiliating from religion, knowing the stressfulness of the conversation is a first step to providing communication interventions that reduce stress for the disaffiliators.

Furthermore, the interviews revealed two additional details to the conversation context that participants had sometimes strategically applied. The first is whether they had planned to have the conversation on the specific day that they disclosed. The second is whether participants had chosen to disclose their doubts about the faith before the disaffiliation conversation. These two choices may change the amount of stress a participant experienced.

Family Communication Patterns

The Revised Family Communication Patterns Instrument was taken by each participant to determine which of the four patterns applied to their family of origin. Participants were asked about their perception of the determined family communication pattern to see if it met their experience. Additionally, this scale served as a pretest for the quantitative phase of this study. Importantly, one question from the conformity scale was not a good indicator when applied to the religious disaffiliation conversation's context.

The question was, "If my parents don't approve of my action, they don't want to know about it." Each JW participant strongly disagreed with this statement regardless of how they ranked the other conformity measures. Daniel, a 31-year-old male and disaffiliated JW, pointed out to me that his parents, "want to know every little bad thing," because the WTS nurtures a surveillance culture where members report on one another's wrongdoings. The other four disaffiliated JW also reported this; therefore, this question was replaced for the quantitative phase and not used to determine the participants' family communication pattern during the interview.

Family communication patterns are based on the degree to which a family has open conversation—the conversation orientation—and the degree to which children are expected to conform with their parents ideas—the conformity orientation (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Families can be high or low in both orientations, which leads to four distinct patterns of communication—consensual, protective, pluralistic, and laissez-faire. Each pattern is discussed below with an example of how a participant described their family. Table 5 provides a summary of each of the participants' family communication patterns, as well as the three other conversation context subjects that are discussed later in this chapter.

Consensual. This family communication pattern occurs when a family has both high levels of conversation and conformity. Schrodt et al. (2008) explain that consensual families are marked by parents' interest in listening to their children, but ultimately believe that parents should make decisions for the family. Jessica, a 24-year-old disaffiliated LDS, and Daniel, a 31-year-old disaffiliated JW, both agreed that they were raised with a consensual family communication pattern.

Table 5

Summary of Phase One Participants' Conversation Context

Name	Family Communication Patterns	Stress	Was the conversation planned?	Prior doubts discussed?
Jessica	Consensual	7	No	No
Samantha	Pluralistic	4	Yes	Yes
Michael	Protective	9	No	No
Christopher	Pluralistic	7	Yes	No
Matthew	Lassie Faire	3	No	No
Emily	Pluralistic	8	No	No
Ashley	Protective	10	No	No
Rebecca	Protective	10	Yes	No
Brandon	Protective	10	Yes	No
Daniel	Consensual	4	No	Yes

Jessica's interview serves as a good example of how consensual families communicate

and what happens after religious disaffiliation disclosure.

Jessica, who was living in her parents' home at the time of the disaffiliation

conversation stated, "My family would always have a family meeting where we would

decide things [like family vacations]." Jessica remarked that most of the topics that she

discussed with her family were rather superficial like vacations or meals for the week,

but that her family was likely more communicative than other families. In terms of high

conformity, one marker is how upset Jessica's parents were that she did not ask them

about her questions with the church before making up her mind to disaffiliate from it. A

few days after her initial disclosure conversation, Jessica wrote her parents a letter that

she recalled saying something to the effect of, "I am making my own decision. I'm being

an adult. I decided what's best for me, and I'm trying to do what's best." This led to her

parents asking her to sign a contract agreeing to attend church, otherwise she would have

to move out because she was becoming a bad influence on her younger siblings. This

illustrates how her parents wanted her and her siblings to continue to agree with their values and beliefs, a key indicator of having a high level of conformity.

Protective. Protective families have a high level of conformity and low level of conversation. Koerner and Schrodt (2014) have found that this family pattern produces children who doubt their own decision-making and do not value family conversation. This was the most popular pattern for the interview participants, with 4 out of the 10 agreeing that this described their family. Given its popularity, two examples were chosen to be representative of how the family pattern impacted the religious disaffiliation conversation. First, I will describe Ashley's experience and then Michael's experience.

Ashely is a 23-year-old disaffiliated JW who was never "super-close" to her parents. She was living with her parents at the time of her religious disaffiliation and was asked to move out after disclosing her disaffiliation to her parents. One of the main issues she discussed relating to the high conformity orientation was how her parents were so highly conformed to the beliefs of the WTS that they could not offer her genuine advice. Ashley said, "I want them to come give me their true advice, like their own advice. And that is something my dad couldn't do." Once she decided to disaffiliate, the high conforming demands of her parents and the WTS became too much. Ultimately, Ashley said of her parents, "I know they love me, but at the same time, I know they love their faith more and it's still there. I still doubt. I have to wait for [my parents]…They still love Jehovah more; Jehovah is their God."

Michael, a 26-year-old disaffiliated LDS, was living at home with his parents when he disclosed his religious disaffiliation. He agreed that the protective family communication pattern fit his family's communication style. As I reviewed his interview

transcript, two key incidents prominently illustrate why his family fit this description. Michael shared that one night he had almost started to tell his parents about some of his doubts, but he "kind of chickened out" and backed down. It was evident that he was not comfortable sharing his opinions with his parents when they cast doubt on their opinions; a clear demonstration of a high conforming orientation. The low conversation orientation was demonstrated when Michael first disclosed his disaffiliation to his father. It was a Sunday morning, and his father came by his room to tell him it was time to get ready for church. Michael said he wasn't going, and his father asked him why. With a great deal of nervousness he responded, "Because I'm an atheist." Michael said, "I expected him to literally flip out, because he was in the hall and I was in my room, sitting at my desk. He's like, 'Oh, really.' Then, he just walks off. I'm just sitting in my room in panic mode…Then, 10 minutes later, I hear him and my mom leave in the car." Here, Michael was doubting his own decision and expected for there to be immediate consequences. However, his parents avoided the conversation initially. Both the doubting of one's own decision and conversation avoidance are clear indicators of a protective family communication pattern because families with this pattern have high levels of conformity and low levels of conversation.

      Pluralistic. This pattern describes families with a high degree of conversation and a low degree of conformity. This pattern is marked by the free and open communication among family members, without the pressure to agree with one another (Schrodt et al., 2008). Emily, a 20-year-old disaffiliated JW; Samantha, a 33-year-old disaffiliated LDS; and Christopher, a 28-year-old disaffiliated LDS; all agreed that their

families used a pluralistic pattern when communicating. Emily's interview is used to illustrate the pluralistic pattern below.

Emily was disfellowshipped because her mother found out she had been kissing a young man. Emily said that when her mom confronted her, "I just came out with everything…I was still really, really devout [and] loyal to Jehovah." A couple weeks later, she went before the congregation elders. She recalled,

> "Even though I went to them, I was repentant. I was really, truly, deeply regretful and remorseful of everything I had done. I was heartbroken over it. [The elders] didn't tell me what their reasoning was, but they told me I was going to be disfellowshipped."

Her father was waiting for her outside the meeting with the elders. When she told him the elder's decision, she said, "He just hugged me and held me and told me that he loved me." Her mother reacted similarly. Emily vowed that she would do whatever it would take to be reinstated and that they "would all be reunited." During the disfellowshipped period, Emily's parents agreed that she could remain living with them as long as she lived "by the Bible's principles and [did not] speak to any people outside the religion." After six weeks, she decided to leave. She sent her parents a text message saying that she was moving out and not coming back. Her mother immediately called to ask why. Emily explained, "I don't think I'm cut out for it. As much as I've prayed and as much as I've tried to want it, I just don't want it. I don't feel it. I haven't felt anything from Jehovah... I feel like I want to do what I want to do." Emily felt compelled to share with her parents why she was leaving the WTS and wanted her parents to understand her decision. She told me later in the interview that she had grown up in a "very open, emotionally

supportive family." She just knew that by disaffiliating from WTS she would no longer be able to maintain that same level of support with her family. Emily's parent were disappointed with her decision but did not try to stop her from making it. Emily's story illustrates how even high conversational oriented families still have consequences when one disaffiliates from their religion.

Laissez-faire. This family communication pattern occurs when a family has low levels of conversational and low levels of conformity. This pattern involves little interaction between family members and leads to children who place little value on family communication (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014; Schrodt et al., 2008). Additionally, children from laissez-faire families are comfortable making their own decisions (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). Only one participant, Matthew, reported having a family who used the laissez-faire communication pattern.

Matthew, a 33-year-old disaffiliated LDS, told his parents via email about his disaffiliation, and they have yet to have a face-to-face conversation about it. Matthew drunkenly sent an email one evening to his father saying that he no longer believed, hadn't for quite some time, and he asked his father to tell his mother. His father responded, "I'm not happy about this. We'll discuss it at another time." Matthew said that this was typical communication for his family, but recognized that it was probably not the typical experience for other disaffiliators. He said,

> "I think some people need to get in an argument with their parents just for the fact of closure… Some people just don't even tell their parents…It's just a matter of family dynamics…Everyone is different, and it's just a matter of how they best want to approach letting down their parents."

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This section provided examples of the four family communication patterns that were present in the interviews conducted with religiously-disaffiliated young adults. Most participants reported being in families that used either consensual or protective communication patterns. Both consensual and protective families have a high level of conformity. Strict churches overall may be more prone to producing families that have a high level of conformity to the parents' ideas or beliefs because the parents are also conforming to their church's ideas and beliefs.

