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An exploration of the lived experiences of returned Mormon missionaries

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AN EXPLORATION OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF RETURNED MORMON
MISSIONARIES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Human Resource Education
and Workforce Development

by

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This dissertation is dedicated in part to St. Charles Lwanga and the martyrs of Uganda, whose faith and courage withstood the harshest of treatment and the cruelest of fates. Their steadfastness and their fearlessness are testaments to all of the faithful, regardless of denomination. I dedicate this dissertation in part to the memory of Staci Ann Pepitone, whose optimism was infectious, whose smile never failed to brighten the darkest of rooms, whose kind voice was warm and reassuring, whose wit and humor are legend, and whose courageous spirit continues to inspire me and countless others. This dissertation is dedicated in part to my sisters Amy, Caryl, Keiron, Liz, Rebekah, Sarah Ann, Lauren, and Lorraine; to my brothers Dave, Eric, Zack, CJ, Miles, Tyler, Jacob, Arthur, Mark, Leon, Greg, and Gene; and to my godchildren David, Francesca, and Simone.

This dissertation and doctorate are the culmination of 37 years of uninterrupted formal education. This dogged pursuit was inspired by one person's unconditional devotion to her family, a person whose lifetime commitment to her children are perhaps best reflected in Carolyn Rodgers's poem "Portrait."

"mama spent pennies and nickels and quarters and dollars and one
life. mama spent her life in uh gallon milk jug fuh four black
babies college educashuns."

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother Martha Jane Cox.

So say we all.

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ABSTRACT

Mormon missionaries face numerous challenges throughout the course of their mission. They serve in multiple capacities; they provide numerous types of services; and they work an average of 12 hours a day, six days a week. Missionaries encounter nearly constant rejection and hostility. In most cases, these missionaries serve in areas that are unfamiliar to them and they have limited contact with their family and friends. Despite these challenges, most missionaries not only successfully complete their mission, but they also have a positive view of their mission. According to Bjorck and Kim (2009), not much research has been conducted in the area of coping styles of religious missionaries. This study is an attempt to contribute to this area of knowledge. This project also relied on qualitative research methods in order to describe the lived experiences of returned Mormon missionaries, to identify daily stressors and coping responses to these stressors, and to identify any additional support received while in the field.

The framework used in this study relied on semi-structured informal interviews that were audio-recorded. It was determined that data saturation occurred with the tenth interview. This study used Moustakas's modified van Kaam method during the data analysis process. The following themes emerged from the data: attitudes toward mission; changes, growth, and development; success and efficacy; and protective factors, motivation, and coping.

An implication from this study include the need for organizations that train missionaries to offer consistency among people who are charged with training missionaries. Returned missionaries in this study reported a disparity between the image that they had been given of missionary work and the true nature of missionary work. As a result of this disparity, missionaries encountered feelings of anxiety and disillusionment with the work. Missionary

training centers should also provide missionaries-in-training with education on burnout, including the identification of successful coping strategies and potential sources of support.

Though the study yielded information on the coping skills of male missionaries who are in their early 20s, it did not focus on the coping styles of female missionaries, missionaries who identify as ethnic minorities, and senior missionaries. Future research should also seek to determine if coping strategies of missionaries employed in religious organizations differ from their counterparts in non-religious organizations.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

