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An Analysis of Religious Extremism Through Memoir

By
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

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ABSTRACT

LEWIS, SYDNEY: An Analysis of Religious Extremism Through Memoir

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This thesis investigates the physical and mental factors extremist religious organizations, such as the Westboro Baptist Church, Church of Scientology and Fundamentalist Mormonism use to decrease the chance of members' departure from their institutions. These factors include familial relationships, physical and mental limitations, and restricted exposure to society outside of the religious organization. The following memoirs illustrate and expose these difficulties and how the female authors overcome these limitations: *Educated* by Tara Westover, *Beyond Belief: My Secret Life Inside Scientology and My Harrowing Escape* by Jenna Miscavige Hill and *Unfollow: A Memoir of Loving and Leaving the Westboro Baptist Church* by Megan Phelps-Roper. All three books detail their authors' various journeys as they persevere through self-liberation in order to find peace.

All three female memoirists have to fight for the opportunity to pursue higher education and integrate into the outside world that they had been sheltered from for a majority of their lives. Westover narrates her childhood in the mountains of Idaho and her ultimate decision to leave her tyrannical household run by her radical-thinking father, Gene Westover. Hill reveals the history behind being born and raised in the Sea Organization of Scientology; and the tight-knit community of the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas, is detailed by Megan Phelps-Roper's memoir. Each author faces different battles concerning life outside of their respective communities, but their

pursuit of the knowledge that their religion shelters them from motivates all of their desires for more.

There are often connotations imparted on memoirs, with the expectation of a revelation for the author or even the reader, as they compare their life story to that of the author. These memoirs in particular are not predictable and do not shy away from the harsh realities the women were faced with in their communities as well as when they left. Even after traumatic events and dialogue are described, somehow the authors are all able to rise above the backlash they have faced and have the confidence that remains in their decision to leave. The Westboro Baptist Church continues to protest, Scientologists still practice invasive auditing sessions, and the Westover family is still adamant in their radical Mormon beliefs; life continues as before. Though Westover, Hill and Phelps-Roper may not be able to alter the beliefs of their institutions as whole, each of their departures caused a stir that cannot be undone, no matter what the authorities attempt. They are strong, independent and confident women who fought for what they wanted from the world and went on to educate that world through their narrative voices.

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Introduction

Human beings constantly search for concrete answers to metaphysical questions that they often cannot resolve directly. Who am I? What is the purpose of my existence? What happens to me after death? The search for validation and knowledge about these concepts can become a significant factor in one's life if they allow these thoughts to consume their everyday mindset. Religion typically serves as an answer to these questions of the unknown. Humans seek out religion to reduce anxiety concerning social support in difficult times, to have the ability to socialize on common beliefs and a daily structure that provides stability. The system of a religion includes the beliefs, stories, texts, social structures and ethical principles that comprise these organizations (*St. Patrick's College*). Religion provides hope for a peaceful afterlife with rituals and routine that will lead the follower there. However, the structure of an organization can become limiting and oppressive if the system abuses its power, such as within fundamentalist or highly traditional versions of religion. The oppression creates a cycle that is increasingly difficult to break out of, especially for members whose early life and education coincide exclusively with their religion.

Memoirs tend to provide wisdom and self-knowledge, occasionally assuring readers that they are on the right path in life and other times making them doubt their sense of purpose. Memoir also provides the readers with a look into a real person's own life story, unlike a work of fiction where nothing is initially assumed to be factual. Some realizations may come to the reader even if the author themselves has not yet determined the outcome of their journey (Burt). The ability to gain an outside perspective on someone else's life, no matter how relatable or unrelatable their struggles may be for the

reader, tends to impart a sense of relief to both the author and the reader. The reader has the ability to distance themselves from their own burdens and immerse themselves in someone else's life, while the authors can unburden themselves from a story or incident that might have been weighing on them their entire lives; however, the authors are still the ones who have to come to the realization that they have gone through these struggles and they might never truly be resolved. Within fiction these experiences can be written off as imaginative, but for memoir the stories and the emotions associated with them are real. Memoir provides an escape from raw emotion that the author can often still be working through as they are writing. Similarly, within memoir there may be no conclusion or satisfying ending for the reader that can be provided through fiction. However, religious memoirs in particular can often provide an ending expected by the reader. This ending often consists of either finding solace in their religion or breaking free of the system and never returning. In terms of the conclusion of the memoir, a reader may look for one of these predictable endings as a way to justify the actions of the institutions that restricted the author. For example, a memoir ending with the author never returning to their institution creates a disconnect between the credibility of what the author is claiming against their Church, and how they could have remained within the community for a significant duration of time before leaving. On the contrary, if the author returns to the institution, the religion gains credibility and often holds a more powerful role in the author's life than it did previously. Therefore, if the reader is looking for either reassurance in their Church or reasons to abandon it, they may pick the memoir with the outcome they desire.

The most intriguing memoirs defy readers' expectations, abandoning predictable conclusions and realizations. The memoirs *Beyond Belief: My Secret Life Inside Scientology and My Harrowing Escape* by Jenna Miscavige Hill and Tara Westover's work, *Educated*, demonstrate each woman's ability to escape and choose the role they want religion to play in the rest of their lives. Jenna Miscavige Hill has chosen to discard Scientology completely, while Tara Westover occasionally engages with her Mormon family without labelling herself Mormon. Recognizing the faults in a religious practice requires knowledge outside of what has been ingrained in that religious society. This can include education from "outside" systems such as public schooling. Overcoming ignorance is an added challenge: Religious practices and institutions such as Scientology, the Westboro Baptist Church, and fundamentalist Mormonism have been known to discourage formal education in favor of their own practices, beginning during the formative years of childhood. This is not to say that all religions do not support education or disregard its importance, but rather that this is a theme throughout the memoirs discussed in this thesis. In addition to Hill and Westover, Megan Phelps-Roper explores ignorance and its connection to education within her memoir, *Unfollow: A Memoir of Loving and Leaving the Westboro Baptist Church*. These memoirs in particular show the various authors' decisions to seek a college education and/or the opportunity to attend public school as a means to educate themselves in a way they cannot while being a member of their religious belief system.

The memoirs analyzed in this thesis are firsthand accounts of women who have left their religion. Gender plays an explicit role in each of the memoirs, as the authors find themselves trapped in "female" roles that might not suit the future they want. I will

uncover what it means for these authors to decide between leaving the past and one's community behind entirely while finding common ground which enables freedom from these restrictive practices and ideologies. On the surface these women are making the decision of choosing either their faith or freedom; they are forced to decide whether life outside the organization is worth risking their membership within. Their decisions have proven to involve either influence from society apart from their own, seeking higher education, or a combination of the two. Within each memoir, the commonality of education enabling this "outsider" mentality is one of the beginning transitions to differentiate those who practice the religion from those who do not. Each religion studied has a demarcation of characteristics that the people outside of their organization are believed to possess, most of which are not shown in a positive light. All three of the female authors/memoirists faced adversity when trying to remain dedicated to their families and their religious practices while simultaneously wanting to expand their knowledge of the world and to meet those who are different.

This expansion of their knowledge of the outside world was often immediately perceived as a threat by the authorities of the organization. Despite the fact that the memoirs are first-hand accounts of how the author remembers these experiences, the commonalities that all three of them share chronicle the emotional and, in some cases, physical abuse that has affected each one of the women at a point in time, always hindering their access to education. Economic instability, abuses of power both within the home and in religious institutions, mandatory obedience and lack of basic freedoms that deny the women intellectual growth and outside knowledge are all found within these religious memoirs. Memoirs serve as a narrative outlet for these women, outlining their

experiences both within and outside their religious sphere. Jenna Miscavige Hill, Tara Westover, and Megan Phelps-Roper work to defy the religious systems that consumed their childhoods and choose to define education for themselves. In a world where there are thousands of religions, an all-encompassing universal knowledge cannot stem from one singular sect. The mentality that this knowledge can be found within one organization, however, is a universal thought-process that forces some members to leave after losing faith in the truth claims of their sect. These are the stories of ex-members of Scientology, Mormonism and the Westboro Baptist Church who have been denounced by their organizations and describe their self-liberation from the oppressive and restrictive religious sects they grew up in.

Research on Religious Values

“A Multidimensional Analysis of Religious Extremism”

As with every religion, there are specific terms that are used to define aspects of the organization and their beliefs. Occasionally these terms can be used interchangeably when they are meant to hold separate meanings. Religiosity, religious fundamentalism, radicalism and extremism are mentioned within the article entitled “A Multidimensional Analysis of Religious Extremism” by authors Susilo Wibisono, Winnifred R. Louis and Jolanda Jetten. Through the words of Matthias Basedau and other authors, the article examines religious extremism through various lenses that have been created in the Western world, which now include “the social and political implications of the surge of ‘bad religion’” (Wibisono et al., 2016). An impartial opinion is hard to find when the word “extremism” is used, and as the authors have written, the term “bad religion” creates false images and certain misunderstandings about specific groups. The term “fundamentalism” is defined as, “Strict adherence to doctrines and practices held to be fundamental to Christianity, spec. belief in the inerrancy of Scripture and literal acceptance of the creeds as fundamentals of Protestant Christianity; a movement based on such beliefs arising among various Protestant denominations in the United States and which rose to prominence in the 1920s” (OED Online). Therefore, a fundamentalist follows strict procedures and abides by a strict interpretation of that specific text, just as the three sects described in this thesis do.

Though engagement with American Protestantism or Islam will not be a topic of focus within this thesis, the emphasis on a “strict belief in the literal interpretation of religious texts” can be seen throughout the readings of the memoirs. The article mentions

that religious fundamentalism “...may be used by some scholars to refer to a rigid interpretation of scriptures, in contrast to religious extremism which is often associated with a particular political agenda” (Wibisono et al.) Deviation from the strict interpretation is often met with harsh punishment and judgement from both the organization itself and their direct family members whom they encounter every day. One’s devotion to religion is often referred to as their “religiosity,” a word that has been found to hold positive connotations versus the terms such as “extremism” and “fundamentalism,” which connote “prejudice,” “hostility” and “armed conflict.” Phrasing and terminology are important to keep in mind as these religions are being discussed and the authors create the framework for correct discussion.

