COMMUNICATION AND SENSEMAKING
DURING THE EXIT PHASE OF SOCIALIZATION

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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A candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

And hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined communication during the three phases of exit: preannouncement, announcement/actual exit, and post-exit. Data from both interviews and questionnaires were collected from employees who had voluntarily left jobs. Results showed that during preannouncement, potential leavers communicate about a number of topics and employ specific communicative strategies; these may act as signals or cues of the impending exit. Leavers discuss exit with family, friends, potential employers, bosses, coworkers and customers. Leavers make sense of their decision throughout the preannouncement period, which is triggered by their initial decision to leave. Through sensemaking, people create accounts for why they leaving. These accounts are presented to others during the announcement process of exit. Leavers announce their exit in phases, telling their inner circle first, then providing the formal announcement, followed by a period of spreading the word that can extend well past a person's physical exit from the organization. Leavers are motivated to provide accounts by the desire to save face, justify their exit, and explain the reasons for their exit. Leavers use a variety of strategies to amend their accounts, vary accounts based on the target, and consider account plausibility more important than accuracy. Finally, communication during the post-exit period is characterized by a reduction in frequency and a general shift to more personal oriented topics.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

According to data complied by the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, over three percent of workers were separated from their jobs every month during 2007 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007). Of those three percent, roughly 4,500,000, nearly half were voluntary separations, or quits. So, generally speaking, over two million people quit their jobs every month of 2007. Schein (1971) has noted that the process of exit and the post-exit period are two of the most basic periods of a persons' career. For communication researchers, then, there is both ample opportunity and reason to study communication during exit. Looking at exit as a part of the overall socialization, this study will shed light on communication during exit.

Broadly speaking, socialization has been referred to as a process by which the relationships between individuals and society are mediated (Bullis, 1993). Those specifically interested in organizational socialization define it as the "process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role" (Van Maanen & Schein 1979), the "process by which newcomers become part of a group's patterns of activities" (Anderson, Riddle, & Martin, 1999), or the way new members are transformed into full-fledged, participating, effective members (Feldman, 1976b).

There is actually some degree of a confusion of terms in the socialization literature. For Moreland and Levine (1982) socialization is the reciprocal process of individuals and organizations attempting to meet their needs. For Jablin (1987) this process is assimilation, a combination of *socialization* which is the distinct attempts of

the organization to influence their members and *individualization* which is the attempts by the individual to shape the organization to meet their needs. To remain true to the specific author's meanings, each individual's preferred terms will be used when discussing their specific work. In more general discussion throughout this paper, the term socialization will be used to refer to the overall process of joining, becoming part of, and exiting organizations. Despite which specific definition one chooses, however, there are some general assumptions which guide the study of socialization.

In developing their theory of organizational socialization, Van Maanen and Schein (1979) proposed six assumptions of organizational socialization. First, organizational transitions are anxiety producing situations. Second, socialization does not happen in an organizational vacuum. Third, how newcomers end up carrying out their tasks impacts both the stability and productivity of the organization. Fourth, people respond and adjust to novel situations similarly despite variability in the situation. The fifth and sixth assumptions are beliefs particular to Van Maanen and Schein. These final two points state that first, the authors' analyses are not meant to be taken as prescriptions for behavior or socialization tactics, and second, that no theory of socialization should become too focused on specific individual, organizational, or role characteristics. These final two assumptions are particular to the authors' point of view in constructing their theory and though they are not parts of the theory, they have influenced the development of research in this area. As a whole, this set of six assumptions has helped to guide and direct research on socialization. However, the practical and concrete issues surrounding socialization have also driven work in this area.

Applied research in organizations has shown that socialization impacts the organization and its members. Four important reasons for studying organizational socialization are noted by Bauer, Morrison, and Callister (1998) who assert that: 1) unsuccessful socialization can be problematic for organizations; 2) the initial socialization of newcomers has a lasting impact on their organizational lives; 3) socialization is one of the key ways that newcomers are exposed to and learn the organizational culture; and 4) newcomers learn organizational politics and power dynamics through socialization. As viable as these reasons are, they reflect some underlying assumptions and limitations regarding the study of socialization. First, exit is overlooked as a part of the overall process of socialization. Saying that socialization can be successful or unsuccessful suggests that socialization is a finite task. This assumption has allowed the process of leaving an organization to be overshadowed by topics such as newcomer entry. Though it has been examined by others (Jablin, 1987; Moreland & Levine, 1982; Schein, 1971), exit is an important facet of socialization that Bauer et al. (1998) fail to consider.

Calling it "one critical limitation of the studies of socialization stages" (Louis, 1980, p. 231) states:

> [W]ith few exceptions (e.g., Becker & Strauss, 1956), views of organizational socialization have focused on the "changing to" process of entering the new situation, and have excluded the "changing from" process of leaving the old situation. Writings elsewhere suggest that the process of changing from has a significant impact on the success of the changing to process (p. 231).

This lack of focus is likely due to the fact that exit was not included as a discrete stage of socialization until Jablin (1987) presented it as such. However, exit had been considered before this point. In his analysis of the basic stages and transitions of a career, Schein

(1971) highlighted termination and exit as the transition between the stages of "granting of tenure" and "post-exit." For whatever reason though, exit has not received the same scholarly attention as entry. Thus, broadly speaking, the purpose of this study will be to examine communication during the exit process.

There are two distinct types of organizational exit: voluntary exit and involuntary exit. Voluntary exit occurs when individuals make the decision to leave their organizations of their own accord (Bluedorn, 1978). Put bluntly, people quit their jobs or retire. Voluntary exit can occur for a number of reasons (Nicholson & West, 1988). These will be examined in more detail in later sections of the paper. Involuntary exit is also a fact of organization life. People get fired, laid off, downsized, and forced into retirement. While these transitions are important, the communication during these types of exits is likely quite distinct from communication during voluntary exits. Additionally, of the communication studies that focus on exit, most are based on a model of voluntary exit. With an interest in further developing this body of research, this study will examine voluntary exits. This distinction is important because the communication patterns of those leaving an organization voluntarily are likely quite different than the communication patterns of those who experience involuntary exit.

As much as leaving one's job seems like a solitary event, it is actually a process that involves three sub-phases (Jablin, 2001). Jablin identified the sub-phases as pre-announcement, announcement/actual exit, and post-exit. Pre-announcement is the period before a person announces that he or she is leaving. During this time people may give cues about leaving, seek information, or disengage from the organization. The announcement/actual exit stage consists of the formal and informal announcements

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people make when they are leaving and the actual leaving event itself. The

announcements can vary in their formality and to whom they are addressed. Also,

depending on the situation, the exit may be marked with a ceremony or party. Post-exit

comprises the communication that takes place after a person has left their job. This may

include everything from the individual's continued communication with the organization

members to the organization members' communication among themselves after a person

has left. To understand communication during exit then, one must analyze

communication throughout the entire leave-taking process.

Specifically, this study will focus on how people communicate and make sense

during exit. Embedded in this question is a focus on the social nature of communication

and meaning creation. This meaning creation extends beyond those who are leaving to

those who remain in the organization. As Ebaugh (1988) points out, the focus of research

cannot simply be on those who are leaving. The impact of exit extends beyond the person

who is leaving to include his or her coworkers, supervisors, and the organization itself.

Thus, research must not ignore those who remain in the organization. Though the primary

focus of this study will be the individual who is leaving, those who remain are still

considered a key element. If those who stayed in an organization were not impacted by

exit, there would be no need to study how people communicate during the exit process.

As was suggested above, this study will examine how people make sense of exit.

As such, sensemaking will be the theoretical framework used to guide this study. As

Weick (1995, 2001) suggests, sensemaking is the process through which people structure

their experiences, make the world intelligible, and most basically, make sense out of the

world around them. Sensemaking is an ongoing event but can be brought to the surface of

consciousness when people encounter a surprise or shock, an event that does not fit with the ongoing flow of daily activities. Exit can be considered such an event as it provides at least some degree of shock to individuals and organization members. Certainly, exit can be understood as an event that interrupts the general flow of daily activities in an organization, because to some degree others' work is impacted. Sensemaking will prove to be a useful theory for understanding exit because sensemaking occurs throughout the exit process. People make sense of their own decisions to leave, they communicate those decisions to their coworkers and organizations, perhaps in an attempt to make sense for them, and then those groups must make their own sense of the events.

One definition of sensemaking suggests that in making sense, people develop intersubjective accounts for events (Brown, 2000). Sensemaking is a good way to describe the exit process because people are not only are expected to provide some sort of account for leaving, whether it be a formal resignation or a simple conversation, but there is a general informal pressure for people to explain their actions when they are unexpected (Buttny, 1993). In other words, people feel socially pressured to give others reasons for why they are quitting. This set of "reasons" or the explanation that is given can be considered an account. Formally, an account is defined as a "statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behavior (Scott & Lyman, 1968, p. 46). Scott and Lyman identify two major types of accounts that will be examined in this study: excuses and justifications. An excuse acknowledges the negative nature of the event but denies full responsibility for it. In a justification a person accepts responsibility for the event but denies the negative evaluation of that event. This study will examine the exit accounts that people generate through sensemaking and will further examine

individuals' motivation for generating the accounts and their perceived impacts on those who remain in the organization.

In summary, little is known about how people communicate during the exit process. Yet, it has an enormous impact on both leavers and those who remain in the organization and is one of the fundamental organizational transitions that people make throughout their work lives. This research will examine communication over the course of the exit process, through pre-announcement, announcement/actual-exit, and post-exit. Communication during exit will be examined through the lens of sensemaking. Specifically, this study seeks to examine how people make decisions to voluntarily exit their jobs, how they make sense of and communicate those decisions to others, and finally, how communication changes after the individual has left the organization. The next chapter will present a more thorough review of the literature.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Research in the area of organizational socialization covers a number of scholarly fields and content areas. In fact, authors have criticized the literature for its lack of integration (Fisher, 1986). Throughout the past couple decades, however, scholars have responded to this criticism and have worked to bring this body of literature together. This review will begin by providing brief reviews of two of the most prominent areas of research in organizational socialization: the major content areas of organizational socialization and the outcomes of socialization. Then it will transition to examine the process of socialization. Several models of the socialization process have been developed and each will be reviewed. Jablin's (1987) model will be used as a framework for the discussion of the models as well as to introduce some of the relevant areas of study in each stage of socialization and to provide a framework for an examination of exit. Following this, as it is the primary focus of this review, an in-depth examination of employee exit will be provided, paying specific attention to the sub-processes of exit and the relevant literature of each. Next sensemaking, the theoretical grounding for this study, will be reviewed. Finally, the accounts literature will be reviewed, followed by research questions.

Socialization

Content of Socialization

Socialization is the primary way the organization can pass on knowledge about the organization (Schein & Ott, 1962). So, it is to be expected that organizations want to focus on passing on specific sets of knowledge to their employees during this period.

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Research has examined this assumption and has found that there are in fact, specific knowledge domains that are foci of organizational socialization.

Having conceptualized socialization as a learning and change process, Fisher (1986), noted that there are five types of learning that occur during socialization: preliminary learning, adaptation, task, work group, and personal learning. Preliminary learning describes the employee's discovery that he/she does not know everything that he/she need to know in order to function in the organization. Next, newcomers learn to adapt to the organization. They learn about an organization's history, rules, and other major characteristics. Learning about the task involves learning the knowledge that it takes to complete one's job. Learning to function in the work group involves everything from learning the culture to the norms of the group. Finally, personal learning is the knowledge that an employee gains about him or herself. This may include becoming aware of one's needs or finding new talents in the organization. Bauer et al. (1998) argued that, prior to Fisher's (1986) review, these learning outcomes were often less of a focus in research because most socialization research favored secondary outcomes such as commitment and satisfaction. Bauer et al. (1998) concluded that this trend continued throughout the decade after Fisher's (1986) article.

In their review of the socialization literature, Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, and Gardner (1994) also summarized the key findings of the content of organizational socialization. Their review resulted in the following six organizational socialization content domains: performance proficiency, people, politics, language, organizational goals and values, and history. Respectively, these domains include knowledge about how to do the tasks of one's job, developing positive work relationships, understanding the

informal and power structures of an organization, being able to understand and use

organization and profession specific language, knowledge of the goals and values of the

organization, and finally, knowledge of the culture, history and tradition of the

organization. These knowledge domains are conceptualized as distinct and generally

independent. Thus, employees can be highly socialized in organizational goals, values

and history, yet have little knowledge of organizational politics.

Arguing that Chao et al.'s (1994) dimensions were exemplary but incomplete;

Myers and Oetzel (2003) conducted a study aimed at gathering an exhaustive list of the

dimensions of assimilation in order to develop a measure of organizational assimilation.

The authors also found six dimensions: familiarity with others, acculturation, recognition,

involvement, job competency, and finally, adaptation and role negotiation. While these

dimensions are similar to the ones identified by Chao et al. (1994), they include new

categories including recognition, the feeling of being valued in one's organization, and

involvement, the degree to which one seeks other ways to be active in one's organization.

Outcomes of Socialization

Based on the previous discussion of the content of socialization, it is clear that the

various types of learning are outcomes of socialization, even though they are rarely

measured as such (Bauer et al., 1998; Chao et al., 1994; Fisher, 1986). Learning is not the

only potential outcome of socialization though. Scholars have identified a number of

ways of assessing the outcomes of socialization. In their analysis of the impacts of

institutionalized versus individualized socialization tactics, Ashforth and Saks (1996)

found that the types of socialization tactics used had effects on employees in a number of

areas including: role innovation, person change, role ambiguity, role conflict, stress,

intentions to quit, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational

identification, and performance. Scholars have used each of these as a measurement of

how well or thoroughly the employees have been socialized.

A body of work by Feldman (1976a; 1976b; 1981) has also examined a number of

different effects of socialization. Feldman (1976b) noted that the way that employees are

socialized into organizations impacts their general satisfaction, the degree of mutual

influence they have over their work, their work motivation, and their job involvement. In

a later study, Feldman (1981) presented a more complex theory of socialization complete

with behavioral and attitudinal outcome variables. He suggests that these outcomes can

be used to measure the success of the socialization program. Behavioral outcomes

include the ability to dependably carry out assignments, staying in the organization, and

spontaneously working to achieve goals beyond those of the role. The attitudinal

outcomes include the general satisfaction of the employees, their internal motivations to

work, and their involvement in their jobs. Feldman (1976a) acknowledges an important

caveat to socialization outcomes when he argues that to reach optimal socialization

outcomes a person must complete the socialization process. Those employees for whom

the process is incomplete will not receive optimal outcomes. This argument points to a

major assumption that underlies much of the early socialization literature; socialization

can be complete. Studying socialization with this assumption obscures the exit process

because socialization is only effectively "completed" while a person is in the

organization. Not all scholars see this process unfolding in the same way though. The

next section of this review will look at the different models of socialization. It will be

clear that not all of the models make the assumption that socialization can be complete.

Models of Socialization

As previously stated, organizational socialization is a developmental process and as such lends itself to being described through various developmental models. Several models have been described to characterize the process of becoming an organizational member (Feldman, 1976; Jablin, 1987; Porter, Lawler, & Hackman, 1975; Van Maanen, 1975).

The model that will be used as a framework for this study is Jablin's (1987) model of organizational socialization. This model is unique and important for two key reasons. First, Jablin's model looks specifically at the communication that occurs throughout the organizational socialization process. Second, while not the first scholar to examine exit processes in organizations, Jablin's model was the first to visualize the process of socialization extending through the processes of exit, and beyond. Unlike the previous models, this model does not assume that socialization can be "complete." Instead, socialization continues through the period when a person leaves their job. Jablin's model consists of three primary phases, entry, assimilation, and exit, each of which is broken down into sub-phases. Bullis (1993) asserts that the model is supported by four primary assumptions. First, the relationship between the individual and the organization is seen from a developmental perspective. Second, information exchange between participants in the process is considered the central communication process. Third, the relationship between the attempts to socialize newcomers and their attempts to individualize the organization is an interactive one. Finally, "this model enables more rigorous theory testing and detailed specification of definitions, hypothesis tests, and ranges of generalizability of theories" (p. 11).

Because this study was carried out within a communication framework and because of its explicit focus on exit, Jablin's model will be used as the framework for the study. Other major models of socialization will be presented throughout the discussion of Jablin's framework as well. A brief review of the research characterizing each stage will also be provided, with an exception for exit, for which the literature will be reviewed in detail.

Anticipatory socialization. The first stage of Jablin's model is anticipatory socialization. Overall, this stage represents the "expectations and beliefs concerning how people communicate in particular occupations and work settings" (Jablin, 1987, p. 680). Anticipatory socialization consists of the learning and preparation that occurs before a person's entry into the organization. This potentially lengthy process includes processes from choosing a career to learning about a specific organization (Van Maanen, 1975).

Two sub-phases operate within anticipatory socialization, vocational and organizational anticipatory socialization. Vocational anticipatory socialization is the intentional and unintentional gathering of information about different occupations, making comparisons about which is most suitable, and finally making a choice about the direction of one's career (Jablin, 2001). This gathering of information can begin early in childhood and extend far into an adult's life. Literature in this area has examined the multiple sources of occupational information that exist for individuals including: family (e.g. Goodnow, 1988), educational institutions (e.g. Gecas, 1981), people's experiences in part-time jobs (e.g. Greenberger, Steinberg, & Ruggiero, 1982), peers and friends (e.g. Peterson & Peters, 1983), and also the media (e.g. Potts & Martinez, 1994). The second sub-phase of anticipatory socialization is organizational anticipatory socialization. Here,

individuals learn about the specific organizations of which they are seeking to become a member. Potential organizational members begin to develop expectations about what life in a specific organization is like. Feldman (1976) described two variables that characterize this stage: realism and congruence. Realism is the degree to which the recruit has accurate information about what the job/organization will be like. Congruence is the degree to which the organization and individual will meet one another's needs. This information is derived from two sources, the organizational literature and interpersonal interaction with members of the organization. Research on anticipatory socialization covers three primary areas including recruiting source effects (e.g. Saks, 1994), realism of expectations (Wanous, Poland, Premack, & Davis, 1992), and interviewing to be hired (e.g. Harris, 1989). Finally, Jablin (2001) notes that the period of time that lies between acceptance of a position and entry into that position is an area that is worthwhile but often disregarded. Researchers could examine messages newcomers receive from the organization, how newcomers represent themselves to their organization prior to entry, and how organizational incumbents make sense of the new hires before they arrive.

Organizational assimilation. The second phase of Jablin's model is organizational assimilation. Assimilation is generally defined as the process by which an individual becomes integrated into the culture of an organization (Jablin, 1982) and is composed of the reciprocal processes of individualization and organizational socialization. Individualization is how employees modify or exert change on their organization and roles within it and organizational socialization refers to the attempts of the organization to change and shape the individual to fit the organization's needs, wants and values. This

process is viewed as a dynamic process of give and take between the organization and employee in order to best meet the needs and goals of both parties.

Other socialization models also mark the transition into the organization as important. Van Maanen identifies this stage as entry. Entry beings when the recruit becomes a newcomer in the organization (Van Maanen, 1975). At this point the newcomer evaluates their expectations against the reality of the organization which, depending on the difference between the two, can be quite severe. According to Van Maanen, several factors mediate a person's early experiences with an organization including environmental factors such as broadly held cultural values, organizational factors including organizational ideology or the type of socialization efforts of the organization, group, task and individual factors. Feldman (1976) refers to this stage as accommodation. In accommodation, the individual has entered the organization, experiences what life is really like and attempts to become an active member of the organization.

The third and in some cases fourth, stages of other popular socialization models also fall within Jablin's stage of assimilation. In Van Maanen's (1975) model, the final stage, metamorphosis, is reached when employees work out problems encountered during entry. While new learning certainly takes place, organizational members generally learn to adopt new responses to the problems they encounter. This stage can also be marked by formal or informal rites of passage that acknowledge an individual as a full organizational member. For example, Kramer and Noland (1999) found that newly promoted restaurant employees endure task tests, as well as tests that measure employees' ability to handle pressure. Reising (2002) noted that critical care nurses are

put through a period of testing to measure their ability to care for patients, manage the

stress of the critical care environment, and to "cut it" in the profession.

In the third stage of Feldman's (1976a) model, role management, individuals have

dealt with conflicts in their own work and now must deal with the conflicts that are

created by other roles competing with the organization's role, such as conflicts with home

life and other organizational groups. Resolution of these two conflict areas are the key

process variables of this stage. The final stage of this model focuses on outcomes of

socialization including general satisfaction of the employee, mutual influence in which

the employee has some degree of control over how their work is carried out, internal

work motivation, and job involvement. A key assumption of Feldman's model is that

socialization can be "finished" or "completed" after progression through the first three

stages. This assumption is prevalent in the other early models of socialization as well.

The outcomes, or fourth stage, indicate whether the process was a successful one or not.

In a later revision of this model Feldman (1981) shifted to a three-phase model including

anticipatory socialization, encounter, and change and acquisition. Similar to the initial

model, there were process variables for each stage, and the outcome variables defined in

the original model were reformulated into a set of behavioral and affective outcome

variables that were used to measure progress through organizational socialization. Unlike

Feldman's (1976a) view of socialization as something that can be "completed," Porter et

al. (1975) make special note of the continuous nature of the socialization process stating

"it continues and becomes sharply intensified when the individual enters the organization,

but it does not stop there. It goes on—when he (sic) is transferred or changes jobs, gets

promoted, or joins another organization" (p. 162).

Interestingly, Jablin (1989, 2001) places the other major models of socialization (Feldman, 1976; Porter et al., 1975; Van Maanen, 1975) under the umbrella of assimilation. He views each of these models as descriptions of the process of assimilation. While each of the previous models does have a stage of anticipatory socialization (or at least one similar to it) the thrust of the models are describing the assimilation phase of Jablin's model. During a person's tenure with an organization she or he makes attempts to make the organization conform to herself or himself while on the other hand the organization is making attempts to make the individual conform to the organization's goals, values, and ideology. This is not necessarily an adversarial process. The individual can want to conform to their organization and the organization may be interested in how an employee can change the organization.

Newcomer entry is arguably the most well-developed phase in the body of socialization literature. Jablin (2001) identifies the most prominent communication processes as: orienting, socialization strategies, training, formal and informal mentoring, information seeking and giving, relationship development, and role negotiation. For example, there have been a large number of studies that have examined the specific tactics organizations use in their attempts to socialize individuals. Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) typology of tactical dimensions has served as a framework for much of this research. They identified six dimensions which described the types of tactics that organizations used, including collective vs. individual, formal vs. informal, serial vs. disjunctive, sequential vs. variable, fixed vs. variable, and investiture vs. divestiture. These socialization tactics are implemented by the organization to aid the newcomer's adjustment into the organization and do not include tactics that might be associated with

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individuation. These tactics have been examined in relationship to factors such as role

adjustment (Ashforth & Saks, 1996). Ashforth and Saks found that those tactics

associated with a structured approach to socialization led to lower role ambiguity and

conflict, fewer stress symptoms and lower intention to quit. On the positive side, those

tactics led to higher satisfaction, commitment, and identification with the organization.

A second example of research in the area of newcomer entry deals with

information seeking. This body of research concerns how newcomers gain knowledge

and information about their work environment, the organization and individuals within it.

Miller and Jablin (1991) identified seven techniques or tactics that employees can use to

gather information at work. The use of each tactic, overt, indirect, third party, testing,

disguising conversation, observing, and surveillance, may be used with differing

frequency depending on factors such as costs of information seeking (Miller, 1996), the

type of information sought (Comer, 1991), and the type of socialization tactics they

experienced (Mignerny, Rubin, & Gordon, 1995), among other factors.

As Jablin and Krone (1987) note, organizational socialization is most often

studied from the perspective of organizational newcomers. Definitions that describe the

process of socialization as one of "learning the ropes" (Schein, 1968, p. 2) seem to

support this idea. However, there has been increasing focus on the other organizational

transitions as important parts of the socialization process. Early socialization research

noted the possibility for examining different transitions (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979),

but it has not been taken up until recently. Van Maanen and Schein argued that

organizations are marked by functional, hierarchical, and inclusionary boundaries and

postulate that "socialization, although continuous throughout one's career within an

organization, is no doubt more intense and problematic for a member (and others) just before and after a particular boundary passage" (p. 224). In other words, movement of incumbents within and throughout the organization will also reveal important socialization transitions. Recently, work in the areas of transferees (Kramer,1989, 1993a, 1995), mergers and acquisitions (Bastien, 1992; Kramer, Dougherty & Pierce, 2004; Zhu, May & Rosenfeld, 2004), downsizing (Casey, Miller & Johnson, 1997), and promotions (Kramer & Noland, 1999) has begun to illuminate the different types of transitions individuals make.

There is also room for research on incumbents as they interact with and respond to newcomers in the previously discussed stages. For example, Jablin (2001) notes that looking at how organizational incumbents construct the reputation of newcomers is an important area of study. While such a study still pertains to newcomers, in that they are the objects of reputation construction, the focus is on the incumbents' communication. In another example, research could specifically focus on the communication of the organizational incumbents when organizations are considering hiring more employees.

Clearly, only the surface of the research on anticipatory socialization and assimilation has been scratched. The goal of the previous review was to highlight some of the most basic research to provide a framework for understanding the process of socialization as a whole. While this study will focus specifically on exit, it is important to not lose sight of the place exit occupies in the overall process of organizational socialization. One major criticism of the early work on socialization is that the processes of each stage were studied in isolation from others and the nature of socialization as a developmental process was lost (Jablin, 1987). The previous review, though short, will

hopefully help situate the following discussion of exit as a part of the overall process of organizational socialization.

Exit. The final stage of Jablin's (1987) model is exit. While Jablin's model is the first to formally situate job and organizational disengagement as a specific stage of the socialization process, he is not the first scholar to examine exit. In some of the earliest research on the relationship between the individual and the organization, Schein (1971) noted that the exit transition and the post-exit stage of the relationship were two of the most basic periods of a person's career. He notes that some major psychological and organizational processes of these times include the preparation for exit, exit rites, and becoming a peripheral member of the organization. However, Schein does not go into any detail on these processes or transitions. Moreland and Levine (1982) also describe exit as part of the socialization process of small groups. They highlight the fact that exit is an important process that does not necessarily happen after passing through all of the other stages. Brand new members of an organization can leave before any assimilation has happened. Take, for example, people who accept a position in an organization and simply never show up to work. While this is not the norm, it does exemplify the idea that Moreland and Levine are trying to present; exit is a complex process.

As Ebaugh (1988) states, all ex's go through disengagement and disidentification. Disengagement involves withdrawing from the norms and expectations of the role while disidentification is more of a mental process in which one begins to think of themselves in terms of not occupying that role anymore (Ebaugh). Not only are individuals decreasing involvement with the organization and their "work roles," but the organization is also decreasing involvement with the individuals, perhaps preparing for the new

member who will fill their place (Jablin, 2001). The job, the organization, the work group, and personal ties all shift at this point. Thus exit has just as much potential to influence the involved parties as do the other stages of socialization.

The process of exit has the potential to vary significantly depending on the relationship between the individual and the group or organization of which he or she is a part (Moreland & Levine, 1982). If the member is well-liked and productive, the group may be sad to see that individual go. Similarly, if the individual feels closely tied to the organization, it may be more difficult to "let go" and he or she may experience a greater deal of stress after leaving. In the reverse situation, if the member is disliked or the individual is unhappy with the group or organization, the transition may be less stressful or even encouraged by the group (e.g. Cox, 1999). In yet a different scenario, the individual may not want to leave the group, but the group may want them to leave, causing an even broader range of complexities for the exit process. Through these few examples it is clear why the exit is such a lucrative area of research.

A common term used to talk about employee exit is turnover. However, this term has a much broader meaning than is typically attributed in the literature. Generally speaking, turnover is "a change in the membership status of an individual" (Bluedorn, 1978, p. 647). This change includes both members who are leaving and those who are joining the organization. In other words, this broad definition of turnover incorporates the entire process of turnover that includes not only the process of a member leaving but also the resulting process of a new member joining to take the leaver's place.

Turnover has been studied for over a century (Dalton, Todor, & Krackhardt, 1982). For years, organizations have placed large concern on the ineffectiveness of

turnover, citing the costs of "recruitment, replacement, and training of personnel" (Dalton & Todor, 1979). However, Dalton and Todor have argued that turnover can be beneficial to organizations for a number of reasons. First, in terms of the organization's goals, the influx of new people can bring new ideas and innovation into the organization. Furthermore, sometimes employees who are ineffective organizational members self-select out of their jobs providing the organization the chance to put a more suitably fitted person into that position. This is referred to as functional turnover (Dalton & Todor). Regardless of whether turnover is functional or dysfunctional, or both, it seems clear that much of this literature operates with an underlying managerial bias, focusing only on what is good for the organization. Much less research has examined the impact of the exit transition on the person leaving.

Exit is clearly an important stage of organizational life. However, of the over one thousand studies examining exit (Steers & Mowday, 1981), very few focus on communication during exit. There are two potential reasons for the lack of research in this area. First, satisfaction and performance have been examined much more often than other outcome variables. This may be a result of a general managerial bias in socialization literature. Second, the processes associated with exit can be interpreted as antecedents to turnover and symptoms of other organizational problems (Jablin, 1987), thus making them difficult to isolate and study. To develop a better understanding of the research in the area of exit, this review examines the types of organizational exit, the sub-process of exit, and the existing research on exit, giving particular attention to the research focusing on communication.

Membership changes can occur voluntarily or involuntarily and the changes can be separations, situations in which people leave the organization, or accessions, occurring when people join the organization. These categories result in four distinct types of turnover: voluntary accession, involuntary accession, voluntary separation or involuntary separation. Voluntary accessions include movement into the organization that is initiated by the individual. An example of this would be if a person applies for and is hired for a job. Involuntary accessions are those movements into an organization that are initiated by someone or some force outside of the individual. Examples of these accessions are being included in a merger or acquisition, being drafted into the military, students being required to attend grade school, and entering prison. Separations from organizations can also be either voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary separations could include quitting or retirement. Involuntary separations would include being fired or forced to retire. Because the focus of this study is exit, the remainder of this review will refer to turnover only in terms of separation from organizations. However, it is important to not discount accession. Bluedorn's (1978) conceptualization of turnover as both accession and separation reinforces the processual nature of socialization that Jablin (1987, 2001) ascribes to by implying that separations can impact future accessions.

The phases of exit that Jablin describes are based on a model of voluntary exit. However, as mentioned above, involuntary exit, is also a fact of organizational life. Thus, a short review of involuntary exit will be provided. This will be followed by an in-depth description of the three sub-phases of exit with a focus on voluntary exit.

Involuntary Exit

Involuntary exit can occur in a number of ways. Employees can be laid off, they can lose jobs through mergers or reductions-in-force, or they can simply be fired. In any case, the nature of the separation makes the communication distinct from that of voluntary separations. Cox and Kramer (1995) note that there is a substantial body of literature designed to teach managers "how" to let someone go. For example, detailed and lengthy handbooks exist that promise to provide "up-to-date information and professional tools for processing employee terminations" (Granhom, 1991, p. xxiii). Unfortunately there has been little empirical investigation of how managers come to make and carry out termination decisions (Cox & Kramer, 1995).

In an early attempt to examine this issue, Fairhurst, Green and Snavely (1984) described a process of managerial discipline where managers evaluate and react to poor performance at two major breakpoints. At the problem solving breakpoint the manager perceives the poor performance and takes corrective action to attempt to resolve the performance issue. The second breakpoint is the elimination breakpoint. This point comes when the problem is seen as unsolvable. While these breakpoints help to illuminate the process managers may go through in dismissals, there was no discussion of how the dismissal is carried out (Cox & Kramer, 1995). Attending to this issue, Cox and Kramer developed a study to focus specifically on the communication that happens before and during employee dismissals. The authors found that managers tend to follow typical steps leading up to employee dismissals including identification of the problem, documentation of that problem, warnings, and termination. Communication during the dismissal meeting revealed a fluid process in which the manager and employee communicate about the employee's performance, the employer uses a dismissal phrase,

the employee asks questions and the manager responds, sometimes with advice. While these are not concrete steps, the authors found that there was a general communication pattern during the dismissal meetings.

Research has also shown that willingness to dismiss employees is impacted by several variables. Klass and Dell'omo (1997) found that the organization's policies and practices had the biggest impact. The authors also found that in organizations where there were restrictive disciplinary procedures or neutral appeal systems that managers were less likely to attempt dismissal in situations where there was a threat to just cause. In other words, people would only be fired if there was no way just cause could be denied. In another example, if there were organizational norms suggesting that good managers did not fire people, managers were less willing to attempt dismissal, even in cases where there were strong grounds for the dismissal (Klass & Dell'omo).

Involuntary exit is much more than a managerial issue though. According to Moreland and Levine (1982) exit can be especially stressful for an individual when they do not want to leave. One line of research focusing on the individual leaving the organization has looked specifically at the issue of fairness (Rousseau & Anton, 1988, 1991). Rousseau and Anton (1988, 1991) have identified a number of factors that impact the perceived fairness of the termination. Performance, length of employment, formal commitments of long-term employment, as well as the explanations for why the employee was let go, all impact how fairly the termination is judged. The major factor of this research is present performance. Accounting for over fifty percent of the variance in perceived fairness, present performance clearly outweighs length of employment and all

other factors combined. If an employee is not doing a good job, despite a long history or contract, the termination is seen as more fair (Rousseau & Anton).

