Born into Deviance

Disaffiliation Processes for First and Second-Generation New Religious Movement Members

Nicole A. Shoenberger and Chris Grayburn, Penn State Erie, The Behrend College

Abstract

Much information on New Religious Movements (NRM) has focused attention on members who either chose or were recruited into a movement. Less information has been recruited from second-generation members, or members born into a NRM. This paper examines the disaffiliation process from a NRM for both first and second-generation ex-members. Results illustrate that both generations experience some of the same catalysts for exiting. Specifically, both experience disruption of group mindset, disillusionment with leaders, and failed teachings or prophecies. Though both experience the same catalysts that generate disaffiliation, it is how they experience these catalysts that differ for the groups.

Keywords: new religious movements, disaffiliation, second-generation, first generation, post-exit experiences

Introduction

The study of New Religious Movements (NRMs) is a fertile field. A great deal of work done on the affiliation process (Bromley 1991; Sirkin; Robinson, Frye, Bradley), brainwashing (Barker; Introvigne), behavior within the movement (Buxant and Saroglou), charismatic leaders (Rochford), tragic endings (Balch and Taylor), and the disaffiliation process (Bromley 1991, 2004; Robinson, Frye, and Bradley). From this research it is known that most members eventually disaffiliate from their respective movements (Coates 2013a).

This process occurs over an extended period of time with various stages: individual doubts begin to form but are kept private, the member begins to openly question movement doctrine or leadership, a precipitating event occurs that solidifies the member's desire to leave, and, finally disaffiliation and re-socialization to mainstream society. Though the disaffiliation process has been studied, one area of particular interest is that of second-generation disaffiliation, members who were born to parents already established within a movement who did not voluntarily choose to live in a NRM (Jenkins and Thomas). Because of their unique entry into a movement, their process of disaffiliation may be just as unique.

This paper addresses the lack of research on second-generation ex-NRM members. Previous research focused on how sudden change in movement doctrine affects second-generation member affiliation and religiousness/spirituality (Jenkins and Thomas). This research differs from Jenkins and Thomas's work in that both first and second-generation ex-members are interviewed about their experiences beyond sudden doctrine changes that led to their disaffiliation. Further, both first and second generation groups discuss their experiences after disaffiliation. Data from these interviews illustrate that both groups experience disruption of group mindset, disillusionment with leadership, and failures of teachings and prophecies. Though they both experience these catalysts that generate disaffiliation, what is unique to this study is *how* each generation experiences these events. Both groups said they experienced feelings of loneliness, anger, and depression once they left a movement; however, second-generation members also discussed their feelings in relation to their parents and how their parents affected their exit.

It is clear that both first generation and second-generation ex-members experience disaffiliation in both similar and different ways. For example, second-generation members demonstrated a remarkable susceptibility to their parents' influence in regards to managing doubts and curiosities that could progress or slow down their journey to disaffiliation and mainstream society. Understanding these differences may inform counselors on better treatment techniques for second-generation ex-members seeking help.

Literature Review

Casting Doubt: Moving Towards Disaffiliation

The disaffiliation process relies heavily on the NRM member's own doubts about their movement's ideology and leadership. Many times, the process is an internal cognitive awareness for the member; however, at times, disaffiliation can be forced upon a member by an outside organization or by non-movement family members (Shupe, Bromley, and Darnell; Bromley 2006a, 2006b). Regardless, in order to disaffiliate, there needs to be a catalyst to process. There are five main circumstances that can create doubt and start the disaffiliation process: disruption of group mindset, disillusionment with leadership, the developmental failure of ideology/movement, deprogramming by the anti-cult movement (Bromley 2006a), and exit counseling by the anti-cult movement (Bromley 2006b).

Disruption of group mindset places a member outside or away from the main area of movement influence (Bromley 2004; Wright 1984; Robinson, Frye, and Bradley). This allows for relationships with non-movement individuals to develop with the member, which can weaken the relationship they have with the movement while reevaluating the movement's

ideology (Bromley 2004; Robinson, Frye, and Bradley). Often, this is linked with personal disinvolvement in which something occurs to create doubt in a member's mind (Bromley 2004). At first, members deal with this doubt with denial or avoidance of the conflicting thoughts. This may move into mentally distancing themselves from the group, expanding on non-movement related relationships, and altering their dress or appearance (Bromley 2004; Robinson, Frye, and Bradley).

Disillusionment with leadership may occur when those with authority destroy their own credibility. Typically, this occurs in two ways: (1) claims for more power and authority, and (2) contradicting movement ideology (Bromley 2004; Robinson, Frye, and Bradley; Wright). Movement leaders may experience delusions of grandeur and try to assume more power and authority. This can violate basic movement doctrines, leading the members to distrust the leader (Bromley 2004; Robinson, Frye, and Bradley; Wright).