“Transmission of Religious Values: Relations Between Parents’ and Daughters’ Beliefs”

The relationship between a daughter and her parents is crucial to religious transmission, whether it be in a positive or negative manner. There are three main goals parents strive for as they raise their children. The first is to ensure health and physical survival, the second is for the child to acquire skills for economic survival, and the third revolves around the development of the beliefs and values that are consistent with what their society’s definition of a good person is (Okagaki 303). These factors become critical in the assessment and investigation into how education plays a role in the lives of the three women presented in my argument. As their daughters are developing, each set of parents holds different values to various standards. The definition of a “good person” also could be interpreted in a multitude of ways. There can never be one “correct answer” to these elusive questions that continue to puzzle society.

“Transmission of Religious Values: Relations between Parents’ and Daughters’ Beliefs,” by Lynn Okagaki and Claudia Bevis delves into the way’s parents influence their daughters’ religious beliefs. Their hypotheses are listed as the following:

1. The accuracy of daughters’ perceptions of their parents’ beliefs is related to the frequency with which parents express their beliefs (an index of redundancy of the message) and to the degree to which mothers and fathers agree about beliefs and values (an index of the clarity of the message) (307).
2. The perceived agreement between daughters’ beliefs and parents’ beliefs (i.e., the difference between daughters’ ratings of beliefs and their perceptions of their parents’ beliefs) is a function of daughters’ perceptions of the quality of the

parent-child relationship and how important daughters believe religion is to their parents (ibid.).

3. The relation between parents' beliefs and daughters' beliefs is mediated by daughters' perceptions of their parents' beliefs (308).
4. The actual agreement between daughters' beliefs and parents' beliefs is a function of the accuracy of daughters' perceptions of their parents' beliefs and the degree to which daughters desire to be like their parents (ibid.).

These hypotheses make it clear that the daughter is essentially in control of how she interprets her parents' religious beliefs, even if it is out of her control how they are presented. Religious transmission turns into an equation, with the daughter becoming the variable that is dependent on what is presented by her parents. Factors such as the importance of beliefs, accuracy of their belief perception and the warmth of the parent-child relationship become crucial to consider as the memoirs are evaluated. The warmth between the parents and child is a component that can be found within each of the memoirs. Each woman shares a different level of affection with her mother and father, a fact that becomes critical as the parent who acts as the authority figure in the household is revealed. Children are a lot more likely to adopt the religion of their parents if they believe the parents love them and have their best interests at heart. As the child matures and their understanding of the world around them develops, these religious values are often associated with their view of the world. However redundant it may seem, the consistency within the parents' beliefs is crucial to how the children, daughters in particular for this study, interpret their view of the world and those associated with the religion of their choosing.

Table 1

Correlations Between Daughters' Beliefs and Daughters' Perceptions of Parents' Beliefs, Parents' Self-Reported Beliefs, and Randomly Assigned Parents' Beliefs

TABLE 1
Correlations Between Daughters' Beliefs and Daughters' Perceptions of Parents' Beliefs, Parents' Self-Reported Beliefs, and Randomly Assigned Parents' Beliefs

Parent beliefs	Daughters' belief scores			
	Existence of God	Morality	Importance of religion	Devotional practices
Perceptions of mother's beliefs	.79****	.75****	.80****	.78***
Mother's self-reported beliefs	.48***	.43***	.55****	.63****
Random mother's beliefs	.03	.03	.17	.05
Perceptions of father's beliefs	.42***	.51****	.43***	.59****
Father's self-reported beliefs	.44**	.35*	.34*	.47***
Random father's beliefs	-.07	-.02	.08	.05

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. **** $p < .0001$.

Source: Lynn Okagaki & Claudia Bevis (1999) Transmission of Religious Values: Relations Between Parents' and Daughters' Beliefs, *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 160:3, 303-318, DOI: 10.1080/00221329909595401

Several conclusions were drawn by the end of Okagaki and Belvis's studies. The first conclusion inferred that "[...] in general, daughters have more accurate perceptions of their parents' religious beliefs if parents talk more frequently about those beliefs" (Okagaki 310). This conclusion becomes more concrete further into the results section, when the authors state that "...the daughters were more accurate in their perceptions of their parents' beliefs when their parents talked more often about those beliefs and when their parents agreed on those beliefs" (311). Though this conclusion is broad, for authors like Tara Westover and Megan Phelps-Roper the option of perception is being taken

away from birth as they are born into their religion through their parental figures. Of course, they can interpret their parents' beliefs as they please, as Okagaki and Belvis argue; however, the accuracy of their perception is already swayed in the parents' favor by their sole voice being the ultimate form of jurisdiction for the religion of their choosing. Something particularly interesting they find is the degree to which, "...the daughters adopted beliefs and practices that were similar to what they believed their father's beliefs and practices were related to how important the daughters believed religion was to their father" (313). Though the specific authority figures vary from memoir to memoir, the leaders of these fundamentalist religions are all males, while occasionally the females are in control of the household. People automatically associate men with power based on history presented in various aspects of political and social realms due to religion's inherent existence. Even as these memoirs are written by women, and they document their own experiences, the infiltration of men and the power they hold within their respective households and organization is a constant and outright theme. Mormonism, Scientology and The Westboro Baptist Church were founded by males and are currently all run by males. Though each religion claims to make the space inclusive to the women who comprise a significant portion of their membership, women are almost always relegated to second-class or "helper" status. In conservative, traditional religions, founded and run by men, women are discouraged from seeking to participate in major decision-making and are often restricted from power even at home.

“Do As I Say and as I Do: The Effects of Consistent Parental Beliefs and Behaviors upon Religious Transmission”

A study entitled “Do as I Say and as I Do: The Effects of Consistent Parental Beliefs and Behaviors upon Religious Transmission” interacts with this idea that the faith of the parents is the most important factor when considering religious transmission (Bader). Christopher Bader and Scott Desmond ultimately conclude that a family unit of two parents who are of the same religion and level of religiosity will have a stronger transmission of religion to their children than if they were to be either single or non-religious or did not share the same beliefs. Though this may seem self-explanatory, they also conclude that even if one parent does not attend church regularly but has a high religiosity, their children are still more likely to be religious themselves. In terms of the influence on gender, a study conducted by Clark, Worthington and Danser, which is mentioned by Bader and Desmond, concludes that fathers have the greatest effect on their son’s church attendance, while their mother will have a greater influence on the son’s practical application of religion (314).

Example of practical application of religion:

It can be difficult to distinguish whether religious values being instilled within the child through the parental figure are genuine or simply the child mimicking the attitude and behaviors exhibited by their parents. Someone like Megan Phelps-Roper grew up surrounded by the church community and was exposed to the outside world solely when her parents allowed her to be. This exposure was constrained and mediated by the authority of the family unit and their Church at large. School became an outlet for social

interaction and learning that she came to enjoy in part due to the time it gave her away from her mother.

Tara Westover, Jenna Miscavige Hill and Megan Phelps-Roper are all indoctrinated into their respective religions at a very young age. This intrinsically distances them from the rest of society outside of their religious communities, therefore creating social isolation within their families and churches. Isolation turns into extreme distrust of the outside world, and in the case of these memoirists, an added barrier to overcome as they navigate escaping these communities. Over many years, the coercion and constant brainwashing create a state of inherent doubt and cognitive dissonance that is seemingly impossible to completely erase. The fear of losing all they have ever known remains a factor forcing their membership, as the social and physical support of their communities' bonds them to the religion itself. In spite of these factors, each author has found an inner strength to endure, to find her own life course, and to liberate herself through education.

Chapter I: Mormonism and *Educated* by Tara Westover

What does it mean to be educated? Does it mean that we understand simple math equations and the way to structure a sentence? Or might it mean that we have a basic understanding of how to behave in the ways society has deemed appropriate? The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word “Educate” in the following terms: “Educate: To bring up (a child) so as to form his or her manners, behaviour, social and moral practices, etc.; to rear in a particular way/To help or cause (a person, the mind, etc.) to develop the intellectual and moral faculties in general; to impart wisdom to; to enlighten” (OED.com). Tara Westover documents her survivalist Mormon experience within her memoir *Educated*. Her disconnect with a majority of society began during childhood and continued into adolescence. Components of life such as immunizations, spending weekdays in public school and the freedom to accept or reject religious dogmas were excluded from her formal education and socialization experience. The Westover family faith rejected these common aspects of life based on their strict interpretation of the Bible and overall religious beliefs. However, Westover needs her readers to distinguish between her novel and Mormonism, despite the impact the religion had on her lifestyle. The author’s note reads as follows: “This story is not about Mormonism. Neither is it about any other form of religious belief. In it there are many types of people, some believers, some not: some kind, some not. The author disputes any correlation, positive or negative, between the two” (Westover, x). This explicit statement allows Westover to distance herself from the stereotypes most non-Mormon readers might have about the link between her faith and her abandonment of the religion. Although this notation gives Westover the ability to distance herself from her faith, I argue that she does reference her

faith throughout the memoir in a manner that is undeniably connected to her ultimate departure. Despite her disclaimers, the version of Mormonism that her parents were presenting and enforcing did not allow Westover to pursue a higher education, and that fact prevented her from receiving the social aspects of education alongside the academic. Isolation created by her parents shaped a paranoid and distrustful view of the outside world, aiding in her alienation from other females from a young age. How can a child determine that one style is right and the other wrong, when the child cannot help which view of the world she is exposed to? She cannot, and that is when escape becomes an insurmountable obstacle for these women who have grown up in such a system.