A second major area of research on involuntary job loss centers on coping with the loss (Kinicki, Prussia, & McKee-Ryan, 2000; Latack, Kinicki & Prussia, 1995). As Buzzanell and Turner (2003) state, "if people lose their jobs, not only do they lose their worth in others' eyes, but they also lose a means of organizing their time, the companionship of their coworkers, their status and titles, their dreams, an era in their lives, a place in their communities, an office, some family roles, and their assumptions about fairness, trust, and other values" (p. 27). This stress is not only felt by people who have lost their jobs, but also by their family and friends (Liem & Liem, 1988). These people play a significant role in helping process the job loss and in helping the person cope.

In summary, communication issues surrounding involuntary job loss are important for both the organization and the individual losing their job. Organizations must balance meeting organizational rules and policies regarding termination and the emotional aspects of releasing someone from a job. The terminated employee must deal with the practical side of finding a new job all the while managing the emotions, identities, and relationships that were impacted by the loss. Clearly, the previous discussion of involuntary job loss only scratches the surface of the issue. Communication and socialization research are important to better understand the process of involuntary job loss. However, since current socialization models have been shaped around voluntary models of job separation, attention will now be shifted to those types of exits.

Voluntary Exit

The socialization model presented by Jablin (2001) was developed with a focus on voluntary exit. The exit phase of socialization can be broken down into three sub-processes which are preannouncement, announcement/exit, and post-exit (Jablin, 2001). Similar to the overall model of socialization, most of the research on exit fits into one of the exit's sub-phases. Thus the relevant research, both communication and otherwise, is presented according to where it fits in Jablin's model. Because this model is based on voluntary exit, much of the supporting literature, though not all, will have this focus as well.

Preannouncement. It is rare that people, for no reason at all, walk into work and quit their jobs with no premeditation, or just stop showing up. For most, there is much tied up in employment, from one's paychecks and health insurance to one's identity. Understandably then, choosing to leave one's job rarely happens without some consideration.[1] Research in the preannouncement phase of exit examines what happens before the actual acts of announcing one's decision to exit and physically leaving the organization.

Antecedents of voluntary turnover have received the bulk of attention of the research on exit. This literature has examined behavioral, attitudinal and communication antecedents. Behavioral antecedents are behaviors that reduce a person's inclusion in their work role (Chen, Hui, & Sego, 1998). Research in this area has studied how these behaviors are related to turnover. One line of research has examined the progression of withdrawal hypothesis. This hypothesis states that there is a progression of behaviors leading to exit, beginning with lateness then leading to absence and finally to turnover (Rosse, 1988). In a longitudinal assessment of this model, Rosse found that the

progression hypothesis only was supported for those who had multiple instances of absence or lateness. This study raised two key questions about progressive withdrawal. First, Rosse acknowledges that the reason for withdrawal remains unknown stating that it could be due to worsening organizational conditions, gradual acceptance of the fact that a person does not "fit" with the organization, or a dissatisfied employee choosing the least costly forms of withdrawal. A second question raised asked whether or not the increased absence was simply a consequence of the decision to quit.

Another example of a behavioral antecedent is a reduction in organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). These behaviors are discretionary behaviors that extend beyond one's formal work role. Chen et al. (1998) hypothesized that those with low levels of OCB would have a higher likelihood of turnover. Generally their findings supported this hypothesis as those who had lower levels of OCB had a higher intent to leave. Furthermore they found that turnover was significantly predicted by intent to leave (Chen et al., 1998). The crux of the behavioral antecedents research is represented by the preceding finding because one of their major arguments is that behavioral intention is a significant predictor, and some (Steel & Ovalle, 1984) would argue the best predictor of turnover. In a meta-analysis of the relationship between intent to leave and turnover Steel and Ovalle found this relationship to hold strong, moderated by the time span of data collection and general economic trends. For example, if there are few alternative job opportunities, this may reduce turnover. Moreland and Levine (1982) argue that declining commitment is also an antecedent of turnover. While commitment is often thought of as an affective concept, it can have behavioral elements as well. For example, once a person

has decided to exit a group or organization, they may begin to withdraw and stop participating in organizational activities.

Attitudinal antecedents to turnover and personal factors related to turnover have been examined to a much greater degree than behavioral antecedents. In an early review of the literature, Mobley, Griffeth, Hand and Meglino (1979) noted the many factors that had been related to turnover. These included personal/demographic factors such as age, tenure, and family responsibilities, job satisfaction factors, organizational factors such as pay and supervision, job content and occupational factors, and external environment factors, such as the availability of alternate opportunities. While all have been studied in relationship to turnover, overall they consistently account for less than twenty percent of the variance in turnover.

A final area of antecedent research has examined communication antecedents to turnover. Jablin (1987) argued that communication concepts such as supervisor and coworker communication relationships, perceived role ambiguity and conflict, and integration in communication networks act as antecedents to affective responses to organizations which in turn have been directly related to intent to leave and turnover in the literature. However, at that time, little research existed that confirmed these links. Concepts examined since that time include general communication concepts, such as information and relationship quality (Allen, 1996), group communication (Cox, 1999), network centrality (Feely & Barnett, 1997; Feely, 2000), and identification (Scott et al., 1999), to name a few. Supporting the link that Jablin (1987) suggested, Allen (1996) found that while communication variables (relating to information quality and relationship quality) were directly related to turnover intentions, these variables were

more strongly related to organizational affect variables. Of the five concepts measured, both co-worker information quality and superior- subordinate communication were directly related to turnover intentions (Allen, 1996). These two particular communication variables were also found to be strong predictors of intent to leave by Scott et al. (1999).

The importance of co-worker communication was also noted by Cox (1999) who found that employees used a number of communication based strategies, as well as behavioral strategies, to encourage their co-workers to quit. These strategies ranged from criticizing their peers, clearly a direct and overtly negative strategy, to praising other job opportunities, a strategy that could be considered less direct and less negative. Communication related behaviors ranged from increasing or decreasing the amount of communication, open acts of hostility, to avoiding communication with their coworkers altogether.

Groups may also engage in activities to encourage a member to leave. Similar to the behaviors noted by Cox (1999), Moreland and Levine (1982) found that groups may engage in "covert rights of passage" that help the individual to save face or "overt rights of passage" which outwardly pressure a member to leave. Covert rights of passage might include reducing one's responsibilities within the group or allowing a member to quietly resign. Overt techniques could range from blatant disregard of the member to social pressure for them to leave.

Coworkers are only part of the overall communication network. Communication networks are patterns of communication between individuals connected within organizations (Feely & Barnett, 1997). Examinations of these networks can identify who speaks to whom in the organizational system. Some scholars have suggested that a

person's location within the network can help to predict turnover. Feely and Barnett found support for each of their hypotheses which argued that those who were structurally equivalent would quit together, those who had more direct links with others who had quit were more likely to leave their jobs, and finally the less centrality a person had, the more likely they would be to leave their job. An unfortunate limitation of this study though, prevents us from knowing if leaving the organization was a voluntary or involuntary act. A later follow up study supported the previous finding that centrality was negatively related to turnover (Feeley, 2000).

Identification with the organization has also been an area of focus for organizational communication scholars interested in turnover. Identification suggests that people become connected to elements of their organization (Scott et al., 1999). Scott's et al. findings suggested that multiple identifications did impact people's intent to leave, but that the relationship was complex. For their sample, identifications with division, agency and state government decreased intent to leave.

Overall, the literature on turnover can be quite overwhelming. As of 1981, there were over 1000 studies on turnover examining over 50 different variables (Steers & Mowday, 1981). Thus a move was made to look at these variables as being part of an integrated conceptual model of turnover. Interestingly, almost all of the research seemed to point to two underlying constructs, job satisfaction and number of perceived job alternatives (Hulin, Roznowski, & Hachiya, 1985). An attempt at bringing the turnover literature together in a meaningful way was presented by Steers and Mowday (1981) who proposed a general sequence of deciding whether or not to leave an organization. Combining both behavioral and psychological antecedents their model consisted of three

parts: job expectations and attitudes, job attitudes and intent to leave, and intent to leave, available alternatives and actual turnover, with each stage of the model affecting the next.

Another example of an integrated approach to predictors of turnover looked at how the effects of job satisfaction, investment, and alternatives work together to predict four different responses, exit, voice, loyalty and neglect, or EVLN (Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers, & Mainous, 1988). Here, exit is conceptualized as "quitting, transferring, searching for a different job, or thinking about quitting" (p. 601) Exit was negatively related to high levels of both job satisfaction and investment but positively related to having high quality alternatives. A second study on EVLN found that exit was most likely when costs of exit, satisfaction, and commitment were low, costs of voice were high, improvement was unlikely, and attractive alternatives were available (Withey & Cooper, 1989).

Drawing on previous research Lee and Mitchell (1994) presented a new model of voluntary employee turnover based on their observation that there are different types of turnover decisions and that these different types of decisions have different characteristics and outcomes. Though their research extends beyond the antecedents to turnover to discuss the actual decision to quit, it is presented here because of its focus on the decision to exit. This decision must be made before the announcement of exit and the physical exit from an organization.

Lee and Mitchell (1994) identified four major decision paths. In the first there is a shock to a person's system; they search their memory for a matching behavioral script for what to do in response to such a shock, find one, and follow it. An example of this script might go as follows: an employee's spouse receives a large promotion that requires a

transfer; because this has happened before and was expected to happen again, the employee identifies the appropriate response, which is leaving their job, and then resigns. In the second path, no matching behavioral script is found for the shock, the individual makes an assessment of their attachment to the organization either quits or decides to stay. For example, an employee is demoted from their current position, weighs the benefits of staying and leaving the job, decides that a demotion is unacceptable, and decides to quit. The third decision path is similar to the second with the exception that it occurs in the presence of a job alternative. So, following the previous example, the individual would weigh the demoted position against the job alternatives and decide which is better. The fourth path differs in that there is no shock but a general and gradual realization that one does not fit with the organization in some manner. The individual then either quits immediately or goes through the process of a job search and leaves for another opportunity.

In a test of the previous model, Lee, Mitchell, Wise, and Fireman (1996) noted several important implications for the turnover literature. First, while many individuals fit the traditional turnover model of general dissatisfaction, job search, evaluation of alternatives, and quitting, nearly half quit their jobs without an alternative in hand. Shock was also found to play a major role in the decision to quit. Finally, the pace of the paths varied. Overall, their findings suggested that turnover was much more complicated than earlier models had suggested.

Another study examining the process leading to exit compares the process to relationship deterioration (Wilson, 1983). Wilson's phases of exit include unmet expectations, differentiation, reduced investment in the job, circumscription, concern for

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the system and closure. When one's expectations go unmet a person may begin to feel different from those they work with. Then a person begins to reduce involvement in organizational activities. One still does the work required, but with less enthusiasm and investment. During circumscription, communication becomes restricted, interaction is lessened and the individual may quit initiating conversation with coworkers. The next step is quite different from the previous ones in that it shows an increased concern and commitment towards preserving the system. Those contemplating exit may work harder to see that the system will be sustained once they leave. Finally, a person realizes that they are leaving and make an effort to "tie up any loose ends" (p. 18). The individual acknowledges that he or she will no longer be able to share information at work and the person wants to make sure everything continues smoothly after he or she is gone. It is important to note that Wilson does not identify the announcement of exit in her model. It is likely that it occurs between the fourth and fifth stages. An increased concern for the system and tying up loose ends are likely processes that can occur more easily after a person has announced that they are leaving because the individual's coworkers are all aware that the individual is leaving.

Wilson's model is interesting because it focuses on a number of communication changes that happen as people prepare to leave. Also, it highlights the idea that people recognize the impending communication changes that will occur after they leave. Finally, it provides examples of what signals people give when they are contemplating exit.

A final area of research in the preannouncement stage is not exactly an antecedent of leaving but what Jablin (2001) calls cues. Cues, or signals, that the person is contemplating exit, appear "in the form of discretionary and ambient messages in the

work setting" (p. 786). These messages may vary from being quite blatant to more discrete and may be communicated intentionally or unintentionally. For example, an employee might confide in a close coworker that he or she is looking for a new job, a cue which is both blatant and intentional. In another scenario, an employee may decrease involvement and communication with coworkers, as was suggested by Wilson (1982), a cue that is more discreet. Jablin argues that as people are contemplating exit, they may communicate these messages to a number of different targets, including coworkers, supervisors, peers, family members, and the community. When members exit groups, they may tell a few close friends, the group's leader, or may make a public announcement of their impending departure (Moreland & Levine, 1982). Work on coworker communication (Cox, 1999) and network communication linkages (Feely, 2000) suggests that how these cues are received and responded to is likely to have important implications for both the individual who is contemplating exit, and the organization and its members.

While the bulk of research on exit fits into the above category of the preannouncement phase, the announcement of exit and the actual exit are equally important areas of research. This is especially true for communication researchers because the announcement of exit, be it formal or informal, is an inherently communicative act.

Announcement of exit and actual exit. The announcement of exit and actual exit combine to constitute the second phase of the overall process of exit. This phase is unique for a number of reasons aside from its communicative nature. It focuses more on public events, is often supplemented with a formal written statement of exit, usually creates some degree of surprise among some group, and can be associated with rites and rituals

that accompany boundary passages (Jablin, 2001). According to Jablin, one of the primary functions of communication in this phase is to reduce the uncertainty of those who are leaving and staying. Specifically "these individuals will share job-related information with one another and generate accounts and justifications to explain the exit of the employee" (Jablin, 2001, p. 789). Depending on the type of exit, communication in this stage will vary. In jobs with high turnover, people may have well defined scripts for their communication with the leaver. Thus, there may be less of a degree of surprise and people may respond to the exit in a more rote fashion. In a situation where the exit is unexpected, the leaver may have to spend more time explaining his or her reasons for leaving. In this situation, there may also be more talk among those who remain about the issues surrounding the exit of the former employee.

Surprisingly, there is little communication research on voluntary job exits, despite the fact that they are such important life events. However, drawing from research on other transitions helps to explain what might be happening when people leave their jobs. As mentioned previously, much of the communication that happens during this phase of exit functions to reduce uncertainty for those who are leaving and those who remain employed by the organization. While this assertion has not been directly examined in the literature, there is some related research that lends support to this idea. Research on communication during reductions in force or downsizings has shown that those who remain in organizations after these events tend to have higher levels of uncertainty (Casey et al., 1997; Johnson, Bernhagen, Miller & Allen, 1996; Tourish, Paulsen, Hobman, & Bordia, 2004). Tourish et al. (2004) found that following downsizings, both survivors and victims experienced higher levels of uncertainty. While this uncertainty

may be focused on their own job security, it makes sense that even when one's coworkers aren't forced out, their absence may cause the stayer to experience some level of uncertainty. In the case of reductions in force (RIF), the uncertainty is a major source of anxiety for those who remain (Casey et al., 1997). Furthermore, Johnson et al. (1996) argued that those employees who were uncertain about their career futures will be more likely to consider exiting the organization themselves. One might argue that the pressure or anxiety experienced by RIF survivors makes their situation distinct from stayers in a voluntary exit situation but the research may suggest otherwise. As Feeley and Barnett (1997) hypothesized, the more direct links a person has with those who have left their jobs, the more likely that individual will be to also leave their job. While only five percent of the variance was explained by this structural factor, it does show that when an individual is connected to a person who leaves, they are more likely to leave as well. Interestingly, this study did not differentiate between voluntary and involuntary turnover.

Another body of research that can help researchers to understand the communication that occurs during exit is the research on intra-organizational movement, particularly transfers. In his work examining transferees, Kramer (1989), noted that people who are transferring positions within organizations progress through three stages of loosening, transition, and tightening. In the loosening phase, transferees lessen their communication with their current coworkers in preparation for separation from the job. In the transition stage, the transferee goes through the actual relocation. In the tightening phase, the transferee adjusts to the new environment and becomes an accepted member of the new subculture.

The transition stage can be likened to the *actual exit* stage of socialization. Kramer (1989) found that during the transition phase, the transferee's talk becomes more social, information seeking increases, and there is more communication with the old position than there is after the move. Stayers also experience changed communication is this phase. Stayers have more communication among themselves to adjust to the vacancy left by the old member. Kramer found that most of the additional communication revolved around job tasks and duties. However, there was also an increase in social conversation about the leaving member. Those who had less experience with frequent transfers or those who were close to the transferring employee experienced the most change in communication. That suggests that communication may also be different in organizations that have varying frequencies of turnover. For example, individuals who are used to frequent turnover in their organizations may have better defined communication scripts for dealing with such an event as compared with individuals whose organizations have relatively infrequent turnover.

One of the key processes in the actual exit phase is the exit announcement. This process includes both formal and informal announcements. They can be made to the organization members as groups or to individuals. As Jablin (2001) notes, this process is about creating accounts and justifications for the exit. Nicholson and West (1988) argued that people tend to leave their jobs for one of four reasons: future-oriented, avoidance, circumstantial, or a combination. Future oriented reasons include moves toward desired futures. For example, if someone is offered a new job that will advance them in their career goals, this would be a move to a desired future. Sometimes jobs are changed to avoid bad circumstances, such as an unhealthy or unpleasant work environment.

Circumstantial factors are secondary reasons for leaving the job; the reasons are not directly related to the job. A typical case of this would be if someone left their job due to the transfer of a spouse to another state. This is a circumstance unrelated to the job, which requires the individual to leave the job. Finally, Nicholson and West (1988) noted that very often people reported a combination of primary and secondary reasons for leaving their jobs. Jablin (2001) argued that those who remain with the organization after a person has left have the option of believing the given account, rejecting it, or constructing a new account.

There are several other possible events that may take place during the announcement/actual exit stage. Jablin (2001) described several possibilities that may characterize this period. Though many only have peripheral support, these possibilities provide exit scholars with important directions for future research. On the subject of accounts, Jablin (2001) stated that though the original account for leaving may be agreed upon, it will be communicated differently by different people as the story gets retold. Furthermore, the retelling of the leaver's reasons for exit will likely be in a list form where as its original form would likely have been narrative. The narrative is originally constructed to tell a story and help the listener understand why leaving was necessary. The list form might develop so that the stayer may remove their emotional investment in the story and reduce the dissonance between their reasons for staying in and believing in the organization's culture and values and the reasons why the other left.

One unique feature of the exit stage is that there is often time between the announcement of the exit and the actual exit. Jablin (2001) noted that this period affords employees the opportunity to discuss features of the organization or the job that they do

not like. These conversations can help employees make sense of what is happening regarding an employee's exit but they can also lead to people thinking of ways in which the organization could be improved. As Wilson (1983) suggests, an individual may also take this opportunity to get their work affairs in order before his/her departure so that the remaining employees are not hindered by the leaver's absence.

This stage may also marked by exit ceremonies. Many times, the exit of an employee is marked with an office party, speech, or gift giving (Jablin, 2001). In two studies of transferees, Kramer (1989, 1993b) found that over seventy percent of transferees reported having a farewell event. These events ranged in formality, from a lunch to a party, and many involved the exchange of gifts and farewells.

Post-exit. The post-exit period begins once the employee has physically left the organization. This period is marked by both change and uncertainty for those who leave and those who remain in the organization (Jablin, 2001). However, uncertainty is only one of the potential consequences of turnover. To better understand these consequences, it is important to examine how exit impacts both groups.

While there is little research that examines the communication that leavers experience after they leave the organization on a broad level, research on the communication of specific groups such as retirees and transferees can again help to suggest what might happen. According to Avery and Jablin (1988), retirement is one of the major reasons that people leave their jobs, third after transferring geographic locations and changing jobs, either voluntarily or involuntarily. Certainly retirement is a unique situation because peoples' lifestyles shift from working to non-working. While those who exit organizations often leave for other working situations, the shift is still

significant and thus some similarities may be drawn. Also, as noted above, the transition processes are quite similar. Avery and Jablin (1988) cite evidence that indicated that retirees experienced a loss of contact with former employers and coworkers and that this led to feelings of isolation. The lack of communication experienced by retirees was noted as the aspect of work that was missed the most. While people who voluntarily leave organizations may go on to other jobs, the experience of retirees suggests that they too might still find communication with former employers important because of the interpersonal ties that were created while the employee was at the organization. A study of the process of leave-taking by Wilson (1983), suggests that people may be aware of the impending lack of communication. Wilson identified the final stage in her model as closure. During closure people accept that they will no longer be in the organization and thus will not be able to engage in information sharing with their co-workers as they once did. Thus, they attempt to "tie up any loose ends" (1983, p. 18) so others can move on in their absence.

Intuitively, during the post-exit stage of socialization the focus of research is drawn to those who are leaving an organization. However, the impacts on those who remain with the organization can be just as great. According to Moreland and Levine (1982) the exit of a group member may have either positive or negative impacts on the group depending on the individual who is departing Those who remain must explain why the other employee left (Sheehan, 1991), deal with the uncertainty caused by the employee's exit (Jablin, 2001), as well as deal with a host of emotions that may accompany a coworker's exit (Sheehan, 1995).

A program of research by Sheehan (1991, 1993, 1995) has examined how turnover impacts those who remain with the organization. Sheehan (1991) argues that much of the work on consequences of exit examines organizational consequences, ignoring what happens to the individual employees. According to Mowday (1981), one of the tasks of those who stay after an employee exit is to determine the reason why the employee has left the organization. Jablin (2001) argues that co-workers will share job-related information in an attempt to come up with accounts and justifications for why the employee left. Depending on what information a person has available, the individual may come to attribute a person's turnover to different reasons. Stayers' attributions for the causes of turnover are important "because beliefs about why others leave may have important implication for how remaining employees react to turnover (Mowday, 1981).

Attribution biases may also be at play as stayers attempt to make sense of a coworker's exit. Mowday (1981) asserts that ego-defensive and egocentric biases may impact how those who stay interpret their colleagues' reasons for quitting. The ego defensive bias causes people to distort the reasons a colleague left in order to balance their own decision to stay in a job that another rejected. The egocentric bias is the tendency to believe that everyone else would hold similar attitudes and thus interpret leavers' decisions in ways that are consistent with stayers' own attitudes about the job. Those who were satisfied with their jobs were less likely to interpret the leavers quitting as due to dissatisfaction with the job, consistent with the ego-defensive and egocentric biases. Interestingly, these findings are not consistent with the fundamental attribution error which would suggest that those who are satisfied would explain quitters' reasons as related to job dissatisfaction. While this study was exploratory in nature, it provides

researchers with an interesting and useful framework for examining how employees come to decisions about why people leave their jobs.

There are a multitude of consequences for those who remain in an organization after experiencing the turnover of others (Steers & Mowday, 1981). The leaver's supervisor may use the reasons for turnover to identify and deal with problems in the organization that may have impacted the leaver's decision to exit (Steers & Mowday). Those who remain may analyze the explanations the leaver gave in order to re-evaluate their own job. The stayer may also be introduced to new job alternatives from another's exit. If the leaver went on to a new, perhaps more profitable position, the stayer may also consider such a move. Support for this may be drawn from the experience of transferees. In his study Kramer (1989) found that approximately sixty percent of stayers reported some communication with the transferee. The primary relationships that were maintained between stayers and transferees were social relationships. However, some retained work contacts in order to influence future decision making. This suggests that there is potential for similar communication between those who have exited an organization and those who remain.

In the group setting, Moreland and Levine (1982) noted that exit can have both positive and negative effects on the group and the individual. Individuals can experience stress associated with leaving a rewarding group, they may experience a loss of self-esteem or identity, and they may decide to focus on the positive effects of the exit. Sometimes exiting a group can be beneficial for the individual, most often when the move is initiated by the individual. Positive effects may include reduced tension or the potential of new memberships that are more rewarding. With regards to the group, there

may be a renewed sense of solidarity if the member was a negative influence on the group. Furthermore, the group suffers costs associated with selecting and training replacements. However, if an individual initiates the exit, group morale may decline if the leaving member was valued by the group. Additionally, conflict may be reduced and performance may increase after the removal of an ineffective member. These findings are supported by the more complex models of turnover that focus on both the initiator of turnover and the group or organizations evaluation of the leaver (Dalton et al., 1982).

One reaction employees have when a coworker quits is comparison. Basing his argument in equity theory, Sheehan (1991) argues that employees' reasons for leaving may be a source of negative inequity for those who remain with the organization. For example, if a coworker who one views as similar leaves for a better paying job, the stayer may begin to feel dissatisfied with his or her current situation because they see themselves as also being able to leave for better paying jobs. They may react by requesting a raise, promotion or increase in other benefits (Sheehan, 1991). Sheehan's results showed that employees do engage in comparisons with those who leave. When the comparison resulted in feelings of inequity, participants were found to have more dissatisfaction and frustration with their jobs.

Examining how turnover impacted stayers' productivity, Sheehan (1993) found that there was a decrease in productivity but it was mediated by the reasoning for the turnover as provided by the leaver. When the leaver exited for reasons that portrayed the job in a negative light, the productivity of the stayer decreased in comparison to the stayers whose colleagues left citing reasons unrelated to the job (1993). While these studies are innovative and promising, they are limited in that the methodology was an

experimental design. The participants did not know one another, were only completing a short task, and would have no future interaction with one another. This study needs to be examined further in actual work settings to verify the effects on productivity.

Sheehan (1995) has also examined affective responses to employee turnover. Because people that work together on a daily basis probably have some degree of affect for one another, whether it be positive or negative, it is likely that a person's departure from an organization will trigger some sort of affective response in those who remain. Sheehan (1995) examined how affective responses changed based on the reasons their colleagues gave for their decisions to exit. Reasons for quitting were divided into work dissatisfaction, a better job alternative, and reasons unrelated to the job. Results showed that the reasons given for quitting one's job did impact the stayers' affective responses. The four affective factors that were measured included frustration with job, personal loss, happy for my co-worker, and competitive. When the reason for quitting was unrelated to the job stayers felt a greater sense of both loss and happiness, than when the other two reasons were given. The unrelated to the job reason also led to higher competitiveness than did the better job reason. This research supports the idea that those who remain with organizations are emotionally impacted when their co-workers leave. How these affective responses impact their relationship with the organization remains unexamined however.

In summary, the above literature points to the idea that voluntary exit has an important impact on those who remain with the organization. Even more important, this literature suggests that the reasons for the exit play a role in the effects on remaining employees. This clearly involves communication because the key factor in the equation is the explanation the employee gives for why she/he is leaving. Sheehan's (1991, 1993,

1995) findings combined with Nicholson and West's (1988) discussion of the accounts people give for leaving their jobs suggests a potentially lucrative area of research. In addition, since much of the literature supporting Jablin's (2001) assertions about communication during the exit process are supported by related studies, but not ones designed to specifically test the assertions, research in this area would help to strengthen and develop the overall socialization literature.

As the previous discussion may have implied, uncertainty reduction is one of the primary frameworks through which socialization has been examined. As Van Maanen and Schein (1979) suggested in their assumptions of organizational socialization, organizational transitions can be anxiety producing situations. Thus it is no surprise that uncertainty reduction is one of the most often used theoretical frameworks for examining organizational socialization. Research has examined how different elements of socialization impact the uncertainty of newcomers, transferees, those who exit, and those who remain after others exit. This research will use a different yet related approach, sensemaking. As Kramer (2004) argues, uncertainty reduction theory and sensemaking theory share several similarities. Both perspectives examine the creation of meaning and understanding from experience, surprise or unexpected situations are pertinent to both processes (of reducing uncertainty and making sense), and both processes are accomplished through language and social interaction.

Two of the differences between the two theories that Kramer (2004) identifies lead to the selection of sensemaking theory for use in this study. First, sensemaking is retrospective process. Much of what will be analyzed in this study relies on a retrospective approach because it is looking at communication about exit decisions. In

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other words, the decision has been made and now people have to make sense of it from a number of competing possible meanings. Secondly, Kramer argues that sensemaking research typically comes from an interpretive methodology. Though this study will use both qualitative and quantitative methods, the overall focus is on meaning creation, a focus more consistent with an interpretive epistemology. The following section of this review will introduce sensemaking and further describe why it is a relevant and useful theoretical framework for understanding communication during exit.

Sensemaking

When people encounter situations that are unexpected or surprising, or when they are presented with a shock, the general scripts that guide behavior can fail, causing them to develop explanations for why the shock occurred (Louis, 1980). The attribution of meaning to that shock or surprise is known as sensemaking. Specifically, "sensemaking refers to those processes of interpretation and meaning production whereby individuals and groups reflect on and interpret phenomena and produce intersubjective accounts (Brown, 2000, p. 45-46). Or, as Weick (1995) argues, sensemaking is quite literally what the name suggests, the process of making sense. In other words sensemaking is acting to "convert a world of experience into an intelligible world" (Weick, 2001, p. 9). The idea of shock or surprise is important because it describes exactly what happens during exit. When a person leaves an organization, it causes an interruption of ongoing organizational activity, a shock to the members of the organization and potentially to the leaving member. Certainly the degree of shock can vary. An organization with unusually high turnover may not experience interruptions in the same way as an organization with a low turnover rate. However, shock is somewhat present in all cases. The goal of the

sensemaking process then, though not an explicit one, is to create a shared, intersubjective account of a person's exit.

Sensemaking has seven basic properties: it is grounded in identity construction, retrospective, enactive of sensible environments, social, ongoing, focused on and by extracted cues, and driven by plausibility rather than accuracy (Weick, 1995). First, sensemaking is grounded in identity construction. This suggests that a person's identity is fundamentally bound in interaction with others. One's identity is created in interactions with others. The interaction and sensemaking that happens during exit therefore impacts the identity of those who are leaving and those who remain.

The second property of sensemaking is that it is retrospective. This is one of the most important properties of sensemaking. Being retrospective suggests that sensemaking occurs after the event takes place, not before it. Until something has happened that shocks people into a state of active conscious sensemaking, people simply continue along accepting the results of previous sensemaking episodes. For example, during exit, sensemaking can occur after a person has decided to quit, after the person tells people about it, and after the person actually leaves the organization. Importantly, during sensemaking, many different meanings could be constructed (Weick, 1995). Because of this, not everyone makes the same sense out of the same situation (Wallemaq & Sims, 1998).

Enactment, the third principle, refers to the actual production of meaning. As opposed to being acted upon by their environments, through their actions, people create their own environments and those environments, in turn, constrain their future actions. When people announce their impending exits from organizations, they create

environments that constrain their subsequent actions. In this instance of exit, they have likely created an environment that requires a response for their action.

A fourth principle of sensemaking is that it is a social activity. Here, social can be understood in a number of ways. First, meaning is created through sensemaking and this meaning is intersubjective, or agreed upon between people. Second, sensemaking does not occur in a vacuum. Whether or not people engage in sensemaking collectively, action and meaning impact and are impacted by others, even when they are not physically present. So, a person leaving a job may provide a certain set of meanings for the action in hopes of influencing the sense that others will make of the event after the leaver is gone. In another example, an employee who is contemplating exit may engage in a discussion of why he or she is considering leaving with a spouse so they can make sense of the event together.

Sensemaking is also ongoing; it has no beginning or ending. Each action is linked to those before it and influences those after it. For example, in an organization with high turnover, there may be less of a need to engage in conscious sensemaking of someone's exit because such actions have become taken for granted in the organization. The sense that was made of previous similar events, impacts how people understand current and future exits. This is important to the present study because the accounts that are produced by the leaver will impact the sense that the stayers make of the event. It is likely that the leaver wants those who remain to make a particular type of sense of the event, but that is not a given. As Jablin (2001) suggests, those who stay may completely reject, modify or accept the reasons the leaver gave. Those who remain may make completely different sense of the event than the leaver makes.

A sixth property of sensemaking is that people tend to cues in their environments. When a cue does not fit within the limits of ongoing daily interaction it creates shock or surprise. When people encounter shock they typically shift their focus to that cue in an attempt to understand what might be going on. However, as Dougherty and Smythe (2004) note, these cues are sometimes dismissed. Because they are novel they may be interpreted as a misunderstanding. For example, with regards to exit, a person may stop after making sense of the individual event and not consider the exit as a clue to a greater organizational problem. What could have been a cue for sensemaking is let go.

The seventh and final property of sensemaking is that plausibility is more important than accuracy. The sense that is made of a surprising event does not have to be accurate as long as it is possible. For example, a group of coworkers may develop their own understanding of why a person quit their job, regardless of the "real" reasons for the person leaving. Because these meanings are intersubjectively created and adopted within the group, the real or true reasons for the person's exit become secondary and virtually unimportant for the group. This idea supports Wallemacq and Sims' (1998) notion that different people can make different sense of the same events.

In addition to the seven properties of sensemaking, Weick (2001) argues that sensemaking is a process of committed interpretation. As an action becomes more public and harder to undo, or deny, a person's commitment to that action increases. Furthermore, volitional acts also strengthen commitment because they can not be disowned. When actions are both public and volitional a person is driven to supply an explanation that acts to increase or resume social order. Because exit can act as a break in the social order, and because it is a highly committed act, presenting explanations for the

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event, or justifications as Weick calls them, is an important step because it begins the overall sensemaking process that can lead to the validation of the act.

In summary, sensemaking occurs throughout the exit process. Both the individual and the other organization members must make sense of why the person is leaving and what impact the individual's leaving will have on the organization. Understanding how people communicate during exit will allow for a better understanding of how the sensemaking process unfolds during exit. As Brown (2000) suggests, sensemaking is a process of interpretation and meaning creation that leads to the production of intersubjective accounts. During exit, people engage in sensemaking by constructing accounts for why they are leaving, they share those accounts with others, and then those people engage in sensemaking in developing their own accounts for why a person is leaving. The next section of this paper will examine accounts in further detail.