“You are hereby called to serve as a missionary on The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You are assigned to labor in the Dominican Republic Santo Domingo West Mission. It is anticipated that you will serve for a period of 24 months. You should report to the Missionary Training Center at Provo, Utah on Wednesday, 3 December 2008. You will prepare to preach the gospel in the Spanish language. Your mission president may modify your specific assignment according to the needs of the mission” (Kidman, n.d.).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, also known as the Mormon Church, was founded in 1830 in the United States and Church membership grew from a small group to nearly 1,000,000 members by 1947 (Ostling & Ostling, 2007). In its May 2, 2012 issue, *The USA Today* reported the findings of the 2012 Religious Congregations and Membership Study (Eckstrom, 2012). This study found that membership in the Mormon Church in the United States increased by 2,000,000 members between the years 2002 and 2012 (Eckstrom, 2012). In addition, Mormons were the most rapidly expanding group in the United States, and as of 2008, composed 1.8% of the population (Eckstrom, 2012; Phillips & Cragun, 2008). According to other sources, the Church’s membership has doubled since 1985, with much of the growth occurring beyond the boundaries of the United States (Phillips, 2006). Indeed, by the 1990s, international membership abroad outpaced the Church’s growth within the United States. Worldwide membership is now in excess of 14,000,000 (Ostling & Ostling, 2007). According to the Church’s website, at any given time, a dedicated portion of its membership is actively engaged in proselytizing efforts worldwide (Mormon_Missionaries, n.d.). Approximately 53,000

full-time members are working on a full time basis to “make God known to all nations” (Matthew 28:19-20 The New American Bible, p.1001; Mormon_Missionaries, n.d.).

The Mormon Church draws its missionaries from young men aged 18-25, young women over the age of 21, and from older, married couples who are usually of retirement age (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012). Even though young men and women volunteer to serve as missionaries, the Mormon Church requires its missionaries to pay for expenses that are incurred during the mission – namely, rent, utilities, and groceries (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012). An average mission will cost approximately \$10,000 – all of which is paid by the missionary and his family (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012). Missionaries may be assigned to missions within their home countries, or they may be assigned to serve missions abroad (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012). A male missionary’s assignment is expected to last 24 months; a female missionary’s assignment will last no longer than 18 months (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012).

Once volunteers receive their letters of acceptance, they must report to one of 17 Missionary Training Centers (MTC) throughout the world (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012). Upon arriving at the MTC, and throughout their mission, missionaries are assigned companions (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012). With some exceptions, missionaries must remain in the presence of their companions at all times (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012). In addition, missionaries are allowed limited contact with their families, not only during the course of their training at the MTC, but also for the duration of their mission (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012).

At the conclusion of their training, missionaries are then transported to their assigned missions (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012). New missionaries are typically assigned companions who have been in the field for at least 6 months (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012). In most cases, the junior companion is subordinate to the direction of his senior companion (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012).

While in the field, missionaries are expected to adhere to a structured schedule (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012). Typically, missionaries must be awake by 6:30, after which they must exercise, eat breakfast, and then spend approximately two hours studying the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and other scriptures (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012). Leaving their apartments by 10:00 every morning, missionaries will spend the next ten hours proselytizing, performing service projects, or engaging in some other type of Church-sponsored activity (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012). Every Monday, missionaries are granted approximately 8 hours in order to tend to personal matters, namely washing clothes, planning meals and grocery shopping, and engaging in some type of Church-approved recreational activity (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012).

A significant part of their daily routine is spent conducting tracting. Missionaries report that people's reactions to their visits are broad – ranging from friendly and welcoming to aloof and even rude (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012). Missionaries are allowed to use cell phones and personal computers, but only under certain circumstances. They are allowed to make phone calls and send text messages only for church-related activities; they may use a personal computer once a week for e-mail correspondence with their family (T.

Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012). Some missionaries have even reported that they have been heckled and threatened with violence. The ultimate goal of these visits is to encourage non-members to not only attend church services, but to also become a member of the Mormon Church (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012). Missionaries report, on average, that they are in regular contact with 750 non-members per month. Of these 500 contacts, an average of two non-members per month will actually join the Mormon Church (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012). Despite such low numbers, and despite being treated in a less than friendly manner, missionaries report a positive outlook on their accomplishments and on their expectations for future efforts (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012).