A member may also doubt her or his membership when a movement experiences failed prophecies, false messiahs, failure to adapt into a stable, operating organization (Bromley 2004; Robinson, Frye, and Bradley), or failed attempts at world transformation (Wright). Failed prophecies may result in mass exodus from the movement. If a movement is unable to develop into a stable, operating organization and cannot fulfill members' needs, it will eventually collapse in on itself.

A member may undergo an involuntary process of deprogramming or be influenced by internal movement strife (Bromley 2006a); organizations or individuals outside of the movement may deprogram a member. Deprogramming movements, or anti-cult movements (ACM), arose in response to NRMs in the mid to late 1960s (Shupe, Bromley, and Darnell). The ACM developed around the basic ideology that NRM's are dangerous social movements and members need to be retrieved and rehabilitated for their greater good (Shupe, Bromley, and Darnell). Practices such as deprogramming and exit counseling were used to decrease NRM membership and increase ACM membership (Shupe, Bromley, and Darnell; Bromley 2006a, 2006b).

Deprogramming is illegal because it involves the abduction and confinement of the NRM member, so ACMs switched to exit counseling as a legal form of deprogramming (Shupe, Bromley, and Darnell; Bromley 2006b). Exit counseling "refers to a voluntary, intensive, time-limited, contractual education process that emphasizes sharing of information with cultists" (Shupe, Bromley, and Darnell: 196). Family and friends try to get their respective NRM member to agree to attend counseling sessions in hopes it will persuade them to disaffiliate. Exit counseling usually involves the counselor outlining all the negative aspects of the member's affiliated movement. If the NRM member wants to disaffiliate at the end of the agreed upon sessions, further counseling and time in a rehabilitation center become options (Bromley 2006b).

The disaffiliating member might shift his or her membership status from active to a peripheral or marginal membership, in which the member continues affiliation with the movement but with lesser status or part-time commitment. Marginal membership allows one to maintain membership status while disputing beliefs and to avoid the stigma most disaffiliating members receive (Bromley 2004). This status continues over an undefined

period of time until the member either reintegrates completely or the tension from going against movement ideology climaxes.

First Generation Post-Exit Experience

Studies on first generation NRM members show that post-exit is usually an emotionally turbulent period for the ex-member. They may feel ambivalent towards their choice to leave and have a sense of personal failure and loss of community (Wright; Coates 2010). At this point, they lost one identity and need to find another. The difficulty in finding a new identity is affected by the damage caused by membership in the NRM; the length of rehabilitation can correlate to the length of indoctrination (Lewis and Bromley).

Ex-members may feel guilty, shamed, angry, and scared as a result of their disaffiliating process (Robinson, Frye, Bradley; Coates 2010). This in turn can bleed into their outward appearances and social responses, such as being depressed, slower to speak, slower to respond, and being indifferent towards personal hygiene (Robinson, Frye, Bradley). While affiliated with the NRM, horizontal relationships are usually discouraged to promote more loyalty to the leadership. This, in turn, can make the ex-member more susceptible to peer pressure, increased problems with authority, as well as problems connecting to their family (Robinson, Frye, Bradley; Coates 2010).

Many ex-members hold neutral or positive views of their time in their NRM (Bromley 2004; Wright 1984; Robinson, Frye, Bradley). Deprogrammed ex-members, however, report negative views of their time in their movement, due to being relentlessly saturated by ACM's brainwashing and mind control theories (Wright; Solomon; Robinson, Frye, Bradley). Though typically positive, members who voluntarily disaffiliated do feel a loss of the community, close friendships, and relationships they developed while working under a shared ideology (Wright; Coates 2010). They also express a grief about the "loss of innocence" and years lost in the group. Most report a feeling of emptiness or "a loss of meaning" having disaffiliated from their movement. With the loss of their community, many have to re-evaluate and re-identify their own values (Coates 2010).

Despite all these struggles, it has been suggested the NRM disaffiliation process may "facilitate the development of increased reflexivity and a stronger sense of autonomy" (Coates 2013b: 793). This may be a normative response to grief over the loss of such a strong emotional and social bond. An ex-member's re-socialization is affected by their temperament, reasons for affiliation, manner of disaffiliation, and availability of outside relationships and support systems (Coates 2010).

Second Generation Member Disaffiliation

Much of the research on NRMs has been dedicated to first generation members, who were often recruited or voluntarily joined a movement. Roughly 5% of these members have children while involved in a NRM (Matthews and Salazar; Bromley 2004); study of second-generation members is limited. It has been suggested that second generation members have suffered more physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse at the hands of the movement (Matthews and Salazar) and may have a harder time disaffiliating and re-socializing into mainstream society.

A second-generation member's entire identity developed within a NRM and this may make it difficult to consider disaffiliation. They do not have a pre-movement identity to reclaim as do their parents who disaffiliate (Matthews and Salazar). The context of the NRM isolated them from the outside world. If they disaffiliate, they may lack the education, marketable skills, decision-making abilities, and socialization skills that a first generation member may have acquired prior to association with the NRM and, therefore, has at his or her disposal. This can leave the ex-member feeling lost, confused, lonely, and different from everyone around them. This, in turn, can result in anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and suicidal ideation (Matthews and Salazar).