Social Accounts

According to Louis (1980), when people experience a shock, such as someone leaving a job, they interact with each other to make sense of what is going on around them and to determine how they should respond. One way that people can do this is by exchanging accounts (Louis, 1980). Specifically, an account is "a statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behavior" (Scott & Lyman, 1968, p. 46). Accounts can be made by the actor or another person. So, in the case of exit, both leavers and stayers can create accounts for the behavior of the leaver. These accounts can be thought of as the products of sensemaking.

People use accounts to clarify the connection between their actions and other's expectations of them (Scott & Lyman, 1968). According to Morgan, Frost, and Pondy

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(1983), "individuals are seen as engaged in ongoing processes through which they attempt to make their situations rationally accountable to themselves and others" (p. 24). Research has shown that people give accounts for a number of reasons including, but not limited to, impression management (Goffman, 1971), responses to face-threatening situations (Schlenker, 1980), and image restoration (Benoit, 1995). Accounts can also be useful tools to reduce anger, penalties, and aggression (Braaten, Cody, & DeTienne, 1993), as well as disapproval and resentment (Folger, Rosenfield, & Robinson, 1983).

Accounting can be likened to explaining one's behavior. However, Scott and Lyman (1968) make an important note to distinguish accounts from explanations. Explanations are similar to accounts but they occur in situations where the action is not considered untoward and the event does not have implications for the relationship between the parties. The explanation becomes an account when the action requiring explanation is unanticipated or untoward. Schönbach (1980) describes these events as "failure events." Failure is not the opposite of success in this instance. While the action is not necessarily a failure in the traditional sense, it "represents a violation of social expectations or role requirements, and thus creates a failure event" (Bies, Shapiro, & Cummings, 1988, p. 382). Or, as Semin and Manstead (1983) eloquently argue, events "are problematic in the sense that they do not fit into the flawless progress of social interaction" (p. 1). The idea of a failure event or a problematic event is directly linked to the notion of surprise and shock in the sensemaking literature. Shocks, like failure events, are events that do not fit in to the expected progress of organizational life. While some shocks can be expected to a degree, they cannot be predicted, and so the occurrence of the event can still produce some shock at the time it happens. For example, people who

have been warned of potential layoffs in an organization may know that they are coming but may still experience surprise or shock when the layoffs actually affect their job. In another example, it is commonplace for people to have a coworker quit. However, the general expectation of this event does not prevent the shock or surprise that happens when the event actually occurs.

Leaving One's Job as a Failure Event

Quitting a job is not necessarily an improper action, nor does it mean a person has failed. In many situations though, it can be considered unexpected, unusual, or disruptive. While there are certainly exceptions to the rule such as temporary work, for the most part leaving one's job would be considered a violation of the job's role requirements. The act of leaving may not be problematic for the leaver, but it can disrupt the expectations and goals of others and thus is still considered a "failure event" because of how it is interpreted by others. Additionally leaving often does create surprise, at least for some groups in the organization (Jablin, 2001). Furthermore, leaving can take on a negative connotation. Those who stay might be upset to see the person go or they may be irritated that they have to take over that person's duties. Thus, it seems reasonable to consider quitting or deciding to quit one's job as an untoward action.

Research has shown that there are a number of other types of failure events in organizations. Braaten et al. (1993) identified four types of failure events which they labeled as sociability, tardiness, judgment, and performance. In sociability events the account giver lacked social grace or etiquette or violated accepted social rules. As the name suggests, in tardiness offenses the account giver was late for work, a meeting or other event. Questionable judgment offenses included those actions where an employee

did not follow standard operation procedure. Finally, performance violations included

those instances where an employee made a mistake, clerical error, or had otherwise sub-

par performance. These examples help to illustrate other violations that might not be

considered "failures" in everyday life, yet in terms of social accounts, they are events that

would be considered untoward actions. Quitting a job is certainly more of a violation than

tardiness so it is reasonable to assume that research would support identifying quitting as

a failure event.

Scott and Lyman's (1968) conceptualization of accounts as responses to failure

events is not the only one found in the literature. Some scholars reject the assertion that

accounts are only created in response to untoward actions or problematic situations

(Buttny, 1993). Regardless of the perspective adopted, in each case, researchers adopt or

create some type of system or typology for analyzing the accounts. Several typologies

been identified in the literature.

Account Typologies

One key focus of the literature on accounts has been determining a typology of

accounts and many have been developed (Goffman, 1971; Schlenker, 1980; Schonbach,

1980; Scott & Lyman, 1968; Semin & Manstead, 1983), but generally they fall into two

groupings (Benoit, 1995; Tata, 1996). Theorists in the first group tend to follow Scott and

Lyman's (1968) typology which identifies two primary types of accounts: excuses and

justifications. Excuses are "socially approved vocabularies for mitigating or relieving

responsibility when conduct is questioned" (Scott & Lyman, p. 47) and justifications are

"accounts in which one accepts responsibility for the act in question but denies the

pejorative quality associated with it (p. 47). Both excuses and justifications have sub-categories which will be examined in further detail later.

The second grouping of account typologies stem from Scott and Lyman's (1968) original research, but scholars have expanded the typology to include refusals and concessions or apologies (Schlenker, 1990). Refusals deny that the event occurred, deny the right of a person to reproach, or refuse guilt. Conversely, concessions explicitly accept guilt, express regret, or offer restitution for the event. Like accounts and justifications, both refusals and concessions have numerous sub-categories. Benoit (1995) argues that Schonbach (1980) presents the most complete typology of accounts. However, because the categories added by Schonbach are not as relevant to the event under examination, quitting one's job, Scott and Lyman's (1968) original typology of excuses and justifications will be used. In other words, refusal and concession, Schonbach's (1980) additional categories, are not particularly applicable to the event of quitting one's job. For example, it is quite unlikely that a person will deny they quit their job (refusal account) or simply express that they are guilty or try to make up for quitting (concession account). Additionally, neither of these types of accounts contribute to sensemaking in the way excuses and justifications do.

As discussed previously, this study will examine one type of failure event, leaving one's job. It can be assumed that in most cases, there will be an accounting process for this action. As mentioned above, Scott and Lyman's (1968) typology for social accounts will be used to analyze these accounts. The two sub-categories of Scott and Lyman's typology are excuses and justifications. The following sections will examine these two sub-categories of social accounts in greater detail.

Excuses. Generally, excuses are accounts "in which one admits that the act in question is bad, wrong, or inappropriate but denies full responsibility" (Scott & Lyman, 1968, p. 47). According to the same authors, excuses can come in four forms: appeals to accidents, defeasibility, biological drives, and scapegoating. An account that appeals to accident shifts responsibility for the event to the environment or to circumstances that are outside of a person's control. For example, a person might argue that they were late to work because their child's school bus came late or because the roads were icy. Importantly, appeals to accidents are more believable in situations where they occur infrequently. In other words, it is much easier to believe an excuse about a late school bus when it happens once every few months, not three times a week.

The second form of excuse is an appeal to defeasibility. Appeals to defeasibility focus on a lack of information, misinformation or a lack of free will. Here, both denial of intent and denial of knowledge of consequence are important. For example, if a person files a complaint about another employee and that employee ends up being fired over the incident, the person who filed the complaint may account for their behavior by arguing that they did not know that the consequence would be termination.

A third type of excuse is an appeal to biological drives. These appeals make the fatalistic argument that the event or offense was the result of an uncontrollable biological drive. So, if a woman were to remark, "he can't help his insensitivity; it is his nature as a man," she would be making an excuse that appeals to biological drives. The acceptance of such appeals may differ by culture.

The final form of excuse is scapegoating. In such an appeal, a person argues that their behavior was in response to someone else's behavior or attitudes. For example, an

employee accused of sexual harassment might use a scapegoating excuse and argue that "he or she has been flirting with me all month," therefore transferring the impetus for their action to another.

In summary, in excuses, the account giver acknowledges the negative evaluation of their action but denies full responsibility for the act. The responsibility may be transferred to an outside circumstance, a lack of information, a biological drive or another person. In any case, the believability of excuses can be related to their frequency of use. People are more likely to accept an excuse from someone who rarely gives them rather than from someone who is always providing excuses.

Justifications. The second type of account identified by Scott and Lyman (1968) is the justification. Justifications are different from excuses in that they recognize but do not agree with the negative evaluation of the event. Here the justification acts to defuse the negative evaluation of an act or its consequences. Specifically, justifications "recognize a general sense in which the act in question is impermissible, but claim that the particular occasion permits or requires the very act" (p. 51). Effective justifications must be judged as intelligible and warrantable if they are to be accepted (Harré, 1977). There are six different types of justification. The first four, denial of injury, denial of victim, condemnation of condemners, and appeal to loyalty are what Sykes and Matza (1957) referred to as "techniques of neutralization." The additional two are sad tales and self-fulfillment.

The first technique of neutralization or justification is a denial of injury. This technique argues that the act was justified because no one was hurt or because the consequences were minor. For example, if a person leaves work early on the days their

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boss is out of town, they might argue that no one felt a consequence for their action so it was permissible.

Denying the victim of an act is a second type of justification. Here the argument is that the action was acceptable because the person dealing with the consequences was deserving of the "injury." If a coworker refuses to cover for absence of another coworker, the first individual might argue that the person deserves a punishment for not showing up to work so the refusal to cover was an acceptable action.

The third technique of justification is a condemnation of condemners. Similar to an ad populum fallacy, this justification argues that everyone else does what the individual did and worse, and the others do not have to pay retribution. In other words, the offender did wrong, but not as wrong as others. For example, if a person shows up late for a meeting they might argue that "Sue and Mike were even later for last week's meeting and they didn't get in trouble."

The fourth type of justification is an appeal to loyalties. In this case, the action of one is justified because of an unbreakable loyalty to another, regardless of the consequences to others. So, in this case, if an employee does not complete a project at work due to having to stay home with a sick child, they may argue that their number one allegiance is to the child, not the organization.

The final two types of justification fall outside of Sykes and Matza's (1957) techniques of neutralization, but are still valid justification techniques. The first is sad tales. Here, a person in essence blames their fault on a sad event or history. Examples of these sad tales can range from a troublesome life story, to marital problems, to monetary struggles and everywhere in between. In particular, this type of justification makes the

argument that because of the sad tale, the negative evaluation of the event should be removed. The final type of justification is called self-fulfillment. Self-fulfillment boils down to the premise that people have the right to attain personal goals desires and essentially do what they want to. So, if a person leaves their job, their justification may be as simple as "I wanted to do something I enjoyed more." Achieving a personal goal is typically constructed as a positive life event so again, the goal of this justification is for the negative evaluation to be removed completely.

Account Functions

According to Semin and Manstead (1983), accounts are a form of motive talk. People are attempting to restore the social order that was interrupted by their failure event. Accounts have been analyzed in terms of image restoration (Benoit, 1995) , impression management (Schlenker, 1980), attribution of responsibility and facework (Semin & Manstead, 1983).Certainly these concepts are related to one another and all may be accomplished in the process of accounting for behavior. However, these concepts can also be thought of in terms of how they influence the creation of accounts.

Because accounts are motive talk, they have some overall function in terms of their goal. Because reality is socially constructed, people can use accounts to reframe and reconstruct events, including failure events (Buttny, 1993). According to Buttny, there are three general functions of accounts that go beyond accounting for the event and shape how the account is created. Accounts can function to save face, serve relational functions, and serve as a form of social control. In the case of a problematic event or untoward action, one function a person wants to achieve is to restore their own or other's "face." Stemming from the work of Goffman (1967), facework is a basic principle of social

interaction. Accounts may serve to preserve or reconstruct face that may have been lost during the failure event. Similarly, accounts can act to restore relationships. If social relationships are damaged or severed because of an untoward action, the account, despite the specific type, may be an attempt to restore the balance to the relationship. Finally, accounts act as a form of social control. This is evidenced by people's expectation that accounts need to be given to explain behavior when it breaks expectation. Accounts can be used to explain why social rules were broken.

Because accounts have these general functions, they can also be seen as reasons or motivations for the creation of accounts. Because accounts are purposefully created, these goals may act as motivating factors for the creation of a certain type of account. Beyond these three goals of or motivations for creating accounts, Bies et al. (1988) argue that two additional goals exist for account creators. People strive to make accounts both intelligible and warrantable (Harré, 1977). If these goals are met, people will understand both why the action occurred and why it was the appropriate action. Taking all of these perspectives, one could argue that people have a number of motivations for creating accounts. In other words, there may be a number of factors that influence the creation of a certain account. One or more of these motivations may be present in the creation of an account and they may influence the overall impact the account has.

The Impact of Accounts

Certainly, the use of accounts is purposeful. People could very well refuse to offer accounts for their actions, but this is likely the exception. People are inclined to explain behavior for one reason or another and these accounts often have impacts which are beneficial. As Braaten et al (1993) argue, impressions of account givers are "strongly

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affected by the communication of accounts" (p. 246). Tata (1996) found that social accounts could help managers who had to deny employee requests. If the accounts were perceived as sincere and adequate by employees, their negative reactions were reduced. Specifically, when managers provided excuses for why they denied a request, attributions of responsibility were decreased. Similarly, when managers provided justifications in similar situations, employee's perceptions of fairness were increased. Bies et al. (1988) found that manager's use of accounts was negatively associated with "subordinates' feelings of anger, procedural injustice, disapproval of the boss, and complaints to higher-ups" (p. 390). They note, however, that the subordinates critically evaluate the account before accepting it. Thus, accounts must meet the requirements of sincerity and adequacy as described above. In the cases where the account is not accepted, conflict can follow (Braaten et al., 1993).

In summary, the literature on accounts suggests that when problematic or untoward social behavior occurs, people are expected to account for what they have done or said. These accounts can ask others to excuse the behavior or they can deny the negative evaluation of the action. Accounts can be examined as products of sensemaking because they represent the meanings that people have constructed around the events in question. Furthermore, accounts share several of the properties of sensemaking in that they are retrospectively created, they represent the meanings constructed of the event, they are intersubjectively created and social in that they are required or called for by others, they are brought on by shocks in the environment, and finally, the believability of the account is more important than how accurately it represents what happened.

The remainder of this chapter will provide a summary of the literature presented here focusing specifically the research questions that this study will examine.

Research Questions

Like the other stages in the socialization model, exit is a process. While the sub-phases may have distinct elements, the process is fluid and adaptable. Thus, in order to understand communication during the exit process, it is vital to examine communication through the entire process. In order to develop an understanding of what role communication plays across the phases of exit, this study will examine communication in the pre-announcement, announcement, and post-announcement phases.

Pre-Announcement

As discussed previously, scholars have identified a number of behavioral, attitudinal, and communication antecedents to exit. Similarly, scholars have analyzed the paths that people take to exit (Lee et al., 1996). Less, however, is known about the communication that characterizes this process. According to Jablin (2001), individuals often communicate cues or signals that they are contemplating exit, or that they have decided to exit. These cues differ based on the level of intentionality and discreetness. The communication of these cues may also provide a glimpse into the sensemaking processes of these individuals. As they make sense of their decision to quit, a person may communicate to others about the relevant factors that influenced their decision. This activity highlights the social nature of sensemaking. Yet, very little research has examined sensemaking as it occurs during non-entry organizational transitions (Jablin & Kramer, 1998). In order to explore the ideas presented above, the following research questions are presented.

RQ1: How do people make sense of their decisions to leave an organization?

RQ2: How do people communicate to reach a decision to leave a job?

RQ2a: What informational cues do people communicate to others before they announce that they are leaving?

RQ2b: Who do people communicate with when they are contemplating exit?

RQ2c: Does cue content differ based on cue target?

Announcement/Actual Exit

The actual exit phase begins when a person makes the formal announcement that they are leaving the organization. Interestingly, little is known about how people make the announcement. Jablin (2001) states that the formal announcement is often anticlimactic and the announcement is designed to politely convey the necessary information. To better examine this process, a third research question is posed:

RQ3: How do people communicate their decisions to leave their jobs to others?

As Jablin (2001) argues, one of the most important functions of communication in the announcement/actual exit stage is to provide an explanation for why the employee is leaving. Research has suggested that those who leave engage in a process of social accounting where they provide members of the organizations explanations for their decisions. Previous research has found that people give numerous reasons for leaving (Nicholson & West, 1988). Yet, beyond simple reason giving, Jablin (2001) suggests that leavers will offer accounts that are more complex than a simple listing of reasons. Following sensemaking theory, these accounts are representative of the sense they have made about their decisions to leave. To more fully examine how people account for their decisions to exit, the following questions are presented:

RQ4a: What types of accounts do people offer for leaving their jobs?

RQ4b: Does the type of account given differ based on a person's reason for leaving their job?

RQ4c: Do the accounts people give for leaving differ based on the target of the account?

By providing accounts for their actions, those who are leaving may be attempting to initiate a particular sensemaking episode. In other words, their accounts may be offered up in hopes that those who are staying will accept the accounts and make the same sense of the event as did the person who is leaving. If this happens, the leaver may be able to counteract the potential negative consequences of their exit. As the literature suggests, people offer accounts for a number of reasons from impression management (Goffman, 1971) to relationship restoration (Buttny, 1993). Thus, three questions are asked to better understand what motivations influence the creation of accounts.

RQ5a: What motivates the creation of exit accounts?

RQ5b: Do account motivations differ based on the target of the account?

RQ5c: Do account motivations differ based on reason for leaving?

Post-Exit

Research on retirees has suggested that communication decreases after a person has left their job (Avery & Jablin, 1988). Research by Wilson (1983) supports this idea for leavers in general. Her research suggests that people come to a realization that they will not be in the organization to share information so they attempt to bring closure to their projects to make it easier on those who will remain in the organization. Importantly,

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she is implying that people realize that their communication will change. Thus, a final research question is offered.

RQ6: How does communication between the leaver and stayers change after exit?

This chapter has reviewed the literature on socialization, voluntary exit, sense-making, and accounts. Then it proposed a number of research questions to further the understanding of communication during the three sub-phases of exit. The next chapter describes the methods used to answer these questions.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

This chapter describes the methodologies and methods that guided this study. This dissertation is a multiple-methodology study. Specifically, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The rationale for this decision was two-fold. First, some of the research questions necessitated qualitative methods to answer the questions. Second, as anticipated, the responses to the interviews suggested additional concepts that needed to be incorporated into the design of the questionnaire. The resulting data allowed for meaningful interpretation of participants' experiences as well as statistical analysis of participants' combined experiences.

Because the communication research on exit has not yet produced accepted quantitative or qualitative measures, only using one methodology did not allow for the complete picture of exit to emerge. As Lindlof (1995) argued, "the survey and the qualitative interview may usefully complement one another in a study (p. 164). Completing the interviews before distributing the questionnaire allowed me to make adjustments to the questionnaire so that it was representative of the variety of experiences participants had.

In the following pages, all three phases of data collection are described in detail. Phase one of the study was a series of interviews using an interpretive methodology. Phase two of the study was a questionnaire using a quantitative methodology. The final phase was a quantitative content analysis of one of the open-ended questions on the survey: "Please describe in your own words why you left your job." Proposed participants, procedures, and analyses are presented for each phase.

Phase One

The first phase of this study was designed to both answer the research questions presented in the previous chapter and to aid in the development and refinement of the questionnaire for phase two.

Methodology

The design of the first phase of this study is guided by an interpretive methodology. Interpretivist philosophies argue that human and social action is meaningful (Schwandt, 2000). As such, researchers investigating human action, or communication, must learn how those actions are interpreted by the actors. An interpretive methodology also assumes that meaning and reality are socially created phenomena. Meanings are created in human interaction. Thus, data collection under the interpretive umbrella is also a potential site of meaning creation. Such an approach allows the respondents' experiences of voluntary turnover to be examined. An interpretive methodology was particularly useful to understand the process of sensemaking because the interaction between the respondent and the researcher was examining a sensemaking episode and was also acting as an instance of sensemaking.

Method

The specific method that was employed in the first phase of this study was interviewing. The interviews were approached as "active interviews" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). From this perspective, the interview is seen as an occasion for the production of meaning. In an "active interview" respondent and the interviewer co-construct the meanings and the reality that emerge throughout the interview. In the interviews, the role of the researcher is one of a guide. During the interviews, I

encouraged the participants to reflect on their decision to voluntarily exit their organizations and to talk about the event and the process. During the discussion I tried to understand how the respondents made sense of that event. Yet, the discussion itself acted in some ways as a sensemaking process for that event. Sensemaking is retrospective; it happens after the act. Having the participant look back on and create meaning about that event provided insight on how and what sense has previously been made of that event.

To help guide the conversation, an interview guide detailing the major questions I asked the respondents was used in the interview (see Appendix A). This interview guide contained questions that were relevant to each of the research questions under investigation in this study. Research questions 1, 3, and 6 were answered solely by the interview data. However, the interview data was also used to refine the items on the questionnaire. For example, interviews were used to determine who participants communicated with regarding exit. The targets identified were developed into part of the questionnaire.

Interviews were conducted in a place that was comfortable and convenient for the respondent, as well as for the researcher. These places were typically chosen by the interviewee. At the outset of the interview, each respondent was provided with a copy of the consent form. After reading the consent form they were asked to give oral consent to participate in the study. Both tapes and transcripts were kept in a secure and locked location when they were not in use and remain in such a place. At the end of the interviews, respondents were asked to submit a short demographic form that was used to provide information about the sample and general context for the individual interviews

(see Appendix H). At the end of the interviews, several participants were asked if they would be willing to act as member checks after the analysis of the data was completed.

Participants

A combination of theoretical construct and snowball sampling was used to obtain participants. Theoretical construct sampling bases the selection of participants on whether or not they have relevant characteristics (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). There were several key criteria or characteristics that the participants in this study needed to meet. First and foremost, because this study examined the entire process of exit, participants must have left a job in the past twelve months and not simply be in the process of leaving or considering leaving. Second, as was stressed in the literature review, current exit research is primarily focused on voluntary exit. As such, the participants must have voluntarily left their jobs. Finally, in order to better represent the population of working adults, participants must have left a full-time paid position of employment that they held for at least six months. This final requirement was designed to exclude those who have left part-time and temporary positions because it is assumed that the turnover rate in such positions is higher and thus communication during exit might be quite different. In sum, participants were adults who have voluntarily left a full-time position of paid employment in the past twelve months. Because a goal of this study was to have a sample of people with diverse work backgrounds and experiences, no additional criteria were set. Snowball sampling was used to expand the pool of respondents beyond the researcher's initial contacts. Snowball sampling enlists participants to name additional contacts who meet the criteria and who might be willing to participate (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

The participant group for the interview phase of this study consisted of 24 respondents. One interview was removed from the data set because it was determined the respondent did not meet the study criteria, leaving 23 useable interviews. Transcripts were completed after each interview and analysis was ongoing throughout the interview process. I continued interviewing participants until theoretical saturation has been reached. Of the remaining 23 respondents, there were 17 women and 6 men. Respondents ranged in age from 25 to 57 years old with an average age of 35. All identified themselves as being either white or Caucasian. In terms of highest level of education achieved, 5 had high school degrees, 5 had some college, 10 had college degrees and 2 had graduate degrees. Respondents had left their jobs between one and 12 months prior to the interview with an average of approximately 8 months. They had been working in those jobs anywhere from 6 months to 38 years with an average length of employment of 105 months or approximately 8 years and 9 months. Positions held by respondents included public relations media coordinator, retail clerk, delivery driver, account administrator, banker, account sales manager, account collector, building service coordinator, assembler, accountant, case manager, registrar, claims deputy, account executive, information technical analyst, and bank vice president. Only two held positions that did not require interacting with customers or clients.

Analysis and Verification

The interview data gathered in this study was used to answer several research questions. Specifically, interview data were used to answer the following questions: RQ1, how do people make sense of their decisions to leave their job; RQ3, how do people

communicate their decisions to leave their jobs to others; and RQ7, how does

communication between the leaver and stayers change after exit?

Each interview was audio taped and transcribed for analysis purposes, resulting in

141 pages of single spaced data. On average, interviews lasted approximately 35 minutes.

The data that were gathered as a part of this phase of the study underwent thematic

analysis. The data were read and re-read to uncover the themes that were present. The

member-checking process served as my first form of verification. When the write-up of

the analysis was complete, two of the respondents who agreed to be member-checks were

given a draft of the analysis to read. I met with one of these individuals in person and

asked her to provide me feedback about the credibility of my findings and interpretation

of her experiences. The second member-check was conducted through e-mail. One

participant suggested that the name of a theme seemed to have an unnecessary negative

connotation. Based on our discussion I agreed that that the theme was not necessarily

negative and thus changed the name to better suit the category. No other substantive

comments were made regarding the analysis. Because Cresswell (1997) suggests that at

least two forms of verification should always be employed, I also make use of thick, rich

description in the presentation of results. Thick rich description provides the readers with

enough information to decide for themselves whether the analysis was appropriate and if

the study has any transferability.

Phase Two

The purpose of the second phase of this study was to gather research on a greater

number of participants' experiences with voluntary exit in an attempt to identify

generalizable patterns of communication that exist in the exit phases. To accomplish this,

a total of 174 participants were surveyed about their previous experiences with voluntary exit.

Participants

Participants for the second phase of this study generally met the same criteria as the participants in Phase 1. Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants. Purposive sampling recruits participants who have relevant characteristics. In this phase of the study, participants were again adults who voluntarily left a full-time, paid job that they held for at least six months. The only difference in this group of respondents is that they could have left their job up to 18 months prior to completing the survey. It was hoped that this change would increase the pool of potential participants and since respondents were not being asked to recall the amount of detail as was necessary in the interviews, it was decided it would not greatly impact the integrity of their responses. Specifically, students in undergraduate courses were offered extra credit to give the questionnaires to qualifying people. They were only granted credit if the person returned the completed questionnaire and there was a maximum of 2 questionnaires per student. Overall, this technique resulted in a pool of diverse participants from a variety of industries.

Once willing participants were identified they were given a copy of the questionnaire and consent form along with a self-addressed stamped return envelope. A cover sheet described the purpose of the study and the instructions for participation (Appendix I). Participants were assured of their anonymity in completing the questionnaire. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire and the

demographic form and return the questionnaire in the self-addressed stamped return envelope provided.

In total, approximately 600 questionnaires were given to students at two mid-western universities. Of the 179 questionnaires that were returned, 160 were usable. Nineteen surveys were deemed unusable for one of two primary reasons. The majority of these were completed by participants who did not fit the specified criteria. For example, several noted on the demographic sheet that they had only been employed at that job for two months or three weeks. Several other questionnaires were returned incomplete.

The 89 female and 71 male respondents ranged in age from 18 to 65 ($M=31.7$, s.d.=11.12). The respondents had been at their jobs anywhere from 6 to 480 months ($M=52.46$, s.d. 73.11). The respondents had voluntarily left their jobs anywhere from 0 to 18 months ago ($M=6.6$, s.d.= 3.95). Highest education achieved ranged from "some high school" to "graduate degree" with totals as follow: some high school=1; high school diploma=15; some college=63; college degree=59; graduate degree=20. The majority of respondents, 86.9%, identified themselves as Caucasian/white, along with 5% African American/Black, .6 % Native American, 1.3 % white/Hispanic, 1.9% Asian, .6 % mixed ethnicity, and .6% Irish American. Finally, there were a vast variety of industries represented, including but not limited to: social work, education, hospitality, accounting, healthcare, retail, trucking/transportation, biotechnology, and banking.

Instrument

Several of the research questions in this study are appropriate for quantitative analysis. Four variables were measured on the questionnaire: cue content, communication target, reason for leaving, and account motivation.

Cue content. Because the content of cues has not been examined in the literature, this instrument was developed out of the interview data. Thus, this part of the questionnaire was developed after the interview data had been gathered. Based on an analysis of the information provided in the interviews, eight themes appeared in the data in terms of communication content. People contemplating exit noted talking about: their coworkers' opinions regarding their desire to leave, complaints about the organization, complaints about people in the organization, complaints about their job, weighing the pros and cons of the job, the toll the job was taking on their non-work life, the desire to keep silent about leaving, and finally, changing work habits. These eight themes were developed into a 24 question instrument (Appendix C) where respondents were asked to respond on a five point Likert-type scale indicating how frequently they used the different types of information cues. The instrument included questions such as: "I asked other people to give me their opinions about leaving my job," "I kept my dislikes about my job to myself," "I told people about specific problems the organization had," and "I told people that my job was causing me personal distress," among others. Response options ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Once data had been gathered, the instrument was submitted to a principle component factor analysis with Varimax rotation analysis to determine if general types of cues existed. This analysis produced 6 factors (using the criterion of $\lambda > 1$) explaining a total of 63.85% of the variance. Loading criteria for the variables required they be greater than .5 on the loading factor and .1 greater than the coefficients for that item on other factors (see Table 1). Items 13, 15, and 23 were subsequently discarded as they either did not meet the .5 loading criteria or cross-loaded within .1. Factors 1 through 4 were

reliable above the .7 level, the alpha for Factor 4 was .673 and the alpha for factor 5 was

.560 (see Table 1). Unfortunately, Factors 3, 4 and 5 ended up with only two items each.

However, each was kept because they were theoretically distinct and had sufficient

reliability. Factor 6 (α = .406) was dropped because of low reliability and lack of

theoretical significance.

Table 1 Factor Analysis of Communication Cues

Item		Factor Loadings				
		Work Dis-Satisfaction	Advice	Personal Problems	Secrecy	Work Behaviors
5	I did not talk about the complaints I had about the organization. (r)	.824	.067	-.038	.087	.164
10	I kept my dislikes about my job to myself. (r)	.812	.032	-.013	.250	.133
6	I didn't talk to others about people I didn't like in the organization (r)	.766	.015	.210	-.100	.086
16	I talked to others about what I didn't like about my job.	.720	.160	.199	.211	.218
18	I told people about specific problems the organization had	.646	.239	.281	.141	.144
11	I openly talked about what I didn't like about the organization	.589	.037	.297	-.028	.180
14	I talked to others about people I didn't like at work.	.586	.020	.402	-.010	.077
21	I was open about what I did not like about my job.	.554	.122	.285	.238	.138
3	I asked others about what they thought of my other job opportunities.	.016	.787	.147	.106	-.045
2	I asked other people to give me their opinions about me leaving my job	.211	.762	-.036	.017	.015
17	I talked to people about new job opportunities	.025	.616	-.021	.477	.237
1	I actively sought out people's help in finding jobs	-.079	.587	.398	-.182	.067
20	I was open about having issues with certain people at work	.348	.113	.688	.095	.129
19	I told people that my job was causing me personal distress	.448	.058	.617	.235	-.008
9	I didn't want anyone to know I was considering leaving my job (r)	.212	-.049	.072	.806	-.091
8	I didn't tell anyone I was looking for a job (r)	.255	.342	.268	.608	-.128
24	When I was considering leaving I stopped working on new projects	.191	-.009	.122	-.173	.804
4	I did not change my work habits when I was thinking about leaving (r)	.318	.082	-.036	.026	.641
Alpha		.894	.717	.712	.673	.560
Eigenvalues		7.658	2.687	1.536	1.267	1.158
% of Variance		31.908	11.197	6.40	5.278	4.826

Five factors were identified in this factor analysis. The first factor was labeled *work dissatisfaction* as each of the items has to do with problems, dislikes, or dissatisfaction regarding one's work, job, or organization. In the second factor, *advice*, each of the items focuses on the individual's use of other people to give opinions, assistance, or advice regarding their exit process. The third factor, *personal problems*, represents items that highlight an individual's problems with other people at work and also the negative ways that work impacts their life. The fourth factor was labeled *secrecy*. *Secrecy* focuses on people's desire to not tell anyone about their desire to quit. Originally, these two items were written as negative examples of other categories. However, the factor analysis clearly indicates that the desire to remain secretive during the process of exit is an important factor in itself. The fifth and final factor is *work behaviors*. These items represented people's changing work habits during their transition to exit. This category is unique in that it is not a cue that can be expressed verbally; yet it shows the importance of nonverbal communication as an exit cue.

Communication target. Jablin (2001) suggests that cue targets can include coworkers, bosses, clients, family members, and the community. Lee, Mitchell, Wise and Fireman (1996) note that some people have job alternatives before they quit. This suggests that people communicate with other potential employers before leaving their current positions. Thus, potential employers were added as a potential communication target group. Similarly, the "community" group was replaced with a group that will be called "friends." The final list of groups thus includes the following: spouse/family, coworkers, supervisor/boss, friends, customers/clients, and potential employers. To examine cue targets, twenty-four items were created to measure these six target groups

(Appendix D). Because no additional groups were identified as important during the interview process these six groups were used throughout the questionnaire to represent the different groups that people communicate with throughout the exit process. A series of four questions was repeated substituting the different target groups. Items included: "Before I actually quit my job, my coworkers knew I was going to quit," "I asked my spouse/family for advice before quitting my job," "before making my final decision, I talked to my friends about leaving my job," and "I didn't tell my supervisor I was considering leaving my job." The resulting instrument was a Likert-type scale with five response options that range from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Each target group (spouse/family, coworkers, boss/supervisor, customers/clients, friends and potential employers) was considered to be a factor. Thus, reliability tests were run on each set of items by cue target. Tests of reliability gave each target group a Chronbach's alpha of above .70 (see Table 2).