Stress

Anecdotal evidence, like that at the beginning of Chapter One, led me to be interested in how much stress the disaffiliation conversation caused in young adults, if there were some people who experienced less stress, or if there were strategies for reducing the stress associated with the conversation. Furthermore, family communication patterns' literature has found that the higher the conversation orientation, the less stress a person experiences during family conflict in general (Schrodt et al., 2007). However, the higher the conformity orientation, the more stress a person experiences during family conflict (Schrodt et al., 2007). With these questions and past literature in mind, I asked participants to rank how stressful they found the disaffiliation conversation with their parents on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the most stressful. Then, participants explained their answers. Overall, seven participants ranked the conversation at a 7 or above, and three participants ranked the conversation as a 3 or 4. This section contains an example from participants who found the conversation not stressful, somewhat stressful, and the most stressful.

Not stressful. Daniel, 31, disaffiliated from the WTS after deciding that his marriage of seven years would not work because he is gay. He had disclosed to his parents that he was gay and getting a divorce prior to telling them that he was disaffiliating from the WTS. He said his strategy at this point was to "tell people that this whole situation is so depressing to me that I need some time alone. I can't go to meetings, and I can't go to church and face people with all of this." He said he knew when he first told his parents about the divorce that he was not going to go back to being a JW, but that he wanted to reveal a little bit at a time. About nine months later, he had the religious disaffiliation conversation with his parents. About the stress he felt, he said,

> "I think I've been preparing it for a while, so because of that I would say a 4. People who leave the organization have this stigma about them that they're just angry apostates, and they're bitter, and the devil is controlling them and stuff. And so I've made this concerted effort to be as loving and patient as possible, because I know this is hard for them."

He did say that disclosing the divorce and that he was gay was much more stressful than disclosing that he was disaffiliating from JW. His strategy of revealing a little bit of information at a time was used by several other people and led to its own category that is explained below.

Moderately stressful. Surprisingly, there was not anyone who ranked their perceived stress as a 5 or 6; rather, it jumps straight to 7. Participants in the 7–8 range reported a variety of experiences. This section focuses on Christopher and Emily's rankings of stress because they are representative of the variety reported by the other participants.

Christopher, 28, chose to call his father while his father was away on a business trip to tell him that he was disaffiliating from the CJCLDS. While his parents lived less than five miles away from his house, he wanted to tell his dad before he told his mom so his dad would more fully understand his decision. Christopher was concerned that his mother would not be supportive. Christopher rated his stress as a 7. He said, "I was outside pacing back and forth when I was calling [my dad], so I was definitely stressed out. I think my voice was shaking when I started to call him so I was nervous. I was definitely nervous." After disclosing to his dad, the majority of the conversation was spent trying to decide how Christopher should tell his mother. They decided he should do it the next day. Christopher said the conversation with his mother was much more stressful because their relationship had always revolved around the church. Christopher's story led me to make more specific directions for the quantitative study to ensure that participants would know to only answer according to the first parent they told, if they told them separately.

Emily, a 20-year-old disaffiliated JW, was described above in terms of her pluralistic family communication pattern. She was disfellowshipped after her mother found out she had been kissing a boy. She perceived the stress of the final conversation she had with her mother after sending a text message that she was moving as an 8, on a 10 point scale. Emily said,

> "It was stressful because of the situation. They were my parents, and I loved them so much. I still do love them so much. It was stressful having to tell them that they weren't getting me back. They were planning on having me back in just a

few weeks. Instead, I was telling them that they weren't going to have me back,

maybe for forever. It was really hard."

She has only seen her parents once since she told them she was disaffiliating from the

WTS. Her parents were getting ready to move across the country to be nearer Emily's

sister. Her dad asked that she write every week to tell them she is okay. Emily does

write, but she rarely gets a response. Emily said if she does, "It is only a one-word email.

That's been our whole relationship."

Severely stressful. Three disaffiliated JW ranked the conversation as a 10, and

one disaffiliated LDS ranked the conversation at a 9. These participants felt the most

stress they had ever felt disclosing to their parents that they were no longer members of

the WTS or CJCLDS.

Ashley, who was described in the protective family communication pattern,

explained her ranking of a 10 when she said,

"Besides the whole losing my family, I think throughout the conversation I was

crying … because it wasn't just the family I was leaving. I was afraid am I

making the right decision and is this worth it? Actually, while I was having the

conversation, I was thinking about people I knew who had left and came back

and said how horrible it is and how much they regret leaving. I was just really

concerned. I was distraught. I almost wanted to change my mind during the

conversation, but I just kept going through with it. So I would say it was a 10."

Ashley has spoken with her parents several times since the disaffiliation conversation

and recently introduced her new boyfriend to her parents. She said her dad has surprised

her and "he actually said to me that he likes my boyfriend, who is not a Witness; that's

big." Ashley acknowledges that her father's faith "is very important to him and makes him very happy." She doesn't want to "interrupt that because I understand." Ashley's story illustrates how sometimes parents are more flexible than their children think they will be when they disclose their religious disaffiliation.

This section described the different perceived stress participants felt when disaffiliating from either the WTS or CJCLDS. Stress was specifically highlighted because of its relationship with family communication patterns. Specifically, families with high conversation orientation typically experience less stress during conflict, while families with high conforming orientation experience more stress during conflict (Schrodt et al., 2008). This trend was not completely sustained in this small sample of religious disaffiliators, however, it will be tested in more depth in the quantitative section. What this section does is provide an in-depth explanation for how different levels of stress are manifested by religious disaffiliators during the disclosure conversation.

Preparation

Some religious disaffiliators felt it was necessary to overtly plan how and when to tell their parents about their religious disaffiliation, while others consciously chose to keep their disaffiliation a secret for as long as possible. Interestingly, the participants were almost evenly split, with four preparing for the conversation ahead of time and six waiting to have the conversation be spontaneous. This category was developed through emergent coding, unlike the prior two sections that were grounded in an etic approach to the data.

Plan in advance. This category describes the various strategies individuals used to plan the conversation for religious disaffiliation. Some chose to script their reasons ahead of time and even share them with friends for advice, while others drop hints over time to soften the shock of their disaffiliation.

Daniel, the 31-year-old disaffiliated JW who told his parents about his divorce first, planned the conversation in advance. He explained that his method was

"to make it as easy for them as possible [and] just do it in steps. Let them digest on something for a while, and then give them a little bit more, and then a little bit more. I have a brother and a sister, who have both been shunned. My brother is currently shunned, and he's been out for a long time, decades. I knew that they would practice [shunning], so this helped … so that I can have a little bit of a relationship with them."

Christopher is another example of someone who planned out the disaffiliation conversation in advance. He decided to wait until his father went on a business trip to tell him that he was no longer affiliating with the CJCLDS and then had his father help him plan how to tell his mother about his disaffiliation.

Finally, Samantha, a 33-year-old disaffiliated LDS, had a similar story to Daniel in that she decided to divorce her spouse. At the time of the divorce, however, she had not decided to disaffiliate from her religion as Daniel had. Samantha said that after she became divorced, she began to embrace feminism, which led to her questioning how women are viewed by the CJCLDS. She took her questions to her parents. In fact, Samantha said she cannot "pinpoint one specific conversation that started [the disaffiliation]." About a year after her divorce, Samantha's temple recommend was

expiring. A temple recommend is given to worthy members of the CJCLDS after an interview with the local leader ensuring their worthiness. Temple recommends are necessary for performing scared ordinances in the temples of the CJCLDS. Samantha knew that she would have to quickly decide whether she would renew her recommend or not. She decided to go to the temple one last time. Samantha recalled, "I needed the closure or to know that I was done…I felt like I'd done everything I could. I'd lived all the commandments right up until the end." She went to the temple on a Saturday and felt that she was not going to change her mind—she was no longer LDS. On Sunday, she went to brunch with some friends and told them her decision. They ordered Samantha her first Bloody Mary. Sunday evening, she told her parents. She had talked through how she would tell her family with her friends and knew that they would expect that she would be disaffiliating because she had expressed her doubts to them before. Samantha's interview led to the realization that disclosing doubts ahead of the final disaffiliation conversation may lead to different outcomes than not disclosing doubts beforehand.

Keep it a secret. Six participants reported keeping their disaffiliation a secret by either continuing to attend religious services routinely with their family or lying about their attendance to their parents. This strategy is only temporary for the participants in this study because eventually they did have a spontaneous conversation with their parents about their disaffiliation. Many of the conversations were seen above in the family communication patterns sections, such as Michael's spontaneous doorway conversation with his dad and Emily making the preparations to move out before sending the text message telling her parents. Ashley told me what was going on in her mind when she finally did disclose and why she wasn't able to plan the conversation in advance. Her

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thought process is in alignment with the other non-planners. Ashley, 23, explained that planning is not something she could have done when she said,

> "You can't plan for it. It's just you decided to do it. I tried to find the right words, the right things to say, but I knew that no matter what I said it was going to hurt them. I could say that I knew that it was the right thing to do. While I was speaking to them though, they were almost like … They tried to … What's the word … talk to me a little bit, and it's like they were telling me, 'Oh we saw it coming; you were not really doing this when you were younger or that when you were younger.' I checked, and I went 'No, I did most of the things when I was younger, but I grew and I changed. This is how I feel now.'"

This section explained why some religious disaffiliators chose to plan their disaffiliation conversations with their parents and others did not. Planning in advance allowed participants to anticipate their parent's response and strategize about the conversation. On the other hand, some participants said that they felt like it was not a conversation they could plan for in advance and actively tried to keep their disaffiliation secret from their parents.

