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Collisions of the Collective and the Individual  
In a Theocratic Oligarchy

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### Abstract

The academic literature pertaining to Jehovah's Witnesses is severely lacking and in most cases altogether absent. This article seeks to counter this paucity through a review of the discourse stemming from The Watchtower Society in conjunction with dialogues from four former members of the religious organization. Each respective body of information is utilized to identify what American Anthropologist Edward Hall labels 'extension transference,' (ET) a digression from a community being grounded in an individual's sincere desire for spirituality and toward a rigid organizational structure. This phenomenon is identified, first, at the operational level of the organization and is identified by highlighting the Governing Body's use of 'ressentiment,' what Nietzsche and Deleuze deem characteristic of a reactive force. Second, interview responses show that 'extension transference' is made manifest internally within the persons of the organization as well. These high levels of conformity demanded by the Governing Body also pervade the seven dimensions of sensemaking, and therefore identity.

### Introduction

“[Knock! Knock! Knock!]” Your eyes slowly pry open after a night’s rest. Half-awake and clumsily stumbling down the stairs wearing your pajamas, which consist of only underwear, you wonder “Who in the world is knocking on my front door at 9 AM on a Saturday morning?” A bit chary, you hesitatingly place your hand on the door knob, twist, pull back enough for one eye to peek out, and ask “Who is it?” Two men dressed in black suits are standing on your doorstep, Bible-in-hand. You glance down at the magazines they hold at their side. Out of the corner of your eye you can see the title: *Awake!* How appropriate. “Good morning, we’re Jehovah’s Witnesses and we’re going door-to-door in your neighborhood this morning. We’re placing *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines with you and your neighbors. The issue for this month is...” Almost immediately you find yourself turning his voice down as your mind zones out. You think to yourself, “Oh, it’s one of those religious groups trying to convert me. Why did I get out of bed for this?” Politely, you say, “No thanks, I’m not interested” and return to your down-feather pillow.

Many have heard that knock on the door, yet reject these real-life Jehovah’s Witnesses (JWs) because they have already encountered the mass-mediated version of JWs, at least briefly, somewhere somehow: whether it was through Michael Jackson, Prince, *The Simpsons*, *Scrubs*, *Community*, *The Far Side* newspaper comic, and numerous other entertainment, and occasionally news, media. All of these (and more) have sculpted people’s view of this religion, providing them with a false sense of understanding. Few will inquire further, not-so-curious as to what else there is to these door-knockers besides magazines and Bibles. But, who are Jehovah’s Witnesses? Why are they at my door? What do they believe? How do they practice their faith?

### Research Questions

Groups serve useful human purposes. Student organizations, politically affiliated groups, and others which may be based on nationality, ethnicity, gender, or religion; all have their respective benefits. According to social identity theory, being part of a group may satisfy our human need for companionship, reward us, provide us with information, or increase self-esteem (Santrock, 2006). More often than not, when asked who we are or to introduce ourselves, we usually respond by specifying a group or series of groups we belong to, groups that we feel represent us to an extent. These groups therefore provide social identities, a map of meaning to identify with and share with the other members, and satisfy the innate “need to belong” (Santrock, 2006; Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

I was raised as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses from birth and practiced this faith until I was 17 years old when I began to have serious doubts about what I was being taught and simultaneously preaching to others. Since I left the organization, I’ve had a fascination with the philosophy of religion, but more recently my interests have been on its sociological and psychological aspects. As such, my research has led me to wonder why people are drawn to this particular religious group. Can all of these people share the same beliefs without any small degrees of deviance whatsoever? If so, why and how is it that such a large number of people have spiritual desires with such considerable uniformity in their existential manifestation? The cosmological, ontological, and epistemological views of Jehovah’s Witnesses are key components in their religious ideology and, thus, directly effect how they conceive the interplay of the JW culture with themselves, fellow members, and outside groups. In order to understand this particular JW conception of religious identity in a particular culture it becomes necessary to examine the inextricably linked social structure (Burke, 2004), which I have termed a theocratic oligarchy.

Granted, there are numerous varieties of large groups of people all over the world performing their beliefs and practices with a relative degree of conformity, but I argue that conformity among Jehovah's Witnesses is so great that it pervades sensemaking at its seven dimensions, and thus constrains the construction of an individual identity (Weick, Sutcliff, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 418):

1. "the social relations that are encouraged and discouraged"
2. "the identities that are valued or derogated"
3. "the retrospective meanings that are accepted or discredited"
4. "the [identity] cues that are highlighted or suppressed"
5. "the updating that is encouraged or discouraged"
6. "the standard of accuracy or plausibility to which conjectures are held"
7. "the approval of proactive or reactive action as the preferred mode of coping"

I will identify the process of 'extension transference' (ET), a term created by American Anthropologist Edward Hall, that suppresses personal desires and substitutes them with organizational goals. My research will show ET to be manifest in both the discourse arising from the organization itself as well as internally within four former members of JW's. This essay will also attempt to categorize the JW organization as what Nietzsche and Deleuze term a 'reactive force.' Emphasis will be placed on the Nietzschean-Deleuzian term 'ressentiment' (both at the intergroup and intrapersonal levels), a negative side effect of the power operations of Jehovah's Witnesses. The organization demands individuals mesh their personal goals with the formal goals of The Watchtower Society, censoring even the slightest dissent. With such obedience expected from the Governing Body, how is the line drawn when the authorities demand something that conflicts/collides with a member's individual identity? At what point do members

or the religious authorities become aware of the collisions taking place between one's personally-derived individuality and the collective effervescence of the group? What actions are taken (by the individual or the religious authorities) if and when any awareness of this conflict is realized?

### **Literature Review**

Of course, religious belief and practice will usually modify and mediate the strength and existence of relationships one cultivates with others (of both identical and dissimilar beliefs), as well as the relationship one establishes with the self in the process of identity formation. In the scholarly realm of religion and communication, the process of organizational identification discusses the tensions/collisions between the collective identity and the individual identity of members within a particular community. The case under consideration here is the religious organization known as Jehovah's Witnesses—or, also known as The Watchtower Society. The intimate and social roles of religion have long been evaluated in extensive detail from social and psychological viewpoints (Weber, 1922/1964; Berger, 1969; Foucault, 1999; Johnstone, 2006; Durkheim, 1915/2008). But there is considerably less research examining religion through the lens of communication and cultural studies, an academic field that encompasses sociology and psychology, as well as anthropology, women studies, philosophy, media theory, and many other fields of research.