The limited research on second generation NRM members illustrates that disaffiliation is strongly associated with the actions of other members, especially that of the parents (Matthews and Salazar). Most movements follow patriarchal rule, strict gender roles, and stress obedience to authority. Parents are usually allowed complete control over their children as long as that falls in line with movement ideology (Matthews and Salazar). Parental influence is very important when it comes to an individual's desire to disaffiliate. If parental approval of affiliation is strong, the second generation member is four times more likely to stay within the movement (Robinson, Frye, Bradley). Second generation members, who have parents in the movement, found it extremely emotionally straining to disaffiliate (Matthews and Salazar). This strain can continue throughout life for ex-members whose parents continue to place the movement first in their life.

The member's religiosity and spirituality are also important factors when it comes to their recovery from disaffiliation. Having left the movement they were raised in, members struggle with a mistrust of faith and sensitivity to being hurt again (Jenkins and Thomas). Unlike first generation members who may return to their pre-movement identities, second generation members have few options in terms of their religiosity and spirituality. They may become cynical towards religion and become agnostics or atheists; they may search for a mainstream religion, such as some form of Christianity (Matthews and Salazar; Jenkins and Thomas); or they may develop their spirituality into a deep, meaningful attachment unlike anything they experienced in the movement (Matthews and Salazar). For those who chose to stay involved in religious organizations, the process of developing a new religious affiliation was worth the effort to renew the sense of community they lost upon disaffiliation from the NRM. Those who became agnostic or atheist felt religion was spoiled for them to the point they questioned the validity of religion and the existence of God (Jenkins and Thomas).

The Current Study

Most Americans do not participate in a NRM; however, these movements provide fascinating cases addressing brainwashing, affiliation, and exiting a NRM. There is a plethora of studies addressing these issues; however, there is not much information concerning second-generation members. More so, there is even less information on the disaffiliation process and what happens to these members once they leave a movement. Using the disaffiliation process above, we specifically examine the disaffiliation process of members of a North American NRM. Moving past this process, we illuminate the process for second-generation members and whether it differs from those who are considered first generation members, or members who were recruited and/or chose to become members of the

movement. Given the contrast of choosing or being born into a movement, second generation members may have a harder time disaffiliating from the only ideology they have come to know. Further, after they disaffiliate, they may have a harder time connecting to a society of which they have limited knowledge

The guiding research questions for this study are as follows:

1. How do members come to terms with disaffiliating with the movement?

    a. What was the process – both cognitively and externally?

2. How was the disaffiliation process or acceptance of disaffiliation different for second-generation members compared to first generation members?

3. How did first and second generation ex-members cope with leaving and reentry or entry into non-movement society?

Methods and Descriptive Data

A main purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of those associated with a NRM. Specifically, we want to understand the experience of the disaffiliation process for second-generation members. Given that little research has been conducted on this phenomenon, there are no preconceived hypotheses about the lived experiences; therefore, this research falls under the phenomenological paradigm (Mertens).

For extreme deviant groups, it is difficult to parse out the deviants from the rest of the population; therefore, random sampling was not a useful technique. Instead, snowball sampling was employed. The researcher was able to gather a sample through an informant who was previously affiliated with a NRM. The informant reached out to possible sample respondents with a recruitment flyer containing information about the study and the contact information of the researcher. These respondents reached out to the principal investigator to set up an interview date. These respondents then reached out to other possible respondents with the same information. The use of the informant allowed access to a highly stigmatized and partially hidden group.

After contact with the researcher, each respondent was screened and selected for participation if he or she was a current or former NRM movement member and had spent at least one year with a movement. Each respondent needed to be 18 years or older. If the respondent met these criteria, a phone or in-person interview was conducted. Over 100 potential respondents were contacted and 63 were interviewed.

To have consistency among respondents, semi-structured interviews were used. This allowed for the interviewer to have a set guideline of questions for each respondent, but also allowed for the interviewer to ask further probing questions (Mertens). Part of each interview contained questions relating to affiliation and disaffiliation with a NRM. For this particular focus, only questions related to disaffiliation are considered. The following questions were addressed:

- What led you to start thinking about leaving the movement?
- How long was it between thinking about leaving and actually putting the process into a plan?

- Tell me about the process; what happened when you left?
- Where did you go?
- Was this a solo adventure?
- If you sought guidance or help, whom did you seek it from and why?
- How was entry (or reentry) into non-NRM society?
- Was exiting difficult? Why?
- What difficulties did you face during your entry (or reentry) into society?
- How do you feel about your time spent in the movement?
- Are you in contact with anyone who shared your experience?
- How is your relationship with faith and spirituality?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience exiting the movement?