Hold Multiple Conversations. Another category that developed through emergent coding regarded whether the participant had multiple conversations with their parents about their doubts before the final disaffiliation conversations. Samantha, the 33-year-old disaffiliated LDS, and Daniel, the 31-year-old disaffiliated JW, were the only two participants to use this strategy. Samantha mentioned that she had had so many conversations about her doubts that she could not pinpoint when the first one began. Daniel had several conversations about his changing lifestyle with his parents and then

used a "breadcrumb approach" by giving his parents just enough information to lead them to question of whether he was still affiliated with the WTS. Samantha and Daniel also experienced much less stress than other participants who first disclosed their doubts during the disaffiliation conversation.

<div align="center">

RQ2: Facework Behaviors Used during Religious Disaffiliation

</div>

While there are several ways of analyzing the choices made during the religious disaffiliation conversations by young adults, this study chose to use Face Negotiation Theory's concept of facework behaviors. Facework behaviors are "the communicative strategies that are the enactment, support, or challenge of situated identities" (Tracy, 1990, p. 210). In this case, they are the strategies young adults used to communicate the change in their religious identity to their parents. Oetzel et al. (2000) developed 14 facework behaviors that were used during the etic coding of the data. The results are presented below in response to Research Question 2.

Avoidance

Avoidance is marked by one party withdrawing from the other. This can happen with either the parent or child. As we saw above, Michael's father withdrew from the disaffiliation conversation by leaving the house after Michael disclosed. An example of the child avoiding is Christopher, a 28-year-old disaffiliated LDS, who first disclosed to his dad over the phone and then told his mother in person the next day. He said,

> "Yeah, it's going to happen eventually, so I have to tell her. [The next] day, we took her dog for a walk and just had a nice evening. I was just procrastinating it and then, we were inside. We were just talking about normal, whatever, stuff but

then she got a call that my younger sister was coming home in like half hour, 45

minutes. I was like, 'OK. I can't procrastinate anymore.'"

Michael and Christopher's experiences illustrate how parents and young adults can both

use the avoidance facework behavior during the religious disaffiliation conversation.

Compromise

Compromise occurred when both parties use a give and take. Many of the

participants who still lived at home were approached with compromises by their parents

that they still attend church and are not openly disaffiliated from the religions, such as

Jessica, the 24-year-old disaffiliated LDS. She said, "They did give me a contract, but I

never ended up signing it. I just kind of left it on my desk because, honestly, it was so

belittling that I didn't even want to think about it." Samantha, the 33-year-old LDS

disaffiliator, did compromise with her mom that she would not officially resign her

membership and continue to support the family by attending religious ceremonies.

Several other participants made a similar compromise with their parents.

Consider the Other

This facework behavior occurs when a participant takes into consideration their

parent's feelings to show respect. Christopher, a 28-year-old LDS disaffiliator,

performed this facework behavior by strategizing with his dad about how to tell his

mother in a considerate way.

Defend Self

Defending one's self happened when the young adult holds tight to their position

when they perceive their parent attacking it. Ashley, a 23-year-old JW disaffiliator,

stated,

"I tried to be very straightforward with my parents, because I didn't want to leave

them in loopholes for them to jump through. My dad just kept telling me how I

feel is really not logical because I'm risking everlasting life; I might possibly die.

I said to him I disagree with him. I said to him, 'Well, you're only a human

being, and you don't know that.'"

Express Feelings

This facework behavior occurred when the young adult expresses how they are

feeling without defending or attacking their parent. Jessica, a 33-year-old JW

disaffiliator, recounts that she was showing a book about the WTS shortcomings to her

mother and said,

"'Mom, you're not going to believe this,' I said, 'I have to talk to you about

something, and I'm really nervous about it because I don't know what to think.' I

just said, 'I can't unsee what I've seen.' I started to tell her about the child abuse

…..... I was really trying to be real and have a heart-to-heart ... I probably came on

too strong because there was so much."

Passive Aggression

This facework behavior occurred when the young adult uses subtle, not

outwardly abusive, means to attack their parent's position. Daniel, a 31-year-old JW

disaffiliator, explained,

"I don't want to say I bait them, but put that nugget out there and see if they bite,

and then explained what I had learned and how it relates to the religion, and say

essentially I feel like at the least, [religion is] somewhat deceptive. At the worst,

it's an outright lie."

Daniel was referring to "nuggets" of information that he would intentionally drop about the shortcomings of the WTS to get his parents to enter into a conversations about the information. This is passive aggressive, as opposed to expressing feelings, because he was deliberately leading the conversation to a pre-determined end point.

Pretend

Pretending there is no conflict or that one is not hurt by the conflict was a facework behavior used by several young adults initially and by their parents. This behavior occurred for young adults when they did not express how hurt they were by their parents words during the conversation. Additionally, several parents either left after the disclosure or said they would talk about it at another time, which for some had still not happened until months later.

Private Discussion

This facework behavior occurred when the young adult tried to avoid talking about the problem in public by taking their parent/s somewhere where they could be alone. For example, Brandon, a 30-year-old JW disaffiliator, explained that he and his mother "took a drive, a long drive, up to the mountains and essentially had a four- or five-hour conversation about my experience and why I was leaving."

Remain Calm

This facework behavior occurred when participants mentioned that they were trying to stay calm and/or used positive self-talk during the conversation. For instance, Samantha a 34-year-old LDS disaffiliator, told herself, "If I'm calm and if I'm positive, then [my parents] know that it's a good decision."

Talk about Problem

This facework behavior occurred when the participants directly addressed one or more of the reasons they were disaffiliating. Brandon, a 30-year-old JW disaffiliator, said during the car ride with his mom,

"[I] took her through the three or four major issues I had with the Jehovah's Witnesses. That was a primary thing, but the more research I did and the more I thought about, I essentially came to the conclusion that I was an agnostic-atheist. I was essentially against all types of organized religions, spirituality, and I was moving on from it. I explained to her why. We didn't argue about it per se…[S]he's very rational and level-headed, so we had a good, healthy conversation."

Other Facework Behaviors

Abuse, apologize, give in, and involve a third party are each facework behaviors identified by Oetzel et al. (2000); however, they were not present in the interviews with the 10 young adult religious disaffiliators. Nonetheless, it is conceivable how each one could occur during the religious disaffiliation conversation. Abuse occurs when a person verbally puts down another. If a conversation escalated to name-calling, then this facework behavior would occur. Apologizing could occur if a young adult admitted to making a mistake by disaffiliating. This could potentially happen halfway through the first conversation and then the participant could go back to their original decision to disaffiliate. Similarly, the facework behavior of give in could occur when a young adult lets their parents believe they are not disaffiliating at the end of the conversation by accommodating their parents. Finally, involving a third party could occur if a young

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adult brings in a mediator, such as a sibling or friend, during the disaffiliation
conversation.

Conclusion

This chapter provided in-depth examples of not only the context in which the
religious disaffiliation conversation occurs, but also the individual facework behaviors
that may be used by young adults during the conversation. Specifically, an etic approach
was taken to more deeply understand the theoretical construct of family communication
patterns, as well as the perceived amount of stress participants felt during the
conversation. An emic approach to the data analysis was taken by looking at emerging
factors that are important to the conversation's context. Two factors—planning the
conversation in advance and having multiple discussions—emerged from the data. These
factors led to two additional research questions being added to the quantitative portion of
this mixed method study:

> RQ7: Does planning the conversation in advance decrease perceived stress of
> young adults during the disaffiliation conversation with their parents?
>
> RQ8: Does having multiple conversations about doubts before the final
> disclosure of religious disaffiliation decrease perceived stress of young adults
> during the conversation with their parents?

Furthermore, this chapter found that the facework behaviors identified by Oetzel et al.
(2000) could be applied to the religious disaffiliation conversation. Therefore, this
typology was used for the quantitative data collection period, the results of which are
explained in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 5

QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative results consist of eight cross-group comparisons between disaffiliated Latter-day Saints (LDS) and disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses (JW) and two hypotheses testing the relationship between family communication patterns and perceived stress. This section is presented in a parallel structure to the qualitative results, with family communication patterns, stress and face behaviors research questions, and hypotheses answered first. Then, additional analyses of the impact of planning the religious disaffiliation conversation and number of prior discussions on stress are examined. The last two analyses were added into the quantitative study after the collection of the qualitative results to further probe the context of the religious disaffiliation conversation.

Data Analysis Strategy and Assumptions

This section lays out the types of statistical analyses performed and their assumptions. Two sample t-tests were used to answer RQ3 through RQ6. The first assumption for a two-sample t-test is that the data are continuous (Field, 2009). As discussed in Chapter Three, family communication patterns was measured on a five-point scale, perceived stress was measured on a ten-point scale, and effectiveness was measured on a five-point scale. Face behaviors was the sum total of three discrete questions yielding continuous data on a three-point scale. Probability distribution for each variable was examined, and the normal distribution assumption was met (Field, 2009). Finally, the groups were independent samples with no participant being eligible to

be in the other group, whether it be disaffiliated LDS or JWs or a planner of the conversation or non-planner (Field, 2009).

Hypothesis 1 utilized Pearson's correlation, which has five assumptions. First, the data must be either interval or ratio measurements (Field, 2009). In this case, the independent variable of family communication patterns was measured on a five-point scale, and the dependent variable of perceived stress was measured on a ten-point scale. The second assumption is that the data is normally distributed (Field, 2009). The third assumption is that a linear relationship exists between the two variables (Field, 2009). The fourth assumption is that there are no outliers (Field, 2009). The fifth assumption is that homoscedasticity of the data exists (Field, 2009). All the assumptions were met for this analysis.