That said, it is important to keep in mind that most Mormons believe in doctors and provide their children with an education, and Gene Westover's radicalism is not a reflection of Mormonism as a whole. The Westover's are categorized as radicals, fitting the mold of Mormon fundamentalists in their strict practices and interpretations of the Book of Mormon. Due to the extremism that is portrayed within her memoir, readers may seek Westover's memoir for an escape from their own life, even as her words speak more to her character than to the dramatic abandonment of her community. Education, for Westover and for the other memoirists in this thesis, proves to be the foundation that the author builds upon. The question marks of life disappear as time passes and events begin to fill in the blank spaces that once held apprehension and mystery. Just as a child begins to learn how to speak and the meaning behind these words, life continues to move forward, and interactions with others shape who one wants to be. I found the definition of educate/education to vary with each memoir, and my own interpretation of the definition changed with each turning page. Education, despite the diverse levels of interpretation by

definition, is an important factor in Mormonism. The following statement is copied directly from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints website:

Latter-day Saints believe that because of its immense and lasting value, God has made education a divine commandment for which His children are responsible. Both the Bible and the Book of Mormon echo this commandment with invitations to seek, “knock,” and ask for knowledge; modern revelations and prophets give explicit instruction to learn, and clarify that learning is essential for salvation. Church founder Joseph Smith taught that “no man is saved faster than he gets knowledge,” and that “no man can be saved in ignorance.” Latter-day Saints also affirm that God is actively involved in the education of His children. He enlightens the mind; He promises that efforts to learn will be recognized and met with His wise dispensations of knowledge.

Based on this excerpt, God will always be an influence in the education of those who follow his teachings, and the divine commandment will guide the believers through the words of The Bible and The Book of Mormon. The term “modern revelations” is vague and seems to be a means for modern Mormons to interpret in their own style. The opportunity then arises for men such as Gene Westover to guide his children “in the name of God” without room for outside interpretations. The amount and quality of the academic experience the children receive is then inherently reliant on the adult figures in their lives, and will evidently be different in each household. Despite Westover’s denial that her memoir is about Mormonism, her entire way of life and mindset is continually jaded by her association with and immersion in the Mormon lifestyle that her father has created. In his article “Another Mormon Education,” John Durham Peters writes, “She

was well educated in the arts of denial; though her family's mode of scriptural hermeneutics was warped, its seriousness was a great preparation for university success" (Peters). From the beginning of her memoir the readers see this denial of the link between her experience post leaving her family and the memoir itself's involvement with Mormonism. Growing up she denies the possibility that her father may be teaching her principles that are inherently wrong, which is particularly damaging as she decides that life on the mountain will not be sufficient. Westover knew how to read and write well, and she could communicate with her peers, but she was lacking in the knowledge of the criteria that are expected of most students who enter a university, whether that university is religiously based or not.

Westover describes learning within her family as "self-directed," and as long as work was done first, they could learn anything they were willing to teach themselves (46). John Peters writes, "And yet there is no more fundamental question in the Mormon tradition than that of testimony and witness -- the question of who gets to speak for the dead, and who gets to speak for the living" (Peters). This can be said for several of these fundamentalist groups, as they all rely on the words of someone living who has claimed to be able to speak for the dead. Mormonism itself began as a movement through Joseph Smith's interpretation of the scripture that was allegedly provided to him by God (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints). A great amount of trust is placed in these individuals and prophets whose words gain credibility over time and a following that endures for generations. Gene Westover's reaction to Tara and her siblings seeking higher education outside of their own home put him in a position where he felt his own teachings had been inadequate. Westover traces learning to read and write back to her

requirements of deciphering scriptures and copying the Book of Mormon; and yet her knowledge of nature and acceptance of its power come across as the most important aspects of her memoir for the reader. Westover writes:

I have been educated in the rhythms of the mountain, rhythms in which change was never fundamental, only cyclical. The same sun appeared each morning, swept over the valley and dropped behind the peak. The snows that fell in winter always melted in the spring. Our lives were a cycle -- the cycle of the day, the cycle of the seasons -- circles of perpetual change that, when complete, meant nothing had changed at all. I believed my family was a part of this immortal pattern, that we were, in some sense, eternal. But eternity belonged only to the mountain. (xii)

The reader gains insight into Westover's personal connection to the mountains that have encompassed her entire being. She is an outsider looking in as she writes her memoir, and yet these descriptions of the sun, valley, and peak are as clear as if we are there with her. Nature serves as a unifying force behind the Westover family, from her mother's connection to the power behind medicinal healing to her father's appreciation of the protection that the mountain offers. Religion often corresponds with the ability to conceptualize a version of eternity that followers can look forward to, and yet Westover connects eternal qualities to nature instead of her faith. Nature serves as an outlet for Westover that she yearns for at various times throughout the memoir, even as it was host to so many traumatic events in her adolescent years almost whole-heartedly due to her father. Gene intentionally fostered an environment that became hard to leave, or rather an environment that he knew would make it difficult for his children to survive outside of.

An interview with Tara Westover, hosted by Saint Mary's College, revealed some of her thoughts about what it means to be educated. She equates education with curiosity, and although she herself felt "objectively unprepared" for an education outside of her home, she welcomed the uncertainties that she would eventually overcome. Her peers at Brigham Young University would become the ones who opened her eyes to other types of Mormonism that varied from the rigid structure she had followed all of her life. BYU is a notorious religious institution, and to have Westover feel completely exposed and bombarded by a new world of ideals is unsettling and serves as an additional example of the restricted level of socialized education she received. To illustrate just how unprogressive BYU is: the school is known for their Honor Code that has been modified over the years due to public outrage over the lack of acceptance of the LGBTQ community. On the BYU website, there is currently a section detailing the policies on "Same Sex Romantic Behavior" (<https://honorcode.byu.edu/policies>). Westover entered Brigham Young University in 2004 and as the website has shown, these policies have remained the same as when she attended with little change enacted. Though Westover realizes her upbringing was extreme as she is introduced to these new concepts and people in her life, there is a strict three-tier system within Mormonism that models the religious background behind each level or Kingdom. The following levels of Mormonism create the claim that there is a "correct" way to practice in order to reach the highest Kingdom of Glory. To reiterate, the importance of religiosity within the Kingdoms of Glory, or "The glory we inherit will depend on the depth of our conversion, expressed by our obedience to the Lord's commandments. It will depend on the manner in which we have "received the testimony of Jesus" (Church of Jesus Christ). Highest or most desired

is the celestial, followed by the terrestrial and ending with the telestial. Alongside the ability for The Book of Mormon to be interpreted in different lights, these levels, despite the transparent desire to rest in the celestial, become open for interpretation as well. Every Mormon then strives to achieve this level of glory, which will be gained through the diligent practices enforced by the individual.

Within modern-day society, certain stereotypes have grown to accompany the Mormon people and their lifestyle through displays both in print and on television. These stereotypes can include that all Mormons are from Utah and live in communes (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ore0cf7SATc>). Through these clichés and miscommunications, the crucial difference between the mainstream Mormon community and the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is forgotten. Today, this difference is the common association with polygamy that is not supported by the modern Church of Latter-Day Saints, but accepted by the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Joseph Smith did partake in marriage with several wives and imposed this practice on his “close associates” at the time but today the practice is not accepted by the mainstream Mormon community. As with all religions, “Positive emotional experiences more effectively dispel such misconceptions and overcome interpersonal bias” (Cragun 79). The legitimacy of an organization becomes questionable if they have an association with a radical sector of their religion that is associated with questionable (or illegal) practices. The Mormon faith bases its beliefs in the Articles of Faith and the practice in the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints. These articles include a 13-point list of the Latter-day Saints’ most important beliefs. In addition, Mormon people consider themselves Christian, as they believe in and follow

Christ. It has been observed that “Fundamentalist Mormons do so (seek to enhance their legitimacy) by emphasizing their ‘Mormoness’ and non-fundamentalist Mormons by emphasizing their ‘Christiansnes’” (Cragun 91). The key factor differentiating Mormons from mainstream Christians includes their belief that “Jesus will establish his new kingdom on the American continent,” an idea derived from the prophet Joseph Smith’s words, contemporary with the history in the Book of Mormon (PBS). Within all of the distinctions and technicalities about who gets to claim to be the “most Mormon,” components of the sect such as the foundations of education become hard to distinguish among the different levels of membership. In essence, the difference between the radicals and those who are not can be lost within the misconstrued portrayal of Mormon people and stories like Educated creating a construct of their people despite Westover’s strong attempts to disassociate her previous faith and memoir. The Book of Mormon serves as the sacred text for the Latter-Day Saints after its introduction by Joseph Smith. The technicalities that lie within the Book of Mormon allow for radicals, such as the Westover’s, to assert their version of the texts as the “correct” one, in turn designating themselves to be in the celestial kingdom and others, such as people who do not identify as Mormon but even other Mormons who are not as devout as people like Gene Westover would like them to be.

With technicalities, terminology and “Kingdoms of Glory” a direct correlation to diligent practice and dedication to religion appears within Mormonism. A big part of Tara’s father’s dogma was the belief that his family of “true” believers could survive a moral apocalypse. His anxiety- and stress-induced actions would instill a sense of fear amongst the family that never did fade away. Westover often found herself preparing for

the Days of Abomination, "...when the World of Men failed, my family would continue on, unaffected" (xii). Therefore, it was imperative that they be isolated, sequestered from the rest of the world and its corrupting influences. For someone who has not been exposed to these ideals or ways of life, the story cannot help but contribute to an understanding of what life is like for those who grow up in a religious household such as the Westover's. Those who grow up surrounded by the community of their religion begin to observe how "outsiders" perceive their beliefs and traditions (Hadley). For Westover in particular, these moments became evident when she arrived at Brigham Young University and met others who followed her religion differently than she had growing up. For Mormons in particular, they may be met with a response of surprise if they do not fit the mold of a white person from Utah. Molds like these have been created by the media to encapsulate the majority of people who follow the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Utah remains host to the most Mormons in the United States with nearly 62% of the state's 3.1 million residents identifying as Mormon (Associated Press). Despite various sources claiming the Mormon population is decreasing, the statistics of this change of membership are difficult to obtain.