These questions allowed for a deductive analysis of the data; however, inductive analysis was also used to parse out new themes that were not intended through the semi-structure interview guide. Many respondents elaborated or discussed other connections, feelings, or experiences that were not originally included in the creation of the interview guide. As such the information that was provided in these tangents were inductive themes that helped provide substance to the deductive themes.

A thorough content analysis of the data was completed to capture emergent themes. To do so, two researchers read through each interview twice noting all apparent themes. The researchers then horizontally read each transcript in order to place all themes into the appropriate emergent category. Internal homogeneity was achieved by reading each of the segmented themes by category to ensure that each segment was placed in the appropriate category (Patton). This also allowed for the researchers to verify external heterogeneity, which includes making sure that all of the themes are independent from each other (Patton). Lastly, all interviews were read a fourth time to confirm that all themes were coded.

To strengthen results, two researchers read and coded themes of the data to obtain a level of inter-rater reliability. Armstrong, Gosling, Weinman, and Marteau suggest that a level of inter-rater reliability can be achieved in qualitative methods through a process of triangulation, which can take the form of multiple researchers coding and agreeing on multiple themes. Further, Hruschka et al. suggest that inter-rater reliability can be increased and the number of re-codes can be decreased by providing a codebook of possible themes. Therefore, previous literature was used as a guided codebook and informed both researchers on how to code for various themes. Using SPSS, a Cohen's Kappa was calculated for inter-related reliability and an excellent rating of 0.83 was achieved.

Throughout the interviews the researcher used progressive subjectivity to reduce researcher bias and perceptions. To do so, member checking was used during the interviews to check in with the respondents in order to verify the respondents' realities on exiting a NRM (Mertens; Guba and Lincoln). Respondents were asked for clarity on answers and asked if the researcher's interpretation of answers were accurate.

The homogenous sample contained all White respondents. The total sample size was 63, which contained 37 women and 26 men who were 18 years or older at the time of the interview. Of those who were interviewed, 12 were second-generation respondents. Respondents were from the United States and Canada with most living in the western and midwest United States. Everyone had at least a high school education with the majority having a 4-year college degree. Two members had nursing degrees, one had a Juris Doctor degree, and one had a Master of Science degree. The majority of respondents were married at the time of the interview. See Table 1 for Descriptive Statistics.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Demographics	First Generation N=51	Second Generation N=12
% Male	33%	42%
Average Age	56	42
Years of Education	17	16
Duration in NRM (years)	14	17
% Married	87%	72%
Average Age of Entry	21	N/A
% White	100%	100%

All respondents had exited a NRM, but were in various stages of the exit. Some remained in contact with other NRM members still living on various movement farms, others still visit members who are very much associated with the NRM. Of those interviewed, 4 stated that they left the farm but felt as though they were still slightly active within the NRM (connected to others on the farm, associated their belief set with NRM ideology, and still believed in the end of times teachings). Other members had greatly distanced themselves from the NRM. Given the vast differences of exiting, many of the respondents had fruitful information to add about their exiting experiences.

Most of those interviewed stated they lived within the NRM for more than 10 years. The greatest length of time within the NRM was 29 years and the shortest time was just over a year. Of those who were born in the movement, the average duration of time spent on a farm was 17 years.

Results

Moving Towards Disaffiliation for First Generation Members

Not unlike the disaffiliation process described above, many of these first generation members moved towards disaffiliation for a variety of reasons, but mainly because of three catalysts: disruption of group mindset, disillusionment with leadership, and the developmental failure of ideology/movement. For these members, however, mainly the failure of movement ideology created doubts in both the movement doctrine but also in the

leadership of the movement. This included prophecies, practices, and beliefs that often failed to come to fruition, were counter to previous advice, or seemed inconsistent with past teachings. See Table 2 for comparison percentages between first generation and second-generation reasons for leaving.

In discussing the main reason for leaving the movement, one male ex-member stated, "The way their revelations and leadings from the Spirit often proved erroneous, especially in dealing with my wife's psychosis, sometimes administering medicine, other times taking it away, claiming it was interfering with her deliverance from demons." For him, there were too many times when the movement "made no sense" and believing in the teachings "never helped with anything they promised." He further stated, "I, to this day, do not question the supernatural phenomena that led me in my decision to go there, but I recognize they are a false sect/cult by their deviating from the clear word of Scripture." This example illustrates both a failing in the teachings but also trust in the leadership.

Table 2. Reasons for Leaving and Transition Issues*

Reasons for Leaving	First Generation	Second Generation
Disruption of Mindset	42%	83%
Disillusionment with Leader	53%	50%
Failed ideology/prophecy	69%	66%
Transition Issues		
Dating	27%	75%
College	29%	58%
Employment	35%	66%
Isolation	55%	66%
Anger	42%	75%
Family Attachment	4%	33%
Doubting Decision to Leave	4%	8%
Stigma	12%	41%

*Categories are not mutually exclusive as some members mentioned more than one item

Another ex-member, discussing an incident when she asked for advice, stated that the behavior of the elders "became frustrating" and it was apparent that they were "making it (rules) up as they go." She further stated that if you had a chance to go from one farm to another, you could note the inconsistencies. "My family moved from the [Redwood] Farm to the [Oak] Farm. I asked the elders at each farm about a 'gray' area in the teachings that was bothering me and each Farm had a different answer. Though it always led to praying about it."