Based on emergent qualitative findings, the two additional research questions were posed to understand if trends exist between stress and planning, as well as between stress and having multiple conversations about doubts. To answer RQ7, an independent sample t-test was conducted with planned/not planned as the independent variable and stress as the dependent variable. The assumptions for this analysis outlined above were met. To answer RQ8, an ANOVA was conducted. The first assumption is that the independent variable, in this case number of prior conversations, are independent observations (Field, 2009). Based on the response categories of 1 = no conversations, 2 = one or two conversations, 3 = three to five conversations and 4 = six or more conversations, this assumption was met. The second assumption is that there is homogeneity of variance (Field, 2009). Levene's Statistic is not significant indicating

that the assumption was met (Field, 2009). The final assumption of normal distribution was met.

RQ3: Family Communication Patterns' Difference between LDS and JWs

Research question 3a asked, "How does the disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses' conformity family communication orientation differ from disaffiliated Latter-day Saints'?" The results indicate that on average disaffiliated JW had more conforming family orientations ($M = 4.21$, $SE = .09$) than disaffiliated LDS ($M = 3.68$, $SE = .06$). This difference was statistically significant $t(296) = 4.38$, $p < .001$ and represents a medium effect size $r = .25$.

Research question 3b asked, "How does the disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses' conversation family communication orientation differ from disaffiliated Latter-day Saints'?" The conversational family orientation was not statistically different between disaffiliated JW ($M = 2.61$, $SE = .11$) and disaffiliated LDS ($M = 2.87$, $SE = .05$), $t(296) = -2.24$, $p > .05$. Additionally, this was a small effect size $r = .13$.

RQ4: Perceived Stress Differences between LDS and JWs

Research question 4 asked, "How does perceived stress differ during the disaffiliation conversation between disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses and disaffiliated Latter-day Saints?" Disaffiliated JW ($M = 8.46$, $SE = .24$) reported the disaffiliation conversation as more stressful than disaffiliated LDS ($M = 7.79$, $SE = .03$). This difference was significant at $t(296) = 2.21$, $p < .05$. Additionally, there is a small effect, $r = .13$.

H1 & H2: Family Communication Patterns Association with Perceived Stress

Hypothesis 1 stated, "Family conformity orientations of young adult religious disaffiliators are positively associated with their perceived stress during the disaffiliation conversation." This hypothesis was confirmed as there was a significant positive relationship between the conforming orientation and stress, $r = .36$, $p < .001$. Table 6 reports the descriptive statistics and correlations. This means that the more conforming a family is, the higher the perceived stress a disaffiliated JW or LDS experienced when disclosing religious disaffiliation.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Product-Moment Correlations among All Variables [a]

	M	*SD*	*1*	*2*
Independent Variables				
1. Conformity Orientation	3.79	0.88		
2. Conversational				
Orientation	2.81	0.82		
Dependent Variable				
3. Stress	7.93	2.15	0.36	-0.20

Note. All correlations are significant at $p < .01$
[a]$N = 267$

Hypothesis 2 stated, "Family conversation orientations of young adult religious disaffiliators are inversely associated with their perceived stress during the disaffiliation conversation." There was an inverse relationship between the conversational orientation and stress, as H1b predicted, $r = -.20$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the more conversational a family was ranked, the less stress a disaffiliated JW or LDS experienced when disclosing religious disaffiliation.

RQ5: Prevalence of Facework Behaviors in LDS and JW Disaffiliation Conversations

Research question 5 asked, "How does disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses' face behaviors' prevalence differ from disaffiliated Latter-day Saints' when communicating their disaffiliation?" Table 7 reports the descriptive statistics and t-test results for each face behavior. Overall, disaffiliated JW report using *more abuse, passive aggressive, pretend, and defend self* face behaviors than disaffiliated LDS. Specifically, disaffiliated JW ($M = .27$, $SE = .08$) reported using put down, or *abuse*, more than disaffiliated LDS ($M = .07$, $SE = .02$). This difference was significant at $t(285) = 3.75$, $p < .001$. Additionally, there was a small effect, $r = .22$. Disaffiliated JW ($M = .67$, $SE = .10$) reported using subtle means to put down the others in indirect ways, or *passive aggressive*, more than disaffiliated LDS ($M = .41$, $SE = .02$). This difference was significant at $t(276) = 2.83$, $p < .001$. Additionally, there was a small effect, $r = .17$. Disaffiliated JW ($M = 1.15$, $SE = .15$) reported *pretending* there was no conflict more than disaffiliated LDS ($M = .75$, $SE = .07$). This difference was significant at $t(283) = 2.64$, $p < .05$. Additionally, there was a small effect, $r = .16$. Disaffiliated JW ($M = 2.40$, $SE = .08$) reported defending their position and not giving in, or *defend self*, more than disaffiliated LDS ($M = 2.04$, $SE = .06$). This difference was significant at $t(294) = 2.95$, $p < .05$. Additionally, there was a small effect, $r = .17$. No significant difference was found for the remaining face behaviors of *consider the other, express feelings, give in, avoid, apologize, involve third party, compromise, remain calm, private discussion,* and *talk about the problem*.

Table 7

Face Behavior Prevalence by JW and LDS

Behavior	JW Mean (SE)	LDS Mean (SE)	t	df	r
Using put downs (Abuse)	.27 (.08)	.07 (.02)	3.75 **	285	0.22
Express Feelings	2.10 (.10)	2.07 (.06)	0.25	294	0.02
Giving in and letting your parent(s) win (Give in)	.34 (.08)	.26 (.04)	0.97	286	0.06
Using subtle means to put down the others in indirect ways (Passive aggressive)	.67 (.10)	.41 (.04)	2.83**	276	0.17
Pretending there is no conflict (Pretend)	1.15 (.15)	.75 (.07)	2.64*	283	0.16
Avoiding having a conversation (Avoid)	.85 (.10)	.74 (.05)	1.02	277	0.06
Admitting that you made a mistake and sharing that with your parents (Apologize)	.50 (1.0)	.41 (.05)	0.95	277	0.06
Seeking a third party to help find a solution (Involve 3rd party)	.40 (.10)	.38 (.04)	0.2	276	0.01
Finding a compromise through give and take (Compromise)	1.62 (.14)	1.32 (.07)	-1.90	280	-0.11
Defending your position and not giving in (Defend self)	2.40 (.08)	2.04 (.06)	2.95*	294	0.17
Trying to stay calm and unemotional (Remain calm)	2.22 (.08)	2.18 (.04)	0.4	276	0.02
Avoiding having the discussion in a public setting (Private discussion)	2.63 (.58)	2.55 (.72)	0.86	281	0.05
Taking into account your parent's/parents' feelings to show respect (Consider the other)	2.57 (.09)	2.71 (.04)	-1.49	294	-0.09
Directly addressing the issue with your parent(s) (Talk about the problem)	1.50 (.13)	1.35 (.07)	0.94	274	0.6

* $p < .05$; **$p < .001$

RQ6: Effectiveness of Face Behaviors Differences Between LDS and JWs

Research Question 6 asked, "How do disaffiliated Jehovah's Witnesses' face behaviors' effectiveness rankings differ from disaffiliated Latter-day Saints' when communicating their disaffiliation?" Overall, disaffiliated JW found *abuse*, *passive aggression*, *pretend*, and *avoid* as more effective face behaviors than disaffiliated LDS. On the other hand, disaffiliated LDS found *involving a third Party*, *talk about the problem*, and *considering the other* as more effective face behaviors than disaffiliated JW. Table 8 reports the descriptive statistics and t-test results for each face behavior.

Specifically, disaffiliated JW ($M = 1.36$, $SE = .11$) rated *using put downs* as more effective than disaffiliated LDS ($M = 1.09$, $SE = .03$). This difference was significant at $t(281) = 3.46$, p $<.001$. Additionally, there is a small effect, $r = .20$. Disaffiliated JW ($M = 1.69$, $SE = .16$) rated using subtle means to put down the others in indirect ways, or *passive aggression*, as more effective than disaffiliated LDS ($M = 1.24$, $SE = .04$). This difference was significant at $t(278) = 4.12$, p $<.001$. Additionally, there is a small effect, $r = .24$. Disaffiliated JW ($M = 2.03$, $SE = .16$) rated *pretending* there was no conflict as more effective than disaffiliated LDS ($M = 1.54$, $SE = .06$). This difference was significant at $t(277) = 3.63$, p $<.001$. Additionally, there is a small effect, $r = .20$. Disaffiliated JW ($M = 2.66$, $SE = .40$) rated *avoiding* having the conversation as more effective than disaffiliated LDS ($M = 1.67$, $SE = .08$). This difference was significant at $t(280) = 3.75$, p $<.001$. Additionally, there is a small effect, $r = .22$.