The power of authority within fundamentalist religions is illustrated by countless examples that are woven throughout the memoirs presented, be it the type of clothing the females are allowed to wear, or the activities they (children) were allowed to participate in. Once a crack within that authority is found, whether the parental figures or figurehead of the Church, the thought process of what else might have been misconstrued continues. Admitting that what one believed and performed is wrong and not what one believes any more after years of conformity takes extraordinary courage, particularly when the

mindset has been ingrained by parental figures for so long. Recognizing that she did not believe all that her parents put forward was the turning point for Tara. The authority was often her father, whose personal authority was God, and God's authority is all powerful. I believe having one's own relationship with God outside of the teachings and guidelines one's religious community has created proves to be the most powerful. When reading that Tara stepped into her first classroom at the age of seventeen, I immediately began to compare all that I had learned up to that age within my schooling system. Westover had not heard of the Holocaust until the topic came up in a college classroom, where she also had to be informed of the history of slavery within the United States. Students in public schooling systems are tested on their knowledge to retain facts and timelines of these violent and problematic periods of history while being told that in order to prevent these types of events from occurring again, they must learn about them.

The decision to attend public school alters the course of Westover's story, as it becomes detrimental to the relationship with her father. She writes: "I stood in front of him for what felt like hours, but he didn't look up, so I blurted out what I'd come to say: I want to go to school" (66). Her statement is met with silence, and slowly Gene says, "In this family, we obey the commandments of the Lord" and proceeds to mention Jacob and Esau. Westover's memoir details religious terminology in a way that is accessible for a diverse audience, once again proving the association to Mormonism denied in the Author's Note. Westover explains that Gene is essentially saying that she is not the daughter that he had raised, she is not the daughter of faith. The stakes, created for these young women who choose to not only receive a different form of education than what is offered in their home but to disobey their parents, are higher than one outside of

fundamentalist communities can even imagine. Westover's older brother Tyler left the household once his love for school overpowered the love he had for his family (60). She writes: "I couldn't imagine where he was now, but sometimes I wondered if perhaps school was less evil than Dad thought, because Tyler was the least evil person I knew, and he loved school -- loved it more, it seemed than he loved us" (ibid). At this point in the memoir, Westover begins to contemplate how she views education and entertains the possibility of asking her father. Her fear of asking her father is confirmed as she writes about his reaction: "There was something in the hard line of my father's face, in the quiet sigh of supplication he made every morning before he began family prayer, that made me think my curiosity was an obscenity, an affront to all he'd sacrificed to raise me" (61). Is this a representation of the transparent divine commandment that God is hoping to instill in His followers? Gene's shadow is indefinitely cast over his children, taking away all that they have to offer the world simply because he is afraid of losing them to a world he shields them from as often as possible. As much as it becomes easier to blame Gene for these troubles, the reasons for his mindset become tied to the religion at large, alongside the insight to his struggles with mental illness. The bubble that these parents and communities create for their children, as much as they may truly believe it is for their (children's) well-being, becomes toxic for children growing up within it. Without any influence and insight of the world that is outside their own, the mountains of Idaho become a stifling place that takes all of Westover's will power to leave.

When an environment is created for children where innocent acts are transformed into something that is taboo or out of reach, the mind of that child is altered, and a particular view of the world is created. Westover's reminder within the Author's Note to

separate religion from her experience becomes crucial as she reiterates what separates her experience with Mormonism from those in the mainstream Mormon community. Tara's mother was constantly trying to erase the 'damage,' so to speak, of her father, but can it ever truly be erased? I argue that it cannot be. A prime example of this behavior is shown through Tara's recollection of a ballet recital she participated in at six years old. She recounts her father describing the recital and ballet classes as, "...one of Satan's deceptions, like the public school, because it claimed to be one thing when it really was another. It claimed to teach dance, but instead it taught immodesty, promiscuity..."

(81). Gene's commentary on every hobby Tara tries to involve herself in becomes laced with anger and connotations of evil that are simply not present. He acts as though he wants her to be independent, and yet her every move is monitored and deemed evil by Gene. Even as her singing voice is recognized and praised for its beauty, Gene continually accepts the praise as his own from those whom he has been known to call 'California socialists' and members or followers of the Illuminati. As a reader, I found myself waiting for the line to be drawn, thinking he had to give at some point, but there truly was no break in resistance. Though my research has deemed it unclear whether Gene was properly diagnosed with bipolar disorder, Westover describes scenes where his manic tendencies compel her to "diagnose" him herself after learning about psychological disorders at Brigham Young University. Tara's claim that her father suffered from bipolar disorder should not be taken lightly, but remains unconfirmed, as there is no evidence that he has been officially diagnosed by a medical professional. Nevertheless, grand delusions and paranoia consume Gene, and ultimately the entire Westover family, as his struggle with bouts of depression becomes a constant worry,

accompanied by disruptions in routine and erratic behavior (Conroy). Therefore, these emotions from her father lead to second-guessing and the need for approval. When one can only find peace in one's place of worship, and the rest of one's life revolves around the practice, this tunnel vision can infect other areas of life. Gene's financial and emotional support is given to his children only if they are following the strict path he insists upon, which includes what version of education they are going to receive. It makes one wonder how many family members sacrifice aspects of freedom, religion aside, due to their schedules and daily life revolving around the mood and principles of their household leader. Freedom becomes a subject of desire rather than a basic right when these authors face the reality that they cannot survive on their own without the support of their authority that is limiting their access to the outside world.

As readers draw conclusions from these complex and diverse fundamentalist religions, it becomes evident that there are clear similarities, and there are differences between lifestyles of the authors. Control of women is promoted heavily in fundamentalist religions: Tara's experience is dominated by the control of her father and the other males in her life. She states in the interview with CSPAN on January 30, 2020:

I knew what the life that had been laid out for me looked like. If you grow up female in that community, it's very proscribed what age you get married and what you'll do after you're married and what your husband will do and what age you'll have children. Everyone that you know adheres to that model. It was always difficult for me to imagine myself that way.

Outwardly these prescribed roles, demonstrations and abuses of power begin with physical criticism and then transform into a control of the mind. Scientology itself centers its belief system on the ability to control and monitor one's thoughts without the intrusion of negativity, advertising this as a difficult yet attainable state. In comparison to L. Ron Hubbard, the subject of a later chapter in this thesis, Gene Westover uses physical provisions and worship to control and dictate the lives of his family members who depend on him, something he is fully conscious of. Either way, authority is a crucial factor of both religions, as those in charge amass power. Despite Gene standing alone in his ongoing fight against time and the government, he is able to act as an “apocalyptic prophet” who relies heavily on the words of the Holy Bible and the Book of Mormon to regulate how the inside of his home would be run, while simultaneously isolating them from the rest of the world that he did not want his family to live in (Penn). As Westover matures, isolation is demonstrated both in the physical and mental nature of their family’s situation which motivates her to establish her plan that will lead her to educational freedom.

Westover’s attitude toward education can be observed across all of these women’s memoirs in various forms. As she recalls memories with her parents and how they viewed the education they were giving her, she says, “Something they said to me very often was, ‘you can teach yourself anything better than someone else can teach you’...I think a lot of people think of education like a conveyor belt that you stand on, that you come out the other side educated...” (Conroy). She goes on to say that she views education as “a living breathing vital thing that you engage in for yourself. I don’t think getting an education should be about making a living. It should be about making a

person” (Conroy). Looking back at the question that opened this chapter, “What does it mean to be educated?” the answer becomes clear: People enhance their knowledge just by opening the cover of Westover’s memoir, and readers leave with a new perspective; however, this perspective varies from reader to reader. Throughout each of these memoirs, there are different methods of education and varied levels of importance placed on formal education. The memoirs engage with how education plays a role in their authors’ decisions to confront the truth of the lives their parents have created for them, and how they change their lives based on the new truths they find in the outside world. Westover wrote this memoir to answer the question of whether what she did to her family and community was “okay.” Though she may never find the words to completely answer this question, her experiences detail the journey of a young woman finding what her version of education will be, despite the mold that has been shaped for her by the influences she could not control.

Chapter II: Scientology and *Beyond Belief: My Secret Life Inside Scientology and My Harrowing Escape* by Jenna Miscavige Hill

Since its founding in 1954, The Church of Scientology has become a controversial subject to both followers and critics alike. Lafayette Ronald (L. Ron) Hubbard began to accumulate followers after completing his science-fiction book *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* (Dianetics) in 1950. Within this book and its practices, Hubbard explored the idea of exteriorization; he claimed the spirit is separate from the body and mind and dianetics, a “methodology which can help alleviate unwanted sensations and emotions, irrational fears and psychosomatic illnesses (illnesses caused or aggravated by mental stress),” can help people recover (Scientology.org). These ideals serve as an immediate contradiction to the common message that emotions are meant to be experienced, not suppressed. If Hubbard’s claims were true, his practices would allow followers to control negative thoughts and distance themselves from past traumatic experiences. These ideals were particularly appealing to those who were psychologically vulnerable, as his methods offered a simple solution to happiness if the practices were followed diligently. The distinct technicality and scripted dialogue he used enticed readers, as he gained power and influence in the United States and other countries. According to Hubbard, Scientology was never a means of psychiatry or psychology, and despite his continually sending his work to the American Psychological Association, it was never fully validated by professionals and often deemed “psychological folk art” (Thurm). The Association explicitly states that these “claims are not supported by empirical evidence of the sort required for the establishment of scientific generalizations” in an effort to make readers of *Dianetics* think about the claims

that Hubbard is making before practicing them

(<https://www.apa.org/about/policy/chapter-11>). Nevertheless, his confident words and practices are still followed today by modern Scientologists, despite several ex-member's memoirs and sensational exposés that detail the reality of being a member of this organization.