### **Jehovah's Witnesses**

Research focusing on JWs from the perspective of communication, or any other academic field for that matter, is virtually nonexistent. Stark and Iannaccone (1997) commented on this lack of

inquiry noting that since 1947 there have only been two significant studies concerning JWs published in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. A Google Scholar search of the exact phrase “Jehovah’s Witnesses” in the title of articles under “Social Sciences, Arts, and Humanities” returned only 593 hits. This is a small number relative to the 2 million hits when the word “religion” was searched in the title of articles under the “Social Sciences, Arts, and Humanities.” The few studies there are concerning the Witnesses pertain largely to a macro view by discussing their battles with the authorities and courts over their resistance to blood transfusions. Even textbooks that aim to tackle the sociology/psychology of religion only give a brief mention of JWs, if that. One of the exceptions, however, has been James Beckford, Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of Warwick, who undertook several studies analyzing the worldview of JWs that combined quantitative and qualitative data as well as some theoretical investigation (Beckford, 1972; Beckford, 1975a, 1975b, 1976a). The foremost problem with this research, though, is that it is three to four decades old. Since then, and since the religion’s inception, Jehovah’s Witnesses have changed their beliefs significantly.

**A brief history.** Charles Taze Russell, the founder of Jehovah’s Witnesses, was born in 1852 into the Presbyterian faith. He felt unsatisfied with the teachings and instruction he received from his church, sparking a religious curiosity that eventually led him to begin oscillating between various religions of the world. Amidst his journey, he was drawn back to Christianity when he stumbled upon an Adventist group called The Millerites. The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society states that Russell then formed a nondenominational schismatic Bible study group with some of his friends to search for ‘the truth’ (Jehovah’s Witnesses, 2012). In the 1870s in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, he founded the International Bible Students Association (IBSA), which

remained the name for JWs until 1931 when the new President of The Watchtower Society, Joseph F. Rutherford, began making organizational and doctrinal changes to the group. In none of Russell's writings did he ever claim divine inspiration from God (Jehovah's Witnesses, 1993). Because of this, under his leadership the group structure was very loose: its people could be described as constant skeptics in pursuit of the 'truth.' Hence, any explanation of scripture made by Russell at this moment in time was not to be taken as official doctrine, but simply an interpretation to be considered. There were approximately 30 self-directed congregations by 1880 that Russell visited on occasion for discussions and to make recommendations for meeting schedules. The IBSA began to further multiply as Russell commenced publication of his own analysis of the Bible: this included a prediction that God's rule over the Earth would begin in 1914. In order to meet a growing demand, Russell created the publishing company, *Zion's Watch Tower and Tract Society*, commencing in 1881 with publication of *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence* (Jehovah's Witnesses, 1993).

By 1910, there were nearly 500 congregations totaling about 50,000 followers. Upon the death of Russell in 1916, it was decided that an election take place for the Society's subsequent President, and, as a result, one of the lawyers for The Watchtower Society, Joseph Rutherford, was nominated. Prior to this point, the IBSA was relatively low-key and discreet. Almost immediately upon Rutherford's election, however, controversy was prevalent within the group. The election itself caused tensions and eventually created schisms as many accused Rutherford of rigging the election and disliked him for his instant autocratic behavior as the new President (Franz, 2002). Despite these changes, membership continued to climb. Rutherford remained President until his death in 1942, followed by Nathan Knorr (1942-1977), Frederick Franz (1977-1992), Milton Henschel (1992-2000), and finally Don Adams (2000-present) (Lindner,



2009). Over the course of these leadership changes, theological fluctuations and modification of organizational operations took place and consolidated, leading up to the existing beliefs and practices of the Jehovah's Witness organization.

**Organizational power structure.** Within each local congregation (which could range anywhere from approximately 75 to 125 people) there is a theocratic hierarchy of titles, beginning from top to bottom: Elder, Ministerial Servant, Special Pioneer, Regular Pioneer, Auxiliary Pioneer, Baptized Publisher, Unbaptized Publisher. These titles are directly associated with one's level of power, authority, and privileges exercised within the congregation. An Unbaptized Publisher is one who correctly answers three questions given by the Elders in order to show they have a basic understanding of the faith's fundamental tenets concerning the roles occupied by Jehovah God, Jesus Christ, and the Governing Body. With correct answers and a proven record of regular meeting attendance, an Unbaptized Publisher may then participate and record time spent in the door-to-door ministry (Jehovah's Witnesses, 2005). Prior to the baptism of an Unbaptized Publisher, Elders from that person's congregation evaluate their aptitude by asking 80 questions over a period of several weeks. Once baptized, an individual is officially considered one of Jehovah's Witnesses. The two highest positions within the local congregation, Ministerial Servant and Elder, can only be held by males. Ministerial Servants perform duties that include giving talks, operating the audio equipment at meetings, decide which neighborhoods to preach in each week, count contribution money, and other similar tasks. Elders are the highest position held at the local level. Typically, there are 4-to-12 Elders for each congregation called the Body of Elders. They are to the Kingdom Hall (JWs' place of meeting) as Priests are to the Catholic Church; essentially overseers of those in their congregation. They

are the teachers who lead the study of weekly *Watchtower* articles and ensure things function smoothly. In addition, they hold the power to decide whether the wayward behavior of a member of their congregation calls for disfellowshipping (Jehovah's Witnesses, 1998).