Furthermore, disaffiliated LDS ($M = 2.91$, $SE = .07$) rated seeking a third party's help, or *involve a third party*, to find a solution as more effective behavior than

Table 8

Face Behavior Effectiveness by JW and LDS

Behavior	JW	LDS			
	Mean (SE)	Mean (SE)	t	df	r
Using put downs (Abuse)	1.36 (.11)	1.09 (.03)	3.46**	281	0.2
Giving in and letting your parent(s) win (Give in)	1.25 (.10)	1.18 (.03)	0.83	278	0.01
Using subtle means to put down the others in indirect ways (Passive aggressive)	1.69 (.16)	1.24 (.04)	4.12**	278	0.24
Pretending there is no conflict (Pretend)	2.03 (.16)	1.54 (.06)	3.63**	277	0.2
Avoiding having a conversation (Avoid)	2.66 (.4)	1.67 (.08)	3.75**	280	0.22
Admitting that you made a mistake and sharing that with your parents (Apologize)	2.21 (.16)	2.18 (.08)	0.21	281	0.01
Seeking a third party to help find a solution (Involve third party)	2.57 (.16)	2.91 (.07)	-2.13*	278	0.13
Finding a compromise through give and take (Compromise)	2.8 (.18)	3.04 (.08)	-1.34	281	0.08
Defending your position and not giving in (Defend self)	4.18 (.14)	3.97 (.06)	1.48	278	0.08
Trying to stay calm and unemotional (Remain calm)	4 (.13)	4.09 (06)	-0.66	278	0.04
Avoiding having the discussion in a public setting (Private discussion)	3.95 (.15)	4.12 (.07)	-1.13	278	0.07
Taking into account your parent's/parents' feelings to show respect (Consider the other)	4.1 (.13)	4.38 (.06)	-2.13*	278	0.13
Directly addressing the issue with your parent(s) (Talk about the problem)	4.15 (.14)	4.48 (.05)	-2.73*	278	0.16

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

disaffiliated JW ($M = 2.57$, $SE = .16$). This difference was significant at $t(278) = -2.13$, p $< .05$. Additionally, there is a small effect, $r = .13$. Disaffiliated LDS ($M = 4.38$, $SE = .06$) rated taking into account one's parent's feelings to show respect, or *consider the other*, as more effective behavior than disaffiliated JW ($M = 4.10$, $SE = .13$). This difference was significant at $t(281) = -2.13$, p $< .05$. Additionally, there is a small effect, $r = .13$. Disaffiliated LDS ($M = 4.48$, $SE = .05$) rated directly addressing the issue with their parent(s), or *talk about the problem*, as more effective behavior than disaffiliated JW ($M = 4.15$, $SE = .14$). This difference was significant at $t(278) = -2.73$, p $< .05$.

There was no significant difference between disaffiliated JW and disaffiliated LDS when ranking effectiveness for the following face behaviors: *give in*, *apologize*, *compromise*, *defend self*, *remain calm*, and *private discussion*.

RQ7: Planning the Religious Disaffiliation Conversation Relationship with Perceived Stress

Specifically RQ7 asked, "Does planning the conversation in advance decrease perceived stress of young adults during the disaffiliation conversation with their parents?" The results indicate that planning beforehand actually increases the perceived stress during the conversation. On average, those who planned the conversation felt more stressed ($M = 8.20$, $SE = .16$) during the conversation than those who did not plan ($M = 7.69$, $SE = .19$). This difference was significant at $t(296) = 2.09$, p $< .05$. Additionally, there is a small effect, $r = .12$. Therefore, RQ7 was not substantiated because the opposite effect was found.

RQ8: Number of Prior Discussions Relationship with Perceived Stress

RQ8 asked, "Does having multiple conversations about doubts before the final disclosure of religious disaffiliation decrease perceived stress of young adults during the conversation with their parents?" The results indicate that those who had three or more conversations before disclosure found the conversation less stressful. There was a significant effect on stress based on the number of conversations a religious disaffiliator had before disclosing disaffiliation, $F(3, 294) = 4.25$, $p < .01$, $r = 0.20$. This was a significant linear trend, $F(1, 294) = 12.21$, $p < .001$, $r = 0.20$, which indicates that the more conversations one has about doubts, the less stressful the disaffiliation conversation

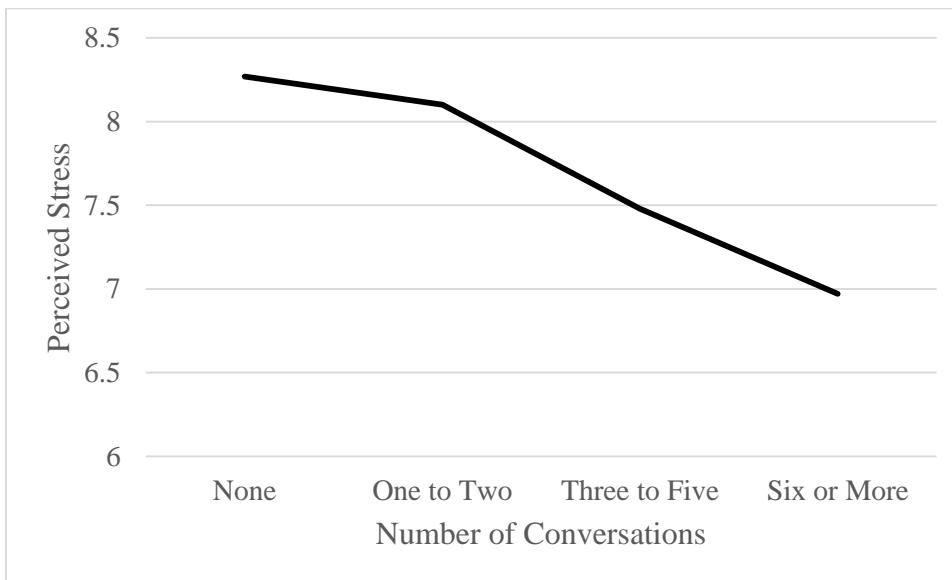*Figure 2*. Number of conversations by perceived stress.

will be. Participants were less stressed when they had six or more conversations about their doubts ($M = 6.97$, $SD = 2.46$), than when they only had three to five conversations ($M = 7.48$, $SD = 2.43$), one or two conversations ($M = 8.10$, $SD = 1.93$), or no previous conversations ($M = 8.27$, $SD = 2.10$). Planned contrasts revealed that having three or

more conversations was significantly different from having no conversations or one to two conversations, t (294) = -3.56, p <.001.

Conclusion

This section reported the findings for Phase Two of the study. In total, 298 participants responses were used to perform eight cross-group comparisons and test the relationship between family communication orientations and stress to address the overarching goals of understanding the context in which the disaffiliation conversation occurs and the facework behaviors that occur during the disaffiliation conversation.

For the context surrounding the disaffiliation conversation, disaffiliated JW are more likely to be from a high-conforming family than disaffiliated LDS. There is no difference between disaffiliated JW and LDS for the conversation orientation. Also, disaffiliated JW experienced more stress during the religious disaffiliation conversation than disaffiliated LDS. Furthermore, religious disaffiliates from high conforming families experienced more stress than low conforming families. Religious disaffiliates from high conversational families experienced less stress than those from low conversational families.

There was significant differences between the facework behaviors disaffiliated JW and LDS use, as well. Disaffiliated JW were more likely to use the following facework behaviors during their conversation with their parents: abuse, passive aggressive, pretend and defend self. However, overall disaffiliated JW and LDS used the following facework behaviors most often during the disaffiliation conversation: express feelings, defend self, remain calm, and have a private discussion. Similarly to prevalence of facework behaviors, disaffiliated JW found that abuse, passive aggressive and pretend

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were more effective facework behaviors than disaffiliated LDS. Additionally, the avoid face behavior was ranked more effective by disaffiliated JW, than disaffiliated LDS. Disaffiliated LDS found involving a third party, talk about the problem, and consider the other to be more effective facework behaviors than disaffiliated JW found them. However, the five most effective facework behaviors—defend self, remain calm, private discussion, consider the other, and talk about the problem—were consistently in the top five for both disaffiliated JW and disaffiliated LDS.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

About one in four individuals will disaffiliate from their childhood religion at

some point in their life (Pew Forum, 2008). Given this large number of religious

disaffiliators, this study sought to better understand the disaffiliators' experience when

communicating their decision to their families. The disaffiliators' experiences were

captured by looking at the context in which the family typically communicates, as well

as what was actually said during the disaffiliation conversation. Therefore, the goals of

this dissertation were to understand the context in which the religious disaffiliation

conversation occurs and the facework behaviors that are used during it. Because of the

lack of prior research on this topic, a mixed method study was conducted by collecting

both qualitative and quantitative data. Results from the data collection, provided in

Chapters Four and Five, indicate that these goals were generally accomplished. This

chapter begins with a brief summary of the data. Then, the findings for both sets of data

are described individually, as well as triangulated to provide a more in-depth discussion.

The chapter concludes with a presentation of overall strengths, limitations, and future

directions for this work.

Summary of Data

Young adults who had either disaffiliated from the Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints (CJCLDS) or the Watch Tower Society (WTS) were given a series of

questions during two data-collection phases about the religious disaffiliation

conversation they had with their parents. To understand the context in which the

religious disaffiliation conversation occurs, Family Communication Patterns Theory

(FCP) was used. To understand the communication that occurred during the conversation, face negotiation theory was used. These two theories were chosen because they provide a framework for making comparisons between the two disaffiliation groups. In total, eight research questions and two hypotheses were posed related to the religious disaffiliation conversation context and facework behaviors. A partially mixed sequential quantitative dominate status design was conducted to capture both the depth and breadth of data available to answer the research questions and hypotheses. This design called for first conducting interviews with a small number of participants and then conducting a survey with a larger number of participants. In total, the qualitative data was collected from 10 participants, five disaffiliated LDS and five disaffiliated JW. The quantitative data collection yielded 298 participants, with 225 disaffiliated LDS and 63 disaffiliated JW.

Summary of Qualitative Findings

Both etic and emic approaches were used to interpret the qualitative data. The etic approach drew on the sensitizing concepts of family communication patterns, perceived stress, and facework behaviors. The emic approach identified two additional conversational context concepts to further explain how young adults approach the religious disaffiliation conversation with their parents. This section provides a summary of the key findings for RQ1 and RQ2 using the etic and emic approaches.