One of the core tenets that can be observed within the structure of Scientology is the rigid control of its members. Scientology is displayed through the media and its construction as a straightforward path to success where members are surrounded by others who are all equally dedicated to the organization. However, this rigidity slowly becomes the deterrent from Scientology itself. The simplicity of following the advancement through levels of training and interviews slowly becomes the very thing that gives some Scientologists doubt about their own thoughts and ability to complete the tasks that authority tells them are necessary to advance. Jenna Miscavige Hill is one of these ex-Scientologists who decided to document her experience within the Church. Her memoir, *Beyond Belief: My Secret Life Inside Scientology and Harrowing Escape*, chronicles her advancement within the organization and ultimately her decision to completely abandon her beliefs despite her deep familial ties to the Church. Hill's uncle, David Miscavige, assumed the role as the leader of the Church of Scientology after Hubbard's death in 1986. His official title is "Chairman of the Board, Religious Technology Center," which seems like a mundane role compared to the involvement that Hill documents within her memoir (Nededog). The role he plays in Hill's life is larger than that of her parents; furthermore, he is the ultimate authority for her parents, and that turns problematic as she becomes an adult and the cracks in Scientology's foundation

become evident. David Miscavige serves as the final barrier between ex-Scientologists and the outside world, even though disciplinary action and supervision are primarily accomplished by his subordinates. This chapter will analyze the rigid structure and groomed intolerance of the outside world within Scientology that create strict rules and procedures in order to promote obedience and restrict individual freedoms. Nearing the final remarks of her memoir, Hill has come to acknowledge that Scientology, both the structure and the members, did not appreciate her mental or physical well-being. Her words come from a place of recognition and acceptance, despite the struggles described in the memoir. Hill writes:

Ultimately, Scientologists make a choice about what they believe, and make a choice as to whether they're willing to ignore the small but persistent voice inside them saying that something isn't right. The brainwashing by the Church teaches people to go against their instincts, and it is too strong, too deeply ingrained for the outside world alone to set things right. The desire to change must come from within. They have to have the realization themselves to believe it. (394)

Growing up within the strict confines of the Sea Organization, defined as "fraternal religious order, comprising the church's [of Scientology] most dedicated members," places a label on Hill from birth (Scientology.org). The structure and conditioning of the Sea Org children specifically would make the decision to leave harder for Jenna and make her think less of those who had fled before her. As Hill writes, "Scientologists make a choice about what they believe," and yet she never truly got to make this choice herself. Being born into an organization that is inherently exclusive and isolating makes leaving that much more difficult. Hill details this early on in her narrative: "From my first

breath, I was a Scientologist, but it wasn't until shortly before my second birthday that the Church actually began to shape the course of my life. That was when my parents decided to give up the life they had started in New Hampshire, move our family to California, and dedicate our existence to service in the Church" (7). Her parents grew up around Scientology but not to the degree that Jenna was immersed within the system at such an early age. Though this memoir is centered around the intensive sector of Scientology, there are many modern Scientologists, such as Ron Miscavige Jr. and Elizabeth Blythe's parents, who are involved with the organization, just not to the degree that Hill's family became. As the memoir progresses, the reader learns about her parents' complicated relationship with the Church, and Hill struggles to adapt to their disbandment of the practice as she is navigating the system for the first time seemingly on her own.

Hill struggles to battle the neglect of her parents throughout the memoir. The role models she has are her superiors, who are often harsh and quick to ridicule her, despite the pressure she is already placing on herself for perfection. She begins to internalize feelings common among the other children she is surrounded by, even as the procedures she is going through require her to disclose all emotions and thoughts she has on a daily basis. For Hill, family is invariably a vague term, with her immediate family members rarely present in her day-to-day life. Sporadic letters and a strict schedule allot little time for family bonding, a factor that has a notable effect on Hill's childhood. Her parents are members of the Sea Organization, defined by Hill as "The inner core of the Scientology parish. Sea Org members run and operate the churches, raise money, give auditing, and perform any number of other tasks. They sign a one-billion-year contract, promising to

return and serve in their next life” (401). Sea Org members serve as an all-knowing authority while also acting as secret police to maintain control of all Scientologists. Having a group within a larger organization who can be fully trusted and used to complete many tasks is apparent in many religions in addition to Scientology. The secretiveness and access to specific materials can be used to create walls between members, another instance of rigidity that can backfire as lines of loyalty are crossed and trust diminishes between members and authority. The mental toll of isolation is a tactic used to create distance and ultimately retain loyalty. Lack of communication brings doubt for Hill, as letters and other forms of correspondence between her and her parents becomes less frequent, at times the longest period being a year without hearing from them. At first the isolation can be observed as a bonding tactic between the other Sea Org children, but eventually it becomes an inescapable punishment and at times a never-ending cycle of loneliness and sadness.

Though Hill’s narrative cannot encompass the sentiments of all ex-Scientologists, her experiences with isolation and lack of education outside of the organization are applicable to the other women whose lives serve as the foundation for these memoirs. Hill’s experience in particular involves less of a glimpse into the outside world as her spark to leave but more so the lack of freedom and individuality. It is important to keep in mind when reading a memoir that these stories are being told years after the incidents have taken place, and the memory may be slightly more jaded towards the opinion the author holds now, versus the actuality of the event in the past. For Hill, the experiences are also validated to a certain extent by media coverage and documentaries *like Going Clear: Scientology & the Prison of Belief* and Leah Remini’s *Scientology and the*

Aftermath, which detail the tactics that Scientology uses to create and enforce this rigid social structure. Education is a crucial aspect of Hill's narrative that plays a role in both her physical and mental state throughout the memoir. Chapter 6, "Being a Cadet, Part II," makes clear how strict daily training routines are within the Sea Org, beginning at a very young age. "Before becoming a Cadet, I had always been a pretty smart kid with a love for reading, but it didn't take long for these tedious and robotic instruction methods to discourage me. Whatever educational value there may have been in learning the definitions of different words was undermined by the stunted and impractical process of the learning itself" (67). Terms such as "daily meter checks," "training routines (TR)," and "Student Point Slips" dominate this chapter, as it becomes even more clear how Scientology-oriented the academic training at the Ranch is. The Ranch itself is a Scientology boarding school located in San Jacinto, California, which Hill attends alongside around eighty other children who have parents who are executives within the Church (1). The similarities to military style "boot camp" are referenced frequently in this section, as Hill recounts the "...grueling drills, endless musters, exhaustive inspections, and arduous physical labor that no child should have to do" (49). These groups give no preferential treatment to those who may be related to their authority, and in Hill's case, the head of Scientology (David Miscavige) does not offer preferential treatment to his niece. Terminology such as "chit," a term used to describe a "kind of written demerit; one went to you, and a copy went into your ethics folder," and "nattering," which is essentially saying critical things about something or someone related to Scientology (50). These little techniques to turn children against each other and for authority to be able to watch it happen naturally due to the system, are truly haunting.

Childhood is a time to develop, expand knowledge and grow socially, and all of these opportunities are taken away by the implementation of a schooling system that creates an environment where the end goal is difficult to achieve and the process incredibly challenging. Hill writes: “To this day I don’t know whether the real motivation behind these projects was the virtually free labor, a way to keep us out of trouble, or to make us better Scientologists,” and maybe that is the aspect of Scientology that keep Scientology popular and hard to leave (63). The authority has become so powerful within a system that is strict enough to keep ex-Scientologists silent and critics from entirely disproving their theories.

Hannah Anneliese Bailey explores this concept of Hill’s education being abnormal in both its structure but also lack of involvement with the realm of education outside of Scientology in her article “Unlikely Captivities: The Narrative of Development in Jenna Miscavige Hill’s Ex-Scientology Escape Narrative.” She writes, “Whether Miscavige Hill intended for this or not, this characterization of the sub-par education at the Ranch taps into portrayals of Chinese communist social practices as invalid or inferior and thus upholds normative U.S. methods of public education” (Bailey 160). This statement comes after Bailey mentions Hill’s description of the practices instituted and created by Hubbard himself into their schooling system. Hill writes, “When all inspections were finished, we went to Chinese school. Chinese school was parroting; we had to repeat everything we heard exactly as he heard it. L. Ron Hubbard had originally called it Chinese school because he had observed a Chinese classroom and was very impressed with how the students engaged with the instructor” (53). She then states the methods that Hubbard used in his version of “Chinese school” where quotations by

Hubbard were "...written in large letters on butcher paper, so that we could all read them when they were held up at the front of the muster" (53). In essence, his ideal style of learning has nothing to do with the Chinese people themselves, nor what they are teaching in the classroom, but solely styles conducted by the instructor and their students. This style of teaching alienates Scientology students from the style and structure of a classroom what a majority of classrooms within the United States look like.

By comparing the "sub-par education" style at the Ranch to Chinese communist social practices, Bailey creates a visual for her readers of the irrational ways Hubbard has deemed necessary for Scientology to be taught. The concept of what is considered "normal" proves to be one of the most divisive factors about aspects of religion that differ for everyone. Though Hill mentions that "academic studies" are taught between the hours of "one-forty-five until six," she never explicitly states what these studies entail, besides a brief mention of the subjects meaning to supplement her Scientology studies (68). The statement, "Traditional education was not viewed as crucial to success in Scientology" is mentioned early on in her memoir, and the parental figures in her life have not finished high school, so the implication that pursuing education is necessary is not a message that is conveyed to her (48). She does, however, go into detail about the Scientology courses at the Ranch, which cover, "...learning about the Thetan, mind, body relationship to understanding the importance of misunderstood words" (69). The term 'Thetan' is referring to the spiritual self and the term 'Operating Thetan' means "a spirit that is increasingly free from the limitations of the material universe" (Urban 17). A chart referencing the levels and certifications that Scientologists need is called "The Bridge to Total Freedom," which can be found on page 41. If Hill is immersed in these specific

courses for over twelve hours a day, and she is primarily recounting her experiences within the Scientology courses, it is fair to assume that Scientology remains that main focus for those in charge. The isolation alongside the specific information that is being taught to these children at such a young age cannot be forgotten, as the readers see Hill struggling to find the means to escape from this rigid structure that has encompassed the entirety of her life. These children are struggling to maintain the rigid structure of a newly founded religion. Adhering to these policies is difficult as they can be manipulated by those in charge at any given time simply by a variation of interpretation.

Due to the fact that Scientology is a relatively new religion room for interpretation on guidelines and policies is vast. Followers are expected to honor and abide by a strict code of both confidentiality and structure which is enforced by the notion that this will elevate them both socially and mentally in ways that they will not find anywhere else. The strength of their influence is often supported by celebrities who have gained power socially and can convince others that there is no other way to achieve the outcome of Scientology without becoming a member. Funding and donations are highly encouraged by the Sea Organization headquarters where actors such as Tom Cruise, John Travolta, and Juliette Lewis have all been known to support the Church at various points in their lives. These well-known influencers aid in the romanticization of the very organization that has created places such as the Ranch and is constantly exposed for the mistreatment of followers, even after they have decided to leave. The celebrity endorsers are idolized by the leaders such as David Miscavige himself.