Aside from general teachings, practices failing to make sense to some members, and failures in leadership, other members were extremely upset about the failure of major prophecies. One ex-member summed this experience with great distraught in speaking about major prophecies and stated,

> There was supposed to be what would amount to an apocalypse. I'm still here so you know what that means. Our lives were devoted to creating a space where we would outlive the end times. We stored grains, rice, and guns. And when this didn't happen, they made up other dates for the failed prediction. It tests your patience and you start to wonder if you made a mistake. And then you know you made a mistake. And that hurts.

Some of the ex-members discussed a disruption in the group mindset and this disruption allowed for the members to think differently about the movement and its ideology. One member stated that the mindset shift "was gradual" and occurred because of a connection outside the movement. During that year, this member spent time outside of the movement doing community work. Throughout the community work this ex-member "developed many friendships that proved to be long-lasting." These friendships allowed for this member to think differently about life outside of the movement. Eventually he left the movement and this exit "felt like it was the natural thing or progression. It wasn't in haste. I was just different."

Another ex-member stated that she was studying to become a midwife. This allowed her to leave the farm for one week out of every month. While leaving she stayed in town and met new people with "a different life than me. When I told the elders my thoughts about the outside I was told to end my studies. That day I began to despair. I knew I wanted a different life and that marked the start of my thoughts towards leaving."

These two examples are not alone. At times, other ex-members remarked that they had communication with others from "the outside." Many of these members talked to or communicated with non-NRM family members and friends who discussed what life was like outside of the farm. Further, some respondents stated that while they were on the farm they knew of other ex-members who had already left but remained in contact with those living on the farm. These individuals helped many of the members witness "successful transitions," because "if they could get a job and live free of the farm, then it was possible." It is also important to note that some ex-members acknowledged that they were ready to leave for a long time but needed help in terms of travel, a place to live, and money. Knowing someone from the "outside" increased his or her chances of making this break.

Moving Towards Disaffiliation for Second-Generation Members

Though their entry into the movement is unique, as second-generation members did not elect to affiliate with a NRM, their disaffiliation process does mirror some of the experiences of first generation members. Feeling as though teaching and prophecies were false or misleading also had a great effect on these ex-members as well. One second-generation member stated,

> all I knew from as early as I could tell you are the teachings in which everyone knew, but it was *all I knew*. I can also tell you that there is nothing

like the feeling of second guessing the people you love. But there was a point when I felt different from the group and that difference, I think, allowed me to question the backtracking and what I felt were lies. I don't think I can navigate what lead me to the realization but I just felt like every teaching or all the 'lay down your life' mentality of my parents was outside of my being. I never witnessed any evidence of divineness. It felt like I was living a hoax and I needed to get out.

Coupled with the second guessing of the teachings, a few second-generation ex-members noted how their mindset was disrupted by meeting new people outside of the farm. One ex-member recalled that in the summers many of the younger members would go into town to get supplies. Though they were treated different and sometimes mocked, seeing the "outside" led to "being curious" and to "asking a lot of questions." Sometimes, they would get to talk to non-members and when these individuals would ask questions about their farm, it would "put a little bug in your ear." Some of these interactions were welcomed as the conversations allowed for a new discussion of life. One second-generation member stated,

> Like, why are all these people on the outside? What makes our way better? Is it better? If you start to ask these questions, it doesn't take long before you start looking for various holes in your beliefs. I started to argue with my parents and when I argued with the elders, they told me I had demons. And, well, that just leads to more disbelief because I knew it was from witnessing life.

Furthermore, it was not just meeting people from the outside that influenced these members, but it was bringing the outside back into the movement. Some of the members snuck in or had hidden elements of the outside in the confines of the movement. Specifically, members recalled magazines, toys, and music that did not come from the movement but would be "considered contraband." One second-generation ex-member said, "This opened my eyes. The love they were speaking about in the music was not love for God. It was desire for others and it made me want that kind of desire. I was a teenager, after all!"

One second-generation member put the disrupted mindset to a comparison. He noted,

> I felt like when one spoke of or was from the outside, they were speaking of a mystical place – a forbidden place. While some in the movement would have yearnings for the afterlife, I was mesmerized by a place I had never experienced. I still loved where I was but you have that type of curiosity about something and at least want to try it.

Many of these members noted that they were young when they started to have connections to the outside community. Youthful curiosity allowed many of these members to start thinking about or poking holes in the teachings of the movement. Important to note, though many of these members mentioned they had these thoughts as teenagers, many did not leave at such young ages since the means and capital were not available to them. It would take much longer for them to initiate the exit.