Context surrounding the disaffiliation conversation. Four concepts were found to constitute the context in which the conversation occurs. First, family communication patterns was used as a sensitizing concept to better understand past communication patterns between young adults and their parents, as well as to explore the role these

patterns played during the religious disaffiliation conversation. At least one participant

represented each pattern during the qualitative phase. Most participants reported

experiencing high levels of conformity to their parents' beliefs and values and, therefore,

identified with either the consensual family communication pattern or the protective

family communication pattern. Schrodt et al. (2008) reported that families with high

conformity orientations value family relationships over other relationships. The

interviews demonstrated the difficulty many young adults had discussing their religious

disaffiliation because of how much they felt it would hurt their parents to know they

were leaving their shared religion.

The second communication context concept was perceived stress. Given the high

levels of conformity experienced by participants, prior research would suggest that

participants would have experienced a large amount of stress during the religious

disaffiliation conversation (Schrodt et al., 2007). Young adults reported a wide range of

perceived stress levels, and answers captured a wealth of information about what it feels

like to tell parents about the decision to disaffiliate from a shared religion. The findings

suggest that the religious communication conversation will likely be stressful to some

extent.

The third communication context concept—the concept of planning— emerged

when the researcher applied the emic approach to the data. Young adults were torn about

whether the conversation should be planned in advance or not. Four participants felt that

planning in advance was necessary. Six participants did not think it was possible to plan

for the conversation, and many decided to hide their feelings for as long as possible.

The fourth communication concept was having multiple conversations about doubting religious beliefs before disclosing religious disaffiliation. While only two of the 10 participants used this strategy, it played a significant role in how they approached the conversation. The two young adults who used this strategy reported being less stressed than other participants. Additionally, they both stated they felt it was easier on their parents because their parents knew they were questioning. It does seem that most of the anger and hurt feelings displayed by the other young adults' parents was because the young adults had not included them until the disaffiliation decision had been made.

Communication during the disaffiliation conversation. Facework behaviors are "the communicative strategies that are the enactment, support, or challenge of situated identities" (Tracy, 1990, p. 210). These strategies are of particular relevance to the religious disaffiliation conversation because young adults are challenging the identity their parents constructed for them through religion. Oetzel et al. (2000) developed a typology of 14 facework behaviors. Each interview was coded using the typology to understand how the strategy was enacted during the religious disaffiliation conversation. Avoidance, compromise, consider the other, defend self, express feelings, passive aggression, pretend, private discussion, remain calm, and talk about the problem were each used by one or more participants. Abuse, apologize, give in, and involve a third party were not used by the interview participants but may be used during the religious disaffiliation conversation by other young adults.

Summary of Quantitative Findings

A survey was constructed to test the differences between LDS and JW young adults when communicating religious disaffiliation to their parents. The interviews led to

minor revisions in the revised family communication pattern instrument, and two research questions were added about the planning of the disaffiliation conversation in advance and about discussing doubts with parents before the religious disaffiliation conversation. This section outlines the findings for each research question and hypothesis tested during the quantitative phase of the study.

Context surrounding the disaffiliation conversation. This study sought to understand the overall context surrounding the religious disaffiliation conversation and to understand any differences between disaffiliated JW and disaffiliated LDS. As in the qualitative section, there are four main context variables—family communication pattern, perceived stress, influence of planning in advance, and influence of multiple conversations about religious doubts.

Family communication patterns. Disaffiliated JW had a higher conforming orientation than disaffiliated LDS. There was no statistically significant difference between the two groups in terms of the conversation orientation. The higher conforming orientation for disaffiliated JW may be related to the WTS being stricter than the CJCLDS. Pew Forum's (2008) data illustrated how JW beliefs, practices, and cultural values deviate further from most religiously affiliated Americans overall than do LDS beliefs. For instance, while 70% of religiously affiliated Americans believe that many religions can lead to eternal life, only 39% of LDS and 16% of JW agree with that statement. This illustrates how JW have a tendency to be more absolutist than LDS. This absolutist philosophy is likely to carry over into how parents and their children communicate.

Stress. Disaffiliated JW experienced more stress than disaffiliated LDS at a

statically significant rate. On a 10-point scale, disaffiliated JW reported an average of

8.46, and disaffiliated LDS reported an average of 7.79. Therefore, most participants

found the disaffiliation conversation to be stressful. This finding is significant because it

is the first quantitative evidence that the disaffiliation conversation is stressful for young

adults.

Additionally when the disaffiliated LDS and disaffiliated JW are combined, the

conforming orientation was positively correlated with stress and the conversational

orientation was negatively correlated with stress. This finding confirms Schrodt et al.'s

(2007) finding that children from high-conforming families experienced more stress

during a conflict than children from low-conforming families did. Additionally, children

from high-conversational families experienced less stress than children from low-

conversational families did.

Planning in advance. Overall, participants who planned the conversation in

advance experienced more stress than those who did not. One plausible explanation is

that planning in advance requires demanding and effortful work on the part of the

disaffiliator (Donovan-Kicken, Tollison & Goins, 2012). Donovan-Kicken et al. (2012)

used the theoretical construct of "communication work" to describe how cancer patients

determined who and how to disclose their health status. Communication work, or the

effort of planning in advance, adds an additional stressor to the religious disaffiliation

conversation, much like the disclosure of cancer, because the disaffiliator is actively

working to determine how to best disclose their new status to their parents.

*Multiple religious doubt conversations***.** This study found that as the number of conversations about religious doubts increased, the perceived stress decreased. Specifically, when young adults had six or more conversations about religious doubts, their average perceived stress was below a 7 on a 10-point scale. On the other hand, those who did not have any prior conversations reported an average perceived stress of 8.27. Specifically, perceived stress decreases at the highest rate between having one or two prior conversations and three to five prior conversations. One or two prior conversations about doubts led to an average perceived stress level of 8.10, whereas three to five prior conversations led to an average perceived stress level of 7.48.

Communication during the disaffiliation conversation. The young adults in this study used a variety of facework behaviors to communicate their new religiously disaffiliated identity to their parents. This study found that disaffiliated JW were more likely to use abuse, passive aggression, pretend, and defend self as communicative strategies during the disaffiliation conversation. There was not a statistically significant difference between the two groups for the other 10 facework behaviors.

Disaffiliated JW ranked the following facework behaviors as more effective than disaffiliated LDS: abuse, passive aggression, pretend, and avoid. However, it is important to note that their rankings were less than 3 on a 5-point effectiveness scale, with 5 being the most effective. This means that disaffiliated JW find the facework behaviors more effective than disaffiliated LDS, but not the most effective overall. Disaffiliated LDS found the following facework behaviors more effective than disaffiliated JW: involve a third party, talk about the problem, and consider the other. While the difference between groups is again statistically significant, both groups overall

ranked talk about the problem and consider the other in the top three facework behaviors. This data is useful when giving advice to those considering disclosing religious disaffiliation to their parents, as others in a similar situation found the behaviors effective.

Triangulation of Qualitative and Quantitative Findings

As previously explained in Chapter Three, a partially mixed sequential quantitative dominate status design was used as the framework for this dissertation. This means that the qualitative data was collected first and then the quantitative. More emphasis is placed on the quantitative data with the qualitative data serving a secondary role. This section considers both the qualitative and quantitative phases' findings together to better understand both the depth and breadth of the findings. First, the findings for the context in which the conversation takes place are discussed, and then the facework behaviors' findings are discussed.

Conversational context. Across the two phases, four conversation context concepts were tested. First, interview participants discovered and discussed their family communication patterns. Overall, most of the interview participants had a higher conformity orientation and varying levels of the conversation orientation. The survey found that disaffiliated JW had higher conformity orientations than disaffiliated LDS. Disaffiliated LDS had an average of 3.68, while disaffiliated JW had an average mean of 4.21 on a 5-point scale. Therefore, both groups had relatively high conformity orientations. It may be a function of having been raised in a strict religion, as strict religions set themselves apart by their religious commitment (Stark, 1996). Chapter Two outlined how the beliefs, practices, and cultural values of LDS and JW differ from those

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of other religiously affiliated Americans and how perhaps their family communication patterns do too. Furthermore, JW do rank higher than LDS on Iannaconne's (1994) strictness scale. This provides additional evidence that there may be a connection between the strictness of a church and the amount of conformity in families.

The second conversation context variable was the amount of stress a young adult perceived during the religious disaffiliation conversation with their parents. Examples across the varying perceived stress levels, as determined by a 10-point scale, were explained in the qualitative section. The quantitative section found that most participants experienced stress during the religious disaffiliation conversation, with disaffiliated JW experiencing more stress than disaffiliated LDS. Prior research from Schrodt et al. (2008) found, on the one hand, families with higher conforming orientations experienced more stress during a conflict than those with lower conforming orientations. On the other hand, families with high conversation orientations experienced less stress than those with low conversation orientations. This study found similar results, with a positive correlation between the conforming orientation and stress, as well as a negative correlation between the conversational orientation and stress. While the family communication pattern is a fairly fixed concept, understanding that a young adult may be more prone to having a more stressful conversation may help that person take steps in advance.

The third conversation context concept, planning, was added based on the qualitative data analysis. There was not a clear trend in the qualitative data to suggest that planning the conversation in advance would reduce the amount of stress a young adult experienced during the disaffiliation conversation with their parents. The

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quantitative data analysis found that planning in advance increased the amount of stress by about half of a point on a 10-point scale, with those who planned reporting an average of 8.20 and those who did not plan reporting an average of 7.69. This finding may seem counterintuitive until it is combined with the fourth conversation context concept.