Hill describes the Celebrity Centre:

In many ways, the Celebrity Centre was the perfect stage for the act that Scientology put on for the celebrities. The accommodations were gorgeous, and the beautiful grounds made the experience enjoyable. Everything was tightly controlled and orchestrated, and if the celebrities themselves took things at face value, they'd simply see the act and never witness what went on behind the curtain. There was never a risk that they would get exposed to child labor or something similar that the Church didn't want them to see. (301)

These centres have originated in Hollywood and are supposed to be promoting the benefits of Scientology to those who may want to join (Kent). In comparison to the treatment of children whose parents are not celebrities and are involved with Scientology, this lifestyle is luxurious. These benefits separate the two groups and give the celebrities a sense of entitlement that they will enjoy as long as they are part of the group. Their presence in the organization seems to suffice, even if they do not specifically follow the guidelines required for other members who are not celebrities or the Sea Org members who uphold the strictly implemented standards. These television and movie stars are presumably educated with the same practices that all other Scientologists are, but if they have not grown up within the institution's walls, do they start at an 'advantage' over those who have never known anything else? The advantage is present and inherent for these members, even if they will never be able to recognize it themselves.

The key factor to maintaining the control that has been discussed throughout this chapter lies in the financial stability of the Church. As Hill mentions, with each advancement through the levels and courses that are taught to Scientologists, more

money is required. Scientology's credibility is then based on the reliability and truthfulness of the members who have achieved this level of intelligence. These methods are often ridiculed and discredited in the media, e.g., the well-known South Park episode "Trapped in the Closet" (S9, epi. 12) that exposes the recruitment process and exposes the structure that allows the Church to keep their auditing processes secret. In an interview with Sirius XM Radio, Hill reveals that the aspects of Scientology that can be considered obscure, such as the aliens and volcanoes, are only revealed to public Scientologists after years of training and counseling. Even after this process is completed, the information is contained with strict security measures such as locked rooms, briefcases that must be physically attached to the Scientologist and confessionals that occur around every six months (Sirius XM). Hill admits that South Park was where she first learned about these classified parts of her Church that she had been a member of for practically her entire life. In essence, an entire religion whose emphasis on security and secrecy is often more important than the well-being of their members, is exposed through a comedy television show. Tension is created when information is withheld from the followers and the public can access this information. Scientology has admonished their followers against the popular culture that has essentially debunked the church's secretive ideals.

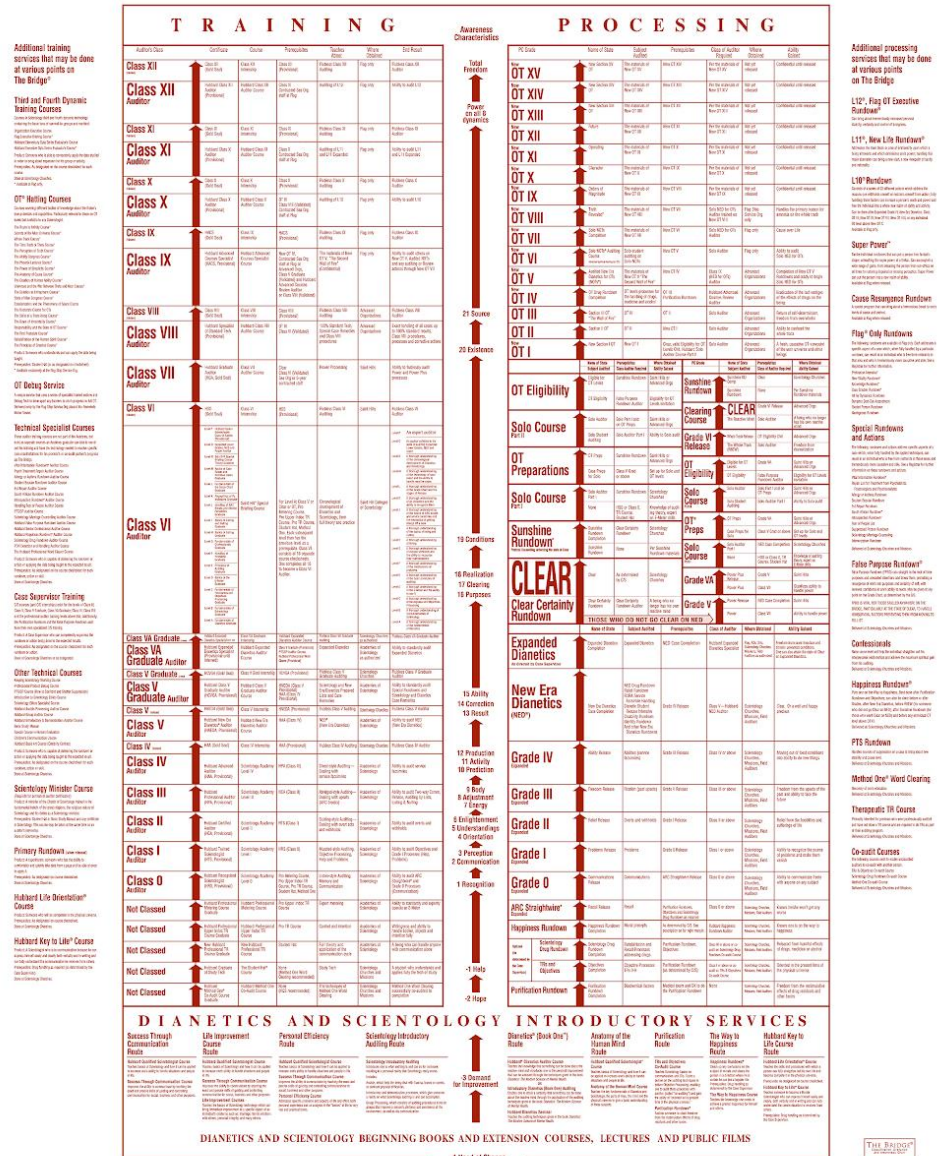
Despite its media notoriety, Scientology has proven to be one of the hardest mysteries to uncover within this thesis. Where one door is opened it seems as though another three are closed, keeping David Miscavige and the other leaders' secrets behind the scenes. The diligence to continue to maintain and protect the exclusivity among public Scientologists, the Sea Organization and the rest of society is truly remarkable,

even as episodes of television series such as South Park expose aspects of the religion like the recruitment process. There is no doubt stories will continue to arise of ex-Scientologists who have decided that these tactics and methodologies in order to achieve level OT (Operating Thetan) VIII are not worth the time and money required (<https://www.scientology.org/faq/operating-thetan/how-would-you-describe-the-state-of-operating-thetan.html>). In closing, L. Ron Hubbard has stated that the goals of Scientology are to create “a civilization without insanity, without criminals and without war, where the able can prosper, and honest beings can have rights, and where man is free to rise to greater heights” (<https://www.scientologyreligion.org/religious-expertises/scientology-a-true-religion/the-final-objective-of-scientology.html>). Jenna Miscavige Hill did not feel as though she could rise to the “greater heights” that she wanted within the constraints of this organization, and because of that she had to flee. In the rigid structure and totalitarian system of control there is no room for deviance that allows each member to create their own version of Scientology that might suit them best. Escape becomes the only means of leaving, and Hill has demonstrated that this is an arduous process that not everyone can undertake.

Chart: "The Bridge to Total Freedom: Scientology Classification Gradation and Awareness Chart of Levels and Certificates"

THE BRIDGE TO TOTAL FREEDOM

SCIENTOLOGY CLASSIFICATION GRADATION AND AWARENESS CHART OF LEVELS AND CERTIFICATES



How to Use This Chart

The chart is a guide to the Scientology classification system. It shows the progression from basic introductory services to the highest levels of training and processing. The central vertical axis represents the level of awareness, from 'No Hope' at the bottom to 'Total Freedom' at the top. The 'TRAINING' section on the left lists the classes and courses that lead to higher levels of awareness. The 'PROCESSING' section on the right lists the various run-downs and certificates that are part of the Scientology process. The 'DIANETICS AND SCIENTOLOGY INTRODUCTORY SERVICES' section at the bottom lists the basic services that are available to all members.

Definitions

ARC (Axiomatic Reaction Control): A process of self-analysis and self-correction that leads to a state of mental and emotional stability. It is a key component of the Scientology process.

CLEAR (Clearing the Way to Total Freedom): A process of self-analysis and self-correction that leads to a state of mental and emotional stability. It is a key component of the Scientology process.

OT (Operating Thetan): A state of awareness that is achieved through the Scientology process. It is a state of mental and emotional stability that allows the individual to function as a free and independent person.

Grade: A level of awareness that is achieved through the Scientology process. It is a state of mental and emotional stability that allows the individual to function as a free and independent person.

Run-down: A process of self-analysis and self-correction that leads to a state of mental and emotional stability. It is a key component of the Scientology process.

Certificate: A document that certifies the individual's achievement in the Scientology process. It is a key component of the Scientology process.

Chapter III: The Westboro Baptist Church and *Unfollow: A Memoir of Loving and Leaving the Westboro Baptist Church* by Megan Phelps-Roper

Megan Phelps-Roper considers the members of her former church, the Westboro Baptist Church (WBC), to be extremists. A majority of these extremists are her immediate and extended family who founded the church in Topeka, Kansas, and sheltered her from acceptance of the outside world. However, through Twitter and other forms of social media, Megan was able to build relationships and gain insight on the world that she spent so much energy protesting against. These relationships and encounters did not mimic the messages that her family was preaching, and that cognitive dissonance caused her to delve deeper into the ideals she had been studying her entire life. A scripture that she once saw as straightforward began to have flaws, and the group she once saw as her world of worship and familiarity was disintegrating before her eyes. Today she no longer believes in God and challenges the words of the Bible she once interpreted word for word. Her understanding of what the Westboro Baptist Church preaches has been altered completely after she had the chance of viewing their stances on controversial topics as an outsider. *Unfollow: A Memoir of Loving and Leaving the Westboro Baptist Church* by Megan Phelps-Roper paints a holistic view of how difficult the decision to leave a community can be. Her decision to leave was not out of malice or loss of love for her family, but due to her own personal growth and the desire to explore a world outside of Topeka, Kansas.

The Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kansas harbors sentiments that differ from those of virtually every other religious institution within the United States. They are self-described as an “Old School Baptist Church” on their website with the URL,

“godhatesfags.org.” The website details what the church stands for in their “About” section, where they say: “We adhere to the teachings of the Bible, preach against all forms of sin (e.g., fornication, adultery [including divorce and remarriage], sodomy), preach repentance and remission of sins in Christ’s name, and insist that the sovereignty of God and the doctrines of grace be taught and expounded publicly to all men.” This message is followed by, “WBC engages in daily peaceful religious demonstrations opposing all manner of sin. We have conducted 67,954 such demonstrations since June, 1991, in 1055 cities. These demonstrations are in obedient service unto our God and out of love for our neighbors.” Contrary to WBC’s description of a “peaceful” religious demonstrations, the church’s picket signs and loud street protests against homosexuality and gay rights have caused waves of tension that have fueled backlash for many years. Todd and Melissa Powell-Williams detail the notoriety surrounding these protests within their article “‘God Hates Your Feelings’: Neutralizing Emotional Deviance within the Westboro Baptist Church.” Aside from mentioning WBC’s protests surrounding the tragedies of the attacks of September 11th, and Hurricane Katrina, their article’s details the “habitual emotional deviance and neutralization techniques employed by the Westboro Baptist Church,” which I argue can also be equated to the methodology other extreme religious groups use as well (1442-3). The organization uses “God’s retribution of sin” to justify picketing and protesting at funerals of United States soldiers who have been killed in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Signs that read “Thank God for Dead Soldiers” can be seen being carried during the picketing. The Westboro Baptist Church identifies as “...independent and unaffiliated with any organized denomination,” and claims that its theology is based on a “strict interpretation of Calvinist principles,” though

they do not label themselves as Calvinists (Lewis). The Westboro Church sect of Baptism may call themselves “Old School” but in reality, they seem to not be willing to adjust to modern society. Even with modern technology there is still a disconnect to the society that surrounds them as they continue to fight against a never-ending battle. Megan Phelps-Roper demonstrates her adjustment to society within the memoir in a way that allows the reader to recognize her acknowledgement of her past actions but not completely dismiss how they shaped who she is today.

Family is an integral part of the Westboro ideology, and Megan Phelps-Roper, granddaughter of Fred Waldron Phelps, who is the founder of the WBC, would grow up surrounded by and immersed in this culture. He founded the Westboro Baptist Church in 1955 and served as the pastor for many years after its creation. For Megan, constant criticisms and anger-filled comments were an everyday occurrence and an aspect of her life that she had become immune to after the church consumed almost all of her childhood. At five years old, Megan had been introduced to picketing in Gage Park, and her elders had started to direct her mindset towards the beliefs of the WBC. Songs filled with lyrics that included “Get back in the closet again! Back where a sin is a sin” filled her ears and began to erupt from her tiny lungs, lyrics that she had no understanding of, and yet she was instructed to sing.

The roles of each gender within these fundamentalist religious groups are specific to both the parents and the child. For Jenna Miscavige Hill and Tara Westover, their father figure or men in charge within the household/community commonly wielded the most power, but for Megan Phelps-Roper it was more her mother who defied the patterns that had been presented to her by other fundamentalist groups. Megan Phelps Roper’s

mother is named Shirley Phelps-Roper. Once thick as thieves, the two women no longer speak. Women are the backbone of the Westboro Baptist Church, despite the church being founded by a man. Early on in her memoir, Phelps-Roper makes it clear who should be kept in mind as the reader is introduced to her family. She writes in Chapter 2, "The Bounds of Our Habitation": "Throughout my childhood, my mother was determined to make my siblings and me understand one idea above all: We were not in charge of our lives, but God -- and that God ruled via the parents and elders He had set over us. Our duty was singular: to obey them. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Their power over us was absolute, and we would do well to accept that without question or protest" (17). This rule provides the perfect opportunity for parental figures and the elders within her community to do as they please, without having to answer to anyone but themselves. There then begins a struggle to gain respect within a community that has a strict foundation where age demands respect, even when it is not always deserved. Within this hierarchy of authority, there is an unspoken competition between siblings for recognition by their mother, which often meant embracing love of scripture and the Bible in the same way that she did. This copy-cat mentality allows the spread of their beliefs to manifest within the community faster but also causes the divide between the siblings who decide to reject their ideals to be denounced immediately. The siblings of Shirley Phelps-Roper are mentioned several times throughout the memoir which helps establish who is currently estranged from the community and the siblings who are still involved. Although this scenario has little to do with gender and much to do with character, her mother is actively allowing her children's minds to distort the view of their sibling, one whom they have always loved and cared

for. Shirley holds complete agency in these situations, until Megan learns more about the outside world and that control is lost. Nevertheless, the respect her mother demands from her children is dutifully reflected up until Phelps-Roper's last days in her community. In an interview with *Topeka Magazine*, Jeffrey Ann Goudie conversed with Megan about growing up surrounded by strong women, such as her mother and aunt, Margie Phelps. Goudie mentions that the Old Testament details a submissive wife as the model, and the Phelps women do not adhere to that concrete image.

Megan states in the interview:

In spite of all the hurtful things I learned at Westboro, I am profoundly grateful to have been surrounded by so many strong, capable women. A huge part of the strength it took for me to leave the church was derived from the example of those women. They knew what they were about; they were passionate and dedicated; they played to their strengths, and they were—for many years—the loudest voices at Westboro. It was empowering and inspirational for me. (Goudie)

The bond between Shirley and Megan slowly decays, as social media begins to open her eyes to the other communities she has spent a majority of her life fighting against.

Nevertheless, the threat of banishment and isolation lingers for the Phelps-Roper children at all times. The possibility to be cast away for abandonment of the Church's beliefs is always present, and for Megan, the bond with her mother is no match compared to the bond with the Church. Silence, withdrawal and isolation consume the siblings who decide that the Church's beliefs are no longer their own, and the group they once called family becomes a long-lost relative. This existential threat is unbearable for a child, and the psychological damage it causes is irreversible. The kind remarks Megan states about

these two women is a true reflection on her character. Her ability to recognize the role that both WBC and these two women have had in her life, for better and for worse, is both shocking and impressive. It is remarkable that Megan Phelps-Roper is able to find kind words to speak about the women who played a crucial role in her childhood, after she has documented the harsh interactions of the past. It seems as though it is a trend for interviewers and those investigating Phelps-Roper's experience within the Church to ask if she regrets her decision to leave, and what should be done about such an openly hateful group. Similarly to Tara Westover and Jenna Miscavige Hill, Megan Phelps-Roper wishes no ill-will to the remaining followers of the organization that she has chosen to leave; however, she does continually reaffirm that she does not regret her decision to leave despite the relationships with the entire community that were severed in the aftermath of her leaving. As a reader, it is evident how manipulative her mother was and used her authority to undermine her children's thought processes. Both her mother and their entire community made ideals she is now repulsed by seem logical and worth demonstrating for. As mentioned previously, the LGBTQ community is a target of the picketing that the Church is often associated with. Phelps-Roper herself can be seen wearing a t-shirt that says, "JEWS KILLED JESUS.COM" as she holds signs that say, "FAGS DOOM NATIONS," "MOURN FOR YOUR SINS" and "GOD IS YOUR ENEMY" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmgZgHpv8Zs>). Looking back on her years of hatred towards groups of people who identify as LGBTQ traumatizes her, and she can be seen tearing up as she recounts these memories of harassing those who are seen as disobeying God in her family's eyes.

When Phelps-Roper says “hurtful things,” she is often referring to the picketing ministry or, “their practice of holding controversial protests to raise awareness of the church and its beliefs” (Southern Poverty Law Center). Police protection, screaming battles with passing cars and emotionally charged chants accompany these protests. Throughout YouTube videos and images, it is clear that these protests provoke anger from seemingly everyone except for the picketers (Westboro members) themselves. This constant demonization of her family members cannot have been easily ignored. The confidence that Megan’s mother, Shirley, displays in an interview with Louis Theroux masks the emotions that clearly have festered beneath the surface (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYzviaM9nh0>). Often parents have to put on a brave face for their children, and yet Shirley’s children constantly have to put on a show for her in order to continue to be in her good graces. She says in the interview that she could tell when her children were pulling away from God, and that despite their leaving the Church, God remains unchanged, as do her practices. “Everything that I had was theirs, everything that I know was theirs, we treated them well...but we don’t control the heart...we don’t own salvation...” These words are choked up, hard to hear at times, and Shirley is barely able to get these words out. The YouTube comments are filled with words of support for Shirley to leave the Church herself after the abuse she has personally gone through. Phelps-Roper chooses to detail Shirley’s struggle to maintain loyalty to WBC after she receives a disciplinary email from Megan’s eldest brother, Sam (129). Phelps-Roper’s words within the remainder of the chapter analyze how she (Megan) interpreted the email at the time as it accused her mother of harsh and unmerciful treatment of others. Her “sharp tongue” had been used against her children

many times; however, "...no one could deny that her vehemence was borne of a desire to do right by the Lord and by us" (129). At the center of these accusatory emails was Steve, a former documentary filmmaker who converted and joined WBC a decade earlier, and his desire to acquire leadership that Shirley stood in the way of (129-30). The demise of her mother's reputation within the church was proof that even the most dedicated and head-strong individuals who fought for the same beliefs that she held were not safe from the upheaval and dismantling of power within WBC. Megan and her siblings are asked to leave their home, and her mother is removed from essentially all duties related to WBC.