Adopting a birds-eye-view to look at the wider vista that is the Jehovah's Witness organization, seen at the top is the Governing Body. They are a group of about a dozen or so men ruling over the entire JW organization claiming divine inspiration by God. As self-defined, they are involved in "making decisions, issuing counsel on doctrinal matters, reproof, correcting, settling disputes on organizational matters, directing conduct of the organization,[...] directing defense of the good news before courts and legal bodies,[...] supervising cleanness of the organization" (Botting & Botting, 1984, p. 5). These men reside in the international headquarters of the organization in New York City, with a bright red "Watchtower" sign visible from the Brooklyn Bridge. There are also 100 other branch offices scattered around the globe. Each office has a "zone overseer," selected by the Governing Body, who visits the hundreds of congregations in their respective zone every few years and reports back to the Governing Body. Then, District and Circuit Overseers are positioned directly beneath the zone overseers in the chain of command, with jurisdiction successively decreasing. All Overseers must be Elders and are all hand-picked by the Governing Body. It is in this sense that the organization can be labeled an oligarchy (a form of governance where a specific class or narrow clique rules over many: in the JW case it is by a few men whose interpretation of scripture and world events become official doctrine). Regarding the use of the term "theocracy," defined by Merriam-Webster as a "government of a state by immediate divine guidance," it is their self-proclaimed style of rule—in a direct and unalterable one-way channel from God to followers—as often highlighted in their

literature (Jehovah's Witnesses, 1994). And so the term "Theocratic Oligarchy" is used here to describe the present type of rule utilized by the religious authorities.

**Dissemination.** Many people know JWs from their most conspicuous religious practice performed by every baptized member: their door-to-door preaching work. By definition every member is a minister, as "one not preaching is not one of Jehovah's Witnesses" (Botting & Botting, 1984, p. 5). Most, if not all, of the literature produced by JWs is created with the intent to be personally dispersed to the public and to contribute to the further education of members themselves. Among the literature distributed to the public are the bi-monthly *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines, as well as study books, most popularly *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?*, and *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived*. There are also special-topics brochures released once per month. JWs are approaching eight million members worldwide, and therefore have a very heavy demand for printed material: the vast majority produced from their headquarters in Brooklyn, New York (Jehovah's Witnesses, 2012).

**Overview of beliefs.** While JWs consider themselves to be a Christian denomination, they sever any association with mainstream "Christendom" (a term used to implicate all other 'false' religions in the world while "Christian" is what is used to reference themselves). They have adopted specific doctrines and beliefs that certainly distinguish them in contemporary society. Perhaps the most widely-known and controversial Witness precept is their position on the appropriate use of blood: it is most sacred and should not be used for any purpose, including those related to health. "[We] do not accept blood transfusions because the Bible forbids the taking of blood to sustain the body (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:1-14; Acts 15:28, 29)" (Jehovah's

Witnesses, 2011a, p. 27). They believe that the Roman Catholic Church is at the forefront of all false organized religion in the world and attribute to them the Biblical title “Babylon the Great,” soon to be destroyed by God using the United Nations as his instrument of annihilation. They believe that Christ is the Son of Jehovah God and that Jesus died on a stake as opposed to a cross (a symbol they regard as having pagan origins). Their complete political neutrality includes conscientious objection to all types of military service as well as a refusal to stand for the national anthem or join in a Pledge of Allegiance to the flags of any of the 235 countries they inhabit (Jehovah’s Witnesses, 2012). All holidays are viewed as having pagan origins and hence are not celebrated. The one event that *is* celebrated annually is the commemoration of Christ’s death in which unleavened bread and wine (symbolizing Christ’s flesh and blood) is passed around to each member in the congregation. This ritual differs from Christian communion in that only members of the anointed class (described below) may partake of the emblems. It is also their conviction that it is futile to advocate any human government because God will soon bring about Armageddon, setting up his own heavenly government consisting of exactly 144,000 “anointed” JW’s (the “little flock”) ruling side-by-side with Jesus Christ. The select few self-proclaimed members of the “anointed,” they say, will ascend to heaven upon death to rule over the Kingdom of God, which will be a paradise Earth inhabited by “the other sheep,” all other baptized members that are not part of the “little flock.” Of the 144,000, there are approximately nine thousand currently living. The other 135,000 or so have either already lived and died between the time of Jesus’ death and present day, are currently living, or have yet to be born. When those of this anointed class die, it is believed they ascend to heaven to be with Jehovah and Jesus and that Armageddon will commence when all 144,000 have lived and died.

Because these beliefs and behaviors are interpreted from the Bible by the Governing Body, it is necessary to examine the relations of power existent between the typical individual congregation member and the theocratic oligarchy, as relations of power play a chief role in the construction of 'individual' JW identity (Burke, 2004).

### **Identity**

Identity is a multifaceted and often contradictory concept. It is not something concrete that can be discovered once and for all. It is constantly being shaped and reshaped as we move through our lives by the people we surround ourselves with and the environments we inhabit (Persson, 2010). French social theorist Louis Althusser refers to the lived formations of different people, environments, and social structures as Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) (Barker, 2008). It is through the struggles of these relations between many forces that identity is created. Through its discourse, The Watchtower Society's theocratic oligarchy thus becomes a competing organizational narrative that defines its devotees. It should be stated that this argument is not based on the idea that the identity of the individual and the identity of the collective are mutually exclusive categories. These are two different conceptualizations that fall under the same notion of the self. The self is extended to encompass the group(s) one belongs to, indicating that the "boundaries of the self are redrawn, and the content of the self-concept is focused on those characteristics that make one a 'good' representative of the group [...]" (Brewer & Gardner, 1996, p. 84). Therefore, the self simultaneously houses the individual and the collective identities and at no point is one solely present without the other. However, there are a variety of identity cues that occur throughout daily life that trigger contextually precise aspects of the self. What will be later pursued here is the argument that the seven dimensions of sensemaking which assist

in the formation of an identity are occupied by organizational identity cues which are experienced by members with such frequency and force that they remain in a state of constant stimulation that comes to eclipse the individual self (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). Past studies have also shown that a sense of belongingness can suppress a sense of individualism within a group (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Codol, 1975)

### **Identity and Sensemaking**

Identity and sensemaking are closely linked in that the ongoing construction of one's individual identity "is at the root of sensemaking" (Mills, 2003, p. 55). Sensemaking is also the "primary site where meanings materialize that inform and constrain identity and action [...]" (Mills, 2003, p.35). Labeling and bracketing events into categories with language (the written responses of the four former JW's) is the media by which these meanings materialize, which suggests sensemaking is expressed explicitly in words. Sensemaking is useful for this study because it places its focal point not just on the individual but on its intersection with the social environment/situational context the person inhabited (past tense is used here because sensemaking is inherently retrospective) when reflecting on past decisions and actions (Weick et al., 2005). Subjects that are now detached from the organization have been questioned because one's ability to make sense of events evolves over time, meaning that a decision or action that was deemed as 'correct' or 'good' when it was made could develop and later be viewed as 'incorrect' or 'bad' (and vice versa). The narratives produced by these former Witnesses will allow for a discerning of the individual at two points in time: 1. how they now view themselves as they were when they were part of the Jehovah's Witness organization 2. how they view

themselves as they are now. For the purposes of this study, analysis will remain concentrated on the former.