The fourth conversation context concept regards disclosing religious doubts before the disaffiliation conversation to one's parents. This concept emerged from two interviews during the qualitative phase. The quantitative analysis found that having three to five conversations reduced stress significantly more than having one or two conversations. Taken with the third concept of planning, these results suggest that it is best to share religious doubts with parents during the faith transition and then, when ready, have the final conversation spontaneously.

Facework behaviors. The second major part of this study was to understand the variety of communicative strategies available to young adults when communicating their religious disaffiliation. The interview participants provided robust descriptions of how the various facework behaviors were enacted during the conversation. The survey results provided a measure of prevalence and effectiveness of the facework behaviors. Few differences were found in regard to prevalence of the facework behaviors between the two groups. Of the 14 facework behaviors, four were used more often by disaffiliated JW than disaffiliated LDS—abuse, passive aggressive, pretend, and defend self.

In terms of effectiveness of the various facework behaviors, there were several statistically significant differences between the two groups. However, the top five facework behaviors—talk about the problem, consider the other, have a private discussion, remain calm, and defend self—remained consistent. These five facework

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behaviors all had an average above a 4 on the 5-point effectiveness scale. The interview participants also described these behaviors as effective ways of communicating the decision to disaffiliate to their parents.

<div align="center">

Implications

</div>

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study serve to reinforce and extend theory in several ways, particularly for theory as it relates to religious communication in the family. For FCP, few studies have examined heterogeneous family situations where the children are affiliated with a different religious organization than the parents, and no studies have looked at the communication that occurs when a family becomes heterogeneous (Sterk & Sisler, 2015; Soliz & Warner Colaner, 2015). This study applied FCP and FNT to this new and important context and thereby extended theory.

Methodological Implications

This study successfully utilized a partially mixed sequential quantitative dominant status design (Creswell, 2003 Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). It is recommended that this study design be used by future scholars who are examining relatively new phenomena because the multiple data sets can clarify one another and explain the subject at hand in more detail. Without having the qualitative data, the quantitative data would not have been interpretable. Furthermore, the quantitative data strengthens the qualitative data by expanding the generalizability of a given trend.

The Revised Family Communication Pattern Instrument was shortened for this study. The conformity orientation subscale had a Cronbach's alpha of .84, while the conversation orientation had a Cronbach's alpha of .69. For Ritchie and Fitzpatrick's

(1990) original instrument, the conformity orientation had a Cronbach's alpha of .82, and the conversational orientation had a Cronbach's alpha of .92. Therefore, the shortened instrument used in this study improved the reliability of the conformity orientation slightly but decreased the reliability of the conversational orientation.

Facework behaviors were measured using a list of items developed by Oetzel et al. (2000); however, no scoring system was created. Given the nature of the statements, a Likert type scale was not usable, as a participant either said something or did not say something. Therefore, a composite score for each of the 14 behaviors was created to measure how many statements a participant used for a particular behavior. For instance, if a participant answered "yes" two of the following questions for defend self, then their score was a two: 1) I was firm in my demands and didn't give in, 2) I defended my position, 3) I wouldn't admit I was wrong, instead I insisted I was right. Therefore, the composite score represents how many "defend self" facework behaviors a participant engaged during the conversation.

Practical Implications

One of the audiences of this dissertation is potential religious disaffiliates. As such, it is important to interpret the results in a way that is helpful for those seeking advice on how to decrease their perceived stress when communicating religious disaffiliation. This study was particularly interested in how young adults communicate religious disaffiliation to their parents, and more research is needed before extending the findings to other contexts. That said, there are four main takeaways from this study that may ease stress for young adults when communicating their decision to disaffiliate to their parents.

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The first main takeaway is that how a family typically communicates is important to consider. This study used Family Communication Patterns Theory as a way of understanding the degree to which a family talks about issues, or how conversational a family is, and the degree to which children feel pressure to conform to their parents' ideas. While the patterns a family uses to communicate is not easily changed, understanding the pattern a family uses can help young adults who may be prone to having a more stressful conversation take steps in advance to make the conversation less stressful. Families with parents that expect their children to conform to their opinions and values had a more stressful than families who do not expect their children to conform. Families who talk with one another about a wide range of subjects experienced less stress during the disaffiliation conversation than families who talk about a limited number of subjects. If someone is planning to tell their parents about their religious disaffiliation, knowing that they are prone to experiencing more stress than others may actually reduce stress or aid in their planning.

Second, multiple conversations about doubts decreases the amount of stress in the final disclosure conversation. It seems that it is beneficial for young adults to share their religious doubts with their parents while still deciding if they will leave their faith or not. While it may be difficult for young adults from low-conversation families to do this, sharing doubts does decrease stress in meaningful ways.

Third, religious disaffiliators should not plan the conversation ahead of time. This study found that letting the religious disaffiliation conversation occur naturally caused significantly less stress for young adults when compared to those who planned it. For instance, one disaffiliated LDS who experienced a large amount of stress planned to tell

his father at a time when his father would be out of town. Then, he had his father help him plan how to tell his mother. He ranked the conversation with his mother as even more stressful. On the other hand, a disaffiliated JW experienced much less stress by waiting for his parents to bring up the topic of disaffiliation and answering them off the cuff.

Fourth, during the actual conversation, there are five techniques that young adults ranked as effective to use. While these have not been tested in terms of reducing stress, they may help potential religious disaffiliators learn and consider effective communicative strategies. The first strategy is to directly address the issue of disaffiliation. It does not seem beneficial to hedge around the topic or lie about continued attendance once the decision to disaffiliate has been made. The second strategy is to consider one's parent/s by taking into account their feelings. This conversation is not only difficult for the young adult but also the parents, and acknowledging may lead to a more effective conversation. Having the conversation in private is another strategy participants rated as effective. Additionally, defending one's self was ranked effective. This is not mean to be disrespectful to one's parents, rather to assert one's opinion and stick with it. The final strategy is to remain calm. One participant gave the advice that it is important to treat this as a good decision for you and being overly emotional may cause one's parents to doubt the decision more.

Limitations and Future Directions

Limitations

The first limitation is that this study chose participants from online support groups for disaffiliated LDS and disaffiliated JW. These participants' experiences may

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not be transferrable to everyone who disaffiliates from the CJCLDS or WTS, because a large number of people may not seek support during or after their transition. Additionally, there may be external factors that led some to seek support during or after the transition while others did not.

The second limitation is that a smaller number of disaffiliated JW participated in the quantitative portion of the study than disaffiliated LDS. It seemed that the disaffiliated JW online communities is not as responsive, nor organized as the disaffiliated LDS online communities. For instance, disaffiliated LDS have a handful of well-known de-facto leaders with websites, podcasts, and blogs. The disaffiliated JW do not have de-facto leaders, however, there are a couple of websites that post regularly. Without the robust online community, it was more difficult to recruit disaffiliated JW than disaffiliated LDS.

Future Directions

It became clear through the qualitative data that other family members, namely siblings, may play a role in the strategy a young adult chooses to use when disaffiliating. Several participants spoke about the influence their siblings had on how they chose to communicate their decision to their parents. Several mentioned that their siblings had disaffiliated before them and they chose to do it differently or similarly to how their sibling

Future research should also further probe the correlations between strict religions and family communication patterns. Perhaps, attending a strict church may lead to family communication patterns with higher conforming orientations than attending a less than strict church. This study found that disaffiliated JW rated higher in the conforming

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orientation than disaffiliated LDS. The WTS is a stricter religion than the CJCLDS. Therefore, future studies could expand to systematically test this hypothesis by comparing family communication patterns across strict and non-strict churches. On the other hand, different demographic variables may correlate more with family communication patterns than religion. For instance, the disaffiliated JW participants reported a lower income and education level than the disaffiliated LDS. Pew Forum (2008) found similar results in their statistically representative sample of the U.S. population, with JW having a lower income and education LDS. This alternative explanation of SES influencing family communication patterns should be ruled out before fully attributing an individual's religious background as the driver of their family communication patterns.

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APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Pauline Cheong
Human Communication, Hugh Downs School of
480/965-8730
Pauline.Cheong@asu.edu

Dear Pauline Cheong:

On 11/21/2014 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Communicating religious disaffiliation: Examining the connections between family communication orientations, face concern, and face behaviors in young adult/ parent relationships.
Investigator:	Pauline Cheong
IRB ID:	STUDY00001804
Funding:	Name: (Unspecified);
Grant Title:	
Grant ID:	
Documents Reviewed:	• Consent %281%29 (1).docx, Category: Consent Form; • HRP-503a - Communicating Religous Disaffliation.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • Measures.docx, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Recruitment Scripts.docx, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Dissertation Funding.docx, Category: Sponsor Attachment;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 11/21/2014.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Megan Fisk
       Megan Fisk

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL QUESTIONS

Interview Guide

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. As you read in the information letter, I am interested how you communicated with your family after your faith transition, particularly your parents. I have us scheduled for an hour and a half together. I want to honor our time constraints today. Therefore, while I encourage you to elaborate on your answers to my questions, there may be times when I redirect, so that we may be sure to cover all the items within our timeframe.

Does that still work for you?

I will be audio recording you, so that I can transcribe this later. The tape will be destroyed after the transcription is complete. Remember, your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue your participation at any time. If I ask a question makes you uncomfortable, you can skip it if you want. Please do not use your real name or anyone's real name throughout the interview. You may make up pseudonyms or just describe your relationship to the person.

