

U-Turn on the Bridge to Freedom: An Interaction Process Analysis of Task and Relational Messages in Totalistic Organization Exit Conversations on Online Discussion Boards

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Abstract : Totalistic organizations include organizations that operate by playing a prominent role in the life of its members through embedding values and practices. The Church of Scientology (CoS) is an example of a religious totalistic organization and has recently garnered attention because of the questionable treatment of members by those with authority, particularly when members try to leave the Church. The purpose of this study was to analyze exit communication and evaluate the task and relational messages discussed on online discussion boards for individuals with a previous or current connection to the totalistic CoS. Using organizational exit phases and interaction process analysis (IPA), researchers coded 30 boards consisting of 14,179 thought units from the Exscn.net website. Findings report all stages of exit were present, and post-exit surfaced most often. Posts indicated more tasks than relational messages, where individuals mainly provided orientation/information. After a discussion of the study's contributions, limitations and directions for future research are explained.

Keywords : Bales' IPA, organizational exit, relational messages, scientology, task messages, totalistic organizations

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