The personal experiences given by my interview subjects will provide empirical data which support my classification of the JW organization as a reactive force as well as my argument that personal goals departing from the formal goals and activities outlined by The Watchtower Society are methodically prevented (Note: Use of the word 'methodically' here is not meant to imply intentionality of deceit on the part of the JW religious authorities, but simply a firmly structured system that is in place).

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

Four former members of the Jehovah's Witness organization were interviewed. Three participants were, at one time, at least a Baptized Publisher, while one was an Unbaptized Publisher. Among those chosen were three females and one male varying from 28 to 36 years of age.

### **Procedures**

Thirty seven members (all at least 18 years of age) of an online support forum created for ex-Jehovah's Witnesses were e-mailed a recruitment letter introducing them to the purpose of the study as well as indicating the two requirements for participation, as stated above (see appendix A). Also included in this initial communication was that participation entailed either mailing or scanning the signed consent form in order to return it to the researcher. The first four to respond were selected and sent a consent form (see appendix B). Upon receipt of the consent form, my

adapted version of Lindolf and Taylor's (2002) sensemaking questionnaire was e-mailed to each of the subjects (see appendix C).

### **Data Analysis**

Responses to the questionnaire were viewed through the lens of 'extension transference' (ET), posited by Edward Hall. This means that answers given by the interview subjects were examined for instances that make it evident organizational goals were to be first and foremost ahead of any individuality/sincerity. In addition, the Nietzschean-Deleuzean concept of 'ressentiment' (affirming one's identity through the negation of others) was sought in the written experiences. Also, evidence for impeding the seven dimensions of sensemaking was pursued. The final conclusion was reached by combining these models with organizational theory.

## **Man's Extension: From Evolution to Atrophy**

### **Extension Transference**

Society consists of organized extensions. The evolution of man can be said to take place both intrinsically within the physical body (internalization) as well as outside of it (externalization) as more innate desires become materialized and ever more systematically complex (Hall, 1976). For example, learning is a basic human desire that has become externalized via the education system. Governmental policy, such as laws prohibiting murder, theft, rape, etc., has become a physical/exterior extension of a natural-seeming internal morality. As such, it follows that religious institutions are the manifestation of a yearning for spirituality coupled with the yearning for belonging to a group.



Edward Hall makes the observation that the flexibility of extensions in their developmental stages often become rigid and opposed to much adjustment. This inflexibility can be partially accounted for by members confusing the extension with the processes or desires that have been extended (Hall, 1976). In other words, religious institutions (the externalization) become synonymous with spirituality (the original internalized process). The externally manifested symbol (signifier) is mistaken for the meaning-thing symbolized (signified) as people grant the symbol characteristics it simply may not have. Hall deems this phenomenon ‘extension transference’ (ET). From one perspective, one could say this is happening with religious institutions in general. However, the following application of ET is concerned specifically with JWs and is not intended to apply to or describe the workings of religious practices as a whole. A prime example of this occurrence within the JW organization is the Governing Body: the interpreters of scripture who claim divine inspiration and come to select what goes into every piece of literature emanating from the organization’s headquarters in Brooklyn, New York. This is a group that obtains its power by honing in on the spiritual instinct by

[Affirming] that God exists and [giving] the abstraction-that-is-God a concrete reality.

Although many churches claim to be theocracies in the sense that they acknowledge the supremacy of God, few actually embed God into their organizational structure ‘at the apex of the pyramid (Botting & Botting, 1984, p. xxxi).

This “concrete reality” of the “abstraction-that-is-God” is the JWs’ Governing Body. Members therefore attribute the alleged characteristics of God (omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent) to the Governing Body themselves in a process that bypasses mystification and goes straight to deification. “The Governing Body publishes spiritually encouraging literature in many languages. This spiritual food is based on God’s Word. Thus, what is taught is not from men but

from Jehovah.—Isa. 54:13” (Jehovah’s Witnesses, 2010, p. 12). Members conform to the edicts of the Governing Body because they believe the group represents God’s will on Earth, and the Governing Body is the sole channel that God uses to communicate with humans (Jehovah’s Witnesses, 2010). Therefore, to question the organization is to question God; to deviate from the organization is to deviate from God; to rebel against the organization is to rebel against God. To further highlight the ‘extension transference’ (ET) that has occurred within the Jehovah’s Witness organization, consider these words from its nascence in 1884 spoken by Charles Taze Russell, the first President of The Watchtower Society: “We belong to *no earthly organization*; hence, if you should name the entire list of sects, we should answer, no, to each and to all” (Jehovah’s Witnesses, 1883, p. 257, italics added). Russell’s Last Will and Testament even demanded that the local members remain a separate entity from The Watchtower Society publishing corporation in Brooklyn (the labeling of “corporation” was not something Russell wanted but was forced by law) as he didn’t want them to be associated with such structure (Botting & Botting, 1984). And so, it was actually much later that this advent of ‘extension transference’ occurred, as found in the literature almost a century later (in 1983), stating in the annual *Yearbook of Jehovah’s Witnesses* that “Jehovah’s *earthly organization* stands out as separate and distinct from all other organizations” (Jehovah’s Witnesses, 1983; italics added). This distortion of Russell’s original vision from individual internalized control to the external control of the tightly structured organizational hierarchy makes Hall’s concept of extension transference quite visible.

In my discussions with disfellowshipped JW’s, one of the most prevalent points raised was this sense of loss of one’s individuality and its take-over by the larger governing structure of the organization as a whole. Indeed, Ellis Bell (all names have been changed), a woman in her mid-

30s and a former Baptized Publisher, provides further evidence of the phenomenon of ET by explaining what led her to become baptized:

I wish that I could tell you that I had a spiritual journey. What I had was browbeating, guilt trips, and a desire to be accepted. When I was twelve years old, I decided to take steps to become a baptized Jehovah's Witness. I did not make that decision because I had a sincere love for Jehovah or because I felt compelled to dedicate my life to him. I did try to fit in, to try and make my parents happy, and to try and get the elders in the Kingdom Hall off of my back. Being a regular unbaptized publisher just was not good enough for them.