The first question is going to be about the conversation you had with your parent

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Turn on audio recorder

Question One:

Tell me about the conversation you had with your parents when you told them that you were leaving the church.

Probes:

   a. What happened?
   b. How old were you at the time?
   c. When did it happen?
   d. What did you say during the conversation?
   e. What did your parent say during the conversation?
   f. How did it end?
   g. How did you feel when it ended?
   h. What were your biggest concerns during the disagreement (were you thinking more about your parent's needs or your own?)
   i. Would you recommend others use your same approach to the conversation?
   j. Was it an appropriate approach?
   k. Was it effective?
   l. How stressful did you find the conversation on a scale of 1 not be stressful and 10 being the most stressful.

Question Two:

The next step for this research study is to send out a survey to other young adults who have disaffiliated. I have started crafting the survey and would appreciate your help reviewing it. As you take it, please circle any questions that were challenging to understand.

[Give time to complete survey and allow all to complete before discussing]

Probes:

    a. Let's talk about the direction first, were they clear?
    b. What questions were challenging?
    c. Any questions you would rephrase?
    d. Which formatting did you prefer?
    e. Would you clarify any part of it?

Question Three:

Give me just a moment to tally up your scores for the various scales. I want to know if you think these categories fit your experience or not.

Probes:

    a. The part of the survey is about your concern for yourself and your parent during the conversation. The results show that you were [Calculate Score]. Do you think this is accurate?
    b. The second survey is about the behaviors you used during the conversation. It indicates the following: [Calculate Score]. Do these capture your experience?
    c. The final survey is about how your family communicated growing up. The results indicate that your family was more [Calculate Score] than [Calculate Score]. Do you think agree?
           a. How do you think your family's communication style growing up influenced the way you approached the disaffiliation conversation?

Question Four:

    a. As we wrap up, I would like to ask what, if anything, you would have done differently when communicating disaffiliation to your parents.
    b. What advice you have for someone who may be in a similar situation.

APPENDIX C

SURVEY MEASURES

Qualification questions

1. In what year were you born?

2. Were you raised as a believer in the [Mormon/ Jehovah's Witness] church?

3. Did you share your decision to leave the [Mormon/ Jehovah's Witness] church with your parents in the past two and a half years?

Yes

No

4. Were your parents still believers in the [Mormon/ Jehovah's Witness] church when you shared your decision to leave?

Yes

No

Demographic questions

1. What is your gender?

Male

Female

Other

2. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Some high school

High school graduate

Some college

Trade/ technical/ vocation training

College graduate

Some postgraduate work

Post graduate degree

3. What is your current religious preference?

Protestant

Catholic

Mormon

Jehovah's Witness

Orthodox

Other Christian

Jewish

Muslim

Hindu

Atheist

Agnostic

Nothing in particular

Don't know

Prefer not to answer

Other (please specify):

4. Please specify your ethnicity.

White

Hispanic or Latino

Black or African American

Native American or American Indian

Asian / Pacific Islander

Other

5. Please indicate the number of biological siblings?

0

1

2-3

4 or more

6. What is your marital status?

Single, never married

Married or domestic partnership

Widowed

Divorced

Separated

7. What is your current household income?

Under 19,999

20,000-29,999

30,000-39,999

40,000-49,999

50,000-59,999

60,000-69,999

70,000-79,000

80,000-99,999

Over 100,000

Prefer not to say

Directions: When completing this section, please reflect upon some of the norms and communication patterns that are common in your family of origin. In general, a family is "a group of individuals who generate a sense of home and group identity." When you answer each statement below, please think of the underlying norms and repeated patterns in your family. If you strongly agree with an item click "5" and if you strongly disagree with an item click "1."

1. When anything really important is involved, my parents expect me to obey.
2. My parents often say something like "Every member of the family should have some say in family decisions."
3. In our home, my parents usually have the last word.
4. My parents often ask my opinion when the family is talking about something

5. If my parents don't approve of my action, they don't want to know about it.
6. In our family, we often talk about our feelings and emotions.
7. My parents often say things like "My ideas are right and you should not question them."
8. In our family, we often talk about our plans and hopes for the future.

Directions: When completing this section, please keep in mind the first conversation you had with your parent/s about leaving your religion.

1. Chose the statement that best describes your situation.
   a. I told my mother first.
   b. I told my father first.
   c. I told my mother and father together.
   d. I told my mother and stepfather together.
   e. I told my father and stepmother together.
2. Did you plan the conversation?
   a. Yes, I planned it.
   b. No, it was unplanned.
3. Prior to the conversation, had you discussed your doubts/ questions with your parent/s?
   a. Not at all
   b. Once or twice I mentioned them.
   c. I had some conversations with (5 or less) with them.
   d. I had multiple conversations (6 or more) with them.
4. Did your parents find out unintentionally about your disaffiliation before this conversation? (For instance, they saw you were part of a Facebook page for disaffiliators or someone told them you had doubts before you did).
   a. Yes
   b. No
5. How stressful did you find the conversation?
   a. 1- Not at all stressful
   b. 2
   c. 3
   d. 4
   e. 5
   f. 6
   g. 7
   h. 8
   i. 9
   j. 10- Most Stressful

For the following items, please consider the actual behaviors and actions you used during the conversation with your parent or parents about your disaffiliation. If you spoke with your parents separately, base your answers on who you spoke with

first. Please indicate what you <u>actually did</u> by selecting "yes," not what you wish you did.

1. I politely ended the conversation because I didn't want to talk with my parent(s).
2. I backed down to solve the problem.
3. I wanted to talk with my parent(s) through another person.
4. I tried to remain calm.
5. I expressed what I wanted to say.
6. I gave my parent(s) the wrong information so he/she gets into trouble.
7. I said I was sorry.
8. I talked things out one at a time and listened to what the other was saying to resolve our conflict.
9. I was firm in my demands and didn't give in.
10. I verbally insulted my parent(s).

11. I tried not to hurt my parent(s).
12. I tried to fake that I wasn't upset.
13. I acknowledged some of the other person's good points so that he/she would acknowledge some of mine.
14. I waited until we were by ourselves to talk about the problem.
15. I defended my position.
16. I listened to my parent(s).
17. I ignored the conflict and behaved as nothing had happened.
18. I tried not to see/visit my parent(s).
19. I asked for forgiveness.
20. I told my parent(s) exactly what I thought.

21. I talked thoroughly with my parent(s) about my doubts to find a solution.
22. I tried to make my parent(s) feel guilty.
23. I wanted to take my problems to someone else to help me solve it.
24. I tried not to get angry.
25. I agreed with my parent(s) and ended the conflict.
26. I called my parent(s) mean names.
27. I tried to use give and take.
28. I didn't argue with my parent(s) in public.
29. I was nasty towards my parent(s).
30. I accepted whatever my parent(s) said.

31. I took into consideration my parent's/ parents' feelings
32. I pretended not to be hurt.
33. I said bad things behind my parent's/ parents' back.
34. I tried to compromise with my parent(s).
35. I had a mediator during the conversation.

36. I explained how I was feeling
37. I didn't get emotional.
38. I tried not to discuss it in front of others.
39. I wouldn't admit I was wrong, instead I insisted I was right.
40. I left the scene during the conversation.
41. I admitted I made a mistake and apologized.
42. I worked with my parent(s) to find a mutually acceptable solution.

Directions: Please tell me about your current relationship with the parent/s you told first about your disaffiliation in the questions below.

1. How frequently do you have contact with your parent/s?
    a. Everyday or nearly everyday
    b. At least once a week
    c. At least once every two weeks
    d. At least once a month
    e. Less often than once a month but more than a few times a year
    f. A few times a year
    g. Once or twice a year
    h. Not at all
2. How satisfied are you with you and your parent/s current relationship?
    a. Very Unsatisfied
    b. Somewhat Unsatisfied
    c. Neither Satisfied or Unsatisfied
    d. Somewhat Satisfied
    e. Very Satisfied

Directions: This section is on how effective you think different strategies are for approaching the disaffiliation conversation with family. This is not necessarily what you did. If you think one strategy is highly effective click "5" and if you think an item is not at all effective click "1."

1. Using put downs.
2. Admitting that you made a mistake and sharing that with your parents.
3. Avoiding having the conversation.
4. Finding a compromise through give and take.
5. Taking into account your parent's/ parents' feelings to show respect.
6. Defending your position and not giving in.
7. Expressing how you feel without attacking your parent's/ parents' feelings.
8. Giving in and letting your parent (s) win.
9. Seeking a third party to help find a solution.
10. Using subtle means to put down the other in indirect ways.
11. Pretending there is no conflict.
12. Avoiding having the discussion in a public setting.

13. Trying to stay calm and unemotional.
14. Directly addressing the issue with your parent(s).

APPENDIX D

SCORING FOR INSTRUMENT

1. Revised Family Communication Patterns Scale

   Conversation   2, 4, 6, 8

   Conformity   1, 3, 5, 7

2. Face Concerns

   Self   5, 6, 9

   Mutual   1, 2, 7,

   Other   3, 4, 8

3. Face Behaviors

   Abuse   10, 26, 29

   Apologize   7, 19, 41

   Avoid   1, 18, 41

   Compromise   13, 27, 34

   Consider the other   11, 16, 31

   Defend self   9, 15, 39

   Express feelings   5, 20, 36

   Give in   2, 25, 30

   Involve a 3rd party   3, 23, 35

   Passive aggression   6, 22, 33

   Pretend   12, 17, 32

   Private discussion   14, 28, 38

   Remain calm   4, 24, 37

   Talk about the problem 8, 21, 42