Table 2 Alpha Levels for Cue Targets

Spouse/Family	.829
Coworkers	.750
Boss/Supervisor	.816
Customers/Clients	.771
Friends	.703
Potential Employers	.811

Communication target was also measured in terms of cue type. Participants were asked to indicate which targets they spoke with about each cue item on a grid. The axes of the grid consisted of the 24 informational cue items identified in the first part of the

questionnaire on the x-axis and the 6 cue targets noted previously on the y-axis.

Participants were asked to circle each group that the question applied to (see Appendix J).

Reason for leaving. Reason for leaving was analyzed using an adapted form of a

scale created by Nicholson and West (1988; Appendix E). In their work they found 16

primary reasons why people left their jobs. These were then categorized into three

general groups: future-oriented, avoidance, and circumstantial. Examples of their reasons

for leaving included: to do something more challenging and fulfilling, to move to a

different location, for child rearing and for dissatisfaction with my job. Those sixteen

items (or primary reasons) were combined with nine additional items created to reflect

the general categories Nicholson and West (1988) described (future-oriented reasons,

avoidance of bad work situations, and circumstantial factors, factors that were external to

the job/organization). The combined twenty-five items were presented in a Likert-type

scale with five response options ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

Items included: "I left my job to change career directions", "I left my job to improve my

standard of living," "I left my job to acquire new skills."

To determine each individual's reason for leaving, the reason for leaving

instrument was submitted to a principle component factor analysis with Varimax rotation.

This analysis produced three factors (using the criterion of $\lambda > 1$) explaining a total of

63.1% of the variance. Loading criteria for the variables required they be greater than .5

on the loading factor and .1 greater than the coefficients for that item on other factors (see

Table 3). Items 12 and 16 were discarded because they double-loaded on two factors.

Item 5 did not load on any variable at the specified criteria level. Item 1 was discarded

because it loaded as a single-item factor.

Table 3 Factor Analysis for Reason for Leaving

	Factor Loadings		
Item	Aviod-ance	Future-Oriented	Circum-stantial
I left my job to get out of a negative work environment.	**.891**	.054	-.054
I left my job because there were problems at my job.	**.876**	.002	.051
I left my job because of things I disliked about my company/job.	**.802**	.062	-.168
I left my job because of negative pressures from supervisors.	**.795**	-.118	.063
I left my job because I was unhappy with my work situation	**.781**	-.020	-.172
I left my job because I saw no future for me there	**.538**	.409	-.173
I left my job to do something more challenging and fulfilling	.076	**.800**	-.173
I left my job to do something that was more in line with my long-term goals.	-.118	**.763**	-.223
I left my job in order to pursue my career goals.	-.025	**.731**	-.256
I saw leaving my job as a step toward career objectives	.069	**.687**	-.115
I left my job to acquire new skills	.059	**.597**	.113
I left my job to change career directions	-.025	**.583**	.122
I left my job because it was not advancing my career.	.444	**.574**	-.083
A family or other non-work issue was the main reason I left my job.	-.150	-.158	**.790**
I left my job for child rearing.	.039	-.004	**.762**
The reason I left my job is unrelated to my work.	-.320	-.110	**.597**
Alpha	.888	.841	.655
Eigenvalues	5.583	3.763	2.680
% of Variance	22.334	15.051	10.722

Factors 1 and 2 were reliable above the .7 level. Factor 3 had an alpha of .655 (see Table 3). Factor 4 was not used in further analyses because it had a low reliability, α = .537. A final fifth factor was also discarded because it had only two items and was not theoretically sound. The items were: I left my job due to the end of my contract and I left

my job because of pressure from domestic factors. The factor analysis strongly confirmed Nicholson and West's (1988) findings. The items in three remaining factors from the factor-analysis are representative of Nicholson and West's categories of avoidance reasons, future-oriented reasons and circumstantial reasons for leaving one's job. Items from Factor 1, avoidance, focus on negative elements of the work such as the job itself, the organization or the people there. Items from Factor 2, future-oriented, were all positive in nature and focused on forward or future-oriented movement and advancement. The final factor, circumstantial, had items that associated a persons leaving with a factor external to work.

Account motivations. The next instrument on the questionnaire examined people's motivations for giving accounts. Although no exhaustive list of account motivations exists, several authors have provided ideas about what could potentially motivate the creation of accounts. These general motivations were discussed in the literature review. They included face saving, social relationships, social control, and creating warrantable and intelligible accounts.

Account motivations were measured by the scale in Appendix G. Account motivation was measured by a fifteen item instrument, with three items written to represent each of the five motivations identified in the literature. Examining how motivations differ by target was difficult because it entails asking about each motivation for each target group. Rather than have five, fifteen item scales, one for each target, participants were asked to identify which motivations were important for each target on a grid with the items on the x-axis and the target groups on the y-axis. This was intended to

reduce participant fatigue. All fifteen items were used so that reliability of the items could be measured.

The account motivation instrument was submitted to a principle component factor analysis with Varimax rotation. This analysis produced three factors (using the criterion of $\lambda > 1$) explaining a total of 61.1% of the variance. Loading criteria for the variables required they be greater than .5 on the loading factor and .1 greater than the coefficients for that item on other factors (see Table 4). Item six was subsequently discarded as it did not load on any variable at the specified criteria level. Factors 1 through 3 were reliable above the .7 level.

Table 4 Factor Analysis for Account Motivation

	Factor Loadings		
Item	Justification	Face-Saving	Understanding
I wanted people to feel that if they were in my situation, they would also leave.	**.806**	.097	.234
I wanted people to understand that I had no choice but to leave	**.746**	.021	.221
I felt compelled to offer an explanation for why I was quitting	**.722**	.313	.197
I felt my people deserved to know why I was leaving	**.585**	.178	.564
Others wanted to know why I was leaving my job	**.555**	.410	-.006
I wanted to make sure that I didn't burn any bridges when I quit	.031	**.795**	.303
I did not want to make anyone at work look bad when I left	.362	**.753**	-.044
Maintaining the relationship with the person I told was important to me.	.102	**.704**	.406
I wanted to make sure I didn't look bad for quitting my job	.549	**.605**	.021
It was important that people knew why I had made the decision to quit my job	.345	.229	**.743**
I wanted people to understand why I was leaving	.196	.323	**.701**

It was important that people understood that my leaving was the right thing to do.	.341	.370	**.630**
I did not care if anyone understood why I needed to quit my job	-.058	-.060	**.602**
Alpha	.831	.814	.747
Eigenvalues	5.70	1.54	1.31
% of Variance	40.74	11.01	9.35

Three factors were identified by the factor analysis. The factors were labeled *justification, face-saving*, and *understanding*. In justification, people wanted others to judge their reason for leaving as acceptable. In *face-saving*, people were concerned with maintaining relationships. Finally, through *understanding*, people wanted others to know the reasons for and circumstances surrounding their exit.

Six additional factor analyses were run on this set of data to see how closely these overall factors would correspond with factors for the specific target groups. Factor analyses were run on the account motivation items for all six target groups individually. While the items in the motivation factors for spouse/family matched the overall motivation factors exactly, the remaining 5 target groups each resulted in factors with slightly different items (see Table 5). Because the reliabilities on the factors for the overall model were strong, and for comparative purposes, the decision was made to use the overall factors for the remainder of the analysis.

Table 5 Factor Items for Account Motivations for each Target Group

Item #			Target Groups				
	Overall	Spouse/ Family	Co- workers	Boss/ Supervisor	Customers/ Clients	Friends	Potential Employers
	9	9	8	8	8	8	8
	8	8	9	12	9	9	9
	10	10	11		11	10	10
	11	11	12		12	11	11
	12	12	13				12

						2
4	4	5	4	4	4	4
14	14	6	5	5	5	14
5	5	4	6	13	14	5
12	12	14		14		13
2	2	2	2	1	1	
1	1	3	3	2	2	
7	7	1	1	3	7	
3	3	7	7	7		
		10	10			
					12	
					3	

Note: Horizontal lines separate individual factors for each target group. Each target group has a different number of total items in the factors because in each factor analysis there were different items that either did not load or double-loaded on factors.

To measure overall motivation, scores of the individual items were summed, giving each participant a total score ranging from 0 (zero target groups marked for that motivation item) to 6 (every target group marked for that motivation item) for each item. For example, if only four target groups on the grid were checked for the item "I wanted them to understand why I was leaving," their score for that item was four. New items were created to represent the motivation factors for this instrument. Since each factor did not have the same number of items, the newly created items were averaged.

Demographics. The final portion of the questionnaire consisted of five demographic questions designed to provide a better understanding of the sample (Appendix H). Questions asked participants to indicate their sex, age, race, highest level of education obtained, years since they voluntarily left the position under question, the title and industry of that position, and months at that position. A copy of the complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix J.

Analysis

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Before the questionnaire was distributed, I administered it to a smaller sample of 10 individuals representative of the population in order to determine if any items are unclear or confusing and further refine the scales. A grammatical error was noted and fixed, yet no other problems were brought up.

Research Question 2. To answer research questions 2a and 2b, what informational cues do people communicate and to whom, both instruments were submitted to a repeated measures ANOVA. Repeated measures ANOVA were required because of the way the data were collected. In each case, there was no independent variable; the tests were simply repeatedly measuring differences in frequency using the same scale for different targets. In the first test, the different cue types acted as the repeating factor. In the second test, the different cue targets acted as the repeating factor. The repeated measures ANOVA compared the means of each group against the rest to determine if group differences existed. Bonferroni post hoc tests were used to determine which cue types and cue targets were most frequently used.

The third question in this series, RQ2c, asked how cue type and cue target were related. For this analysis, the fifth informational cue type factor, work behaviors (from RQ2a), was omitted because it focused on changing work behavior prior to leaving a job. While this is an important factor, it is nonverbal and thus respondents would not be able to identify who the target was for that communication. Similarly, it does not make logical sense to mark cue target groups for items such as "I started to tie up loose ends." Thus, only cue type Factors 1 through 4 were analyzed in terms of cue target.

Because of the unique way this data was collected, the data had to be recoded in such a way that allowed for analysis. Based on the questionnaires, the data only showed

whether or not (represented in SPSS as 1 or 0 respectively) the respondent talked to a specific group (ex. Spouse/family) about a specific item (ex. I actively sought out these people's help in finding jobs). So, to derive analyzable data, twenty four new variables were created in SPSS (6 cue targets x 4 cue types). The new continuous variables were calculated by summing the scores for all of the individual items for each cue type (as determined by the earlier factor analysis) and dividing by the total number of questions. Thus giving a score that ranged between zero and one. For example, the "advice" cue type had five items associated with. To get a score that represented advice for Spouse/Family, each of those five items, which had a score of either 0 or 1, was summed. That sum was then divided by five (the total number of items) giving each respondent a score falling between zero and one for Advice—Spouse/Family.

Research Question 4. The fourth series of research questions focused on exit accounts. Research question 4a is detailed in phase 3 of this chapter. Research question 4b asked whether the type of account differed based on the reason a person left their job. Initially, a 2 x 3 (account type: excuses, justifications) x (reason for leaving: future oriented, avoidance, circumstantial) chi-square was going to be used to examine differences in account types and reasons for leaving. However, since subsequent analysis of the respondents' written statements did not identify any excuses in the data this question became null.

Research Question 5. The final series of questions in the announcement/actual exit phase addressed what motivates the creation of accounts. Research question 5a asked what motivates the creation of accounts for people's decisions to quit. A repeated measures ANOVA was used to determine if there were significant differences in the

motivations for creating accounts. This test compared the means of each factor of the motivation variable. These factors were: justification, face-saving and understanding. A Bonferroni post hoc test was used to determine where significant differences existed.

The next two questions asked whether account motivations differ based on target and reason for leaving, two variables previously described. A series of five ANOVAs measured if the three motivation factors differed based on target, RQ5b. Target was the categorical independent variable and motivation was the continuous dependent variable.

With regards to reason for leaving, RQ5c, a series of three separate ANOVAs measured how general motivation differed based on reason for leaving, with the reason for leaving acting as the categorical independent variable and the three motivation factors acting as the continuous dependent variables. As was done in previous cases, combined scores were created to represent each of the three reason-for-leaving factors. Because individuals have a variety of reasons for leaving their jobs, most individuals ended up with scores above zero for each of those three newly created items. In order to run the statistical tests comparing reason for leaving with motivation, it was necessary to determine each individual's "primary reason for leaving." The respondent's primary reason for leaving was determined by computing an average score for each of the three reasons for leaving. Then, in a new item, each individual was given a label of one, two, or three, representing the three reasons for leaving factors, depending on which factor they scored highest for. For example, respondent one scored a 3.67 for avoidance, a 1.86 on future-oriented and a 2.33 on circumstantial. Thus, respondents' primary reason for leaving was coded as "1" for avoidance.

As for motivation, the number of target groups checked for each item was summed, giving each person a score for overall motivation. Thus, the more target groups that were checked for each item, the higher their score for that motivation. A smaller number represents a weaker motivation and a higher number represents a stronger motivation.

Phase Three

Phase three of the study was designed to analyze account type. To determine what type of accounts people give for leaving their job, participants were asked to respond to several open-ended questions on the questionnaire. On the questionnaire, participants were asked, in an open-ended format, to describe in their own words why they left their job (Appendix F, question 1). The original intention was to content analyze the accounts and place them into the corresponding account category. A codebook was developed to aid in this process. Accounts were first categorized as excuses or justifications based on Scott and Lyman's (1968) typology. From there, those accounts labeled as excuses and justifications were to be further analyzed and categorized according to the sub-categories of excuses and justifications. For example, a response may be coded primarily as an "excuse" and then further as an "appeal to defeasibility" which is a form of excuse. However, after coding nearly two-thirds of the data it was evident that this classification system was not a good fit with the data.

Specifically, the accounts fit nicely into the sub-categories of each excuses and justifications. However, those same accounts did not always fit with the major category. For example, in one account an individual stated that they quit their job because they were being sexually harassed at work. In terms of the excuses/justifications code, this

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would be considered a justification; the person felt that while quitting a job may have a negative evaluation in this case she does not agree with the negative evaluation of the event. She felt she was justified in this case. What is troublesome is that this account does not fit with any of the sub-categories of justification. In fact, the sub-category it makes the most sense with is one of excuses, scapegoating. Here, a person's behavior is a result of someone else's behavior or attitudes. This is not even a perfect fit for this account though as both "excuse" and "scapegoating" seem to imply that someone is shifting the blame. Thus, it was determined that a new approach was necessary.

Though the data did not fit perfectly into the categories identified in previous research, the concepts and differences highlighted in the accounts research are still important. Also, having previously coded much of the data into these categories, I was somewhat predisposed to such a classification. Because of this, when the data were recoded, they were done in a two-fold process. Using the justification section of the codebook developed earlier, I first recoded all "reasons for leaving." Their entire answer was considered the unit of text and each unit was coded into one of the two primary account types, excuses or justifications. None of the responses fell into the excuse category.

From this point, I employed the Constant Comparison Method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in hopes of finding sub-categories that were more suitable to the data from this study. The previously defined sub-categories of justification were kept as such, but I did not limit myself to these categories.

In the Constant Comparison Method texts are first broken into their basic units and then those units are broken into groups. The first unit begins the first grouping of

texts. After the first unit is read, each of the following units is read, one by one, each time comparing it with all of the previously grouped units. If the unit is similar to the first, they may be grouped together. If the unit differs from the first, it begins a new group. Every text unit thereafter goes through the same process of being compared with and contrasted to each of the previous units and then either being grouped or starting a new group. Each unit is examined separately until all units have been grouped. The units were considered to be the participant's entire explanation of why the left their job. If more than one appeal was present, the unit was coded as the most prominent category of appeal.

Requirements for this process include that no text be placed in more than one group. Each final group of texts should be different than the other groups and the units within each group should be similar to one another. When all units have been grouped, or when theoretical saturation of different groupings occurs, this process ends. Finally, the groups are examined and are labeled as categories. There were three resulting sub-categories. One sub-category was retained from the literature on justifications: appeal to loyalty. The other two categories that emerged from the data were: appeal to self-fulfillment and appeal to negative environment. Definitions and exemplars of these are provided in the results chapter. A trained coder was asked to code the first 15 questionnaires (approximately 10%). Cohen's Kappa was used to calculate intercoder reliability for the coding of the justification sub-categories was found to be $k = .91$. The one disagreement was discussed until an agreeable placement was found. The disagreement centered on a unit of text in which there were multiple appeals. To answer research question 4a, which was interested in the types of accounts offered, the data were tabulated and statistically analyses were run. Specifically, frequency totals were compiled

for the justification sub-categories. The categories were defined and further explained through the use of examples.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methods that were used to complete this study. Specifically, three phases were outlined. The first phase discussed the interview portion of the study, explaining the participants, analysis and verification of interviews. The second phase focused on the quantitative, questionnaire portion of the study. Here, respondents, instrument, and analysis were each examined. This section also highlighted the results of three factor analyses on cue type, motivation, and reason for leaving. Finally, phase three described the content analysis of respondents explanation of why they their job. The following chapter will present the results of the thematic analysis of interviews, statistical analyses of the questionnaires and the content analysis of the questionnaire.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This study had three phases that encompassed all of the research questions. In order to present the results in the clearest form, they will be presented by research question and not by the phase of study.

Research Question 1

The first question in this study asked "how do people make sense of their decisions to leave an organization?" At the same time that people are processing their decision to leave their jobs they are also transitioning to the act of announcing their exit and actually leaving. The following pages will examine the role of the trigger event in sensemaking, and the role of communication in both processing the decision to exit and transitioning to announcement of exit.

Trigger Event

In their model of voluntary employee turnover, Lee et al. (1996) propose a number of decision paths that people follow when they decide to exit voluntarily. The major elements of the overall model are shock, "the amount of psychological analysis that precedes decision to quit" (p. 6), and the act of quitting. Shocks are considered to be events that do not fit within the ongoing flow of daily activity. One path did not have a "shock" but had a trigger event, such as a spouse's retirement. These trigger events may have been anticipated for some time. In most cases of retirement, for example, people plan their retirement and are not shocked by it, perhaps with exceptions such as forced retirements.

While the trigger events that the respondents experienced are not the primary focus of this study, they are important because they act as the impetus for sensemaking to begin. One of the key elements of sensemaking is that it occurs retrospectively. People are not making sense about something that may happen in the future, but instead they are engaging in sensemaking for something which has already occurred. In terms of voluntary exit, the actual exit may be a shock for others in the organization but it is a wholly anticipated and premeditated event for the employee who is leaving. Thus, theoretically, there must be a point at which an internal decision is made that begins the process that leads the employee actual exit.

Several of the interviewees were able to pin-point specific trigger events that led them to decide they were leaving:

> Ian: I found out that they had, um, taken away our tuition reimbursement. They got rid of it. And I'm, in my head, you know, I talk to them about going to school. As soon as I found out that they got rid of it, I started looking.

> Karen: It was pretty well known ahead, kind of laid the foundation for it a long time ago. So I'm going to be leaving like around August (to begin school) and then that previous year in November I got pregnant. And so that kind of set it in stone.

> Krista: Well, it was mainly just that I was bored. That's what first I mean, I liked it at first. I started thinking it was just a learning process, but I felt like I had stuff to do. But, once you learn what to do, I discovered I was really bored and that's when I decided to leave.

Ian and Karen experienced specific events that triggered their decisions. For Krista, her boredom grew over time but she at a point she experienced a realization that her job was boring enough to cause her to leave. A final respondent had received an e-mail about a potential new job from a former associate and in his words: "That was the reason. That was what started it all."

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There are differences in these cases. In some, the trigger event led to an instantaneous decision to look for other work. When Ian's benefits were cut he decided at that moment he was quitting and started looking for another job. For Karen, making the decision to return to school, and then becoming pregnant were. For others, such as Krista, it took a while for the boredom to build up, but there was a breaking point that would be considered the trigger. Once the individual had experienced the trigger, eventual exit became a possibility and the sensemaking process began. While all of the individuals in this study did eventually exit their organizations, it is possible to go through this process without ever actually quitting. Making a decision to do something is not the equivalent of acting on that decision. Thus, in terms of the communication process that follows this trigger event, deciding to look for a job is equivalent to deciding to quit one's job because in deciding to look for other work one is accepting that the result of a successful search would require them to quit their current job.

Many, if not all, of the experiences of the interview respondents for this study could be aligned with one of the four decision paths that Lee et al. identified. They had a variety of different trigger events that led them to consider quitting, and they all did eventually go through the act of quitting. However, the data showed that the interim period between the trigger event and quitting is much more than a period of psychological analysis as Lee et al. suggested. This time period is a highly communicative period and it is through this communication in the interim between the trigger event and formally quitting that people make sense of their decision to leave.

Preannouncement Communication

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The period that Lee et al. (1996) call "psychological analysis before deciding to quit" is a very important period in the exit process. For Lee et al., this is the period between the trigger event (shock) and the actual act of quitting. However, it was made clear in the interviews that: one, this process is highly communicative in nature (not just psychological), and two, the communication was discussing the decision as if it had already been finalized. Jablin (2001) argued that the primary role communication plays in the stage of preannouncement is that of cue, signaling the impending exit. Participants were questioned about their communication with people as they contemplated exit and how they talked to others about what made them consider exit. Their answers to this question identified topics of communication as well as some overarching communication issues relevant to the preannouncement phase of exit. The themes of communication strategies included: *job dissatisfaction, organization dissatisfaction, interpersonal conflict, personal life, and job evaluation.* Three themes fell under the umbrella of communication issues: *enlisting help, openness and changing work habits.*

Table 6 Communication Cue Definitions

Category	Cue Type	Definition
Communication Topics	Job dissatisfaction	Dissatisfaction with elements of the specific job one was engaged in at work.
	Organization dissatisfaction	Occurred when there was dissatisfaction with the overall organization, not the job in particular.
	Interpersonal Conflict	Conflicts with one or more people at work. Including but not limited to managers, coworkers, and clients.
	Personal Life	The job, organization, or people associated with either caused the employee's personal or family life to be negatively impacted.
	Job Evaluation	Evaluation of the pros and cons of the current job or potential jobs.

Communication Strategies	Enlisting help	Respondents used other people in their lives to help them transition between jobs (resume, job contacts, decision-making)
	Openness	Direct consideration was paid to how open or closed to be about leaving
	Changing work habits	People changed their work habits in preparation to exit their job/organization.

The first set of themes focuses on five specific topics of communication that were found throughout the interviews. These were topics that respondents highlighted repeatedly in the interviews.

Job dissatisfaction. The first theme that was apparent in the pre-announcement communication of employees was job dissatisfaction. Interviewees noted having spoken to a variety of target groups about what they didn't like about their jobs. In each instance in this category, people discussed parts of their job they did not like, or referred to their job in an overall negative manner. The following examples show how people communicated their dissatisfaction with their jobs.

> Kelly: Well, they all, well they (family and friends) kind of knew my situation. They, I, I, hadn't been all that happy with my job in a while probably the last 4 or 5, 6 months or so…You know, coming into the office every day, walking on eggshells. What kind of mood is she (boss) going to be in today? It was just kind of horrible, I don't know. It was just a bad situation.

> Carol: I didn't think that they were going to be so on, focused on keeping score. I would always joke and say they're just like McDonalds's, every time you sell something you're supposed to say "would you like fries with that." And I just couldn't remember to say would you like fries with that.

> Carol: Yeah, yeah. Every Friday night at four o'clock, you know, she (a client) would send her receipts and say, "well I'm going home, have a nice weekend." And I go "Well, OK, I'm stuck here for the rest of the night and all day tomorrow." Not all day tomorrow, but you know.

Kelly recalls how she would share her job dissatisfaction with her family and friends. As she notes, they had known she was unhappy with her job for the past six months. Carol discussed how her job changed over the years she was employed there to a position that shifted to a focus on sales. She was clear about her dislike for the shift and compared herself to a fast food server who could not remember to encourage other sales. She concludes by describing how she complained to a client about having a job that kept her at work late and on the weekends. These examples show both a specific conversation that describes how a person expressed their dislike for their job to another and also a person acknowledging that they had made their feelings about their job dissatisfaction known over time. In either case, whether direct or indirect, communication that expresses dissatisfaction about one's job is a clear cue that that person may be considering leaving their job

Organization dissatisfaction. The second theme was related to the first in that the communication focuses on the dissatisfaction of the employee. The examples in this theme are different from the previous ones because there is a focus on dissatisfying elements of the organization as a whole, not the job specifically. While some people were unhappy with both their job and the organization, there were instances where people reported loving their jobs but being unhappy with the organization.

> John: And a lot of things were just being mishandled by the bank. A lot of turnover in the bank in general, within the bank itself in a lot of key areas and most of our support was pretty bad. And I had just grown tired of making excuses to people, to clients, of why the bank was messing things up and not doing things appropriately.

> Erica: You know, this is pretty much a dead end. There's really no where to go. And they're not going to be, you know, like, "here's a bunch more money to stay in this exact same job." So, that was pretty much what I kind of talked about, just my general growing discontent with the organization.

Both Erica and John are currently in jobs very similar to the one's they left. This highlights the fact that dissatisfaction for the organization, regardless of their feelings for their job, can impact a person's decision to exit. For each of them, the organization was the root of the problem. For John, having to provide excuses for the organization's faults and errors was frustrating. While he covered for the organization in front of clients, he was open about his frustration with others. Erica talked to her coworkers about their mutual organizational troubles such as lack of financial rewards. Whether it is intentional or unintentional, discussing ones dissatisfaction with the organization can be a sign to others that one might be interested in moving out of that job or organization.

Interpersonal conflict. A third theme that was repeatedly discussed by respondents during the pre-announcement stage regarded their interpersonal conflicts. In many cases, people noted having problems with individuals they worked with. Whether it be a personality issue, the behavior of certain employees, or differences in work style, it was clear that interpersonal conflict was just as important to employees as satisfaction with other elements of the organization. What was most interesting about this theme was that though the conflict was readily discussed with others, it was rarely, if ever, discussed with the target of that conflict. Both of the following women enjoyed their jobs. However, the conflicts they discussed played a significant role in their decision to exit.

> Kelly: She's the boss, she's the owner of the company. So, its not like you can go to HR and say "she told me to F-off and she told me I was an F'ing moron," you know? You can't do, what can you do? Your hands are tied.

> Debbie: There was a new manager who took over accounting after I came there and he wasn't so bad with me, but he, he was pretty bad with some of the other people there. He had definite power issues.

For both of these women, their interpersonal conflicts were a hot topic of communication. Kelly noted that her relationship with her boss was a key issue that she discussed in therapy. The power issues of Debbie's boss were a popular topic of discussion among her coworkers. Both women see interpersonal conflicts as a key element that led to their leaving their jobs. This shows that when people begin to voice their interpersonal conflicts with people at work it may be a sign that they are considering leaving. While an interpersonal conflict may not be enough to get a person to leave there job, as was the case with Debbie, it did add to the reasons why she considered leaving. For Kelly, on the other hand, the way she was treated at work was a major factor in why she left her job.

Personal life. The next theme describes cues related to the negative impact of an element of their work life on their personal life. The toll a job took on one's personal life was not only communicated to others by the employee but was also something that outsiders could notice on their own.

> Michelle: My phone rang constantly, and it was nights and weekends. It was just a quality of life. Just getting married, being young, still; my friends were out doing their thing when I knew I had responsibilities. I had a house at the same time, I knew for the next 20 years I did not want to work every holiday weekend. I wanted to have a life.

> John: It got to the point where literally I'd be downstairs at night watching a basketball game or football game, on my Blackberry e-mailing customers, or e-mailing myself in
> the office to remind me to take care of their problems. It was, it was just consuming and you couldn't get away from it.

> <div align="center">*******</div>

> Julie: Well, I told them (coworkers) that I was really, they knew I was not meeting anybody there; that I, I was kind of lonely I guess.

> Interviewer: Missing home?

Julie: Yeah, and I was going home every weekend, so they got the idea that I probably wanted to move back.

In each of the above three examples, the respondents identified examples of how their personal lives were being negatively effected by their jobs. Michelle could not "have a life" as her friends did and they noticed how different their lives were because of her job. John spoke of not being able to mentally leave work. Even when he was at home spending time with family, work would invade through e-mail or his Blackberry. Julie also notes how her coworkers just "got the idea" that she wanted to move back because of her comments about not meeting anyone. Each of these three individuals gave an example of how others in their lives were able to see the impact the job had on their personal life. The respondents noted that they also had conversations about this topic with others, but these examples extend those discussions to show how people were able to pick up on these cues nonverbally.

Job Evaluation. In job evaluation communication is focused on helping the employee in a decision-making process. People frequently spoke of making "pro and con" lists regarding their current and potential jobs. Others noted wanting to talk over their decision with another person to make sure they were seeing things clearly.

> Karen: My husband and I discussed different options to see if there was any way I could stay. I mean, the pay was great and the people we awesome and they did a lot of things to really make you feel like a family…Mike (husband) and I talked about it and so I think maybe I talked to my mom a couple time about what she thought.

> Interviewer: Just to get their perspective?

> Karen: Yes, just to like, sometimes you don't trust your own, you know, your own ideas. "I may be making a wrong decision, better run it by two or three other people."

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Alan: Yeah, I had a, um, lengthy conversation with um, I have a group called the Professional Partners, made up of nine guys that are all presidents of companies. We've been together for 15 years…we talked about it.

Interviewer: What, what did you talk about?

Alan: Hmmm, just gave them the parameters of both jobs. They pretty much knew my job that I was doing, parameters of the new job and what I thought would be different. What I thought was different about the culture and what I thought of it and then they asked tons of questions…and then, and, they gave me their vote.

Karen and Alan both spoke of the importance of having other people evaluate their decisions with them. Karen wanted to make sure she was not making a mistake and wanted to get other's opinions. Alan wanted to talk to other industry professionals to help him evaluate his current job versus his potential new job. Several other interview respondents considered it a given that they would discuss the issue with their spouse before making a final decision. In this cue the social interaction regarding the decision is of key importance.

The three remaining cues do not represent communication topics but instead highlight three fundamental communication strategies regarding preannouncement communication. Enlisting help highlights a specific communication activity as opposed to a topic. Openness focuses on a quality of communication that could be found with any other cue. Changing work behaviors is primarily a behavior with the potential to be a primarily nonverbal cue.

Enlisting help. One cue that sent a very clear and intentional message to those it was communicated to was enlisting help. Respondents talked about how they asked various people in their lives to help them either move towards exit or to remedy their

current situation. Help was enlisted from a variety of people for a variety of tasks

including looking for jobs and updating resumes.

> Sondra: I didn't really talk to them (coworkers) about much. I did tell Lisa and Cliff and some of the other people there that I was interviewing at this job and had them look at my resume and, and stuff so, I hadn't updated my resume in nine years or so.

> John: I called a couple friends of mine that have been pretty reliable sources, uh my wife, and we talked to people in the circle of influence in the market to see what they thought.

> Liz: Well, I do remember bringing it to my immediate manager and asking if she could put me in a different department. And, when they said, "no, we really can't find another place for you at this time." I was like, I just couldn't handle it.

> Ian: I had made it known to, not inside of the company, but to friends and family, just other people. Just kind of told them, yes, if you see something, just keep your eyes open. I'm not in a hurry, but.

In each of these examples the respondents go to outside sources to help them in

their transition to exit. Sondra enlisted help on a resume and Ian asked for help finding

new job opportunities. Liz actually enlisted help from her boss. When she encountered a

work situation she knew would lead her to having to quit, she asked her boss to help find

a solution. John went so far as to convene a group of trusted friends get other's opinions

on his new opportunity. These examples show how individuals reach out in a variety of

ways when they are contemplating exit. Enlisting help was one of the most clear cut exit

cues.

Openness. At first it seemed as though the next theme was simply the absence of

cue giving. However, it became clear as the interviews continued that the decision about

how open or discreet to be (about considering exit or looking for new jobs) was important

to the interviewees. Even those who were completely open with some groups of people

noted being careful not to bring up the subject with other groups. Some alluded to this in passing but others discussed it outright with people.

> Michelle: I just told them the truth, and it was funny because I was the last person that they thought was looking for a job. I mean, everyone was open about looking for jobs and how they wanted to leave. And, I just didn't say anything. It was no one's business. I had known for the past month that I might be leaving, and I was very close to a lot of them. And I didn't tell them.

> Carol: I talked to family, but I did not talk to coworkers. And, when I talked to family, I said, "now, I don't want this to get out." Because, have you ever lived in a small town?

> Sondra: I told my immediate boss [I: oh really] that I was interviewing. The reason is we were pretty good friends and I know she's retiring…

Michelle notes that unlike other people at her job, she was secretive about looking for a new job. Though it was a common topic for others in the office, she did not feel it was a subject she should discuss in public because it was her personal business. Carol was not sure when she would be taking over her new position. She did not want her boss to hear the news from someone else before she had an opportunity to tell her boss face-to-face so she instructed her family to keep quiet about it. Sondra, on the other hand, was very open with her boss about leaving. She felt a close relationship to her and felt obligated to tell her. The fact that Sondra's boss would soon be retiring did influence her decision though. Other interviewees noted that they did not want to tell anyone until they were sure they would be exiting. These examples show the different elements people consider when deciding how open to be about exit. People weigh personal relationships, privacy issues, and also the likelihood of actual exit.