Bell also stated "For the brief years that I consider myself to have been a true Witness, I did not allow personal interpretation of morals." This particular individual indicates that she was involved with JWs for about 20 years. The somewhat subtle phrase "a *true* Witness" implies that the majority of her 20 years was not carried out because of a sincere interiorized belief-system, but because of outside pressures imposed on her by organizational leaders. It may very well be that she reached a level of personal contentedness in her spirituality, but was always pushed to do more as "being a regular unbaptized publisher just was not good enough for them." David Agnew, a young man in his mid-30s and a former Ministerial Servant, is in agreement by stating that one of the reasons he considered leaving the religion was because of "the non-stop pressure to do more."

Hence, ET is visible in the mechanical processes of the religion as well as internally within the interviewed members. That is, in its formal classification as a corporation and in the transformation made apparent in the comparison of the technical wording of its literature in 1884 and 1983. But, what are the elements at play that shift focus away from the individual toward an

inelastic organizational structure? How is it that people are still drawn to this religion, even with the advent of ET?

### **Cultivating the Dependent ‘Herd Animal’**

Many people want their life to come in a neatly packaged box with a simple universal truth as bow on top and often begin to think they are “doomed to bleak futility” if they do not have such clear-cut meaning in their lives (Kaufmann, 1979). Humans seek meaning and have a desire that the true and final meaning be decided for them. Identifying and belonging to a group aids in reducing uncertainty about the world and delivers a sense of safety (Weick et al., 2005). Ulrich Beck, a Professor of Sociology at Munich University and the London School of Economics, argues that contemporary society is often felt to be highly destabilized and this creates a subject who is personally insecure and consequently searches for refuge (Holden, 2002). The JW rituals and routines provide meaning for its members in a box neatly wrapped with a silk red bowtie. It is not only objective meaning that members get in return, but a way of managing and relegating their fears. The doctrinal assertions of the Governing Body offer ontological security in a world that is perceived to cause so much anxiety. The literature increases this anxiety through use of the good-evil dichotomy (discussed in detail below), with just enough appeasement to allow members to place their worries on the shoulders of the Governing Body. This creates more certainty in the lives of members and is viewed as a safe-haven from the frenzied outside world of war, terrorism, immorality, and calamity (Holden, 2002).

Coinciding with this point is Nietzsche’s commentary on the ‘herd animal’ being ill-equipped in regard to leading itself (i.e. deciding meaning for one’s self) and thus searches for a person or group of people to fill the role of leader (the Governing Body) (Nietzsche, 1886/2006). Meaning

and refuge are in a sense being ‘sold’ to congregation members in exchange for power and this is vital to the success of the organization because it is what initially attracts ‘the herd animal.’

For example, the Bible is said to only be interpreted accurately when accompanied by the organization’s literature and guidance, as explicitly stated in *The Watchtower*:

The Bible is an organizational book that belongs to the Christian Congregation as an organization; not to individuals, regardless of how sincerely they may believe that they can interpret the Bible. For this reason the Bible cannot be properly understood without Jehovah’s visible organization in mind (Jehovah’s Witnesses, 1967, p. 587).

This focus on the literature as a necessary tool is a testament to how the individual is brought into a dependent relationship with the organization. The relationship is dependent in the sense that the vast majority of JWs delegate authority to the Governing Body and other organizational leaders for directing their lives in order to collectively achieve the promised goal of eternal life on a paradise Earth. Responsibilities, including thinking, reasoning, and personal life decisions, are abrogated to The Watchtower Society. This is highly noticeable when looking at the responses of the four former members interviewed for this study when asked “As a Witness, how did you decide what was morally right or wrong?” The following statements are each of their replies in part:

Roxanne Morgan: “I didn’t. All of that is decided [...]”

Ellis Bell: “As a Witness, I did not decide for myself what was morally right and wrong. For the most part, I blindly followed the dictates as established by the religion;”

Leslie Stone: “[...] I based my moral decisions on the way the Society interpreted the Bible from the various publications that they released that we studied three times a week;”

David Agnew: “What the Bible and The Watchtower publications stated.”

This decision-making carried out by the Governing Body and The Watchtower Society shapes a set of morals for the malleable collective to relieve the individual of the burden to decide on a more tailored set of morals for him/herself. The outcome of this allocation of power leaves the person in an individual state of amorality, indifference, and indecisiveness. They, although perfectly capable, were not inclined to take an active role in linking morality to their individual identity due to these relations of power in place.

## Collisions

### Active and Reactive Forces

Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morality* categorizes two types of morality: the noble and the slave. Noble morality is active, constructive, and functions utilizing notions of good and *bad*; 'good' being any life affirming capabilities and 'bad' being a deficiency of life affirming capabilities. In contrast, slave morality is reactive and deleterious, functioning under notions of good and *evil*. The construction of this concept of evil provokes attempts to impede any acts that are believed to be representations of evil (Deleuze, 1983). Gilles Deleuze analyzed these Nietzschean concepts, resulting in further articulation of the concepts of active and reactive forces. As characteristics of noble morality and slave morality, respectively, active forces are creative and exercise themselves, to make whatever can be made of themselves. In stark contrast, a reactive force's function is to attempt to sever active forces from their own power (Deleuze, 1983). An active force is one that affirms its own difference whereas a reactive force posits an external force and then denies that which is different. One element of a reactive force is hostility and aggression toward that which is different, the "other," those that are not part of the group. A paradox then emerges as negation of the enemy becomes the life affirming characteristic of the

reactive group. Nietzsche terms this ‘ressentiment’ (Nietzsche, 1886/2006). Ressentiment identifies the “other” as “evil” for the sole purpose of rejecting it. As a result, and significant for my argument here, there is a simultaneous construction of “us” as “good.” JWs are highly discouraged from perceiving that which is different from the JW community (any outside person, group, or idea described as the ‘enemy’). The majority of what members hear of the outside world comes from the discourse emanating from The Watchtower Society. It is then logical to conclude that they have created a myth for members to believe, one that they base their very identities upon, according to the concept of identity and difference. Thus, the operation of ressentiment plays a paramount role in the constitution of identity (both collective and individual) as difference and binaries are used to distinguish identity (Woodward, 1997).