Clergy perform important and necessary roles in Western culture (Weaver, Flannelly, Larson, Stapleton, & Koenig, 2002). A study that was published in 2002 reported that nearly 40% of Americans who seek mental health services obtain those services from clergy (Weaver et al., 2002). Indeed, clergy serve in various capacities and the demands on their time are perhaps without end (Weaver et al., 2002). Chronic work stress is one of the key causes of burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Though research in the area of burnout has not focused as much on burnout as experienced by clergy, it is acknowledged that clergy do perform and provide human services and are thus at risk for experiencing burnout (Miner, Dowson, & Sterland, 2010). In addition, Bjorck and Kim (2009) point out that research in the areas of life stressors and religious support resources have increased; they also point out that not much research has been conducted on the coping strategies of religious missionaries.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to investigate and explore the lived experience of returned Mormon missionaries, focusing on protective factors and strategies employed in the field to insulate against burnout and the daily stressors that are encountered while in the field. The value of this research project is to determine the extent to which spiritual beliefs, the practice of religious rituals, and the missionaries' perception and attitudes toward beliefs and practice insulate them against the effects of burnout and other stressors.

Significance of the Study

Parker and Martin (2011) recently published information on the nature of attrition among clergy. In that article, they reported that nearly 30% of clergy in Australia will leave the ministry within the first five years. In the United States, nearly 50% of clergy will resign within five years of having begun to work in that vocation (Meek, et al., 2003). Randall (2004) reported that approximately 50% of ministers have contemplated resigning from their ministry, with nearly 28% of clergy reporting that they had considered more than once leaving the ministry. Because ministers perform such vital roles for the communities that they support, wellness among clergy is an important social concern (Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Meek, et al., 2003; Randall, 2004; Turton & Francis, 2007).

Burnout first became the focus of research in the mid-1970s and early 1980s. Christina Maslach, an American social psychologist, is responsible for defining the most widely-used conception of burnout (Schaufeli, Taris, & van Rhenen, 2008). In addition, Maslach created the Maslach Burnout Indicator, which researchers estimate is used in nearly 90% of the research that is conducted on burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2008). Researchers agree that burnout is an adverse mental and physical condition that occurs in healthcare workers, clergy, or in occupations that

require frequent and sustained contact with people. One of the earliest definitions of burnout outlined symptoms of the disorder:

"...(a) loss of concern for the people with whom one is working. It is characterized by an emotional exhaustion in which the staff person no longer has any positive feelings, sympathy, or respect for clients. A cynical and dehumanized perception of clients develops, in which they are labeled in derogatory ways (Maslach, 1978, p. 112)."

However, over the years, the definition of the symptoms and the disorder remain the same. It is an extended response to constant emotional and interpersonal stressors which result from a mismatch between the worker and his job (Cohen & Gagin, 2005; Maslach, 2003). People who suffer from burnout report feeling emotionally drained and the quality of their work may also begin to decline (Freudenberger, 1974; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

Cherniss (1982) and Pines and Maslach (1978) both describe specific interventions on the organizational level that are designed to reduce role ambiguity, role conflicts, or work overload. Cohen and Gagin (2003), Cherniss (1982), and Maslach (1982) have written that teaching coping skills and time management skills have also had limited success in reducing the effects of burnout. Pines and Maslach (1978) and Cherniss (1982) also report that teaching new intervention skills and improving existing skills also helped buffer employees against the effects of burnout. In addition, another study suggested that enhancing the employee's self-efficacy should be of primary concern in any intervention that is designed to reduce the overall effects of burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Two important domains of skill development include support and education (Cherniss, 1982; Krell, Richardson, LaManna, & Kairys, 1983).

Merrill, Baker, Gren, and Lyon (2009) point out that numerous studies have shown that religious activity contributes to better health. Citing theoretically grounded models, namely the prevention model and the stressor response model, Merrill et al., (2009) assert that studies have

supported the theory that religion influences positive health behaviors. The Seventh Day Adventist and Mormons Church encourage their members to refrain from smoking, thus members of these denominations have lower rates in heart disease and cancer. Merrill et al., (2009) also cite that the stressor response model has shown that religious faith can help people cope better environmental stressors. Jain et al.,(2002) and Merrill and Salazar (2002) reported a study that showed that people who attend church services on a weekly basis have lower occurrences of mental illness than their counterparts who attend church services infrequently.