Work habits. The final theme that emerged in terms of giving exit cues was strictly a nonverbal, behavioral issue. During the pre-announcement phase, several people experienced a change in or shifted their work habits. In the following quote, Krista is

describing how, in hindsight, she can see how her work habits likely sent a cue to others

that she might be in the wrong job.

> Krista: It was just like usually monthly (their busy time at work). We would kind
> of be busy that one week and then after that it was like I would have like two
> hours worth of work each day, and the rest of the day I kind of just like, surfed the
> internet or…

When Krista quit her boss made the comment, "is this because you don't have enough

responsibility?" This comment shows that Krista's work habits were, in fact, interpreted

as a cue that she was unhappy. When preparing to leave, Alan intentionally changed his

work behaviors.

> Alan: We pretty much knew for a month that we were leaving, and maybe not
> quite a month. But we had cleaned up all of our messes and we got in all of our
> delinquent things. And we took care of all our little stupid loans, because we had,
> because we'd stopped selling, in essence. And, we just cleaned up so they can
> kind of tell it was a cleanup effort being done way more than the normal cleanup
> that goes on.

Though his behavior was intentional, it was not intended as a cue subtly designed to

announce his exit. In hindsight though, he noted that it was something that others would

definitely have noticed as being out of the ordinary. Wilson (1983) suggested that this

was one of the final stages leading to exit. She argued people would have an increased

interest in making sure things were prepared for the person who would take over the

position they were leaving. While not all participants noted this happening, the above are

perfect examples of what she had found.

The communication during the period between the trigger event and actual exit

varied greatly in content. Interestingly, these cues occurred over varying time periods as

well. The time between the trigger event and actual exit for these participants lasted

anywhere from days to years. When asked about what she felt was significant or

important about her experience at the end of the interview, Sheri noted: "It kind of drug on, it was probably three years ago or four years ago when I came up with the idea (to leave her job)." She had left that job only two months previously. Amanda's experience was quite different. When asked to describe how she made her decision to leave, she stated, "I just didn't go in the next day, and I called and I said 'I just can't do this, so.'" Thus, depending on the situation, the sensemaking period between deciding to leave and actually leaving can vary quite a bit.

Summary

In summary, the findings for research question one suggest that communication plays a very important role for people who are in the preannouncement stage of exit. Interview participants identified trigger events that began the process of preannouncement. During this time, people's communication with others can impact their decision to stay in or leave a job. There were specific topics that were prominent individual's communication. Respondents also identified three key communication issues regarding exit. Though the issues and topics could sometimes overlap, they each have the potential to act as cues or messages that signal a potential impending exit. More than that, these cues are evidence of the process of sensemaking. This will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Research Question 2

The second series of research questions focused on how people communicate to reach a decision to leave a job. Embedded in this question are two key issues: the content of the communication and the people who are the targets of this communication. The

three following questions examined these two concepts and their relationship to one another.

Research question 2a examined what types of cues people communicated to others before they announced their exit. As was detailed in the methods chapter, the cues that emerged in the previous question were submitted to an exploratory factor analysis. The result was a set of five distinct cues: *work dissatisfaction, advice, personal conflicts, openness,* and *work behaviors.* The work behaviors theme encapsulated both job and organization dissatisfaction. *Advice* included elements of enlisting help and evaluation. Interpersonal conflict and personal life issues fell into an overarching factor of *personal conflicts.* Both *openness* and work behaviors fell out as separate factors.

A repeated measures analysis of variance was computed to see which cues were used most often. Results showed that there was a significant difference in choice of cue type among respondents *Wilks'* $\Lambda = .356$, $F(4, 155) = 69.996$, $p < .001$, partial *eta*^{2} = .644. Results of Bonferroni post hoc tests (see Table 7) showed that *advice* ($M = 3.410$), openness ($M = 3.252$) and *work dissatisfaction* ($M = 3.110$) were used significantly more often than personal conflicts ($M = 2.843$), and work behaviors ($M = 2.138$). Though there was a significant difference ($p < .05$) between *work dissatisfaction* and *advice*, there was no significant difference between either of those and the use of *openness.* All remaining differences were significant at the $p < .001$ level.

Table 7 Cue Type –Repeated Measures ANOVA Post Hoc Significance Levels

Factor	Work Dissatisfaction	Advice	Personal Conflicts	Openness	Work Behaviors
Work Dissatisfaction	--	.003	.001	.863	.001
Advice	--	--	.001	.706	.001
Personal Conflicts	--	--	--	.001	.001

					.001
Openness	--	--	--	--	.001
Work Behaviors	--	--	--	--	--
Mean	3.11	3.41	2.84	3.25	2.14

Note: Bonferroni Post Hoc Test

This shows that on the whole, when people are considering leaving, they will often seek *advice* from other sources. Certainly, asking someone advice on whether you should leave your job is a clear indication that you are thinking about it. The second most often used cue was *openness*. Leavers were open and honest with others about their desire to leave in many cases. The third most often used cue was *work dissatisfaction*. Before they leave, people let others know about the elements of their job and organization that they are unhappy with. *Personal conflicts* and changing *work behaviors* were the two cues used to a lesser degree. While this may suggest people are reluctant to talk about their problems with other people or change their work behaviors, it may be that less of the sample had personal conflicts or were able to change their work behaviors. Either way, both were still important cues to exit.

Research question 2b asked who people communicated with when they were contemplating exit. A repeated measures analysis was preformed to determine which group was most often targeted with exit cues. Results showed that there was a significant difference in choice of cue target among respondents *Wilks'* $\Lambda = .336$, F(5, 152) = 60.102, p < .001, partial *eta*^{2} = .664. Results of Bonferroni post hoc tests (see Table 8) showed that, overall, spouse/family (*M* = 3.646) and friends (*M* = 3.711) were cue targets more often than all remaining target groups. Potential employers (*M* = 3.261) were the third most targeted group, significantly higher than both boss/supervisor (*M* = 2.884)

and coworkers ($M = 2.955$), which were not significantly different from one another.

Each of those five groups was a target significantly more often than and customers/clients

($M = 2.478$).

Table 8 Cue Target Repeated Measures ANOVA Post Hoc Significance Levels

Factor	Spouse/ Family	Coworkers	Boss/ Supervisor	Customers/ Clients	Friends	Potential Employers
Spouse/Family	--	.001	.001	.001	1.00	.001
Coworkers	--	--	.001	.001	.001	.012
Boss/Supervisor	--	--	--	.001	.001	.008
Customers/Clients	--	--	--	--	.001	.001
Friends	--	--	--	--	--	.001
Potential Employers	--	--	--	--	--	--
Mean	3.646	2.995	2.884	2.478	3.711	3.261

Note: Bonferroni Post Hoc Test

These results indicate that exit cues are most often received by non-work

members of people's lives. In other words, people will be most forthcoming with their

cues with friends and family. Potential employers received cues with the next highest

frequency. This is not surprising because for potential employers, it will be very likely

that the new hires will be coming from other jobs. Simply contacting a potential

employer is a rather clear cue that one is considering leaving their current job.

Boss/supervisor and coworkers were the next most frequent cue targets. It is not

surprising that they occur with similar frequency because they occupy the same physical

setting. Bosses and coworkers may also be more likely to share information. The

placement of these two groups is also telling. Perhaps people are reluctant to send exit

cues to these two groups because, whether or not they choose to exit at a later time, their

working relationships might be altered just by the giving of those cues. Additionally, it is possible that people fear punishment if they are not able to find a new job and must remain at their current job. The interview data provided some support that this may happen. Though she did find a new job, during the period between announcing her exit and when she actually left, Carol was given the most undesirable work tasks. The target group with the lowest frequency was customers/clients. These results can be interpreted in a number of ways. First, not all members of the sample had customers/clients at their job. Second, just because one has customers/clients, does not necessarily mean that they are people that one forms relationships with. For example, a retail worker may deal with thousands of different clients and may never feel the need to cue them into an impending exit. A customer service representative, on the other hand, may have formed very close relationships with certain clients and will have more opportunity or perhaps desire to cue this group in on the potential for exit.

The final part of research question two, RQ2c, asked whether cue type differed based on cue target. Four separate repeated measures analyses of variance were computed to determine which groups were the most frequent with targets of each cue. A repeated measures analysis of variance for *work dissatisfaction* found that there was a significant difference among respondents in terms of who received this cue, *Wilks' Λ* = .200, $F(5, 153)$ =, $p < .001$, partial *eta^2* = .800. Results of Bonferroni post hoc tests showed that respondents spoke about *work dissatisfaction* with spouse/family ($M = .824$), significantly more often than with friends ($M = .722$), coworkers ($M = .411$), boss/supervisor ($M = .256$), potential employers ($M = .206$), and customers/clients ($M = .119$). Differences between all groups were significant at the $p < .001$ level with one

exception. There was no significant difference between boss/supervisor and potential

employers for this cue type.

Table 9 Work Dissatisfaction Repeated Measures ANOVA Post Hoc Test Results

Factor	Spouse/ Family	Co- workers	Boss/ Supervisor	Customers/ Clients	Friends	Potential Employers
Spouse/ Family	--	.001	.001	.001	.001	.001
Coworkers	--	--	.001	.001	.001	.001
Boss/ Supervisor	--	--	--	.001	.001	.505
Customers/ Clients	--	--	--	--	.001	.001
Friends	--	--	--	--	--	.001
Potential Employers	--	--	--	--	--	--
Mean	.824	.411	.256	.119	.722	.206

Note: Bonferroni Post Hoc Test
Note: Each factor had a different number of total items so the factor scores were divided by the total number of items. Thus, means for these factors range from 0 to 1.

The results show that people are more likely to talk about their dissatisfaction

with work to spouse/family and friends. Again, these are two groups with close bonds to

the individual but they are also people who are not connected to that person's job.

Coworkers were the next most frequent target. People spend a lot of time with their

coworkers and they are likely experiencing the same job and organizational issues so it is

also not surprising that this group is a frequent target of work dissatisfaction cues.

Boss/supervisor was a less frequent target, possibly because this person, though not on a

personal level, could be in charge of what is causing the particular dissatisfaction. Giving

these people work dissatisfaction cues may also impact the boss/employee relationship or

give one's boss the impression that one is going to quit well before it happens. As will be

seen in later questions, knowing that an employee is leaving does change the

communication and relationship between the two individuals so this may explain why people are reluctant to give this cue to this group. The final two groups were potential employers and customer/clients. The interviews once again provided some reasoning for this finding. Several people suggested that they did not want to "bad mouth" or "trash" their company in the face of other employers or customers/clients.

A repeated measures analysis of variance for *advice* found that there was a significant difference in among respondents in terms of who received this cue, *Wilks' Λ =* .245, $F(5, 154) = p < .001$, partial *eta*^{2} = .755. Results of Bonferroni post hoc tests showed that respondents used advice with spouse/family ($M = .744$), significantly more often than with friends ($M = .626$), potential employers ($M = .336$), coworkers ($M = .299$), boss/supervisor ($M = .148$), and customers/clients ($M = .104$). Respondent sought *advice* from boss/supervisor and coworkers with similar frequency. Also, there was no significant difference in *advice* seeking between coworkers and potential employers. All other differences were significant at least at the $p < .05$ level. There was no significant difference between potential employers and coworkers for this cue type, nor were there significant differences between boss/supervisor and customer/clients.

Table 10 Advice Repeated Measures ANOVA Post Hoc Test Results

Factor	Spouse/ Family	Coworkers	Boss/ Supervisor	Customers/ Clients	Friends	Potential Employers
Spouse/Family	--	.001	.001	.001	.001	.001
Coworkers	--	--	.001	.001	.001	1.00
Boss/Supervisor	--	--	--	.092	.001	.001
Customers/Clients	--	--	--	--	.001	.001
Friends	--	--	--	--	--	.001
Potential Employers	--	--	--	--	--	--
Mean	.744	.299	.148	.104	.626	.336

Results showed that for *advice* the targets were used with a similarly ordered frequency. People sought advice from their spouse/family most frequently. Because quitting a job usually impacts a person's spouse/family, it is not surprising that they were the foremost recipient of this cue. Friends were the secondary recipient. This order differs when it comes to the third most frequent recipient, potential employers. This indicates that people do make connections with potential employers while they are still considering whether or not they want to leave their jobs. Likely, some of this happens during the job search while people are looking for other jobs. However, it is also possible that people reach out to members of this group for more that just new job information. They may be seeking general information about the job market, how their current job differs from similar jobs at other organizations, how different organizations in the same field operate, etc. This is very important information to have before following through with quitting one's job. The final groups in the advice category were coworkers, boss/supervisor and customers/clients. People sought advice from these groups with considerable less frequency. One reason may be that people felt like they knew what these groups would say, or at least they hoped they would. Most people would hope that their boss or supervisor would advise them to stay, if they were asked. Or, on the other hand, perhaps some people are aware that they are not getting good performance reviews from their boss, so they don't bother asking their boss if quitting is a good idea.

A repeated measures analysis of variance for *personal conflicts* found that there was a significant difference among respondents in terms of who received this cue, *Wilks'* $\Lambda = .274$, $F(5, 153) =$, $p < .001$, partial $eta^2 = .726$. Results of Bonferroni post hoc tests

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showed that respondents spoke about their *personal conflicts* with spouse/family (M =

.712), significantly more often than with friends (M = .598). These two groups were

targets significantly more often than coworkers (M = .250) and boss/supervisor (M =

.180), which were not significantly different from one another. All four previous target

groups were significantly different than potential employers (M = .073) and

customers/clients (M = .063) which were not significantly different from one another. All

significant differences were significant at least at the p = .001 level.

Table 11 Personal Conflicts Repeated Measures ANOVA Post Hoc Test Results

Factor	Spouse/ Family	Coworkers	Boss/ Supervisor	Customers/ Clients	Friends	Potential Employers
Spouse/ Family	--	.001	.001	.001	.001	.001
Coworkers	--	--	.152	.001	.001	.001
Boss/ Supervisor	--	--	--	.001	.001	.001
Customers/ Clients	--	--	--	--	.001	1.00
Friends	--	--	--	--	--	.001
Potential Employers	--	--	--	--	--	--
Mean	.712	.250	.180	.063	.598	.073

Note: Bonferroni Post Hoc Test

Results were again similar in this cue with spouse/family and friends taking the

two most frequent spots. There was quite a large difference in means between those two

groups and following groups. Coworkers were the third most frequent target of personal

conflicts, followed by boss/supervisor, potential employers and customers/clients. One

potential explanation is that if one's work is causing problems at home, those problems

are obvious at home without direct discussion of those problems. A second explanation is

that this cue also focuses on interpersonal problems with people at work. Thus, it is not surprising that people don't talk to people at work (boss/supervisor, coworkers, customers/clients) about those problems. Either they don't want to confront the people they are having problems with or they don't want to talk about those problems at work because they may eventually make it back to the wrong people.

A final repeated measures analysis of variance, for *openness*, found that there was a significant difference among respondents in terms of who received this cue *Wilks' Λ =* .325, F(5, 154) =, p < .001, partial *eta*^{2} = .675. Results of Bonferroni post hoc tests showed that people were *open* significantly more often with spouse/family (*M* =.921) and friends (*M* = .881) than with any other of the groups. People were open with potential employers (*M* =.780) significantly more often than coworkers (*M* = .591) with whom *openness* was used significantly more often than either boss/supervisor (*M* =.368) or customers/clients (*M* =.330). There were no significant differences between spouse/family and friends as were there no significant differences between boss/supervisor and customers/clients. All other differences were significant at least at the p = .001 level.

Table 12 Openness Repeated Measures ANOVA Post Hoc Test Results

Factor	Spouse/ Family	Coworkers	Boss/ Supervisor	Customers/ Clients	Friends	Potential Employers
Spouse/ Family	--	.001	.001	.001	.554	.001
Coworkers	--	--	.001	.001	.001	.001
Boss/ Supervisor	--	--	--	1.00	.001	.001
Customers/ Clients	--	--	--	--	.001	.001
Friends	--	--	--	--	--	.001
Potential	--	--	--	--	--	--

Employers

Mean	.921	.591	.368	.330	.881	.780

Note: Bonferroni Post Hoc Test

Based on the previous results that showed spouse/family and friends as being the top receivers of cues, it should be expected that these groups would be the groups with whom people were most often open. This was supported and there was no significant difference between the two groups in terms of openness. People were also frequently open with potential employers. As people look for their jobs they are open about the fact that there is something that is causing them to want to leave their previous job. Coworkers were next in terms of openness. Because they work with the individuals every day, it is likely that they will be confided in to some degree. Even if they are not directly given cues to exit, they are probably picking up some indirect cues. People were least open, or most discrete, with the boss/supervisor group and the customer/client group. Again, this could be because people do not want their boss to know they are looking for other jobs, because they don't have close working relationships with these people or for other reasons altogether. As the interview suggested, in many cases individuals don't have strong relationships with customers/clients so it is unlikely that they would be open about their decision to leave with this group.

Summary

Overall, research question two showed that there are five primary types of cues that people communicate when they are in the preannouncement stage of exit. These cues are communicated to a variety of targets but most often are targeted toward the categories of spouse/family and friends. Looking individually at the four cues that are verbally

communicated, showed that while spouse/family and friends always ranked the highest, in terms of frequency, the other targets differed based on the type of information being communicated.

<div align="center">Research Question 3</div>

Research question three asked "how do people communicate their decisions to quit their jobs to others?" Though the 22 individuals interviewed worked in a variety of types of organizations, the pattern or process of announcement was very similar for the majority of them. This may suggest that quitting one's job is a scripted event. In general, respondents told people that they quit their job in three phases: telling their inner-circle, formal resignation, and finally, spreading the word.

Telling the inner-circle. Once people had made the final decision to quit their jobs, almost all of the respondents noted that they told someone of their decision before they gave their formal resignation. Most often this was a spouse but could also include other close family members, close friends, or even close coworkers. Typically, this was the same group of people with whom the respondent had previously discussed the possibility of quitting. Here are several examples of what people said when asked if they told anyone they were quitting before they formally resigned.

> Erica: Oh, I told a lot of people before them (boss).
> I: You did?
> Erica: Yeah. I told some, several of the people in the organization knew, that are my good friends that work in different departments in the organization. And of course my family and stuff like that, they all knew that I was going to resign before I actually told them.
>
> <div align="center">*******</div>
>
> Alice: So, they offered me a job and I told them I'd let them know and I talk to my husband and and he was like, "why did you say that, you should have just said yes." So I talked to him (husband) and I called him (new employer) back and told

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him. And my director wasn't there so I told a couple coworkers that they offered me a job…I told them not to say anything because I wanted to tell my boss."

John: I was sure she (secretary) knew something was going on. About two or three o'clock I said, I told her. "They'll want to escort me out of here and everything else which they do so just be ready. Tomorrow morning when you come in, I won't be here when you come in."

Kelly: I called my mom just because we're, we're so close and I was like, I called her on my way to work or something and said "I'm going to do it today." And she said, "You are?" And I said, "Yeah, I just have to quit." And she said "Ok." She was very supportive.

When people finalize the decision that they are quitting and being making that decision known, they usually tell the people they are close to first. Several of Erica's coworkers knew she was looking, and had applied for a job, so she told them before telling her boss. Alice and Kelly told their spouse and mother first, respectively. This was the person they felt closest to, talked about their decision with, and even lived with. Both their physical and relational closeness led these family members to be included in the group of people who were told of the exit first. In Alice's case, she was unwilling to accept her new job without discussing it with her husband, even though he had encouraged her to apply for the job. She also notes that her next call was to accept the job. While the new employer isn't likely part of the inner circle, most respondents who had a new job, accepted the job before announcing their exit. John confided in his secretary that he would be quitting later that afternoon. As someone he had worked in close and direct contact with over the past few years, he did not want her to come to work the next day to find out he was no longer there. The reasons people announce their exit to people in the inner-circle first may differ, but it is obvious that there is a clear separation between telling these people and the formal process of quitting which came next.

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Formal resignation. The formal resignation process for the majority of the

respondents was quite traditional. Eighteen of the 22 respondents met face-to-face with

their boss or supervisor to give them the news. Over half of these 18 people also provided

a formal letter that provided the details of the exact date they would terminate their

employment. The period between telling the inner-circle and formal resignation lasted

anywhere from one hour to two months. In the latter case, a respondent was offered and

accepted a new job but continued to work at her other job for two months. Many

respondents gave their employers the standard two-weeks notice but several provided

additional time. Three respondents were immediately escorted out of their office after

resigning, due to the nature of their industry, and two did not return the next day because

of personal choice.

> I: How did you communicate your decision to leave?
> Ian: To leave Sanders? I just typed out a little letter and then gave it to my boss
> and told him and I just gave them the date of when I would leave and he said ok.

<div align="center">*******</div>

> Julie: I wrote a letter. I just made it, I don't know that I had to but I wanted to, just
> to be professional.

> Sheri: I worked on it very carefully (her letter of resignation). I don't remember.
> At the time, I wanted to make sure I gave proper notice. It was important for me
> to leave in good standing. It was important to me not to go out as a whiny bitch,
> "oh they did this to me." You know, I'll hold my head up and thank everybody in
> it. "It's been my pleasure."

As these quotes show, many of the respondents viewed the letter of resignation as

more of a legal document that the organization needed to have. However, for each of

them, the letter was secondary to meeting with their boss face-to-face to give them the

news. Even in cases where the respondent had previously informed their boss that they

were looking for new jobs, the act of formally quitting was still seen as a necessary interaction.

Of the remaining respondents, one gave notice over the phone and never returned to work, two e-mailed their bosses and one provided a letter but there was no verbal discussion of the employee leaving. In fact, in the latter case, the employee ended up walking out of work a week after turning in her resignation and never coming back. Since the day she had given her resignation, her boss had not spoken one word to her. While this was not the reason she left, it did play a role in her decision to walk out before her two-week notice had run out. When asked about his silence she recalled, "I figured it was because he got the notice and was upset or something, but it just made it awkward. You know, working around each other and nothing being said."

Spreading the word. The period after formal resignation was also important for the respondents. Even for the people who did not come back to work at all, the process of informing "everyone else" they had quit their job was important. Liz left her job because her work interfered with a health condition. When asked if she told others why she quit she answered, "I always, I always explain to them, give them the whole story. Gave the whole situation to everyone I ran into." John remembers what happens after he left work on his last day (which was the same day he quit):

> He (boss) actually walked me out of the elevator and as I walked out everyone else in the office was looking out of their cubicles and everybody was buzzing and I kind of waved to them and walked out. As soon as I got to my car, my cell phone was going crazy all night. So, it was funny, with everybody from work calling to find out what happened

The key group that was important for respondents in this stage was coworkers. This group was important because it consisted of people who the respondent spent time

with at work, people whose work may have been connected with theirs, and perhaps the people who would notice their absence most. In fact, other than coworkers, very few people mentioned making an effort to tell other groups that they had quit their job. In most cases, other people were just informed as they were encountered in the respondent's normal interaction with them. The biggest point of distinction, and sometimes contention, in this process was whether or not coworkers heard of the exit from the respondent or another source. Michelle was infuriated when her boss told her coworkers she was quitting before she had the chance to do it herself:

> And so we had our (department) meeting and he (boss) didn't say anything. And then he gave out, he had revised the schedule, the duty schedule. And everyone was like "what the hell? Why aren't, why isn't your name on this?" And I just sat there and I was like, I'm going to kill him, because I wanted to tell everybody. But he just like walked out of the meeting and just left it the way it was and didn't tell anybody and didn't say anything. And he e-mailed everybody. Everyone in my office was like, "what the hell's going on? Why aren't you on the schedule? So he came back finally, and I was like, "why did you let everybody go from the meeting? I wanted to tell them?"

Michelle felt like her opportunity to explain herself had been taken away from her by her boss. Other respondents also expressed a desire to be the one to tell others. t is important for people to give not only their own account for why they are quitting, but it is also important for them to be the one to tell others. Being able to break the news to others personally also allows the leaver to control the information communicated in the exit account. Michelle later said that she felt like she owed her coworkers an explanation for why she was leaving but she didn't want to tell them too much.

Summary

Though every individual's process of announcing exit was slightly different they had many common elements. In particular, respondents tended to go through three phases

of announcement. First, they told the people in their inner-circle that they were quitting. Next, they made their formal announcement. Though many chose to write formal letters of resignation, the information was initially communicated face-to-face for most. A few did use e-mail and telephone to quit. Finally, after the formal announcement was made, people were free to spread the word. The most important group highlighted in this phase was coworkers. The respondents focused on telling their coworkers about leaving after the formal announcement.

<div align="center">Research Question 4</div>

The fourth series of research questions was designed to look at the accounts people constructed to explain why they were leaving their job. These accounts can be understood as products of the sensemaking process. The first question in this line asked what types of accounts people offered for leaving their jobs. As was detailed in the methods chapter, no distinctions were found between excuses and justifications. However, based on the coding of that data, it was obvious that two of the previously existing subcategories of justification, loyalty to others and self-fulfillment, offered useful descriptions of the accounts. Those accounts that did not fit into those two categories all fell into a third sub-category: negative environment. Included in this category were accounts that highlighted a negative work environment, unfair or unethical treatment, poor leadership/support, and a negative impact on personal life. Table 13 offers examples of common reasons that appeared in the sub-categories:

Table 13 Justification Sub-Categories

Sub-category	Definition	Example Reasons for exit
Loyalty	Accounts that appeal to loyalty focus on how an action is justified because of an	Spouse transferred Staying home to raise children Staying home to start a family

		Changing jobs to locate near sick relatives
Self-Fulfillment	Accounts that appeal to self-fulfillment focus on how people are justified in attempts to attain personal goals and desires.	Growth Advancement Go to school Be challenged in my job Do something that interests me/makes me happy Retire
Negative Environment	Accounts that appeal to negative environment make the argument that people have a right to remove themselves from situations that are negatively impacting them.	Negative work environment Toll on personal life Unfair treatment Unethical treatment Unethical work expectations Bad leadership/management No support

Appeals to loyalty argue that people are justified in their actions because of unbreakable bonds with others. In other words people have different loyalties that are stronger than the loyalty they have to their job. Approximately 16% of the accounts fell into this category.

89: I left my job to follow my boyfriend to graduate school.

145: I moved out of town—wanted a better "family life."

152: I left this job because I was working way too much to spend time with my family.

153: My youngest child going to a new school. Drive would double my mileage to/from work. Decrease the amount of undue stress in my lie. I wouldn't be on call 24° day/ 7 days week. More family time.

169: I left my job because it was an hour commute one way. This took away my time at home. Also, the company I worked for looked like it would be closing soon. We moved up north to be closer to family.

These examples show how people are willing to leave their jobs when other loyalties are impacted. The first respondent was loyal to her boyfriend over her job and thus quit in order to move away with him when he went to graduate school. The other

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four respondents speak generally of "family life." For each, improving the quality of family life, or being closer to family, was more important than the job they had. Because the job was in some way interfering with their primary loyalties, they quit their jobs.

Accounts that appealed to self-fulfillment (46%) focused on the fact that people were quitting their jobs to move onto something that would better meet their goals or desires. Some popular accounts included language such as: advancement, better opportunity, growth, happiness, education and happiness. The following are examples of accounts people wrote.

> 119: I was not seeking a job. I was called 18 months later after an interview. It was a great opportunity that was more in line with my strengths/passions so I gave my notice.

> 123: I am retiring. I am eligible for full retirement. I have other things I want to do.

> 133: I left my job because I decided it wasn't for me anymore. I needed a fresh start doing something that I enjoyed more.

> 148: I left my job to pursue graduate school.

> 165: There was no opportunity to move up and better myself. I was offered a lot more money and a lot more opportunity. I know that if I stayed there I had no chance of bettering myself.

In each of the above examples the individuals describe wanting to better themselves, advance, or start doing things they enjoy. While the specific reasons they give may differ, the common element is that all were framed in a positive tone and focused on fulfilling personal goals.

The final set of accounts is quite different from those presented above. For starters, appeals to negative environment (39%) tended to focus more on negative elements. Appeals to negative environment focused on elements of their work situation

that they found toxic, interpersonal conflicts, bad working conditions, unethical

treatment, and negative impacts on their personal lives. In these cases, people make the

appeal that they are justified to quit their jobs because actions to remove themselves from

negative environments are positively regarded.

> 137: I left my job because I was sexually harassed by a co-worker. The manager
> and store did <u>nothing</u> about it. I felt my rights were violated, so I left. (emphasis
> in original)

> 143: Company was in a downward spiral. Losing business, client and key
> employees. New owner was not "client friendly." Competition was taking clients
> away at a brisk pace. Future of the business was in doubt.

> 150: Didn't like the way comp. was working. Didn't like the way boss was
> treating employees (including myself). Too much pressure.

> 160: I was manager. The business was sold & the new owners did not make much
> effort to learn the business or address any problems staff & customers had. Both
> night staff employees quit & I followed in suit. I could no longer run the
> establishment without help or support.

> 166: I left due to my boss being very negitive (sic) and lazy. He always delegated
> his work to me and I was not getting paid enough for everything I was doing.

> 177: I left my job because the management was very irresponsible. They did not
> really care if you were doing your job or not & since I don't like it when things
> aren't getting done I would do someone else's job. When they realized how
> versatile I was they (management) started asking me to do other's jobs ALL the
> time. It was too stressful & I felt like I was being take advantage of.

> 178: I felt belittled, talked down to & underappreciated.

The examples above provide an indication of the different accounts that fell into

this category. Several of the respondents were unhappy with people they worked with.

Respondents 166 and 177 both felt they were being asked to do the work of others and

not getting paid for it. Both saw management at fault in these situations. Two

respondents, 137 and 178, felt they were unjustly treated through sexual harassment and

negative comments. These respondents saw both of these behaviors as inappropriate for

the workplace. In the remaining two examples, 143 and 150, the respondents made note of how they did not like how the company was running. This suggests that perhaps there was a difference in goals or values between the organization and the respondents.

Respondents felt that acting to remove themselves from negative work situations was a justifiable reason for employee exit. Certainly one could make an argument that these fit well the sub-categories of excuses, appeal to accident (an external circumstance was the reason for the exit) or scapegoating (someone else was the reason for the exit). However, not one respondent gave the indication that they denied responsibility for quitting. For the account to be categorized as an excuse, an individual must deny responsibility for the action. Thus, none of the accounts fit the excuse category. Though respondents were not asked to make note of whether they thought quitting their jobs was negative, not one respondent alluded to the act of quitting as being negative. In each account the respondents gave the impression that they felt that leaving was a positive action that was completely justified.

Research question 4b asked whether the type of account given differed based on a person's reason for leaving their job (as measured by the questionnaire). Originally, this was to be analyzed by comparing excuses and justifications against the reasons for leaving. However, since subsequent analysis of the respondents' written statements did not identify any excuses in the data, this question became irrelevant.

Research question 4c asked how the accounts differed based on the target. On the questionnaire, respondents were asked to provide their reason for leaving. Then, they were asked to provide the reason they gave their spouse/family. Finally they were asked to note whether or not the reasons they gave their boss/supervisor, coworkers, friends,

customers/clients, and potential employers differed from the reasons they gave their

spouse/family. In the instances where they marked "yes," respondents were asked to

provide the explanation they gave that specific group. Of the 160 questionnaire

respondents, 52 identified that they gave a different response to at least one group, with a

total of 89 total different responses for the 52 individuals.

The focus of this research question was the difference between the original

account (OA) and the different or amended account (AA) (given to different groups of

people). Twenty-one of the 89 amended accounts were simply situations where the target

group received no explanation. For example, a respondent first identified that they gave a

different response to "customers/clients" and then wrote "I gave them no explanation."

Sixty-eight accounts were amended with an actual response (the respondent did give

them some sort of explanation).

Of those 68 remaining accounts, 3 were originally loyalty, 21 were originally self-

fulfillment, and 44 were originally negative environment accounts. Of those 68 original

accounts, 62 were amended as self-fulfillment justifications, 2 were amended as loyalty

justifications and 4 were amended as negative situation justifications. Table 14 provides a

breakdown of how each original account type was amended.

Table 14 Changes in Accounts by Justification Sub-Category

| Original Account Sub-Category | Amended Account Sub-Category | | | Total |
	Loyalty	Self-Fulfillment	Negative Environment	
Loyalty	0	3	0	3
Self-Fulfillment	2	18	1	21
Negative Environment	0	41	3	44
Total	2	62	4	68

All three loyalty justifications were amended as self-fulfillment justifications. For example, the respondent might have changed the account from "I left to spend more time with my family" to "I left to pursue personal goals." Of the 21 original self-fulfillment justifications, two were amended to loyalty and one was amended to negative situation. For example, the account might have originally stated, "I left my job because there was no room for advancement." The two corresponding amended accounts might have read, "I left my job to stay home with my children" (loyalty), or "I left my job because the manager put her work off on me" (negative situation). The 18 remaining accounts that were originally self-fulfillment were amended but not in a way that changed the account type. For example, the account may have changed from "I left my job because there was no potential for growth" to "I left my job to pursue other opportunities." Both would be considered self-fulfillment, yet they give different reasons.

The most interesting findings were for the 44 accounts that were originally negative-environment accounts. Only 3 remained as such once amended. The other 41 original negative-environment accounts were amended as self-fulfillment accounts. In a typical example the account would go from "I left my job because the organization was in crisis," to "I left my job to seek new opportunities." This finding supports the notion that one motivation for amending accounts may be face-saving. In other words, people do not want everyone to know they were leaving their job for negative reasons. Leaving out of loyalty or reasons of self-fulfillment are generally more positively oriented reasons and thus may be interpreted differently by others.