Phelps-Roper writes: "My mother would no longer arrange the pickets in Topeka. She would not prepare the monthly events calendar. She would not orchestrate our cross-country protests. She would not coordinate childcare or media schedules" (131). Megan became educated in the art of removal, and these rapid adjustments to a system that preaches hate towards others and does not restrict hate on its own members. Though her memoir does serve as a story of escape, her access to education while being involved in her community was greater than others. The social pressures and limited options she felt she had as she advanced through grade school and ultimately pursued her business degree reflect the fear of exile that had been instilled within her since she was a child.

The control that the Westboro Baptist Church has over its members is especially evident in their social lives. Although the children attended grade school and college, their attitude towards the people there and what they are being taught is limited. Megan attended Washburn University and pursued a degree in business; "the university was located less than two miles from my home, and we had protested there at least weekly from the early days of our picketing ministry -- an unlikely place for a Westboro member

to find, or even to seek, intellectual freedom” (90). Intellectual freedom is the device that allows these women to evade their communities despite the repercussions they face post-escape. Within the United States college can serve as a haven for intellectual development if that is desired by the student. This opportunity is countered by Phelps-Roper’s acceptance that her educational journey would follow a path to have her end up where she began, both physically and in terms of her faith. Leaders like Fred Phelps dismiss the ideas of others without a second thought, and until Megan Phelps-Roper is in charge of the community’s social media, it is rare that she hears an opinion that differs from her own. Social media plays a crucial role in the development of Megan’s life as she discovers the power of the Internet at age thirteen (52). Jenna Miscavige Hill and Tara Westover do not experience this kind of awakening through technology, and because Phelps-Roper’s family is directly in charge of the Westboro Baptist Church, her role is larger than those of the other women inside their respective organizations. Social media exposure brings her grandfather’s trial to light as well as the accusations of child abuse within the Church. Despite the continued denial of these stories by her parents, Megan knows in her heart that there has to be some substance and truth behind the claims of people such as her estranged uncles. In Chapter 3, “The Wars of the Lord,” Phelps-Roper details her thoughts after numerous conversations with her mother about the abuse of her grandfather. She writes:

I was only too relieved to let her direct me away from these thoughts, because pressing at the edge of my consciousness was an uncomfortable parallel: between my grandfather’s physical brutality on the one hand, and the way our church responded to the suffering of outsiders on the other. Our joy at their demise. Our

delight at their destruction. I took my leave of this line of thought and accepted the shield of my mother's instruction, because I needed to believe that our ministry had not been influenced by the pathologies of a human being. I needed to see that Westboro's monopoly on truth would continue to stand. I needed to know that the past had no bearing on the present. (61)

From early childhood she was coerced into repressing these emotions that she knew were raw and real, and yet at such a young age her thoughts, even as she grew older, were immediately dismissed as irrational and dramatic. The term "monopoly on truth" encompasses many of these extremists' tendencies as leaders make any disagreement or disruption in the structure seem unconscionable to even discuss. Religion can be criticized at times for its refusal to adapt to changing times, and this is shown explicitly in Scientology, Mormonism, and the Westboro Baptist Church. Throughout the memoir it is not as though the family is actively recruiting members but rather embracing their exclusivity and hatred towards everyone that is not them. Unlike Mormons and Scientologists who embrace their recruitment process as it has become part of their identity, the members of the Westboro Baptist Church are fully content with the community members that have been involved since birth, and those who join at their own volition. Phelps-Roper ends the chapter by saying, "I was beginning to see that our first loyalty was not to the truth but to the church. That for us, the church was the truth, and disloyalty was the only sin unforgivable. This was the true Westboro legacy" (64). The line between loyalty and abuse blurs as Phelps-Roper grows older, and these stories about her estranged uncles and their allegations become evidently more factual than the dismissed falsities her mother and grandfather have previously claimed. She knows, even

at the age of thirteen, that the same fate -- banishment -- will await her, if she decides to dismiss Westboro's teachings. An institution, created by her grandfather, encompasses all that she has been, and if it were not for her refusal of these practices in the future, would be forever.

Amidst the continual label of a "hate group" and being tarnished in the media, WBC remains vigilant in defending their beliefs and claiming that "God Hates America." However, Phelps-Roper managed to escape this hateful mentality. The energy exerted in order to rectify others takes on a show-like quality that is demonstrated in the videos they have created in defense of their past actions. One thing that will never be found within the preaching's of the WBC, however, is any form of apology. Despite continued backlash from the media, they are unapologetic in maintaining their primarily anti-gay and anti-Semitic views. The backlash seems to fuel the fire within them to continue to display these messages of hate that hurt so many when seen. Megan Phelps-Roper has distanced herself from her family and with them, from the entire Westboro Baptist Church community. Of the three authors discussed in this thesis, she was the only memoirist to have a sibling accompany her as she entered a world she had only known through social media. The relationships she formed were the driving force behind her ultimate decision to leave, and that would have been even harder to do without the camaraderie of her sister.

Conclusion:

Education is a privilege. This privilege can be taken for granted as some people grow up without boundaries placed on what they learn, while others have to fight for the opportunity. The three memoirists in this thesis had to find a way -- and, yes, even fight for an opportunity -- to educate themselves. Each author initially conformed to the societal norms presented to them, then fought internal battles as to whether what they were practicing was what they actually believed, and challenged their communities by breaking free. The education provided to them through their familial and organizations' authorities proved to be insufficient in fulfilling the future that they desired, driving them towards self-liberation, no matter the cost. The definition of education remains unchanged: "To help or cause (a person, the mind, etc.) to develop the intellectual and moral faculties in general," but each person has her own interpretation of what that entails (OED.com). Tara Westover was first educated by nature and by the teachings of her father, and yet she longed for more from the larger society that had remained unreachable for most of her childhood. Jenna Miscavige Hill was surrounded by Scientologists her entire life and concluded that the militaristic style of life inside the Sea Organization was not for her, while Megan Phelps-Roper found solace through online friends on Twitter who eventually convinced her that life outside of the Topeka bubble would better suit her.

Despite the stark differences between the religions studied throughout this thesis, the power dynamics in these families and organizations are comparable. Those who deviate from the policies are ostracized, as demonstrated with three authors discussed in this paper. This exclusivity makes not only mentally leaving the group extremely

difficult, but the physical moving aspect rigorous as they are shunned and left with nothing. However, this journey is about much more than just the escape. As their mental health deteriorated within the institutions that were supposed to be giving them hope for the future, the idea to leave slowly started to form. Religion, typically assumed to provide peace and an answer to the unanswerable, was used against these memoirists to prevent them from interacting with others.

When I started this thesis, I was optimistic about the conclusions I would reach regarding each religion and the messages that could be taken away from the memoirs. Despite claims by Westover that her memoir is not about Mormonism, the religion's importance to her mental state and the extreme measures she had to take in order to pursue a higher education prove otherwise. Her narrative voice draws the reader into a world that is unlike any other, and in turn, allowed me to learn about a lifestyle that I may never have encountered otherwise. This is something that has always compelled my love for reading and writing, which I found these authors took solace in as well. Megan Phelps-Roper found her voice through Twitter, Tara Westover through copying scripture, and Jenna Miscavige Hill saw through the physical teachings and practices that had encompassed the entirety of her young adult life. As readers, we have now seen what it means to be educated in Scientology, the Westboro Baptist Church and Fundamentalist Mormonism. We have also been along on the life journeys of three women, all of whom had to fight for the broader education they wanted. They demonstrated what it meant to be courageous, defiant, and determined, to fight for what they believed. The three memoirs are stories of overcoming adversity, acquiring knowledge and self-knowledge, and, above all, pursuing the truth.

Appendix 1: Is Scientology a Religion?

Stephen A. Kent, who works in the Department of Sociology at the University of Alberta in Canada, discusses this controversy in an essay called “Scientology -- Is This a Religion?” He states that the dilemma that arises by saying the organization can be described as “...a multi-faceted transnational that has religion as only one of its many components.” Other terms that have been used to describe Scientology include the political aspirations, business ventures, cultural productions, pseudo-medical practices, pseudo-psychiatric claims, and even an alternative family structure for those who are members of the Sea Organization. The ability to evade taxes is the main reason why it is presumed Scientologists pushed so adamantly to be recognized as a church. The Internal Revenue Service continually denied attempts by the church to have a “tax-exempt status,” until they allowed them the status in 1993.

Appendix 2: The Code of a Scientologist

Source: Scientology.org

The Code of a Scientologist was first issued in 1954. In this code, L. Ron Hubbard provides a Scientologist with guidelines for fighting for human rights and justice through social reform. It is a vital code for any Scientologist active in the community. The code was revised in 1969 and again in 1973 and is given here in its final version.

As a Scientologist, I pledge myself to the Code of Scientology for the good of all.

1. To keep Scientologists, the public and the press accurately informed concerning Scientology, the world of mental health and society.
2. To use the best I know of Scientology to the best of my ability to help my family, friends, groups and the world.
3. To refuse to accept for processing and to refuse to accept money from any preclear or group I feel I cannot honestly help.
4. To decry and do all I can to abolish any and all abuses against life and Mankind.
5. To expose and help abolish any and all physically damaging practices in the field of mental health.
6. To help clean up and keep clean the field of mental health.
7. To bring about an atmosphere of safety and security in the field of mental health by eradicating its abuses and brutality.
8. To support true humanitarian endeavors in the fields of human rights.
9. To embrace the policy of equal justice for all.
10. To work for freedom of speech in the world.
11. To actively decry the suppression of knowledge, wisdom, philosophy or data which would help Mankind.
12. To support the freedom of religion.
13. To help Scientology orgs and groups ally themselves with public groups.
14. To teach Scientology at a level it can be understood and used by the recipients.

15. To stress the freedom to use Scientology as a philosophy in all its applications and variations in the humanities.
16. To insist upon standard and unvaried Scientology as an applied activity in ethics, processing and administration in Scientology organizations.
17. To take my share of responsibility for the impact of Scientology upon the world.
18. To increase the numbers and strength of Scientology over the world.
19. To set an example of the effectiveness and wisdom of Scientology.
20. To make this world a saner, better place.

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