All of the second-generation members noted that being close to their parents made disaffiliation extremely difficult. When distrust for the movement or "yearnings" to leave arose, discussions with parents many times halted these thoughts. One noted, "your parents should know best. After all, they decided it was a good idea to be there, who are you to question their devotion." Another stated, "I was young and my parents told me that these thoughts were normal and that I needed to pray. Prayer would help guide me to the right path." Even further, one respondent stated, "I wanted to leave. But I didn't. I stayed until my parents felt God was telling them it was time to leave. I couldn't do it on my own and I definitely wasn't going to leave without my parents."

A unique case from the general pattern of exiting for the second-generation members was one respondent who stated, "I left because my parents left. But I'm not sure it was the right decision. I like being there. I have no qualms about my life there. I had a purpose. I don't feel like I missed anything. Life, to me, isn't any better with a full time job and a house."

Post Disaffiliation for First Generation Members

As with much of the research presented above, first generation members felt a mixture of emotions and had difficulties with re-entry after their disaffiliation from the movement. Many members felt isolation, fear, anger towards the movement, and stressed about the change. Many also felt ambiguous about the transition and felt that although it was difficult, it was "probably the right move."

Many ex-members stated that although exiting was a good idea, they still "loved and missed the people there. They are still my family." One ex-member stated, "It was a huge part of my life – 18 years. I have many friends from the [NRM], and many good memories and experiences." Although there was much love for the people of the movement, there was a feeling of abandonment. One ex-member stated, "I have many good memories and experiences. However, I also feel like I lost those years to something that was false and not loyal to me. I am angry about those lost years and living those lies made my life even more difficult when I left. I didn't know anything about anything! I was like an abandoned child."

Many of the ex-members expressed feeling isolated once they exited the movement. One ex-member revealed that the isolation was "so bad, that I actually seriously thought about getting on a bus and going back to [a location]. I missed my friends and felt so lost." She further stated that she felt guilty for wanting to go back because she was "lucky enough to have housing help and a place to live" once she exited the movement.

Other members admitted they went through bouts of depression and had issues with anxiety. Many stated that they feared reaching out to others because they lived in a shroud of secrecy. One ex-member stated, "How was I supposed to make friends? Get a job? I had this missing time frame in my life. How was I supposed to account for the gap? You get other members to vouch for your references and you basically say you lived in [a location] for a few years and try to leave it at that. It kind of makes you live in fear. Like, you're going to get found out."

Lastly, it is important to note that many ex-members were able to become "successful." Many received employment and found housing because of knowing others who could help

them once they exited. Though some did seek counseling, none of the members felt like they "needed deprogrammed" or went to deconversion therapy/exit counseling. Many of these members did feel that their faith in regard to the existence of God was tested but most remained faithful to a religion (not the movement) with a few ex-members becoming either agnostic or atheist. Some expressed that they wished they could convince those still there to leave and to "get out from under that cloud of deception."

Post Disaffiliation for Second-Generation Members

Life after exiting the movement proved to be a rough transition for second-generation ex-members as well. Specifically, many second-generation ex-members also felt anger, isolation, depression, and fear after leaving a movement. Further, second-generation ex-members also felt as though there were more struggles in relation to finding jobs, dating, and going to college. A unique difference for these members, however, was the process of coming to terms with their parents' decisions to enter the movement in the first place. One member stated, "I am also angry with my parents for not even considering that they were not only giving up their lives to the [NRM], but eventually mine too. I know their story, and they genuinely think that God told them to join the [NRM], and they still do to this day, but I don't believe it was God, and so I am left with some bitterness and resentment, even though I do understand how it all happened." Another member echoed this statement, "I love my parents but when times are harder for me because of being from a cult, I can't help but feel rage and anger. How could they decide to have a child – a child that would have no other life than what they chose for? I get so frustrated." Another member stated that though she was angry at her parents she knows "my mother is sorry. Though she feels being there was the right choice, she is sorry for the decision she made for me. That must be difficult to live with."

As suggested in the literature, many of the second-generation respondents felt "behind" in terms of education, culture, and job experience. One member stated, "We were educated well at [the Farm]. It was a fine education but I didn't have a college degree. I had to decide whether or not I needed one. Then I had to figure out in what and then how do you get there? There was almost too much choice. Too much freedom in that decision." Another one echoed,

> I was almost 30 when I left. I was able to get a simple job afterwards because friends helped but then I decided I needed to go to college. So there I was, then almost 40 in school with a bunch of 18 year olds trying to act normal, but every time I stopped to think about how old I was in school, I got mad. I lost so much of my life. I get mad and I get depressed but I can't redo it.

Dating was also a transition that some of the respondents stated was difficult. One female stated,

> I "dated" about two guys back at [the Farm] but nothing serious and especially nothing serious after leaving. It's hard. I didn't get a chance to experience school like other young adults which meant I didn't get to experience sex and relationships like everyone else. It greatly hindered my

sense of worth. I sort of feel as though I will live a life without ever having the chance for a long-term relationship and that cult took that from me.