Looking at the overall picture shows that of the 50 accounts that changed sub-category, 44 (88%) were changed to self-fulfillment justifications. This suggests that

while all of the three account sub-categories were seen as justifiable reasons for leaving, self-fulfillment may be the most acceptable of the three.

After examining the different explanations people gave for leaving, it became clear that there were some distinct similarities in how people "amended" their stories between groups, thus further analysis was done. A thematic analysis of all of the amended reasons yielded 5 key themes: partial omission, total omission, ambiguity, positive spin, and deception (see Table 15). Generally, there was one theme that characterized the amended account. However, it also occurred that one amended account showed evidence of more than one of the themes.

Table 15 Communicative Changes in Exit Accounts

Theme	Definition
Partial Omission	Partial omission occurred when respondents noted that they omitted part or all of their primary reasons for leaving when speaking to certain individuals/groups.
Total Omission	Total omission occurred when no account for leaving was given.
Ambiguity	Respondents also gave individuals/groups reasons that were more generic or ambiguous than they had previously stated.
Positive Spin	In a number of the cases respondents gave similar reasons for leaving but spun them in a more positive way.
Deception	This theme describes cases in which individuals were clear that they purposefully lied to that group or individual about their reason for leaving.

Omission, the first theme, appeared in two forms: partial omission and total omission. In *partial omission*, the respondents were very clear that they purposefully left out parts of their reason for leaving when speaking to certain target groups. Though it may seem that these examples would fit just as well with the theme of ambiguity or

positive spin, this theme is considered different because the respondent specifically stated that certain information was purposefully removed from the account. The following examples give both the respondents originally presented account for why they left their job and the amended account (denoted OA and AA respectively). The target group for which that person amended their account is also noted at the end of the account.

> OA: My supervisor was not flexible to my needs. Also, I did not enjoy my job or the things I was required to do as a part of it. I also did not particularly enjoy my supervisor, nor my coworkers. (37)
> AA: I told them the same thing I told my family except that I did not tell them I did not like them. (Coworkers)

> OA: The job itself was taking a toll on my emotionally. The young children I worked with had so many problems that I felt like I couldn't help them. Rather than my principal realizing this, I was made to feel like I was a bad counselor. The teachers and principal expected me to cure the children. My job was no longer fulfilling. (66)
> AA: I work with young children therefore I did not fill them in on everything. I simply told them I was changing jobs (Customers/Clients).

> OA: The job was very sketchy. I did not know the stability of my job either. My boss was very demanding and at times hurtful with the words he would use when he said all he was doing was using constructive criticism. He was harsh sometimes, he has no people skills. (71)
> AA: I didn't tell him that I didn't like him. I told him that I was offered a better paying job. (Boss/Supervisor)

> OA: I left my job because the management was very irresponsible. They did not really care if you were doing your job or not and since I don't like it when things aren't getting done I would do someone else's job. When they realized how versatile I was they (management) started asking me to do other's jobs ALL the time. It was too stressful & I felt like I was being taken advantage of. (177)
> AA: I told them that I had a better paying job I could get (sic). I didn't want to tell them the real reason because I didn't want the company to look bad. (Clients/Customers)

In each of the previous examples, the respondents make it clear that they purposefully left out part of their reason for leaving. Two respondents note their reasons behind this decision providing some insight into why omissions are made. Respondent 66

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notes that she works with young children. This suggests that individuals make conscious

decisions about the appropriateness of the message for certain individuals. Respondent

177 states that his primary concern was to not make the company look bad. Not only does

this reinforce the previous point about message appropriateness, but it also suggests that

some individuals may have a degree of loyalty to their organization despite the fact that

they are unhappy with certain people in the organization. Overall, the theme of partial

omission appeared in the spouse/family, boss/supervisor, and coworker target groups.

Total omission was also an abundant theme. *Total omission* occurred when

respondents noted that they left without giving any reason for leaving. For example, if a

person wrote "I did not give my customers/clients a reason for why I left" it was coded as

a total omission. Total omission occurred in five of the six target groups, each one except

spouse/family. The only amended account given to a friend was a total omission. Two

respondents provided insight to their decisions to not give accounts to certain groups.

One respondent, a retail sales manager, stated that:

> It wasn't really much of a 'people person' job and I never developed any
> substantial relationships with my customers so I didn't feel like I owed them any
> explanation as my position would be filled by another employee and they would
> never think twice about it.

Another respondent, an assistant professor who left his job due to a decline in department

collegiality and an environment he described as "toxic" noted the following when asked

about what reason for leaving he gave to his boss/supervisor:

> None, really. They didn't even ask for an exit interview. They didn't want me
> around—I was disruptive to their view of the dept. I know what they were
> thinking & didn't care that they probably didn't care what I was thinking.

These two examples give insight into why people may decide to leave without providing

any indication for why they are leaving. The first respondent didn't feel like his

customers would even notice he has been replaced by someone new. Because of the lack of relationship there was no reason to give these people an explanation. The second respondent stated that he felt like others were hoping he would leave and thus he didn't think they would care what his reason was. He also did not like his supervisor. This supports the notion that the nature of the relationship between the leaver and the stayer will impact the account they are given.

A second theme that described the amended accounts was *ambiguity*. Numerous respondents changed their accounts in such a way that made them somewhat generic. The amended accounts still provided reasons, but those reasons did not provide a clear picture of why the person was actually leaving. Notably, the amended accounts tended to highlight elements of their original account that are more palatable.

> OA: Poor communication between employees and management was extremely frustrating. There were monthly goals in place that everyone struggled to meet. The pay, in my opinion, didn't compensate for the amount of work completed or expected. Upper management didn't have the knowledge or skills in the areas they were responsible of supervising. Under-qualified and under-trained people were hired. (20)
> AA: I told them that I would be leaving in two weeks because I have found employment elsewhere. I gave no details or reasoning behind my choices. (Customers/Clients)
>
> OA: I was under a lot of stress and pressure. I also felt sexually harassed by the manger (sic) at my job and some of the customers that would come in. I could not handle the stress of the job and didn't feel the job would further my career. (77)
> AA: I told them that I couldn't handle the job right then due to up and coming circumstances. (Boss/Supervisor)
>
> OA: Very boring working at the job. A lot of low-end tedious tasks preceded by repeated routine tasks. Stressful at times and upper management kept changing so I had a new boss several times while working there. Never had much fun and the hours were not well-suited for my lifestyle. (136)
> AA: It was not the job the job for me. Same idea just nicer wording and more statements other than, "I hate working here." (Boss/Supervisor)

OA: I felt that my salary & benefits (unreadable word) could be better with another company. The company I was with was small & my medical cost were increasing (sic). Also, they cut (unreadable word) back on bonus pay. (142)
AA: I told my customers/clients that I was leaving for better opportunity with another company. I did not want to get into specifics with them. (Customers/Clients)

In each of the above examples, the amended account lacks the clarity and specificity of the original account. Respondent 20 removed all of the details of why he was leaving except for the fact that he had a new job. Respondent 77 did not confront her supervisor with the fact that she felt sexually harassed by him/her, only noting that she couldn't handle the job right now. Respondent 136 put her complaints about the job and organization into a professional and positively worded statement. This shows that one consideration that people are making has to do with the appropriateness of the message for that target. While she felt comfortable telling her family the full details, she did not feel this was the appropriate way to address the subject with her boss. Respondent 142 changed salary cuts, medical costs and benefits into "a better opportunity." Along with the previous quote, these two respondents also highlight how the more ambiguous messages were often more positive messages. The theme of ambiguity was present for all target groups except spouse/family and friends.

Sometimes overlapping with the theme of *ambiguity* was the third theme, *positive spin*. *Positive spin* describes situations in which a respondent had an original exit account that focused on negative aspects of their job or organization yet provided an amended account that used positive language.

OA: My job involves too much time "outside of the work day. I spend hours everyday doing tedious and boring chores or paperwork for no pay. It annoys me in many ways and is extremely unsatisfying. I have little desire to go to work in the morning. (173)

AA: I told them that I wanted to stop taking work home and follow a dream. (Customers/Clients).

OA: I was working as a personal care aide and had many clients who were old, crabby and mean to me. I got sick of driving from house to house to deal with people I disliked for minimal pay. I decided I didn't want to be a caregiver anymore—it was too stressful—and found a different job.
AA: I wanted to go in a different career direction. (Potential employers)

OA: Company was in a downward spiral. Losing business, clients and key employees. New owner was not "client friendly." Competition was taking clients away at a brisk pace. Future of the business was in doubt. (143)
AA: Told them that my new job offered a more promising future than did my previous employer. (Customers/clients)

OA: I am a Pediatric Physical Therapist. I left 1 pediatric hospital to work at another pediatric hospital because I believed the 2nd hospital was a better working environment, a teaching hospital where people kept up with continuing education and I would be able to learn more. (113)
AA: "Ready for a change" (Coworkers & Customers/Clients)

OA: It got to a point when upward movement in the firm was stagnant and my work was not appreciated. I also felt a sense of just going through the motions. (21)
AA: I told them that I needed to further my career. (Coworkers)
AA: That I had accepted an offer with another company that best suited me. (Customers/Clients)

Throughout the interviews and questionnaires, the notion of "not burning bridges" came up relatively often. People often did not want to leave on a bad note or destroy relationships when leaving their jobs. This is one possible reason for the prevalence of positive spin in the amended accounts. Respondent 173 was a teacher. Instead of hurting his relationships with his students by telling them he hated his job, he tells them he is following a dream. It is hard to find fault in a person who is following their dream because it is something nearly every person wishes they could do. It is a very acceptable and positive reason for exit. In the second example the respondent says she didn't like working with people who were old and crabby. This is a statement that is probably not

going to make a job candidate look appealing no matter what the industry so he rephrases

his feelings to say he is ready for a change in career direction. This is completely true and

does not paint the respondent in a negative light. The final three examples all have

amended accounts that are positive, yet generic. This allows them to still be truthful about

their reasons for leaving while masking the negative aspects of their exit. Clearly,

positive spin fulfills a face saving function for both the leaver and the job/organization.

People don't want to make their organizations look bad and are very careful to paint

themselves in a positive light to others. As was the case with ambiguity, the theme of

positive spin was present for all target groups except spouse/family and friends.

The fourth and final theme was *deception*. In cases of *deception*, respondents

noted that they were dishonest when giving their amended accounts. While it was only

confessed outright in three cases, deception was possibly a much more prevalent theme

than is reported here. One might argue that omission is a form of deception since details

were left out. However, without knowing for sure the respondents' intent that argument

cannot be made. The following examples show three cases in which people intentionally

deceived the targets of their amended accounts.

> OA: My job often requires me to be out of town for up to two weeks per month. Because of a personal reason involving my father I could no longer deal with being away from home that long. (47)
> AA: I told my father he wasn't the only reason I was quitting even though he really was. I needed to be able to take him to doctor's appointments and other things. (Spouse/family)

> OA: I didn't really enjoy anything about the food industry and it was a good job while I got my degree but I just wanted to pursue my degree and advance myself in more meaningful ways through the job I wanted to pursue.
> AA: I have enjoyed working here but I want to pursue a job that is in the field of my degree. (Boss/Supervisor)

OA: I left due to my boss being very negative and lazy. He always delegated his work to me and I was not getting paid enough for everything I was doing. (166)
AA: I told him, I was offered more money than I was. (Boss/supervisor)

In the amended account of respondent 47, he notes that he purposefully deceived his father about why he was leaving his job. He did not want his dad to know that he was the only reason he was leaving. In the second example, the participant originally states that she didn't enjoy anything about the food industry and turns around and tells her boss that she had enjoyed working there. This direct contradiction in terms shows that she did not want to be honest with her boss about not liking her job. This may have been in an attempt to not burn bridges or because she was afraid it would impact their relationship. Despite the reason though, she is clearly lying to her boss. The third example is somewhat different. While respondent 166 basically leaves out the real reasons he is leaving, an omission, his new account is a deception. He tells his boss that he was offered more money at his new job than he really was. It is unlikely that his boss will question why he is leaving his job if there is more money involved. However, if he is not going to be making any more money at the new job, the boss may expect a better explanation from the respondent. Perhaps respondent 166 felt that lying to his boss would enable him to not have to tell his boss he thought he was negative and lazy.

In each of those cases, the respondent is clear about the fact that they have lied regarding their reason for leaving. While the motivations for lying may differ in each case, there is still a conscious decision to falsify the account. *Deception* was only found in the spouse/family and boss/supervisor target groups.

Summary

The findings from the fourth series of research questions offer some preliminary insight into what types of accounts people give for leaving their jobs and also how those accounts change based on who they are given to. All of the accounts in this study were justifications which fell into one of three sub-categories: appeals to loyalty, appeals to self-fulfillment, and appeals to negative environment. The data showed that when accounts were amended they could be slightly amended and remain in the same type of justification or they could be amended into a completely new type of justification. Finally, people amended their accounts using the techniques of partial omission, total omission, ambiguity, positive spin, and deception.

<div align="center">Research Question 5</div>

The fifth series of research questions focused on peoples' motivations for creating accounts. Research question 5a asked what motivates the creations of people's exit accounts.

A repeated measures analysis of variance was performed to determine which motivation factors were most influential on message creation. Specifically, the test examined whether the means of the motivation factors were significantly different from one another. The three motivation factors identified in the instrument creation were justification, face-saving, and understanding. The justification motivation represented people's desire to agree that they were justified in their decision to leave their jobs. They wanted their accounts to seem reasonable and acceptable. The face-saving motivation represented people's desire to maintain positive relationships through their account. They were motivated to not make themselves or others look bad in their account. Finally, the understanding motivation was seen in people's accounts in that people wanted their

accounts to explain their decision and give people details for why they were leaving. Understanding is different from justification because in understanding people are not seeking approval or asking that other people agree they should leave. They are simply giving them the information.

An overall motivation test (looking at all of the groups combined) was done first. Then separate tests were conducted for each target group. In the first test, the analysis found that there was a significant difference among respondents in terms of what motivation factors were employed with the groups as a whole, *Wilks' Λ* = .675, F(2, 157) =37.727, p < .001, partial *eta*^{2} = .325. Results of Bonferroni post hoc tests (see Table 16) showed that all three account motivation factors were significantly different from one another at the p <.001 level. Understanding (*M* = 4.047) was the primary motivation, face-saving (*M* = 3.53) was the secondary motivation and justification (*M* = 2.979) was the least important of the three.

Table 16 Account Motivation Factors Repeated Measures ANOVA Post Hoc Results

Factor	Justification	Face-Saving	Understanding
Justification	--	.001	.001
Face-Saving	--	--	.001
Understanding	--	--	--
Mean	2.979	3.530	4.047

Note: Bonferroni Post Hoc Test

This tells us that overall, people were motivated to give accounts that were understandable. Understanding would entail simply knowing why that person had left. Secondary to that, face-saving motivated the creation of accounts. Through their accounts, people wanted to not only leave a positive lasting impression of themselves but

also did not want to make anyone else look bad. Finally, people wanted others to believe that they had justifiable accounts, reasonable and acceptable reasons for leaving.

Research question 5b asked if motivations differed based on target. A series of six repeated measures analyses of variance were run to examine if and how the three primary motivations differed for each target group. Because each factor had a different number of items, the factor totals were divided by the number of items so the scores would be comparable. The resulting means fall between zero and one.

The analysis found that regarding spouse and family, account motivations differed significantly, *Wilks'* Λ = .575, $F(2, 157)$ =58.135, p < .001, partial *eta*^{2} = .425. Results of Bonferroni post hoc tests (see Table 17) showed that *understanding* was significantly different from *justification* and *face-saving* at the p <.001 level. Understanding (*M* =.844) was the primary motivation, justification (*M* =.592) was the secondary motivation and face-saving (*M* =.535) was the least important of the three. There was no significant difference between justification and face-saving.

Table 17 Spouse/Family Post Hoc Significance Levels

Factor	Justification	Face-Saving	Understanding
Justification	--	.147	.001
Face-Saving	--	--	.001
Understanding	--	--	--
Mean	.592	.535	.844

Note: Bonferroni Post Hoc Test

When giving exit accounts to spouse/family, people were motivated primarily by understanding. Above all, leavers simply wanted their family to know why there were leaving. This is supported by the earlier finding that leavers were most open with the

spouse/family group during the preannouncement phase. Justification was the secondary motivation. They wanted their family to believe they were right to leave their jobs. Finally, people were somewhat concerned with face saving. In talking with spouses and family, people weren't concerned with making themselves or the organization look good. This is probably related to the fact that people were most open with member open with members of their family so there was nothing to hide. Also, people tend to expect family to accept the good and bad so perhaps they feel less need to manage impressions with them.

Regarding coworkers, the analysis found that account motivations differed significantly, *Wilks' Λ* = .741, F(2, 157) =27.423, p < .001, partial *eta*^{2} = .259. Results of Bonferroni post hoc tests (see Table 18) showed that understanding (*M* =.708) and face-saving (*M* = .697) were significantly higher than justification (*M* =.532) at the p <.001 level. There were no significant differences between understanding and face-saving.

Table 18 Coworkers Post Hoc Significance Levels

Factor	Justification	Face-Saving	Understanding
Justification	--	.001	.001
Face-Saving	--	--	1.00
Understanding	--	--	--
Mean	.532	.697	.708

Note: Bonferroni Post Hoc Test

When providing accounts to coworkers, understanding and face-saving were the two primary motivations for giving and creating accounts. Coworkers are also typically groups who have close interaction. People wanted their coworkers to understand why they were leaving and they also wanted to keep these relationships in tact. Justification

was the least motivating of the three factors for coworkers. People were least concerned with whether or not coworkers agreed that leaving was the right thing to do.

The analysis found that regarding boss/supervisor, account motivations differed significantly, *Wilks'* Λ = .785, F(2, 157) =21.486, p < .001, partial *eta*^{2} = .215. Results of Bonferroni post hoc tests (see Table 19) showed that, similar to coworkers, understanding (*M* =.671) and face-saving (*M* =.654) were significantly higher than justification (*M* =.519) at the p <.001 level. There were no significant differences between the two primary motivations.

Table 19 Boss/Supervisor Post Hoc Significance Levels

Factor	Justification	Face-Saving	Understanding
Justification	--	.001	.001
Face-Saving	--	--	1.00
Understanding	--	--	--
Mean	.519	.654	.671

Note: Bonferroni Post Hoc Test

Once again, for boss/supervisor, people were concerned with face-saving and understanding above justification. The explanations behind saving face are likely very similar to those of coworkers. Interview participants repeatedly expressed interest in not wanting to burn bridges with their bosses because they may need future recommendations or their new jobs may not work out. Understanding was the secondary motivation. People also wanted their bosses to know why they were leaving. Finally, leaver's accounts were motivated by justification. This motivation may have been especially strong for those who were leaving because of problems with their boss/supervisor or organization. It would be difficult to be honest and save face at the same time so it becomes important to

create a justifiable account. If the boss feels the reason for leaving is justifiable, perhaps he or she won't question the person's reasons for leaving any further.

Regarding customers/clients, the analysis found that account motivations differed significantly, *Wilks'* Λ = .789, F(2, 157) =20.999, p < .001, partial *eta*^{2} = .211. Results of Bonferroni post hoc tests (see Table 20) showed that once again, face-saving (*M* =.569) and understanding (*M* =.503) were significantly higher than justification (*M* =.396) at the p <.001 level. There were no significant differences between the two primary motivations.

Table 20 Customers/Clients Post Hoc Significance Levels

Factor	Justification	Face-Saving	Understanding
Justification	--	.001	.001
Face-Saving	--	--	.078
Understanding	--	--	--
Mean	.396	.569	.503

Note: Bonferroni Post Hoc Test

Results for customers/clients were very similar to those of boss/supervisor. Understanding and face-saving were the most important motivations in account creation. The open-ended questions on the questionnaire support this data. Several people noted that they did not want to make their company, coworkers, or boss look bad by leaving. Thus, they did not say anything negative when leaving. Additionally, many said that it was not important for their clients/customers to know why they were leaving, many still gave them a generic reason, thus helping to explain why understanding was a more important motivation that jusitification.

The analysis found that regarding friends, account motivations differed significantly, *Wilks'* Λ = .719, F(2, 157) =30.661, p < .001, partial *eta*^{2} = .281. Results of

Bonferroni post hoc tests (see Table 21) showed that as with spouse/family, understanding was significantly more motivating than justification and face-saving at the p <.001 level. Understanding (*M* =.744) was the primary motivation, face-saving (*M* =.557) was the secondary motivation and justification (*M* =.533) was the least important of the three, but there was no significant difference between justification and face-saving.

Table 21 Friends Post Hoc Significance Levels

Factor	Justification	Face-Saving	Understanding
Justification	--	1.00.	001
Face-Saving	--	--	.001
Understanding	--	--	--
Mean	.533	.557	.744

Note: Bonferroni Post Hoc Test

The results indicate that people talk to their friends about leaving in much the same way that they talk to their spouse/family about leaving. It is most important for leavers to explain why they were leaving; justification and face-saving take a secondary role. While this group may be targeted with information about exit less frequently than spouse/family, the explanations are similarly motivated.

Finally, regarding potential employees, the analysis found that account motivations differed significantly, *Wilks'* Λ = .708, F(2, 157) =32.454, p < .001, partial *eta*² = .292. Results of Bonferroni post hoc tests (see Table 22) showed that in this case, all three account motivation factors differed significantly from one another at the p < .05 level. Understanding (*M* =.604) was the primary motivation, face-saving (*M* =.519) was the secondary motivation, and justification (*M* =.405) was the least important of the three motivations.

Table 22 Potential Employers Post Hoc Significance Levels

Factor	Justification	Face-Saving	Understanding
Justification	--	.001	.001
Face-Saving	--	--	.018
Understanding	--	--	--
Mean	.405	.519	.604

Note: Bonferroni Post Hoc Test

In the case of potential employers, people were motivated by understanding primarily. Leavers wanted to provide their new employers with an explanation for why they left their jobs. It would be of the utmost importance to look good in front of a potential new employer so it is not surprising that face-saving was the secondary motivation. Finally, justification was the least important of the three motivations. When explaining to a future employer why you left your job, it is very important to let them know you had good reason for leaving and that you didn't just up and leave on a whim. Employers may be less likely to hire someone who exhibits such behavior.

Research question 5c asked how account motivations differed based on reason for leaving. A series of three one-way ANOVAs were run to answer this question. In each, the primary reason for leaving (avoidance, future-oriented, and circumstantial) acted as the independent categorical variable and the motivation score (for each of the three factors respectively) was the continuous dependent variable. As a reason-for-leaving, avoidance focused on negative elements of the work such as the job itself, the organization or the people there; future-oriented reasons were all positive in nature and focused on forward or future-oriented movement and advancement; and circumstantial reasons associated a persons leaving with a factor external to work.

The first ANOVA examined justification. No significant effect for reason for leaving was found, $F(2, 157) = .937$, $p = .394$. Results for the second ANOVA showed that there was no significant effect for reason for leaving on understanding, $F(2, 157) = .054$, $p = .947$. A final ANOVA showed that there was a significant effect for reason for leaving on face-saving, though the effect size is small, $F(2, 157) = 5.646$, $R^2 = .0675$, $p < .01$. Results of a Bonferonni post hoc test showed that circumstantial reasons ($M = 4.156$) and future-oriented reasons ($M = 3.778$) had a significantly higher effect on the use of the face-saving motivation than did avoidance ($M = 2.81$). In other words, face-saving was a more important motivation when people left their jobs due to future-oriented or circumstantial issues. Face-saving was a significantly less important motivation for those whose primary reason for leaving was avoidance.

Taken together, these results indicate that the reason a person is leaving has little impact on their motivation for creating accounts. In other words, if just because two people quit their jobs for different reasons, does not mean that they will have different motivations for explaining those reasons. For the most part, there was no effect for reason for leaving on account motivation.

Summary

The results from the fifth series of research questions show that when people give exit accounts, they are motivated by face-saving, justification and creating understanding. There are slight differences in the ordering of these motivations depending on the specific group they are targeted at but overall having others understand why the leaver quit is the primary motivation for creating accounts. Face-saving is generally the secondary motivation and justification is the final motivation.

The final research question in this study asked how communication between the leaver and stayers changes after exit. Interview participants were asked how their communication has changed with people they used to work with, what they talk about, and what they don't talk about. Analysis of the interview data suggested two primary ways in which communication altered after the participant had left the organization. The content of communication changed as did the frequency of communication.

Communication Content. In terms of content of communication, there were two themes that emerged in the data: *taboo topics* and *shared interests*. After the first few interviews, it was clear that once a person leaves their job, certain topics become taboo. Though not everyone had this experience, it was a relevant change for those that did. There were two sub-themes surrounding taboo topics: *legality* and *discomfort*. In four of the exit experiences of the participants, the stayers were no longer legally allowed to discuss certain topics with those who had left the organization. This was typically the case when the job involved financial information about clients. The following examples are from a youth case manager, a former bank vice president and an account manager.

> Karen: Before, there's a lot of venting that goes on, you know. You're talking about, what are the problems with this kid and. But now, it, for confidentiality purposes, we can't really talk about that. If I ask, like, "how's so-and-so?" I get a more general answer. Like "it's all pretty good," instead of "Johnny's back in this hospital," or "he broke the window and ran away."

> *****

> I: Do they talk about Beverage Company to you?
> Michelle: Constantly, It's funny. Once you leave, they still think that you want to know everything. Every detail.
> I: Is there anything that you don't talk about with them? Now that you've left?
> Michelle: No, not really, unless it is some proprietary information. Information about projects or accounts.

<center>*****</center>

John: I go to lunch with a couple of the guys. We just met last month, and I ask, "how are things over there, how's morale, how's, how's so-and-so doing?" We don't really talk about a whole lot of business, just more personal. Our kids, how's this person; leave the work side alone. They'll ask me, "are you guys busy over there? Are you doing this or are you doing that or I hear rumors that you're putting a bank here."
I: So more general?
John: Yeah, you know, we never (with emphasis) talk customers.

In each of these cases, the interviewees were not legally able to discuss certain elements of their former jobs. Both Michelle and John worked with company account information that they were not allowed to discuss. Furthermore, in John's case, the company he moved to was in direct competition with his former place of employment so the non-compete contract he had signed put additional limitations on his communication. Karen worked at a children's home and was no longer able to talk to her coworkers about the children's conditions. This was more difficult for her because she had spent so much of her time with the children and had been personally connected to their lives. So, it was difficult to not be able to find out how they were doing.

In other cases, people noted that they simply felt uncomfortable discussing certain topics with former coworkers. Participants were uncomfortable expressing criticism about the organization; two participants noted that they did not want to discuss how happy or unhappy they were at their new jobs.

Karen: They always make people do an exit interview to tell, like, what went well, what you thought didn't go well. And I never did that. And, I've never really talked to them about like, things that I didn't so much like about it or things that I thought they should change just because it made me really uncomfortable. And a lot of things are going on now that I especially don't agree with. So, I don't ever bring those up. I don't feel like it's my place now.

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Erica: I will say that if we're in a group setting, like if there are several, for example if we're. A few weeks ago we went to lunch with several people who still work there, you know? Just kind of a get together after the holidays, I haven't seen you in a while type of lunch and my former manager was in the group and for some reason I always feel, still to this day, I always feel uncomfortable talking about my new job and how much I love it.

Julie: The fact that I was not very happy at my new job. I didn't want to tell them that because I felt kind of embarrassed.
I: Yeah?
Julie: So, because I left, and now not liking it. I deleted that point, I was not liking it.

Once Karen had left her job, she did not feel like she had any right to criticize the practices of the organization. Even though she was asked her opinions in an exit interview, she was reluctant to give them. This attitude could be detrimental for organizations if people feel they cannot express themselves during exit interviews. Whether or not people are leaving on good terms, they often have feedback that could be useful to their organizations. In the second example, Erica holds back on positive communication. She does not want to talk about how much she loves her new job because it makes her feel uncomfortable. She had previously discussed being close to her manager and did not want to make it seem as though she was unhappy at work because of him. Thus, she holds back about her new job when he is around. In the final example, Julie holds back, but for another reason. She does not like her new job. She is embarrassed that she left her old job to take a job that she doesn't like, so she does not share that fact. Despite the fact that people found lots issues taboo or uncomfortable to talk about, leavers continued to communicate with people at work. The second theme highlights what participants did talk about.

The second theme regarding the content of communication was *shared interests*. Since the participants did not see their coworkers on a daily basis or participate in the

daily goings on of the organization, there were fewer potential topics to discuss but many did keep in contact at some level. Most noted that their communication eventually evolved into generic observations and questions regarding family, personal life, shared interests, and the person's former place of employment. Many participants reported that they still talked to their coworkers about both *non-work interests* that they shared as well as *work information* regarding the individual's former place of employment. When people communicated after an individual had exited the organization, the topics of communication most frequently mentioned by the participants had to do with non-work issues. Alice left her job 10 months ago and said that she still talks to her boss and coworkers "all the time, at least every other day…just about kids and family and personal stuff." Ian agreed:

> We send e-mails back and forth, jokes and everything. A couple of the guys are State fans. And I'm a College fan so we give each other grief about that. Sports cars. It just depends.

Most of the participants who kept in contact with former coworkers had similar answers. They would ask about children, families, and personal matters. A couple respondents also mentioned that former coworkers would ask about how their new jobs were going which leads to the second topic of communication discussed by the respondents.

Though there were many taboo work topics as mentioned previously, people did still talk about their former jobs with their former coworkers. In a couple cases, respondents noted that their coworkers wanted to tell them everything that had happened at work since they left while others gave more cursory information about the organization.

Carol: They call me at the [new] office and say "Here's my problem, how should I handle this."

Michelle: It's funny. Once you leave, they [old coworkers] think you want to know Everything [about the company], every detail.

John: They'll [former coworkers] ask me, "Are you guys busy over there? Are you guys doing this, or that?" or "I hear rumors you're putting a bank here."

Carol's coworkers still called her to help them figure out technical problems at the bank. Michelle, who left her job 10 months ago, said that her coworkers were even more adamant about sharing every detail of the job so she would not miss anything. Things were different for John though. His discussions about his work were very cursory. He stated that their market was so small it was impossible to not run into former coworkers and you had to be polite and "say the right things" but you couldn't say too much. In some cases, respondents still had close ties to the former places of employment. Julie was invited to her former company's Christmas party and Carol is still invited to monthly pot-lucks. Both Sheri and Carol noted that the frequency of those events has begun to diminish though.

Communication Frequency. With the exception of just a few cases, most participants noted that the frequency of communication with former coworkers had declined. For some it tapered off slowly; while for others it ended abruptly, particularly for people who left jobs where they had little interaction with coworkers in the first place or for people who left because they did not get along with their coworkers.

Debbie: It's just not; I'm not as up to date with them just because I don't see them every day. You know, we can't discuss stuff that happened at work or at lunch now because it's harder because we have to talk on the phone or e-mail or get together.

Jack: Pretty much before, we used to talk all the time, two or three times a week after we get home from work just to relax and whatnot. I don't hear from them near as much. Maybe once a month.

John: It's tapering off. I think that's pretty common. When I left my first job to go there it was the same way. You keep going to lunch with people you worked with, but eventually it kinds of splits off to where you, you have your own separate thing going. You know, you may see them once in a while at functions, but, you may talk to them once in a while on the phone, but, you don't see them as routinely as you used to.

Debbie noticed that when she didn't see her coworkers every day, maintaining communication with them required more effort and time and thus became more difficult. Jack noticed that even his after-work communication with his former coworkers declined. For John, it was an issue of not seeing the people as often. Other participants noted that one of the reasons they felt that their communication frequency had declined was because there was less common ground.

Mary: Just not being part of their daily lives. Just you know, like with my really good friends, what are you wearing today? You don't know those things.

Sheri: I don't talk to them near as much. I mean, because I don't see, um, I mean. I know I talk to them about, you know, or when we all had the same kind of focus, blood donors and stuff. And now, I have a completely different focus than they do and I don't see them everyday and I talk to them about once a week so pretty much it's dramatically slowed down.

When people work together they typically have social interaction during the work day. When those people no longer share social interaction during the work day, it requires them to make that time outside of work. As Sheri noted, she doesn't have the same focus as her coworkers anymore. That lack of shared interaction coupled with lack of time and less common ground can make continued communication much more difficult.

Summary

Post-exit changes in communication were very obvious to the participants. They easily recalled that their communication was not the same as it had been. Communication had primarily changed in terms of two themes: shared ground and frequency. People did not feel that they shared enough common ground to have the same level of communication as they once had. Similarly, and possibly as a result of the first theme, people did not communicate as frequently as they once had. Generally participants noticed that their communication tapered off as opposed to ending abruptly.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

This chapter has examined the results of the six research questions being examined in this study. Qualitative data, supported by quotes from the participants, and statistical test results of the questionnaires were presented and analyzed. In the next chapter, these results will be further interpreted and discussed in terms of the literature. Furthermore, applications and limitations will also be discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

While newcomers have taken center stage in socialization research, scholars have begun to focus more attention on other organizational transitions in recent decades. Not only are people leaving their job during exit, they are leaving their organizations. At the least, leavers are significantly altering their relationships with former coworkers and many relationships are severed completely. People must also relinquish part of their identities when the leave organizations. After exit, organizations must recuperate by training and assimilating replacements. Individuals leaving must manage their exit with a variety of groups and many have new jobs and organizations to be socialized into. Clearly, exit is a fundamental stage of the socialization process. Thus, this study sought to examine this process beginning with a person's decision to leave an organization and ending with well-after the individual had physically left the organization. In this chapter I will provide a brief review of the literature and methods of the study, followed by brief reviews of the results incorporated into a discussion of the results and their implications. Finally, the limitations will be presented followed by the general conclusions of the study.