Nietzsche and Deleuze discuss the ‘enemy’ in a way that it can be categorized as an expression of hostility toward other groups. What they do not comment on, however, is the possibility of a reactive group explicitly pronouncing that it is not only attempting to give ‘protection’ from a group specified as ‘evil’, but to gain protection from the very notion of individual itself. And so, it is evident there is not just a single ‘enemy’ (outside groups) being negated here. Both classified social behaviors (intergroup) and ideological thought (intrapersonal) are being classified as ‘evil’ by the Governing Body, therefore creating a second ‘enemy’ *within* the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ politics: the individual. When the collective and the individual encounter each other, one of two things can happen: 1. they coalesce to form a more powerful whole or 2. one decomposes the other (Deleuze, 1988). In this case, the collective triumphs in order to maintain the individual member as a ‘herd animal’ requiring adherence to The Watchtower Society. This dichotomy of good and evil (existent in both the intergroup and intrapersonal politics of the organization) operates as a means of repression, limitation, and

restriction on the individuality of members of the JW organization. This falls directly in line with Jacques Derrida's contention that the very creation of a binary or dichotomy (whether good/evil OR good/bad) itself is a tool utilized by those in power to remain in power (Woodward, 1997). This results in a type of atrophy or decomposition of the individual in favor of the collective, the exact opposite purpose of the original expansion of religion as man's extension being a technology of the self.

Now that it is understood how the Governing Body derives its power, we must now consider their decisions wielding such power, specifically, their adoption of the Nietzschean-Deleuzean style of resentment management. It is this resentment that negates life by creating images of 'evil' that I will now argue are present in the Jehovah's Witness organization, which therefore categorizes them as a reactive force. The analysis is conducted using the literature produced by The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society supplemented with empirical data collected from the dialogues of four former members of the Jehovah's Witness organization.

**Intergroup resentment.** As stated in *Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, "[...] Association with those who reject Christian teaching would be destructive to faith. That is why [Paul] wrote: 'Do not be misled. Bad associations spoil useful habits.'—1Co 15:12-22, 33" (Jehovah's Witnesses, 1993, p. 199-200). Those who reject Christian teaching ('Christian,' as stated earlier, is a term JWs use when referring to themselves whereas 'Christendom' is a label denoting all *other* 'false' religion) destroy one's faith. The "either/or" mentality here is made clear. It is explicitly stated that one cannot hold faith while associating with people who are not JWs. Indeed, the 'enemies' that destroy faith, in this particular text, are all those who are not JWs. This is in agreement with a comment made by two interviewees:



Roxanne Morgan: “We were taught that you were bad if you weren’t a Witness [...].”

Ellis Bell: “It was very black and white to me. Homosexual? Sinner. Murderer? Sinner. For things not specifically called out, I relied on the materials provided by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society for guidance.”

The literature’s dichotomous construction of the outside world is not always so general, however. It is repeatedly made quite clear that the Governing Body stringently prohibits members of the congregation to be part of groups or participate in behaviors considered ‘evil.’ Their view on education reflects this:

In view of the short time left as Armageddon approaches, a decision to pursue an education in this system of things is not only unwise but extremely dangerous. For all its presumed benefits, would four years or more in a university really be the best use of that remaining time? (Jehovah’s Witnesses, 2006, p. 27).

An additional passage:

[...] there is danger in encouraging [youth] to take up a lifestyle centered on education and financial security instead of true worship. [...] Jesus said: “As for the one sown among the thorns, this is the one hearing the word, but the anxiety of this system of things and the deceptive power of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful (Matt. 13:22) (Jehovah’s Witnesses, 2011b, p. 6).

Again, a choice of either education or “true worship” is presented, particularly emphasized through the use of the word “instead.” Yet another telling passage reads

Finally, there is the powerful warning that those who practice the works of the flesh will not inherit God’s kingdom. Let all, then, turn completely from worldly filth and strife and

set their hearts entirely upon bringing forth the fruitage of the spirit (Jehovah's Witnesses, 1990).

And here is how the instructions for youth to deal with homosexual feelings are outlined in their book *Young People Ask*: "If at times you feel an attraction to a member of the same sex, be assured that this doesn't mean that you're gay. Such inclinations usually fade with time. Meanwhile, you must keep from getting involved in homosexual practices" (Jehovah's Witnesses, 2011c, p. 232). These are just a few of the passages describing some of the 'evil enemies' all JWs must resent, which therefore makes the JW organization 'good.' This commentary on the 'outside' world demonstrates that the collective identity is affirmed by negating lifestyles that pursue higher education, a financially secure career, homosexuality, and association with anyone who rejects the teachings of The Watchtower Society (the first three of these being active forces of identity construction). These outside identities become part of the non-self of the JW organization that will be annihilated at Armageddon. These austere limitations on behavior and associations with the 'enemy' present extraordinary difficulties for the individual who wishes to actively construct their own distinctive ideology.

**Intrapersonal resentment.** What happens when a person begins to deviate from the ideology of the Governing Body and create their own maps of meaning? David Agnew, a former Ministerial Servant, shares his experience in response to the inquiry when asked "Tell me about the event(s) and/or situation(s) just prior and leading up to your no longer being one of Jehovah's Witnesses":

The leaders of the watchtower started to crack down hard and tighten their grip. This plus having to do research because of a bible study I was conducting, or actually in reality it

was an indoctrination study. While I began to do some research, it was having to face either lying to my “student” or telling the truth, and on top of that trying to figure out the blood doctrine once and for all. JWs cannot accept blood transfusions, but can accept fractions. That made no sense to me, and after researching it, I discovered that it doesn’t make sense because its BS. Blood fractions are blood, JW’s do not abstain from blood any more than Bob Marley abstained from smoking weed [sic].