Another ex-member stated that he felt like he was hiding some type of stigma and that this marked identity placed him at a disadvantage in the dating market. He remarked, "I didn't know the moves. You know, like, how to get someone's number or when do you approach a girl?" He continued to discuss how to out oneself. He stated, "At a certain point you have to come out. Good luck trying to figure out the dating game and let alone telling a potential date about your upbringing. They could hate you, look at you like a pet project or be totally freaked out by you." As most of the first generation individuals were either coupled before entering or coupled while in the movement, some of the second-generation members felt devoid of a typical life course experience, as they were not socialized in how to date.

This situation seemed to be moderated with age. One younger member left with his parents when he was about 16. Because of this he was entered into a public high school and transitioned right into college. By doing so he noted, "I don't feel like it was that difficult. I was a teenager when we left so school was school and I learned quickly that girls were different on the outside than at [the Farm]. Dating seemed like a natural activity to me."

As mentioned above, the connection for these members to leave with or without their parents was an extreme decision to make. Some of the second-generation members left without their parents while others had the chance to exit with their parents. Those who left without their parents mentioned that it was extremely difficult to leave as their parents were really all they knew. One stated, "By leaving without my mom and dad it was like I was starting a new life without no one by my side." This respondent spent years trying to convince her parents to also leave and eventually "cut ties with them. It would just depress me more every time I tried to talk to them. I tried to get them to leave and they would try to make me feel guilty as if I made the wrong decision."

Though many of the respondents mentioned multiple ways in which living with a NRM "stole a piece of their life," many stated that living within a movement eventually made them a "stronger person" and one person stated, "I experienced some of the most amazing things that are good and helped me to grow." In general many respondents had both anger and love for their experiences while in a movement. Their fond experiences were more so towards the people they met and experiences while the anger was displayed towards a loss of time and deceit.

Discussion

There is much literature on NRMs, however, one area that needs to be illuminated are the experiences of second-generation members. This paper attempts to compare the experiences of second-generation members to those of first generation members. Major themes that are apparent are how members come to the idea of exiting. Both groups had similar ways of reaching this decision, however, the second-generation's experiences towards exiting are influenced differently than those of the first generation.

It was apparent that both the first generation and second-generation ex-members experienced a disruption in their mindset. For the first generation members, it was often

experiencing a job or community work outside of the movement that provided extended time to experience a different way of life. Other first generation members also mentioned having connections to family members and friends from their previous life providing them with information about the "outside life."

Though similar, second-generation ex-members experienced their shift slightly different. Some offered experiences with meeting "outside" younger kids while out on community errands that would discuss life outside of the movement. Further, others hid or snuck "contraband" into the movement, which introduced some of the younger kids to "outside life." These kids were also introduced to newer members who had lived on the outside before entering the movement. These three experiences provided a curiosity for the outside and a desire to experience a different way of life.

Both the second-generation and the first generation ex-members discussed that a big reason for leaving was either failed prophecies or failed leadership. Curiosity opened the door for the second-generation ex-members to start second guessing the teachings of the movement. For the first generation ex-members it was the constant failure of predictions and practices of the movement and leaders that allowed for them to start questioning the movement. It was apparent that once one started to question the teachings that most started to contemplate leaving the movement.

Though a little similar, one stark difference between the two groups was the connection of the second-generation members to their parents. For the first generation members, some spoke of taking their children with them or of a spouse they left, but none spoke of the fear of leaving without another family member. For the second-generation members, their connection and devotion to their parents affected their choice to leave. Some stayed much longer than they desired while others left and felt guilt for leaving their parents behind.

Lastly, both groups suffered feelings of loneliness, anger, and depression when they exited. More so, both groups spoke of difficulties entering into life outside the movement. Though these were experienced by both, the second-generation members spoke of the difficulties of trying to fit in a society they knew nothing about. They had difficulties with typical life course transitions such as college and romantic relationships. These experiences lead to anger not only towards the movement but also towards their parents.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the experiences of both first and second-generation ex-members' experiences of exiting a NRM. The intent was to examine similarities and differences among the two groups. Interviews with ex-members of a NRM illustrated that the lived experiences of these members were indeed both similar and different. Given the results, it is apparent that second-generation members experienced exiting a NRM differently than first generation members. Specifically, feeling connected to the family/parents, which made leaving extremely difficult, was unique to second-generation members as many discussed either leaving family behind or waiting to leave until their family was ready. Many also felt as though there were more struggles in relation to finding jobs, dating, and going to college. These are unique to the second-generation ex-members and in terms of their experiences, should also shape the help they seek from counselors, families, and friends.