Much socialization research has focused on the content of socialization (Fisher, 1986; Chao et al., 1994) and the outcomes of socialization (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Feldman, 1976a, 1976b, 1981). These two areas of research highlight the assumption that many scholars view socialization as a process that has an end point; something that can be finished. However, from a communication standpoint, socialization includes not only how people become official members of their organizations but also how people resign

this status. People make the transition from members to non-members and along the way learn how to operate as former members of an organization. In order to focus on one type of exit transition this study only examined voluntary exits, those initiated by the employee, such as quits and retirements.

Research has examined behavioral, attitudinal, and communication antecedents to exit. Studies have examined such communication issue as relationship quality (Allen, 1996), group communication (Cox, 1999), and identification (Scott et al., 1999). Research has also examined how people process through exit. Lee and colleagues (Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Lee et al., 1996) found that people generally exit through scripted decision paths that include the five basic elements of shock, dissatisfaction, job search, evaluation of alternatives and quitting. Though useful for examine exit, these studies do not examine the communication of leavers during the exit transition. In one of the first studies to examine communication through the exit transition, Wilson (1983) compared the transition to relationship deterioration. She found that at certain points before leaving, an employee will experience unmet expectations, declining involvement and commitment, restricted communication and then renewed interest and concern in preserving the system they are leaving. Wilson also found that people recognize that their communication will change after they have left the organization. Drawing on a variety of research from both other fields and different work and non-work transitions, Jablin (2001) suggested a number of communicative changes and events that were likely to take place during exit. The purpose of this study was to examine some of the most basic communication events and changes that people experience during exit, from the perspective of the leaver.

Integral to the process of exit is sensemaking. Both leavers and stayers must make sense of the leaver's decision to exit. Sensemaking is a useful approach to socialization because some degree of shock is a key element in both sensemaking and exit and because both sensemaking and exit are accomplished through language and interaction (Kramer, 2004). Sensemaking is the process of creating and attributing meaning to the shock associated with leaving. The decision to leave instigates both the beginning of the exit process as well as the retrospective sensemaking that will give meaning to the event. In the case of exit, the product of sensemaking is an account, or a statement made to "explain [the] unanticipated or untoward behavior" (Scott & Lyman, 1968, p. 46). As a form of motivated talk, accounts do more than provide information; accounts are used to accomplish goals (Semin & Manstead, 983). Researchers have found that accounts are useful tools for impression management (Braaten et al., 1993) and reducing negative reactions to an event (Tata, 1996).

Research questions addressed each of the three phases of Jablin's (2001) exit model: preannouncement, announcement/actual exit. In preannouncement, the focus was on how people make sense of their decision to exit, what type of verbal and nonverbal cues they give, to whom, and with what frequency. Questions from the announcement/actual exit phase examined how people announce their exit, what types of accounts they provide and what motivates the type of account they give. The final question asked how communication changes post-exit.

The research questions were answered through a three phase methodology. Under the umbrella of an interpretive methodology, well suited for examining sensemaking (Kramer, 2004), interviews were conducted with twenty-three adults who had voluntary

left a job in the previous twelve months. The data gathered from this phase was used to answer questions about sensemaking and also provided additional foundation for the creation of the questionnaire that was used in the second phase of the study. The interviews focused on how people communicated during all three phases of the exit process, focusing on what they talked about, who they talked to, and how they communicated their exit. The second phase of the study adopted a quantitative approach to data collection. Through this phase, questionnaire data was collected from 174 participants regarding their communication behavior during exit. The goal of this phase of the analysis was to gather data from a greater number of individuals to examine how the interview participants' experiences were regarded on a more generalizable level. Data from the open-ended portion of each questionnaire was submitted to content analysis in the third and final phase of analysis.

The following pages recap the results of the research questions briefly, providing a discussion of how they fit with the literature. Each section is concluded with a discussion of the general implications for communication during that phase of exit. Finally, the limitations are presented, followed by the general conclusions.

<div align="center">Preannouncement Communication</div>

Research Question 1

The first research question asked how people make sense of their decisions to leave their jobs. During the preannouncement phase, people are making decisions about quitting their jobs, discussing those decisions with a variety of people, and deciding if, in fact, they are going to follow through with those decisions. The data showed that generally this phase of exit is brought about by some type of trigger event that leads the

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person to begin considering exit. After the trigger event has taken place, people focus on five key communication topics and they employ a variety of communication strategies to process their exit decision.

Whether it was an e-mail from a potential employer, a growing realization, a pregnancy, or an interpersonal conflict, most respondents were able to pin-point events or moments when they decided to leave their jobs. This supports Lee and Mitchell's (1994) model of voluntary employee turnover. Lee et al. (1994, 1996) identified four "paths" that one can take when leaving a job. For three of those, a "shock" was present as the impetus for leaving. The fourth path was not characterized by shock but instead by gradual realization that the job was not a good fit. In this research both shock and gradual realization are considered trigger events because despite the time period they occupy, they have the same impact. Trigger events are the impetus for exit and for sensemaking regarding the exit decision.

As Louis (1980) suggests, surprising or shocking events lead to situations in which normal behavioral (and communicative) scripts can fail. Thus, people must develop explanations for what has happened. Creating that explanation, or account, is an attempt at giving that event meaning. When people experience trigger events the flow of their normal, organizational activity is interrupted. At this point, people decide to leave their jobs or at least they decide that quitting is a possibility. The subsequent sensemaking is an attempt at giving meaning to that action or creating a valid account (by the standards of the leaver) for quitting. Whether or not people are able to create a valid account may be the reason some choose to follow through with their decision to quit while others do not.

In summary, with regards to trigger events, a key element of sensemaking is evidenced. The trigger events act as the shocks or impetus for sensemaking to begin. As was mentioned previously, the trigger event was not an original focus of this research because trigger events are not necessarily communicative events. However, it played an important role for the respondents in the exit process. The next paragraphs will examine the communication issues regarding the preannouncement stage of exit.

After a person makes the initial decision to leave a job, communication begins to change. The analysis showed that there were five key topics of communication and three unique communication strategies that were highlighted in the preannouncement phase, all of which have the ability to act as exit cues. When people were considering or planning their exit, people talked about job dissatisfaction, organizational dissatisfaction, interpersonal conflicts, personal life issues and job evaluation. Jablin (2001) suggested that after people formally announce exit they, along with those staying in the organization, will be more open to discussing formerly taboo topics such as problems with the organization. However, it seems that these are also some of the topics that are most often discussed before people announce their exit as well, though the openness or the target of the communication may differ. As they are deciding whether or not to leave and building their exit accounts, they talk about their dissatisfaction with organizational, interpersonal and job features. In job evaluation, both the positive and negative elements are weighed against one another. Even in the two instances where people walked out of their jobs without providing notice, a seemingly unplanned action, there had been ongoing job evaluation with at least one or more targets. Communicating these elements is very important for people as they are deciding to leave. Through this communication

people are either able, or not able, to construct an environment which enables their exit. Depending on the outcome, they may or may not leave. One interviewee, Karen, summarized this well: "Sometimes you don't trust your own, you know, ideas. [I] may be making a wrong decision; I'd better run it by two or three other people."

These five topics of communication can all be interpreted as cues, "evident in the form of discretionary and ambient messages" (Jablin, 2001, p. 786), that signal to others that a person is considering exit. As Jablin had suggested, these cues were communicated in a variety of ways, to a variety of targets, and at varying lengths of time before exit. Sondra told her boss she was applying for a new job, a direct and intentional cue. Ian shared his irritation about losing tuition benefits with his coworkers, an intentional, yet less direct cue. Carol began giving direct and intentional cues about her exit nearly four years before she actually left her job. For others, the period was much briefer.

Along with communicating about certain topics, there were three broad communication issues evident in the preannouncement phase. Individuals enlisted others to help them transition to exit in a variety of ways. As the theme of openness showed, individuals made considerations about how "open" or "discreet" to be with different groups regarding exit. They were generally open when communicating to family yet more discreet when communicating with bosses and supervisors. Finally, some individuals also changed their work habits. Several respondents were concerned with making sure they tied up their loose ends so there would not be problems for the remaining employees after they left.

The communication topics and issues are important in themselves; however, they are also important in that they offer a glimpse into the how people work to construct their

accounts for leaving and how people begin to make sense of their decisions to leave. In terms of the different topics that people discuss during this period, most of them have a negative focus. People focus on dissatisfaction, conflict, and interference with their personal life. People are, in essence, building their set of reasons for leaving. It is likely that the response from the targets of the cues go a long way in determining whether or not those elements become parts of their final exit account. Jablin (2001) states that the cues serve functions for the targets in that they allow them to engage in collective sensemaking to develop explanations about why a person is leaving. The cues, and the target's responses to them, also serve this function for the potential leaver. Cox (1999) found that organization members communicate to encourage exit in a variety of ways. If, for example, the target responds to a person complaining about their job by agreeing with them and telling them they should look for a better job, the potential leaver will be reinforced in that element of their decision. While this study did not look at how cues are responded to by targets, respondents did talk specifically about asking for advice from others and had people weigh the pros and cons of their job. Through these episodes, targets are working collectively with the potential leaver to create an environment that either makes leaving justifiable or not. If, as in the previous example, the potential leaver is supported in their observations about a bad work environment and the benefits of finding a new job, the two have worked together to create, or enact, a reality in which leaving is not only an appropriate thing to do but the only sensible option. So, by focusing on the pre-exit cues communicated by individuals, targets and potential leavers work collectively to construct an environment in where their reasoning for leaving is justifiable. This process highlights three very important elements of sensemaking: it is

extracted by cues, people work collectively to create meaning, and that collective, or

social activity, enacts the environment of the potential leaver. This process is vital

because the next phase of exit is announcement. When people announce their exit to

others, they must have developed their account for why they are leaving. The content of

and motivation for accounts will be discussed in detail in later pages but this is the point

at which the account is created. Through the communication and interaction with

different target groups during preannouncement leavers construct an account that will be

accepted by both members and non-members of the organization, thus allowing for a

smooth transition through the exit process.

Originally posed under the sub-heading of "preannouncement," the data clearly

showed that sensemaking regarding the exit decision is not a process restricted to this

sub-phase. While sensemaking regarding this decision begins in this phase, it continues

throughout the entire exit process. This is not surprising considering that a major property

of sensemaking is the fact that is ongoing. Thus, in order to do justice to sensemaking

throughout exit, it will be added to the discussion of this research question throughout the

remainder of the research questions.

Research Question 2

The second series of research questions focused on communication during the

preannouncement phase of exit. Specifically, the questions asked what types of cues are

given during this period, who people give these cues to, and whether cues differed based

on the targets of the communication. A similar analysis of the targets of this

communication found the communication most frequently directed at family and friend,

then potential employers, followed by boss/supervisor and coworkers, and finally customers/clients.

A factor analysis of the themes from the previous question showed that, in order of frequency of use, the basic five types of cues were advice, openness, work dissatisfaction, personal conflicts and work behaviors. Again, advice seeking behaviors highlight the social element in making the exit decision. People sought advice most often from family and friends and much less frequently from bosses and coworkers. With regards to exit, people are not making their decision alone; they are asking the advice of people whose opinions matters and who have a stake in the decision being made. The important part of the interaction is it either acts to bolster the account that is being created or it may show weaknesses in it. In other words, during this interaction, people are trying out their accounts on others and using their feedback to strengthen the plausibility of the account. Because plausibility, not accuracy, is important for the account and sensemaking (Weick, 1995), others can be used to test the account. If the advice received encourages a person to stay at their job, it may point to weakness in the account, either encouraging the person to stay or amend their account in such a way that it is more believable.

People were frequently open about leaving as well. But, that openness diminishes in frequency depending on the target. Family, friends, and potential coworkers are frequently apprised when a person is considering exit. Openness is both practically and theoretically important when thinking about exit. Sensemaking theory suggests that the more public an action is, the more committed the person must be to the action (Weick, 2001). Thus it could be argued that the more a person is open about the possibility of quitting, the more committed they must be to actually following through with that action.

As the data showed, people are least open with coworkers and supervisors suggesting that being open with these groups expresses the highest level of commitment to the action of quitting. By being open about wanting to leave a job, a person is enacting or creating an environment that makes it easier to leave and yet is at the same time creating an environment that requires their exit. For example, if a person is constantly talking to others about how dissatisfied they are at work, it will make sense to others when they quit their job because they have created a scenario in which other's will not question or be surprised by their exit. On the other hand, constant complaining about one's dissatisfaction at work may create an environment where others encourage them to quit. In other words, "leave or quit complaining."

People also discussed work dissatisfaction. As mentioned previously, Jablin (2001) argued that people may be more likely to discuss elements of the work/organization that they did not like during the period between announcing their exit and actually leaving their job. These results support the notion that is when people leaving are likely to discuss work dissatisfaction but the findings suggest that it happens earlier than Jablin expected. None of the respondents said they talked about work problems after they had announced their exit; one respondent went so far as to say at that point she felt it was no longer her place to comment on problems the organization had. Interestingly, people are not talking about work dissatisfaction to people who have the control over those dissatisfactory elements. Management and coworkers, the parties who have the most control over dissatisfactory elements of the work, are generally only given infrequent indication of dissatisfaction prior to exit.

Finally, and least frequently, people talked about personal conflicts and changed their work behaviors. People talked less about personal conflicts than the other topics. Communication that acts as a cue for exit can also act as a cue for another's sensemaking process to begin. If a person airs grievances regarding a personal conflict, it may lead others to use that conflict to make sense of the person's exit. As later data showed, face-saving was an important function of creating accounts. Face-saving seems to openly contradict airing personal grievances, at least with work colleagues. People are also using their accounts to influence the sense other people make of their exit. This, coupled with the face-saving motivation, suggests that airing personal grievances would be counterproductive in the work setting, perhaps explaining its low frequency of use. Additionally, people may feel like leaving a job because of a personal conflict may be a less justifiable reason for leaving a job, thus prompting them to build other reasons into their account.

In terms of work behaviors, research by Wilson (1983) found that in the final stages before exit, people have a renewed interest in the future of the organization and work to make sure that there are no loose ends once they leave. The findings of this study support her research. This may be one instance where employers have the ability to recognize that an employee is considering, or more likely preparing for, exit. Because the audience of changing work behaviors will often be coworkers and management, it would be difficult to completely hide these behaviors, thus acting as a cue to the other employees that they need to make sense of something that is occurring..

Implications for Communication during Preannouncement

There are a number of important implications regarding communication during the preannouncement stage of exit. Both the individual and the organization have potential to benefit.

The role of the target is extremely important. The targets of preannouncement communication potentially have a great deal of influence on the leaver. They provide advice, act as soundboards, help with resumes, and generally help people make their decisions. This is a role that should be investigated more thoroughly. As Jablin (2001) suggests, a target's response to a disengagement cue may negatively or positively impact the potential leaver's decision, creating perhaps unwanted turnover, from an organizational standpoint, and may cause the targets to question their organizational status or may cause the target to feel responsible for the leaver's decision. Similar to studies on encouraging exit (Cox, 1999) future studies should examine how people encourage others to stay and the impacts of either type of communication on the stayers.

It would also be interesting to discover whether or not the recipients of the cues believed them less if the potential leaver gives the cues over a long period of time. The literature on excuses suggests that the more often an excuse is used, the less it is believed (Scott & Lyman, 1968). Though not an excuse, it would be interesting to know if the same effect occurred in cues. If someone hints that they hate their job for ten years, do people still think this is a cue for exit? Like the boy crying wolf, what happens when employees cry "I'm quitting"?

From a managerial standpoint, there is a lot that can be gained by being aware of employee's pre-exit communication. Though they are rarely communicated directly to management, cues that signal potential exit should not be dismissed. First, if managers

are more aware of the less overt and nonverbal signals of exit, they may be able to intervene before the individuals have solidified their decision to leave. Second, these cues may point to serious organizational problems. The respondents in this study did not frequently talk to bosses or supervisors about their dissatisfaction with work. If organizational members are able to pick up on more subtle cues, they may be able to encourage open communication about the issues that are leading to turnover. While the individuals may still choose to exit, the organization may benefit from the information communicated through these cues. Similarly, in cases where the organization would like to retain the employee, noticing the cues early on may give the organization time to attempt to encourage the individual to stay. People who are thinking about leaving their jobs are clearly talking about it, yet in many cases, not to the people who could potentially remedy the situation. On the other hand, simply knowing that, as a boss, you are not likely to be consulted when a person is considering leaving is helpful. Management can be more proactive regarding turnover by asking questions about what their employees are dissatisfied with, making themselves open to talk about organizational problems, and simply paying more attention to discreet messages that are being sent. While not all cases of exit are based on dissatisfaction, many are. Furthermore, when people announce their exit, they have already gone through a lengthy decision-making process, it is unlikely that the leaver will be convinced to stay at this point.

Announcement of Exit & Actual Exit

The second phase of organizational exit focuses on how people communicate or announce their decision to exit and the actual process of exiting an organization. As

Blumstein (1974) states, "people respond to our symbolic restructuring of our deeds, much more than to the deeds themselves" (p. 565). Thus, the remaining questions examined how people accomplish that restructuring through accounts.

Research Question 3

The third research question asked how people communicate their decisions to leave to others. Announcing exit was not a singular event. The data showed that people tend to follow a general pattern when making their announcements. First, they tell the members of their inner circle they are leaving. This is likely an anti-climactic event. The people in the inner circle are those who are most aware of the individual's desire to leave their job. They are often the people who have received the most open communication regarding exit and the most direct cues. Members of the inner-circle are in many cases the same people who have helped construct the person's reason or account for leaving. Thus, this act is typically very informal. As one respondent told her mother (part of her inner circle), "I'm going to do it today." There was no need for a formal explanation because this person had been involved in the sensemaking process that created the account.

The second part of the announcement process is formal resignation. The general trend was for the respondents to have a private, face-to-face meeting with a boss or supervisor. The majority also provided a written letter to accompany the announcement but viewed it as a formality, with the meeting being the most important part. Overall the formal announcement was a private matter, delivered to only one or two people in supervisory roles.

While Jablin (2001) suggested that based on research from the literature and layoffs that the formal announcement would be anti-climactic as rumors typically

abound, this was not necessarily the case. More often that not, the target of the formal announcement, was not expecting announcement. This is likely due to the fact that of all the groups who received exit cues, those in the boss/supervisor role received them with much less frequency than other groups did. On several occasions the participants in this study wanted to avoid telling their supervisor until the last minute, when they were sure the exit would happen. Secondly, leavers did not want this information communicated through gossip or the grapevine so they were careful about who did receive information. One respondent noted getting upset when she overheard a coworker telling her boss that she was thinking about leaving. People who are leaving put a lot of thought into how they want the announcement to play out; it is a calculated event.

For many, the announcement produces some measure of anxiety and presumably, the more control they have over the announcement, the less anxiety they feel. We also know that people sometimes give their boss or supervisor a different account than they give their coworkers. Thus, it becomes even more important for the leaver to give their account first. One of the tenets of sensemaking states that the accuracy of the account is secondary to an account's plausibility. If potentially conflicting information reaches the boss before the leaver has an opportunity to give their account, it may hurt the plausibility of it. If the leaver's account is challenged, it may cause anxiety regarding their decision.

Finally, the actual announcement is important because it is the major public enactment of quitting. As Weick (2001) states, sensemaking is an act of committed interpretation. As acts become more public, they are harder to undo. Until the point of formal announcement, the leaver has the ability to change their mind more easily. It is probably easier to turn down an offered job than it is to ask to come back to the job you

just quit. Formal resignation is the point when commitment to an act is at its highest, thus making it more difficult to persuade leavers to stay. Because quitting is both volitional and public, the leaver needs and uses their established account to restore the social order that has been upset by the leaver's announcement and impending exit.

Once the formal announcement had been made, leavers *spread the word* that they were in fact leaving or did leave their job. There were two key findings about this stage. First, people want control this process. Second, the process of spreading the word is a loosely configures stage. Control over the ability to spread the exit announcement is very important in terms of sensemaking. By being the one to share this information, the leaver gets to give their account first. Stayers will likely make their own sense of the exit and being able to influence the sense they make by giving one's account for leaving personally may, in the mind of the leaver, increase the likelihood that their account will be accepted. If the account they provide is plausible to the target, they may forego their own sensemaking and accept the leaver's account.

Because spreading the word can last well past the point at which a person has left their job, it would be interesting to examine how the account changes as time since exit increases.

The process of announcing one's exit varied quite a bit. Some announced their exit months in advance while others announced their exit and left that afternoon. Some were extremely concerned about the announcement and others were unconcerned about how others would react. There were also differences in the formality of the announcement, the mode of delivery, and the reactions people had to the announcement. Despite these differences, a key finding was that the formal announcement was not the

only announcement, nor was it always the most important one. People went through phases of announcement and gave their announcements to a variety of people in a variety of ways. The next series of research questions examined the content of those announcements in more detail.

Research Question 4

Earlier I argued that throughout the process of making sense of their decisions to leave, people are working to create accounts to clarify why they have decided to leave their job. In general talk we might call these accounts explanations. However, the literature on accounts states that accounts are different than explanations; accounts are created in response to failure events (Scott & Lyman, 1968; Schönbach, 1980). Failure events are those in which the behavior or action, in this case quitting, is considered unanticipated or untoward. Explanations are given in cases where the event does not have those two qualities. In this sense, quitting is a failure event because the action is likely to be unanticipated by people in the organization, if not by the leaver him/herself. Even in cases where a person is aware they may be leaving, it will often create surprise for at least some other group in the organization (Jablin, 2001). Importantly though, quitting is not seen as a failure in the traditional sense of the word; here, failure does not mean a lack of personal success. This was reinforced by the data. Each respondent in this study let their job voluntarily. Not one of them expressed, explicitly or implicitly, that they felt they had failed.

The fourth series examined what types of exit accounts people give, who they give them to, and how they change the accounts. Scott and Lyman (1968) identified two primary types of accounts: excuses and justification. Interestingly, none of the accounts

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presented in the data were excuses; all were justifications. Though surprising at first, it makes sense that people who did, in the end, quit their jobs would feel justified in that decision. Perhaps developing the justification is what enables people to quit their jobs. Three types of justification for exit were found: appeals to loyalty, self-fulfillment, and negative environment. These justification sub-types all focus on elements in which the organization is not meeting the needs of the employee. These three types of justifications or appeals are supported by the Nicholson and West's (1984) research on exit. They found that people tend to leave their jobs for circumstantial factors not related to the job, avoidance factors, and finally future oriented reason. Though no statistical analyses were run, theoretically, these reasons align well with appeals to loyalty, negative situation and self-fulfillment respectively, thus supporting them as the categories of justification. Also, just as people sometimes have a variety of reasons they leave a job (Nicholson & West, 1984), people can also use a combination of appeals when leaving a job. Though only the primary appeal was analyzed in this question, the use of combined appeals is an area future research should consider.

The data showed that people give different accounts to different targets. There were two key findings in this data. First, of those that were amended, nearly all of the appeals to negative situation were changed to appeals to self-fulfillment. Second, over half of the amended accounts were for boss/supervisor, coworkers, and potential employers. While data was not collected on why each change was made, the data and literature provide a few hints. Folger et al. (1983) found that accounts could be used to diminish disapproval and resentment. Braaten et al. (1993) found that accounts were useful in reducing anger and aggression. People who are concerned about negative

reactions from bosses or coworkers may use their account to ease reactions. Similarly, if strong relationships exist between the employee and coworkers, for example, they may alter their account so negative feelings don't hurt the relationship. Impression management may also be a motivating force (Goffman, 1971). An individual who is worried about how quitting may make them look may alter their account to appeal to something that is more acceptable to their target. People may change their account if it has the potential to threaten the other person's face as well (Schlenker, 1980). Some participants left their jobs because they did not like their bosses yet were reticent to tell them that was the reason.

What is most interesting is not the fact that the motivations for accounts change, but the simple fact that the accounts themselves can change from target to target. Overall, as people tell and retell their exit account, it changes. Some groups may get the full story, while others get a condensed, slightly altered version. People used deception, partial and total omission, positive spin, and ambiguity when amending accounts. As Weick (2001) argues, plausibility is more important than accuracy. If though, the account is not seen as plausible, it may act as a cue to the target that there is something else going on at which point that person may begin their own process of making sense of why the person left. As long as the reason the leaver provides is believable, or plausible, the actual reasons for leaving become unimportant. This feature of sensemaking allows people to meet their secondary functions of saving-face or creating understanding with the account. Having an account that is seen as plausible by the target allows the two parties to deal with the exit in a way that meets the needs of their relationship (e.g. face-saving).

The giving of the account, no matter what phase, also highlight two additional elements of sensemaking. After the account is given, the target may accept the account, question it, or reject it completely. Based on the target's reaction, the leaver may amend, or add to the account in order to strengthen its plausibility. This interaction emphasizes the social and interactive nature of sensemaking. Stayers or other target groups may also interact in the absence of the leaver, sharing the accounts they received and collectively creating a new account for why the person left. Since this study did not examine the exchange that occurs from the perspective of the stayer or target, these are areas that future research should examine further.

Additionally, it is the act of leaving that requires the giving of the account in the first place. By announcing exit, a person breaks the normal flow of interaction, in both personal and organizational life, thus calling for an "explanation" of that action. The fact that every person gave some sort of account for leaving shows that there is, on some level, an obligation for explanation. In other words, the act of quitting creates a situation that requires the actor to provide an account for that action. The enactment is continuous and reciprocal because the quitting creates an environment that requires an account and the giving of the exit account creates an environment which requires the follow through of the action.

Research Question 5

The final step in understanding accounts was to determine peoples' motivations for creating accounts. Cody and McLaughlin (1985) found that failure events are less likely to evolve into conflict when the offending party properly manages the account. The account is the way the event is managed by the leaver. The three questions focused on

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general motivation for account creation, motivation as it differed based on target, and motivation as it differed based on reason for leaving.

Saving face, creating understanding, and justification were the three motivations for creating the accounts. These motivations are not unique to exits as all were supported by the literature on social accounts. A key goal of an account is to make a behavior both intelligible and warrantable (Harré, 1977). These goals are represented in the first and third motivations that argue accounts should give the target an understanding of the event and should persuade the target that the event was justifiable. Giving targets an explanation of the event ranked as the first motivator for nearly every target group with understanding being the most motivating factor. Coming back to the argument that sensemaking requires plausibility and not accuracy supports these findings. Making the target understand a person's reasons for leaving were more important than making sure the target agreed the act of quitting was the right decision. However, as was seen in the data, accounts were changed readily to accomplish the goal of understanding, supporting the notion that the accuracy of the account was secondary to believability.

As Buttny (1993) and Schlenker (1980) suggested, accounts are used to maintain their own and others' positive face as well as restore what was interrupted by the failure event. Overall, face-saving was the second frequently noted motivation for each target group. This suggests that people want to maintain a positive tone with others as they prepare to leave their jobs. The fact that face-saving was an important motivation lends indirect support to the framing of exit as a failure event. If people did not accept that there was some degree of negative connotation regarding quitting, there would likely be little motivation for face-saving in their exit accounts. Face-saving was a weaker

motivation only in situations where people were leaving to avoid a negative

circumstance, suggesting that if the situation is already negative, fewer attempts will be

made to mend relations before leaving.

Implications for Communication during Announcement/Actual Exit

Sensemaking is a process of committed interpretation (Weick, 2001). Once the

process of announcement has begun and impending exit becomes public knowledge,

leavers become more committed to acting on the statement, actually leaving. Weick goes

on to say that the commitment to volitional acts, such as were studied here, is even

stronger because the individuals hold responsibility for them. As people find out that a

person is going to exit, or as people hear rumors of an impending exit, an environment is

created that requires the act to happen. If people do not go through with the exit, it may

cause conflict in the organization or interpersonally. For example, a boss might

categorize the behavior as a tactic to get a raise. Coworkers or other target groups may

feel like their time and concern were wasted. All of the participants in this study did

eventually leave their jobs, but future research should examine the communication that

follows when individuals do not follow through with their exit announcements.

People who are contemplating exit must be aware of the potential pitfalls of not

going through with the exit. Just as newcomers may choose to engage in indirect

information-seeking strategies (Miller, 1996), leavers may also choose to make the same

decisions to be indirect and/or discreet when communicating about their exit. Research in

this area should further examine the considerations employees make when discussing

potential exit. Research should also look at how individuals at this stage of exit use other

uncertainty reduction techniques in making their decisions. For example, how do

peoples' former exit experiences impact their later exits? Also, if others have left the organization, how do those exits impact the potential leaver? Because exits due to events such as retirement may be accepted with no explanation other than, "I'm retiring because I can," future research may want to consider how sub-types of voluntary exit influence the account giving process.

On a practical level, it is very important for leavers to have the opportunity to share their story with others as they see fit. Though they may be upset or shocked, managers should consider and respect the wishes of the individual if it is a possibility. Interesting, it seems as though people change their stories as they share them. People who hear the stories then have the opportunity to make their own sense of the event and retell the story to others, not necessarily in its original form. This offers researchers an opportunity to evaluate how sensemaking happens during exit from a different point of view. Also, narrative theory could be applied to examine the accounts as narrative events and trace the changes that are made from yet a different perspective.

From an organizational standpoint, the fact that people are giving a variety of accounts for their exit highlights the importance of the exit interview. The data showed case after case of people leaving for outrageous reasons, being cursed out by a boss, being sexually harassed, having their workload increased beyond job description, and being asked to do illegal things. Many of these same people noted that they left without disclosing what was going on to anyone in the organization. If organizations want to get rid of negative situations such as these, there needs to be a way to get this information from employees. Many employees are given opportunities to discuss these issues during exit interviews but if, as the data suggests, leavers are unlikely to talk about their

problems with organizational members, the exit interview may be providing the organization with inaccurate information.

Research also suggests that events are interpreted in a variety of ways; different sense can be made of the same event (Weick, 1995). It would be interesting to study the accounts that stayers develop about an employee's exit. As Jablin (2001) suggests, they may not be the same as the ones provided by the leavers. It would be useful to interview organizational members who have recently experienced others' exits. Researchers could ask what reason the co-worker or boss was given and then ask the participant if they agree or disagree with the reasons they were given. This would provide a more holistic view of how accounts are interpreted by stayers. Jablin (2001) expects that accounts will be originally given in narrative form and will be retold in list form. This research could also examine how leaver's accounts are re-told and shared among stayers.

Though it was not an explicit focus of this study, a couple of the participants were able to identify ways in which their communication changed between announcement and actual exit. A couple of participants noted that their communication was more jovial and non-work related and another participant noted she was given more undesirable job tasks. Research on transferees (Kramer, 1989) suggests that the communication of transferees also shifts focus to a more personal orientation in the time before transfer. Future research should examine how these communication changes occur in those leaving the organization completely.

<div align="center">Post Exit</div>

Research Question 6

The final research question looked at communication between leavers and stayers changes after exit. Communication changes in terms of both content and frequency. Nearly all of the respondents noted that their communication frequency slowed after leaving and had tapered as time went by. One reason that frequency may diminish is that there are taboo topics for leavers and stayers. For some, there are specific organizational or work issues that are confidential. Once a person leaves the organization they no longer have rights to this knowledge, which can be frustrating for some employees. Other taboo topics are self-imposed because they make the parties uncomfortable. Some people prefer to no talk about their new job because they don't want to make other's feel bad. Others didn't feel it was their place to discuss elements of the former job, even if the current employees were willing to do so. There were many topics that people continued to discuss including both work and non-work issues. People talked about their families, their shared interests and other surface information. This is similar to Kramer's (1993b) findings that people preparing for transfers talk about more topics and personal topics with close co-workers. Though closeness of coworkers was not measured in the current study, the interviewee's noted that generally, they only maintained relationships with those coworkers they were close to. Leavers and stayers also continued to talk about work but in a more superficial way. The stayers would occasionally call those who left to ask a question or figure out a work problem. Some would ask about or give cursory information about the organization let the leaver know what had been happening in their absence. On rare occasions, there were employees who still felt the need to tell the leavers every detail of what was going on.

Relationships at work are important; they allow us to do our jobs more efficiently and hopefully increase our satisfaction at work. In the early stages of socialization, people must work to become a full-fledged member of the organization. That status and the relationships that are built during one's organizational tenure are not easily dissolved. However, when people leave one job to enter a new one, they begin that process again with the need to develop relationships at their new jobs, not because they need or want new friends, but because those relationships help them to reduce their uncertainty about their new jobs, assist them in accomplishing their work, and create personal connections. In any case, it may be difficult for some leavers and for some stayers to recognize the change in organizational status of the leaver.

Generally, people have much less interaction because they don't see one another at work; they must find time to communicate outside of work which can be difficult. Wilson (1983) noted that people are likely aware that this will happen and so they begin to seek closure. They are aware that they will not be able to share information with their coworkers as they once did. Also, many people move onto other jobs and must begin to build social relationships with those people. This may result in old contacts or relationship being replaced by new ones. This finding is also supported by research on transferees Kramer (1989) that found that during the period after a transfer, transferees' and stayers' communication diminished in frequency over time. Also, the content of that communication was primarily non-work related.