In this particular instance, doubts and further inquiry of JW doctrine occurred in the context of a Bible study, one of the few exceptions where JWs are permitted contact with someone from the ‘outside.’ For Agnew, who was conducting the Bible study and attempting to answer questions his student had, this contact sparked the emergence of his own critical thinking and reasoning skills and commenced creation of a personal interpretation of the JW religious literature and the Bible’s view on blood, an issue he formerly allowed the Governing Body to decide for him. When Agnew began researching on his own, he felt that the religious leaders began to “crack down hard and tighten their grip.” Whether there actually was a written edict that disseminated down from the Governing Body to those beneath them with authority (District Overseers, Circuit Overseers, Elders, etc.), whether a further structural tightening took place or not, is irrelevant. It may very well be that the organization’s rules remained the same, but Agnew’s individual identity began to burgeon, colliding with the brick wall of the collective laid by the organization. The constrictions imposed by the religion began to be felt by Agnew as he was entering the genesis of his transformation from a reactive to an active force, making him conscious of the battle between the collective and the individual. Aside from the fact that his own views were beginning to diverge, the sense of conflict/collision between the individual and the collective is made even more apparent in his particular situation. Agnew was instructing an interested person

on The Watchtower Society's interpretations of the Bible as he was formerly a Ministerial Servant, an authoritative role within the local congregation. He is then presented with a moral quandary; the choice of either "lying to [his] student or telling the truth." Should he teach what he believes to be the truth or what the organization dictates? *The Watchtower Society* realizes the risks presented by situations such as this, hence their maintaining of the collective dominance through only bestowing full fellowship to those who profess the religion's ideology without the slightest doubts or reservations: all those who express objections and follow through in their adamancy are disfellowshipped and deemed an 'apostate.' This process is an effective operational mechanism for keeping the group unadulterated and diminishes the chances that members might refuse to undertake public evangelism because the conflict between group- and self-identity would then be too apparent. The purpose of this notion seems to be to impede the very *possibility* of dissimilarity between the individual and the group, and hence prohibits the becoming of an active force (Beckford, 1976b). Agnew eventually left the congregation and mentioned that he is now looked upon as an apostate and wears that label as "a badge of honor." This is clearly an affirmation of difference characteristic of what Nietzsche and Deleuze describe as an active force and signals that Agnew allowed his budding sense of unrestricted individualism to be the cause of separation from the collective in his transformation from reactive to active.

### **Conclusion**

The power structure of Jehovah's Witnesses severely limits a person's freedom to actively construct an individual identity for him/herself. Granted, one could argue that members are in fact exercising their freedom in that they willingly choose to give their unwanted personal

responsibilities of decision-making, interpretation of scripture, and current world events to a higher authority and dismiss themselves of the potentially daunting task that may cause anxiousness: constructing an identity for one's self and discovering the meaning behind the chaotic events in the world (Holden, 2002). It is a rather typical paradox. However, one of my goals is to raise awareness of how individuality can be severely suppressed in this religion, and, thus, bring a heightened awareness to people who may be considering joining, or more importantly, those currently in the congregation who may be there for reasons that are less than genuine and because of outside pressures (which is likely to be a substantial number of people considering the continued prominence of ET). Now, there are stories out there about people getting off of drugs, alcohol, etc. after studying with JWs. It is impossible to deny the evidence that religious practice can potentially benefit people by outlining moral guidelines, giving them a sense of community, and an enhanced hope for the future. However, the JW organization does not benefit everyone but in fact, for some, can cause injurious damage.

Disfellowshipping produces situations that make it extraordinarily difficult for one to exit without feeling a tremendous loss of identity. When one has solely based his/her identity on the collective and then that collective is removed from one's life, there is a need for a complete rebuilding and laying down of a new ideological foundation. The people who have a yearning desire to form their own sense of self, those at risk of a potential identity crisis from a suppressed sense of individuality and distinctiveness, are the people that should at the very least be informed of the methods in place within this group that limit their ability to become active in the creation of their individual identity. And so, it can be said that members of the organization are indeed exercising their freedom in the act of surrendering it, but the question that should be raised here is whether this decision is an informed one. Those making life-changing maneuvers such as this

should be knowledgeable about which direction their identity will be taking; that a collective identity will ascend to a position of dominance as the forces of the individual and the collective negotiate over one's subjectivity.

Movement away from Charles Taze Russell's original formation of the International Bible Students Association highlights the phenomenon of 'extension transference' having gradually occurred within the Jehovah's Witness organization from its inception. A comparison of Russell's comments in 1874 with the literature produced by *The Watchtower Society* has, in part, shown this transformation and acts as a microcosm of the changes that have occurred. To complement this discourse from the religious leaders of the organization, the personal testimonies of each of the four former Jehovah's Witnesses attesting to their sense of a loss of individualism helps verify that extension transference has indeed occurred within the organization.

In sum, the power held by the Governing Body in this theocratic oligarchy is expressed in acts that shape what people accept and reject. This affect occurs through control over the shaping of the seven dimensions of sensemaking, and thus identity (Weick et al., 2005). The following are concise definitions of each dimension along with how the Governing Body regulates each:

1. "the social relations that are encouraged and discouraged:" controlled through disfellowshipping,
2. "the identities that are valued or derogated:" controlled through construction of the good-evil binary,
3. "the retrospective meanings that are accepted or discredited:" controlled through the 'must-be-accepted' interpretation of historical events such as Russell's failed predictions for Armageddon in 1914,

4. “the [identity] cues that are highlighted or suppressed:” controlled by the religion’s demand for belief to be an all-encompassing way of life, therefore having people constantly act out organizational beliefs in most ISAs/social scenarios,
5. “the updating that is encouraged or discouraged:” controlled by the rejection of contemporary social institutions and scientific knowledge, e.g. evolution,
6. “the standard of accuracy or plausibility to which conjectures are held:” controlled through interpretation of the Bible,
7. “the approval of proactive or reactive action as the preferred mode of coping:” controlled through resentment—the rejection of active forces and imposition of a reactive way of life, as defined by Nietzsche and Deleuze (Weick et al., 2005, p. 418).

The chronicles given by the four former members, along with countless passages written by The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, imply that the Governing Body does not allow deviation on the myriad of social behaviors and ideologies. Homosexuals, educational institutions, governments, ideas not produced by the Governing Body itself—essentially anything that consumes the time of members that does not advance or support organizational goals, are represented as harmful ‘threats’ to unity which is sought at the expense of individuality. JW authorities make it nearly impossible to construct a significant individual identity of active forces and simultaneously be a dedicated active (the term used for regular participants, ironically enough) member of the religion. From the given experiences and passages, it seems apparent that the individuality of JWs is regularly and severely suppressed. But so what? Why does individual identity matter?