Although the findings provide insight into these experiences, there are a few limitations to the study. The biggest limitation is the small number of respondents who are second-generation members who have exited a NRM. The estimation that only 5% of members have children while in a movement makes it difficult to find a large sample of those who are second-generation members who actually exited from a movement that are willing to discuss their lived experiences. Further, a second limitation is that snowball sampling was utilized and because of this, it makes it even more difficult to have interviewees who know hundreds of second-generation members who would be willing to discuss their experiences. Although some second-generation members would know a few other second-generation members, not many couples have children in a NRM, limiting the exposure to how many second generation members are in contact with others like them. Though both of these limitations narrow some of the possible experiences of others who fit the criteria, those who were interviewed shared very similar experiences.

Future studies might benefit by comparing those born within a NRM to those children brought to the movement at very young ages. Many of those interviewed as first generation members stated that they brought small children to the movement with them. These children might have very similar experiences as those born into the movement.

Bibliography

Armstrong, David, Ann Gosling, John Weinman, and Theresa Marteau

1997 "The Place of Inter-Rater Reliability in Qualitative Research: An Empirical Study." *Sociology* 31, 3: 597-606.

Balch, Robert W., and David Taylor

2002 "Making Sense of the Heaven's Gate Suicides." Pp. 209-28 in *Cults, Religion & Violence*. Edited by David G. Bromley and J. Gordon Melton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barker, Eillen

1984 *The Making of a Moonie: Choice or Brainwashing?* New York: Basil Blackwell.

Bromley, David G.

1991 "Unraveling Religious Disaffiliation: The Meaning and Significance of Falling from the Faith in Contemporary Society." *Counseling and Values* 35, 3: 164-85.

2004 "Leaving the Fold: Disaffiliating from New Religious Movements." Pp. 298-314 in *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*. Edited by J. R. Lewis. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2006a "Deprogramming." Pp. 143-48 in *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements*. Edited by Peter B. Clarke. London: Routledge.

2006b "Exit Counseling." Pp. 176-78 in *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements,* edited by Peter B. Clarke. London: Routledge.

Buxant, Coralie, and Vassilis Saroglou

2008   "Joining and leaving a new religious movement: A study of ex-members' mental health." *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 11, 3: 251-71.

Coates, Dominiek

2010   "Post-Involvement Difficulties Experienced by Former Members of Charismatic Groups." *Journal of Religion and Health* 49, 3: 296-310.

2013a   "Disaffiliation from a New Religious Movement: The Importance of Self and Others in Exit." *Symbolic Interaction* 36, 3: 314-34.

2013b   "The Effect of New Religious Movement Affiliation on Reflexivity and Sense of Self." *The Journal for Scientific Study of Religion* 52, 4: 793-809.

Guba, E., and Y. Lincoln

1989   *The Quality of Fourth Generation Evaluation.* Newbury Park: Sage.

Hruschka, Daniel, Deborah Schwartz, Daphne Cobb St. John, Erin Picone-Decaro, Richard Jenkins, and James Carey

2004   "Reliability in Coding Open-Ended Data: Lessons Learned from HIV Behavioral Research." *Field Methods* 16, 3: 307-31.

Introvigne, Massimo

2006   "Brainwashing." Pp. 66-70 in *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements.* Edited by Peter B. Clarke. London: Routledge.

Jenkins, Tricia, and Virginia Thomas

2009   "From Radicalism to Mainstream Evangelicalism: Exploring the Effects of Doctrinal Upheaval on Second-Generation Members in the Worldwide Church of God." *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 3, 2: 113-40.

Lewis, James R., and David G. Bromley

1987   "The Cult Withdrawal Syndrome: A Case of Misattribution of Cause?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 26, 4: 508-22.

Matthews, Cynthia H., and Carmen F. Salazar

2014   "Second-Generation Adult Former Cult Group Members' Recovery Experiences: Implications for Counseling." *International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling* 36: 188-203.

Mertens, Donna

2005   *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity with Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods.* Second edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Patton, Michael Q.

2002   *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods.* Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Robinson, Beth, Ellen M. Fyre, and Loretta J. Bradley

    1997   "Cult Affiliation and Disaffiliation: Implications for Counseling." *Counseling and Values* 41: 166-73.

Rochford Jr., E. Burke

    2007   "Social Building Blocks of New Religious Movements: Organization and Leadership." Pp. 159-85 in *Teaching New Religious Movements*. Edited by David G. Bromley. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shupe, Anson, David G. Bromley, and Susan E. Darnell

    2004   "The North American Anti-Cult Movement: Vicissitudes of Success and Failure." Pp. 184-205 in *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*. Edited by James R. Lewis. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Solomon, Trudy

    1981   "Integrating the 'Moonie' experience: A survey of ex-members of the Unification Church." Pp. 275-96 in *In Gods We Trust: New Patterns of Religious Pluralism in America*. Edited by Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony. New Brunswick: Transaction.

Sirkin, Mark I.

    1990   "Cult Involvement: A Systems Approach to Assessment and Treatment." *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training* 27, 1: 116-23.

Wright, Stuart A.

    1984   "Post-Involvement Attitudes of Voluntary Defectors from Controversial New Religious Movements." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 23, 2: 172-82.