Implications for Communication after Exit

Communication after exit clearly impacts leavers. Avery and Jablin (1988) cited research showing that retirees noted the lack of communication after exit led to feelings

of isolation. While non-retirees will likely go on to create new communication networks at their new jobs, the dissolution of old ties may potentially negatively or positively impact the leaver. Developing more realistic expectations about how communication will change after exit may make the transition easier for all individuals involved.

Future research should further investigate the changes in topic and frequency of communication among leavers and stayers. Research on a larger sample of individuals would allow for greater generalizibility to working adults. Stayers' communication must not be ignored either. As Sheehan's (1991, 1993, 1995) program of research contends, stayers may engage begin to evaluate their own jobs, may have decreased productivity, and may also experience negative affect after a coworker leaves. These findings suggest that communication is also likely to change until a new routine has been established.

Socialization

While the goal of this study was to examine the communication processes during exit the findings support the notion of socialization as an ongoing process. As mentioned in the literature review, some scholars have suggested that socialization is a process with a definite end point, something that can be completed with varying degrees of success (Feldman, 1976a). However, it seems as though the processes of exit and entry are not only connected and related but interwoven. People are engaging in anticipatory socialization with their new jobs at the same time they are exiting their current jobs. For example, findings indicated that during preannouncement, potential employers were the third most often communicated with target behind friends and family. In other words, before people announce they are quitting, they talk with potential employers and learn about new jobs, companies, and coworkers. As in the case of one interview respondent,

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Sheri, she was one month into her new job when she quit her previous job. Thus, the processes of entry and exit can be simultaneous. Because of this, exit and entry communication will impact each other. This supports the idea that the stages of socialization are not discreet but fluid and interconnected.

<p align="center">Sensemaking</p>

Sensemaking was used as a lens through which to view people's communication during exit. The components of sensemaking were useful for highlighting key elements of the process of leaving. In turn, the data collected also lend support the theory. Most interestingly, people use sensemaking strategically. At the point of deciding to leave, a person begins to make sense of that decision for herself. However, she also tries to influence how other people make sense of an event. Certainly, this is not completely under her control but she is able to communicate strategically with that person to create or enact an environment, or environments, that will either lead a person's sensemaking in a desired direction or will create a situation in which the other person simply accepts the account that is given to him or her. In other words, leavers are aware that others will make their own interpretations about why they quit, and because of a variety of motivations, leavers make strategic attempts at influencing these interpretations.

This study has also shown support for sensemaking as a social activity. People's communication with others during the preannouncement phase is integral to whether or not they follow through with the decision to exit. While none of the respondents in this study stayed with their organization, it is clear that they all used their communication with family, friends, coworkers and others to create a justifiable account for leaving. This, coupled with the strategic communication intended to influence others'

sensemaking points to an additional issue. Sensemaking theory gives importance to plausibility over accuracy and this study confirmed that plausibility is important. Leavers wanted to create accounts that were believable to others, independent of the accuracy of the account. Participants showed this by amending their accounts depending on the target. However, not only can different people make sense of events differently, but one individual can make sense of an event in a variety of non-conflicting ways. A leaver makes one sense of his exit with his wife, another sense of the event with his boss, and yet another sense with his new employer. Sensemaking is not a singular linear process; multiple and divergent sense can be made of the same event by the same person. These divergent senses are not options to be chosen among, but instead are viable meanings that are enacted by the leaver. So, perhaps instead of plausibility over accuracy, we should examine divergent sensemaking attempts as multiple accuracies. The idea of multiple accuracies not only fits well with sensemaking theory's view that the meaning we give events is enacted socially but also fits well within an interpretive epistemology that would accept multiple, sometimes conflicting realities.

Practical Application

As long as people continue to work, there will be exit in organizations. Whether that turnover is functional or detrimental, it is a fact of organizational life that managers have to deal with. This study offers key lessons for practitioners who want to make the most of turnover. First and foremost, during the period leading to announcement, potential leavers are not giving exit cues to their bosses and supervisors. In other words, people in management should not expect to be able to tell if an employee is considering leaving or not. While it may be clear in some cases, the results of this study showed that

bosses and supervisors receive exit cues with a much lower frequency than other groups, and that often potential leavers intentionally keep information from these people in the event that they do not follow through with the exit. So, the question becomes: what can managers do to be more aware of their employees' state of mind? While this study did not examine how to keep employees from leaving, a few suggestions can be made. It is important to create an environment where expressing grievances, about one's job, the organization, or interpersonal conflicts, is allowed. If people can not be open about what they are dissatisfied with, they will likely be closed off regarding a job search as well. It is equally important that the employees receive feedback about the grievances they do express. Even if no change is made, knowledge of why no change is made may be enough to reduce the dissatisfaction of the employee. Second, members of management should be proactive in getting this information. Especially in cases when one wants to retain desired employees, management must either seek out this information or be clear about being open to receiving it. Finally, it is useful for members of management to be aware of their employees' goals. Not all cases of exit are due to dissatisfaction. In many cases people leave for growth or self-fulfillment. If a supervisor is aware of the employee's goals upfront, she may be able to find new places for the employee within the company or down the road she may be more attune to cues that the employee is not getting his or her needs met.

A second key lesson for practitioners focuses on announcement. It is clear from the data that people want control over their exit announcement. Leavers especially want to be able to tell their coworkers that they are leaving and why. By allowing this to happen, the organization may experience both positive and negative effects. On the

negative end, the organization does not get to frame or influence how the employees will make sense of the exit and the employee may paint the organization or members of management in a negative light in their account. However, by allowing the leaving employee to make those announcements, they are showing that person respect and taking steps to maintain a positive working relationship with that individual. This can become important as that person tells and retells their exit account as it may change the way the organization or its members are portrayed in the account, causing the organization to lose face.

Finally, though not an intended goal of this study, it became clear that even after the exit announcement had been made, leavers did not "come clean" about their problems with the organization. Because of the need to save-face or perhaps fear of punishment, leavers were not honest, or at least not clear about the negative elements that impacted their decision to leave. In the amended leaving accounts unbearable bosses became "I had an opportunity for advancement," negative work environments became "I needed a change," and sexual harassment became "it was too much stress." Neither general communication before exit nor exit interviews were able to get at this information which is clearly important for organizational growth, retaining desirable employees, and general organizational improvement. People interested in removing negative elements, or individuals, from their organizations can not rely on leavers to supply this information willingly, nor can they expect to get the full picture from exit interviews. One option may be to have the exit interview months, as opposed to days, after exit. Perhaps at this point the leaver will have more stability in a new job and be less likely to focus on saving-face and not burning bridges. The organization must also want answers to the questions it

asks. If, as happened to one of the interview respondents, a leaver has seen many others before her give meaningful exit interviews yet has seen not action regarding the information the organization was give, that person is not likely to bother taking that interview seriously. The leaver has to believe that their input is important and for this to happen, the organization must believe the same.

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

This study should be interpreted with a couple limitations in mind. The questionnaire posed several potential limitations. First, the questionnaire was eleven pages. Though it is difficult to assess the impact of fatigue, it is possible that it played a role in the lack of in depth answers to the open-ended questions. Nearly all interview respondents noted changing their accounts for at least one target group but only one third of the questionnaire respondents did. It is possible that the questionnaire respondents simply did report amended accounts to save time. However, very few questionnaires were returned incomplete, suggesting that overall, the length was not problematic.

Second, because of the exploratory nature of some of the research questions, several of the instruments were created specifically for this questionnaire. Consequently, items were removed leaving some factors with few items or weaker than hoped for reliabilities. As a result, some of the relationships may actually be stronger with data collected from refined scales.

Third, in terms of the questionnaire, general motivation for account creation should be measured separately from target specific motivation to more accurately measure both constructs. The factor analysis for overall motivation, while not perfectly

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aligned with those for individual target motivations, was very similar, suggesting the factors themselves are theoretically and conceptually strong.

A fourth limitation of the questionnaire is that because the data were collected anonymously and students were given extra credit if their questionnaires were returned, there is a possibility that questionnaires could have been forged. However, students were given an alternate extra credit assignment that took approximately the same amount of time it would have taken them to falsify the questionnaire. Several students chose this option. Because of this, and the quality and depth of the written comments on the questionnaires, it is unlikely that many, if any at all, were falsified.

Finally, only five of the original cue categories fell out as separate factors in the factor analysis. While this may be a result of me making overly fine distinctions, it could also be a measurement issue. For example, the words "job" and "organization" in the questionnaire, could have been reworded to say "work tasks" and "company" to show greater distinction between the two concepts. Future studies should not disregard the three themes that were not factors in the later analysis.

Another limitation to the study was that sometimes in the participants' written accounts for why they left their jobs there were multiple appeals stated. In the analysis, if more than one appeal (to loyalty, self-fulfillment, and negative environment) was identified, only the first was coded. It was considered the overall appeal when examining how accounts were amended. However, in nearly all cases, one appeal stood out as primary. The lack of major disagreement with the secondary coder reinforces this. Just because multiple appeals exist, doesn't diminish the importance of the primary appeal.

However, future research should take the possibility of having multiple appeal types in an account.

There are two limitations of the sample. First, very few of the participants left their jobs because of retirement. Thus, the communication processes of retirees during this period may be different from those who quit to take another job. However, based on the literature and the data collected, those who quit have commonalities with those who retire, such as their post-exit communication tendencies. Second, while there was diversity in ages, sex, occupation and industry, very few participants had jobs in a labor industry. There may be a difference in the way these people communicate during exit. Additionally, there was a lack of ethnic diversity as 87% of the respondents identified themselves as white/Caucasian.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has looked at the communication during the transition from employee to former employee. Through interviews and surveys, nearly two hundred participants contributed their experiences of leaving a job. This combination of approaches yielded not only a great quantity of data, but a great quality of data as well. Their contributions allowed for a robust picture of exit to develop.

Communication plays a major role in preparing for exit, enacting exit, and also transitioning to being a former employee. Overall, this study revealed several key features of this process. First, in preparing for exit, people's communication regarding their job becomes focused. Though the length of the decision process or the reasons for leaving may differ, people rely on their interaction with a variety of target groups during this phase of exit to both justify their exit and to ready them for announcing the exit. The

communication is focused because people make conscious decision about what they discuss with whom. This finding supplements the research on behavioral and attitudinal antecedents by highlighting the perhaps less obvious communicative signals of exit. Most interestingly, members of the organization, coworkers and management, are the groups who receive these signals least often.

Second, the creation and presentation of an account to justify the exit was an important part of the exit process. As the importance of the face-saving motivation showed, being able to control the content and presentation of their exit account is of key importance for people as they attempt to provide the reasoning for their behavior. Being the one to communicate or announce their decision gives them the opportunity to potentially frame how others will make sense of the event and allows them the opportunity to counteract any potentially negative reactions to the event.

Finally, upon leaving, there is an inevitable shift in the relationships people have with their former coworkers. While communication with some is happily and abruptly severed, desired relationships with former coworkers also must be reconfigured. For nearly all, the frequency of communication tapers and the topics generally shift to personal realm, as organizational issues are no longer pertinent to the relationship. Even though people may anticipate these changes, they may still be difficult to deal with as people must work out new rules for their communication.

In sum, though they may be somewhat exploratory in nature, the results of this study provide a foundation for studying communication during exit. By further studying the experiences of leavers, those who remain in organizations and the additional

stakeholders in the exit process, researchers can begin to develop a greater understanding

of this most important life transition.

NOTES

1. There are, of course, exceptions to this idea. For example, low-career path jobs such as fast-food service may experience higher turnover. Additionally, a person's work ethic impacts their job leaving behaviors. However, this study is not focusing on those types of jobs specifically and is instead examining jobs that are full-time and that provide people with their primary income.

2. On the questionnaire, the word "explanation" will be used instead of "account" for clarity purposes. Though they are quite different in the literature, participants are unlikely to recognize this difference.

Appendix A

Interview Guide

1. Tell me about the job that you left.
   a. What did you anticipate the job would be like
   b. What was the job really like
   c. How well did you fit that job?
2. Tell me about what made you first consider leaving your job.
3. Describe any conversations you had when you first considered leaving?
   a. What did you say?
   b. Who did you tell?
4. Were there other factors that made you consider leaving?
5. Describe any conversations you had when you first considered leaving?
   a. What did you say?
   b. Who did you tell?
6. Tell me about how you made your final decision to leave?
7. How did you communicate your decision to leave?
   a. What explanation did you provide
   b. If no, did your communication change at all at work?
   c. If yes, go to #8
8. Who did you tell first?
   a. What did you tell them?
   b. How did you tell them (channel)?
   c. What concerns did you have about how they would react?
9. How did you tell your boss/coworkers/family/etc?
   [Continue this series of questions for each target group]
   a. What did you say to each group?
   b. If accounts differ, ask them why.
10. Did you feel that you "owed" them an explanation?
11. How do you communicate with people that are still at your old job?
    a. What do you talk about?
    b. What don't you talk about?
    c. How has the communication changed since you left?

Appendix B

Consent Form--Interview

Project Title: Communication and Sensemaking During the Exit Phase of Socialization
Researchers: Stephanie Hamlet is a graduate student in the Department of Communication at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Michael Kramer, project advisor, is a faculty member in the Department of Communication at the University of Missouri-Columbia.
Purpose: I will be conducting a study using interviews to look at how you made sense of your decision to leave your last job. You must have voluntarily chosen to leave a full-time, paid job in the past twelve months and you must be over the age of 18 to participate in this study.
Time: This study should take between ½ to 1 ½ hours, depending on how much you choose to participate and on what you have to say. Interviews will be audio taped.
Voluntary: Your participation is voluntary. You may quit at any time and you may refuse to answer any question.
Risk: There is minimal risk involved with this study. There is no more risk than you would experience in your daily interactions.
Benefits: The results of this study may help researchers understand how people decide to leave jobs, how people make sense of these decisions and how communication changes during this process.
Confidential: Neither your identity or the identity of the organization will be revealed in either transcripts, written documents, or verbal presentations of the data. The following steps will be taken to protect your identity and confidentiality.
1. Consent forms will be separated from the data.
2. Personal identifying information will be eliminated from the transcripts and any reporting of the data
3. You can refuse to answer any question asked.
4. Audio tapes will be kept in a locked cabinet.
Consent: When the interview begins you will be asked to provide your oral consent to participate in this study.
Contact: If you have any questions, feel free to contact the primary investigator, Stephanie Hamlett, at 859-426-1105. You may also email her at srhwc6@mizzou.edu. Dr. Michael Kramer can be contacted at 573-882-6980.
Questions: If you have any questions about your rights, contact Campus IRB:
Office of Research
483 McReynolds Hall
Columbia, MO 65211
(573) 882-9585
Thank you for your participation
Stephanie Hamlett
Doctoral Student

Appendix C

Communication Cues Scale

1   I actively sought out people's help in finding jobs.
2   I asked other people to give me their opinions about me leaving my job.
3   I asked others about what they thought of my other job opportunities.
4   I did not change my work habits when I was thinking about leaving.
5   I did not talk about the complaints I had about the organization.
6   I didn't talk to others about people I didn't like in the organization.
7   I didn't talk to people about the toll the job was taking on my life.
8   I didn't tell anyone I was looking for a job.
9   I didn't want anyone to know I was considering leaving my job.
10   I kept my dislikes about my job to myself.
11   I openly talked about what I didn't like about the organization.
12   I started to tie up loose ends when I started considering leaving my job.
13   I talked about the toll my job was having on my personal life
14   I talked to others about people I didn't like at work.
15   I talked to others about the pros and cons of my job.
16   I talked to others about what I didn't like about my job.
17   I talked to people about new job opportunities.
18   I told people about specific problems the organization had.
19   I told people that my job was causing me personal distress.
20   I was open about having issues with certain people at work.
21   I was open about what I did not like about my job.
22   I was open and honest about my desire to change jobs.
23   I weighed the pros and cons of my job.
24   When I was considering leaving I stopped working on new projects.

Appendix D

Cue Targets Scale

1   I asked my spouse/family for advice before deciding to quit my job.
2   I didn't tell my spouse/family I was considering leaving my job.
3   Before making my final decision, I talked to my spouse/family about leaving my
job.
4   Before I actually quit my job, my partner/family knew I was going to quit.
5   Before I actually quit my job, my coworkers knew I was going to quit.
6   I asked my coworkers for advice before deciding to quit my job.
7   I didn't tell my coworkers I was considering leaving my job.
8   Before making my final decision, I talked to my coworkers about leaving my job.
9   I asked my friends for advice before deciding to quit my job.
10   Before making my final decision, I talked to my friends about leaving my job.
11   Before I actually quit my job, my friends knew I was going to quit.
12   I didn't tell my friends I was considering leaving my job.
13   I asked my supervisor for advice before deciding to quit my job.
14   I didn't tell my supervisor I was considering leaving my job.
15   Before making my final decision, I talked to my supervisor about leaving my job.
16   Before I actually quit my job, my supervisor knew I was going to quit.
17   Before I actually quit my job, I talked to other potential employers.
18   I asked potential employers for advice before deciding to quit my job.
19   Before making my final decision, I talked to other potential employers.
20   I didn't talk to other potential employers while I was considering leaving my job.
21   I asked my clients/customers for advice before deciding to quit my job.
22   I didn't tell my clients/customers I was considering I was leaving my job.
23   Before making my final decision, I talked to my clients/customers about leaving
my job.
24   Before I actually quit my job, my clients/customers knew I was going to quit.

Appendix E

Reason for Leaving Scale

1   I left my job to do something more challenging and fulfilling
2   I saw leaving my job as a step toward career objectives
3   I left my job to change career directions
4   I left my job to improve my standard of living
5   I left my job to acquire new skills
6   I left my job in order to pursue my career goals.
7   I left my job because it was not advancing my career.
8   I left my job to do something that was more in line with my long-term goals.
9   I left my job because I saw no future for me there
10   I left my job because of things I disliked about my company/job.
11   I left my job because the position was made redundant.
12   I left my job because of negative pressures from supervisors.
13   I left my job because there were problems at my job.
14   I left my job to get out of a negative work environment.
15   I left my job because I was unhappy with my work situation.
16   I left my job because I was returning to a position from which I had been temporarily laid
        off.
17   I left my job to enter employment from full-time education.
18   I left my job for further education.
19   I left my job due to the end of my contract.
20   I left my job to move to a different location.
21   I left my job because of pressure from domestic factors
22   I left my job for child rearing.
23   A family or other non-work issue was the main reason I left my job.
24   If it were not for a unique circumstance, I would still be at my job.
25   The reason I left my job is unrelated to my work.

Appendix F

Open-Ended Account Questions

1. Please describe in your own words why you left your job:
2. What explanation did you give spouse/family for why you were quitting?
3. Did you give your boss/supervisor the same explanation you gave your spouse/family?
   Circle the appropriate response: Yes   Somewhat   No
        If YES, skip to question # 5
        If "Somewhat" or "No" go to question # 4
4. Describe what explanation you gave your boss/supervisor for why you quit.
5. Did you give your coworkers the same explanation you gave your spouse/family
   Circle the appropriate response: Yes   Somewhat   No
        If YES, skip to question # 7
        If "Somewhat" or "No" go to question # 6
6. Describe what explanation you gave your coworkers for why you quit.
7. Did you give your friends the same explanation you gave your spouse/family?
   Circle the appropriate response: Yes   Somewhat   No
        If YES, skip to question # 9
        If "Somewhat" or "No" go to question # 8
8. Describe what explanation you gave your friends for why you quit.
9. Did you give your new employer the same explanation that you gave your spouse/family?
   Circle the appropriate response: Yes   Somewhat   No
        If YES, you are finished with this section, please go to the next page.
        If "Somewhat" or "No" go to question # 10
10. Describe what explanation you gave your new employer for why you quit.

Appendix G

Account Motivations Scale

Indicate how strongly you agree with each statement:

1. I wanted people to understand why I was leaving.
2. It was important that people knew why I had made the decision to quit my job
3. I did not care if anyone understood why I needed to quit my job

4. I wanted to make sure that I didn't burn any bridges when I quit.
5. Maintaining the relationship with the person I told was important to me.
6. I did not care if my relationships dissolved after I left the job.

7. It was important that people understood that my leaving was the right thing to do.
8. I wanted people to understand that I had no choice but to leave.
9. I wanted people to feel that if they were in my situation, they would also leave.

10. I felt my people deserved to know why I was leaving.
11. I felt compelled to offer an explanation for why I was quitting.
12. Others wanted to know why I was leaving my job.

13. I wanted to make sure I didn't look bad for quitting my job.
14. I did not want to make anyone at work look bad when I left.
15. I did not care what others thought of me when I left my job.

Appendix H

Demographic Questions

1. Sex: _____
2. Age: _____
3. Race: _____
4. Highest level of education obtained
   ▪ Some high school
   ▪ High school diploma
   ▪ Some college
   ▪ College degree
   ▪ Graduate degree
5. Months since you last left a job voluntarily: _____
6. Title of position you left: _____
7. Industry of job you left: _____
8. How long were you at that job: _____
9. Did you routinely interact with customers/clients? _____

Appendix I
Consent Form—Questionnaire

Project Title: Communication and Sensemaking During the Exit Phase of Socialization
Researchers: Stephanie Hamlet is a graduate student in the Department of Communication at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Michael Kramer, project advisor, is a faculty member in the Department of Communication at the University of Missouri-Columbia.
Purpose: I will be conducting a study using questionnaires to look at how you made sense of your decision to leave your last job. You must have voluntarily chosen to leave a full-time, paid job in the past twelve months and you must be over the age of 18 to participate in this study.
Time: This study should take approximately 30 minutes.
Voluntary: Your participation is voluntary. You may quit at any time and you may refuse to answer any question.
Risk: There is minimal risk involved with this study. There is no more risk than you
would experience in your daily interactions.
Benefits: The results of this study may help researchers understand how people decide to leave jobs, how people make sense of these decisions and how communication changes during this process.
Confidential: Neither your identity or the identity of the organization will be revealed in written documents, or verbal presentations of the data. The following steps will be taken to protect your identity and confidentiality.
5. Consent forms will be separated from the data.
6. Personal identifying information will be eliminated from any reporting of the data
7. You can refuse to answer any question asked.
8. Finished questionnaires will be kept in a locked office.
Contact: If you have any questions, feel free to contact the primary investigator, Stephanie Hamlett, at 859-426-1105. You may also email her at srhwc6@mizzou.edu. Dr. Michael Kramer can be contacted at 573-882-6980.
Questions: If you have any questions about your rights, contact Campus IRB:
Office of Research
483 McReynolds Hall
Columbia, MO 65211
(573) 882-9585
Thank you for your participation,
Stephanie Hamlett
Doctoral Student
By completing and returning the attached questionnaire you are consenting to participate in the study. (Please return this sheet as well so student can receive credit).

Student Contact:_____ Instructor: _____
(please print names legibly so proper credit can be awarded)   Class: _____

The following questions all concern the process of leaving a job. When answering these questions please think of the last job that you left voluntarily. This would **not** include being fired, losing your job because of a merger/downsizing, or being forced into retirement.

Circle the response that best describes the degree to which these statements describe your behavior as you were considering leaving.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I actively sought out people's help in finding jobs.	5	4	3	2	1
2	I asked other people to give me their opinions about me leaving my job.	5	4	3	2	1
3	I asked others about what they thought of my other job opportunities.	5	4	3	2	1
4	I did not change my work habits when I was thinking about leaving.	5	4	3	2	1
5	I did not talk about the complaints I had about the organization.	5	4	3	2	1
6	I didn't talk to others about people I didn't like in the organization.	5	4	3	2	1
7	I didn't talk to people about the toll the job was taking on my life.	5	4	3	2	1
8	I didn't tell anyone I was looking for a job.	5	4	3	2	1
9	I didn't want anyone to know I was considering leaving my job.	5	4	3	2	1
10	I kept my dislikes about my job to myself.	5	4	3	2	1
11	I openly talked about what I didn't like about the organization.	5	4	3	2	1
12	I started to tie up loose ends when I started considering leaving my job.	5	4	3	2	1
13	I talked about the toll my job was having on my personal life	5	4	3	2	1
14	I talked to others about people I didn't like at work.	5	4	3	2	1
15	I talked to others about the pros and cons of my job.	5	4	3	2	1
16	I talked to others about what I didn't like about my job.	5	4	3	2	1
17	I talked to people about new job opportunities.	5	4	3	2	1
18	I told people about specific problems the organization had.	5	4	3	2	1
19	I told people that my job was causing me personal distress.	5	4	3	2	1
20	I was open about having issues with certain people at work.	5	4	3	2	1
21	I was open about what I did not like about my job.	5	4	3	2	1
22	I was open and honest about my desire to change jobs.	5	4	3	2	1
23	I weighed the pros and cons of my job.	5	4	3	2	1
24	When I was considering leaving I stopped working on new projects.	5	4	3	2	1

Please circle the response that best describes how much you agree with each statement:

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Before I actually quit my job, my coworkers knew I was going to quit.	SA	A	N	D	SD
2	Before making my final decision, I talked to my friends about leaving my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
3	Before I actually quit my job, my clients/customers knew I was going to quit.	SA	A	N	D	SD
4	I asked my spouse/family for advice before deciding to quit my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
5	I didn't tell my spouse/family I was considering leaving my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
6	Before I actually quit my job, I talked to other potential employers.	SA	A	N	D	SD
7	Before making my final decision, I talked to my spouse/partner about leaving my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
8	I asked my supervisor for advice before deciding to quit my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
9	I didn't tell my supervisor I was considering leaving my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
10	Before making my final decision, I talked to my clients/customers about leaving my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
11	Before I actually quit my job, my friends knew I was going to quit.	SA	A	N	D	SD
12	Before making my final decision, I talked to my supervisor about leaving my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
13	I asked potential employers for advice before deciding to quit my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
14	I didn't tell my clients/customers I was considering leaving my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
15	Before I actually quit my job, my spouse/family knew I was going to quit.	SA	A	N	D	SD
16	Before making my final decision, I talked to other potential employers.	SA	A	N	D	SD
17	I didn't talk to other potential employers while I was considering leaving my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
18	Before I actually quit my job, my supervisor knew I was going to quit.	SA	A	N	D	SD
19	I asked my coworkers for advice before deciding to quit my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
20	I didn't tell my coworkers I was considering leaving my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
21	Before making my final decision, I talked to my coworkers about leaving my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
22	I asked my clients/customers for advice before deciding to quit my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
23	I asked my coworkers for advice before deciding to quit my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
24	I didn't tell my friends I was considering leaving my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD

The following questions are aimed at finding out *who* you talked to about the specific issues mentioned earlier. Read each statement and circle each group on the line that the statement applies to. If the statement applies to all (or no) groups, you may simply circle either "all" or "none" at the far right columns.

		Spouse/ Family	Co-Workers	Boss/ Super-visor	Clients/ Customers	Friends	Potential Employers	All	None
1	I actively sought out these people's help in finding jobs.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
2	I asked these people to give me their opinions about me leaving my job.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
3	I asked these people about what they thought of my other job opportunities.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
4	I did not talk about the complaints I had about the organization to these people.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
5	I didn't talk to these people about people I didn't like in the organization.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
6	I didn't talk to these people about the toll the job was taking on my life.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
7	I didn't tell these people I was looking for a job.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
8	I didn't want these people to know I was considering leaving my job.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
9	I talked about what I didn't like about my job to these people	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
10	I openly talked about what I didn't like about the organization in front of these people.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
11	I talked about the toll my job was having on my personal life with these people.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
12	I talked to these people about people I didn't like at work.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
13	I talked to these people about the pros and cons of my job.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
14	I talked to these people about what I didn't like about my job.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
15	I talked to these people about new job opportunities.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None

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		Spouse/ Family	Co-Workers	Boss/ Super-visor	Clients/ Customers	Friends	Potential Employers	All	None
16	I told these people about specific problems the organization had.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
17	I told these people that my job was causing me personal distress.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
18	When with these people, I was open about having issues with certain people at work.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
19	When with these people, I was open about what I did not like about my job.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
20	When with these people, I was open and honest about my desire to change jobs.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
21	I weighed the pros and cons of my job with these people.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None

Please describe in your own words why you left your job:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The following statements are about different reasons for leaving one's job. When reading the following statements, think about the *most important reason* you had for leaving your job. Answer the questions in terms of what the most important reason was.

Please indicate how well you agree with each statement:

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I left my job to improve my standard of living	SA	A	N	D	SD
2	I saw leaving my job as a step toward career objectives	SA	A	N	D	SD
3	I left my job because the position was made redundant.	SA	A	N	D	SD
4	I left my job to do something that was more in line with my long-term goals.	SA	A	N	D	SD
5	I left my job because I was returning to a position from which I had been temporarily laid off.	SA	A	N	D	SD
6	I left my job to acquire new skills	SA	A	N	D	SD
7	I left my job because I saw no future for me there	SA	A	N	D	SD
8	I left my job to raise my child(ren).	SA	A	N	D	SD
9	A family or other non-work issue was the main reason I left my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
10	I left my job because it was not advancing my career.	SA	A	N	D	SD
11	I left my job to do something more challenging and fulfilling	SA	A	N	D	SD
12	I left my job for a position I qualified for after completing my degree.	SA	A	N	D	SD
13	I left my job for further education.	SA	A	N	D	SD
14	I left my job to change career directions	SA	A	N	D	SD
15	I left my job to move to a different location.	SA	A	N	D	SD
16	If it were not for a unique circumstance, I would still be at my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
17	I left my job because of things I disliked about my company/job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
18	I left my job because I was unhappy with my work situation.	SA	A	N	D	SD

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
19	I left my job because my contract expired.	SA	A	N	D	SD
20	I left my job because of pressure from domestic factors.	SA	A	N	D	SD
21	I left my job in order to pursue my career goals.	SA	A	N	D	SD
22	The reason I left my job is unrelated to my work.	SA	A	N	D	SD
23	I left my job to get out of a negative work environment.	SA	A	N	D	SD
24	I left my job because there were problems at my job.	SA	A	N	D	SD
25	I left my job because of negative pressures from supervisors.	SA	A	N	D	SD

The following questions ask you to think and write about how you told different groups of people that you quit your job. For each question, write out what you said as closely as you remember.

1. What explanation did you give spouse/family for why you were quitting?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Did you give your boss/supervisor the same explanation you gave your spouse/family?

Circle the appropriate response: Yes   Somewhat   No

If YES, skip to question # 4
If "Somewhat" or "No" go to question # 3

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3. Describe what explanation you gave your boss/supervisor for why you quit.

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Did you give your coworkers the same explanation you gave your spouse/family

Circle the appropriate response: Yes   Somewhat   No

If YES, skip to question # 6
If "Somewhat" or "No" go to question # 5

5. Describe what explanation you gave your coworkers for why you quit.

_____

_____

_____

6. Did you give your friends the same explanation you gave your spouse/family?

Circle the appropriate response: Yes   Somewhat   No

If YES, skip to question # 8
If "Somewhat" or "No" go to question # 7

7. Describe what explanation you gave your friends for why you quit.

_____

_____

8. Did you give your customers/clients the same explanation that you gave your spouse/family?

Circle the appropriate response: Yes   Somewhat   No

If YES, you are finished with this section, please go to the next page.
If "Somewhat" or "No" go to question # 9

9. Describe what explanation you gave your customers/clients for why you quit.

_____

_____

10. Did you give your new employer the same explanation that you gave your spouse/family?

Circle the appropriate response: Yes   Somewhat   No

If YES, you are finished with this section, please go to the next page.
If "Somewhat" or "No" go to question # 11

11. Describe what explanation you gave your new employer for why you quit.

_____

_____

When you were considering how to tell people why you quit, several factors may have been important to you. Read each statement, then circle *each* group that the statement was important for when you were considering how to tell them you were quitting. If a group doesn't apply to you, such as customers/clients, simply don't circle the group. If the statement was important for all groups, or none of the groups, you may simply circle one of the last two options.

	Spouse/ Family	Co-workers	Boss/ Super-visor	Clients/ Customers	Friends	Potential Employers	All	None
I wanted them to understand why I was leaving.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
It was important that people knew why I had made the decision to quit my job	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
I did not care if they understood why I needed to quit my job	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
I wanted to make sure that I didn't burn any bridges when I left my job.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
Maintaining relationships with people I worked with was important to me.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
I did not care if my relationships with my coworkers dissolved after I left the job.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
It was important that people understood that my leaving was the right thing to do.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
I wanted people to understand that I had no choice but to leave.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
I wanted people to feel that if they were in my situation, they would also leave.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
I felt people deserved to know why I was leaving.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
I felt compelled to offer an explanation for why I was quitting.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
Others wanted to know why I was leaving my job.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
I wanted to make sure I didn't look bad for quitting my job.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None
I did not want to make anyone at work look bad when I left.	S/F	CW	B	CC	FR	PE	All	None

Demographics

1. Sex (circle one):   M   F

2. Age (in years) : _____

3. Race: _____

4. Please indicate the highest level of education you have obtained (Circle one):

   - Some high school
   - High school diploma
   - Some college
   - College degree
   - Graduate degree

5. Months since you last left a job voluntarily: _____

6. Title of position you left: _____

7. Industry of job you left: _____

8. How long were you at that job: _____

9. Did you routinely interact with customers/clients at that job? _____

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