Individual identity is a progression by which people define themselves; it helps explain why people do the things they do, why they join or leave organizations, and how they communicate

their definition of themselves with others of both shared and dissimilar beliefs. This communication with others and with difference itself is distorted when the producers of meaning (the Governing Body) have the power to define what counts as 'evil.' This creates a bias against those part of the non-JW self. Consequently, this poses a heightened potential for intergroup conflict (Ashforth et al., 2008). On a personal level, other inimical side effects of an overriding triumphant collective identity are the potential for remaining committed to a failing organizational project (Haslam, Ryan, Postmes, Spears, Jetten, & Webley, 2006), antisocial behavior toward those who pose threats to the person's collective identity (Aquino & Douglas, 2003; H.S. Schwartz, 1987), "an automatic trust in other members, suppressing dissent when doubt is called for, impeded organizational learning and adaptation, an inability to question ethicality of organizational behavior, and behaving unethically on behalf of the organization" (Ashforth et al., 2008).

These unfavorable qualities can be consequential in themselves, and for further inquiry it is suggested to study members who have experienced the above-mentioned to further validate the argument of the existence of a suppressed individual and a prevailing collective within the concept of the self among members of Jehovah's Witnesses (in a sense, this would be an inversion of the current study). Also, it would be interesting to use the same theoretical framework pertaining to the active, reactive, and resentment provided by Deleuze and Nietzsche, but applied to *currently baptized members* to compare their interpretations of past events (sensemaking) with those formerly associated with the organization (as was evaluated here). In addition, because the interview subjects often referenced online support forums for former JWs, a third potential avenue that would be categorized under the discipline of media studies is to examine the role of the internet in creating a close-knit community of 'apostates.'



## Appendix A

**Recruitment Email**

Hello, my name is Stephen Salvitti. I'm a student in my senior year at Millersville University of Pennsylvania.

I am writing to see if you would be interested in taking part in a study which will analyze the theocratic power structure of Jehovah's Witnesses and examine its role in the forming of both the collective and the individual identities of former members. I am contacting you because of your experience with and prior connection to Jehovah's Witnesses.

To participate in this interview, it is required that you be at least 18 years of age and formerly at least an Unbaptized Publisher of Jehovah's Witnesses. Participation in this interview would involve answering a set of eleven questions, which should take approximately 30-90 minutes. I can assure that your responses will remain anonymous. Accompanied with these questions will be a consent form, which I request that you either scan and then e-mail or print out, sign in pen, and send to me via postal mail at:

Stephen Salvitti  
131 Shenks Lane  
Suite 108  
Millersville, PA 17551

If you are interested in taking part or if you have any questions, please email me back at this address ([smsalvit@marauder.millersville.edu](mailto:smsalvit@marauder.millersville.edu)) or call me at 484-947-1590.

Thank you very much.

Kind regards,

Stephen Salvitti

## Appendix B

**CONSENT FORM*****Collisions of the Collective and the Individual  
in a Theocratic Oligarchy***

You've been asked to participate in a research study regarding how the power structure present in the Jehovah's Witness organization impacts individual and collective identities of former members of the religion. You were selected to be a participant because you are no longer actively involved with Jehovah's Witnesses either due to disfellowshipping, disassociation, or simply ceasing to attend meetings.

If you agree to be in this study, you'll be asked questions related to your past experiences as a member of Jehovah's Witnesses as well as your handling of the situation that led to your disconnect with the religion. The risks associated with this survey are minimal to none. Although you won't receive any monetary benefits from participating, one of the goals of this study is to investigate how the Jehovah's Witnesses theocratic power structure impacts the individual and collective identity of individuals as they were as a part of the religious community, as well as now that they are not. This study may potentially help former members gain a richer understanding of their identity as it was constructed in the past and as it currently is.

Your responses will remain anonymous because no names will be used to identify you in the thesis. Only the principal investigator, Stephen Salvitti, will have access to your responses and will therefore be the only person who will be able to link your responses with your name. Pseudonyms will be used in the thesis when referencing participant responses with a footnote that reads "Not actual name". If you decide to participate, you are free to refuse to answer any of the questions that make you feel uncomfortable. You can also withdraw at any time.

Your responses to the interview questions can be e-mailed to Stephen Salvitti at: [msalvit@marauder.millersville.edu](mailto:msalvit@marauder.millersville.edu). Please send the signed consent form as soon as possible to Stephen Salvitti at the following address:

131 Shenks Lane  
Suite 108  
Millersville, PA 17551

This research has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Review Advisory Committee at the Department of Communication & Theatre at Millersville University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, you can contact the Department committee through Dr. Thomas Boyle, Department Chair, at [thomas.boyle@millersville.edu](mailto:thomas.boyle@millersville.edu).

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign & date below.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

**Interview Questions**Demographic Information

What is your sex?

Male

Female

What is your age?

\_\_\_\_\_

What was your official title in your local congregation (Check all that apply)?

Baptized Member

Ministerial Servant

Elder

Special Pioneer

Regular Pioneer

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions

1. Tell me about your spiritual journey and what led you to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses.
2. As an active Witness, what did the phrase "new light" mean to you? What were your thoughts when that phrase was used? Has your understanding of this phrase changed? If so, what is your current understanding of the phrase?
3. As a Witness, how did you decide what was morally right or wrong?
4. Tell me about the event(s) and/or situation(s) just prior and leading up to your no longer being one of Jehovah's Witnesses.
5. As an active Witness, was there ever a time when you felt your faith in the organization was strengthened? If so, what made you feel this way?

6. As an active Witness, was there ever a time you considered leaving the organization? If so, what made you consider leaving?
7. Tell me what you know about reactions from the other congregation members upon their learning that you were no longer a member of Jehovah's Witnesses.
8. What impact has this separation with the congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses had on your spiritual beliefs?
9. Do you decide what is morally right or wrong using the same principles as you did when you were a member of Jehovah's Witnesses or using different principles? If the same, please explain why you have chosen to keep this particular "moral compass." If different, please explain where you derive these new principles from.
10. What impact has this separation with the congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses had on you socially?
11. If someone asked about your religious affiliation, how would you describe yourself?

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