Definition of Terms

Church: In the context of this dissertation, “Church” refers to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Researcher defined).

Companion: Missionaries conduct their assignments in pairs; a missionary will refer to his/her assigned partner as his/her companion (Defined by Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints).

Investigator: A person who is considering joining the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Researcher defined).

Latter-day Saints: The formal title of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Ostling & Ostling, 2007).

Mission Call Letter: The official notification that a volunteer has been accepted and assigned to a mission. The Mission Call is a packet that contains a letter that includes the location and duration of the volunteer’s mission (<http://www.mormonmissionprep.com/call-process/mission-call-letter/>).

Mission of the Church: A geographical area to which a missionary is assigned (Ostling & Ostling, 2007).

Missionary: A male member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints whose primary function is to proselytize non-Church members. Missionaries may also engage in Church service and humanitarian aid. Missionaries work in pairs (Researcher defined).

Missionary Training Center (MTC): A facility whose primary purpose is to educate and train Church members who are preparing to begin a mission. There are currently 17 Missionary Training Facilities throughout the world, the largest of which is located in Provo, Utah (Ostling & Ostling, 2007).

Mormon: A nickname for members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Though unpopular among some members of the Church, this nickname is the more recognizable moniker for Latter-day Saints (Ostling & Ostling, 2007).

Stake: An administrative unit within the Mormon Church; it is composed of smaller units called Wards and/or Branches. A stake is analogous to a Catholic or Episcopalian diocese. (Ostling & Ostling, 2007).

Temple: A church building that Latter-day Saints regard as sacred. Church members conduct certain rituals, known as covenants and ordinances, inside the temple. Admission to the temple is granted only when a Church member is deemed worthy. There are currently 152 temples throughout the world (Ostling & Ostling, 2007).

Temple-worthy: A Church member who has adhered to the guidelines for accessing a Mormon temple. Temple-worthy Mormons are required to attend church services regularly, tithe, abstain

from using tobacco, drugs, alcohol, and adhere to the Church's teachings on faith and morality (Ostling & Ostling, 2007).

Tracting: A slang term that is often used by missionaries. This is an initial or repeat visit to a non-church member from a missionary pair. The visit may or may not have been requested by the non-Church member. Missionaries will attempt to educate and proselytize the non-Church member (<http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Missions>).

Ward: A local congregation of Church members, a ward is composed of 200 to 500 congregants. A ward is analogous to a Catholic or Episcopalian parish (Researcher defined).

Limitations

1. This study required respondents to reflect on and respond to questions about their experiences while serving a religious mission. Depending on the respondent's level of personal insight, the respondent may not have been aware of any adverse emotional responses to the experience, or the respondent may have underreported the severity or the frequency of any negative emotional responses to his duties, or to the mission in general.
2. Many of the respondents had made routine contact with the researcher prior to the commencement of the study. As a result of this association, the respondents may have felt inhibited by the researcher, and may have purposely omitted information that was vital to this project.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter is intended to serve as the foundation for a qualitative research project on the subject of burnout as it is experienced among clergy, namely returned missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormon Church). This literature review contains an overview of three topics, namely a history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a review of the issues that religious missionaries experience while engaged in various activities while in the field, and a brief history of the study of burnout. In addition, this literature review provides a general definition of burnout, an outline of the symptoms of burnout, a review of how researchers have developed the concept of burnout over time, and an overview of which types of working professionals are prone to experience burnout.

A Brief History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Joseph Smith, Jr., and six additional members, established the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1830 upstate New York (Ostling & Ostling, 2007). It was founded during an era of considerable political, societal, and religious unrest and upheaval (Ostling & Ostling, 2007; Rosten, 1975). Religious movements during this time period were characterized by a number of themes, namely Christian primitivism and millennial expectations (Ostling & Ostling, 2007). The faithful and religious began to eschew orthodox beliefs and practices; they displayed a passion for expanding their membership; and they sought to restore their faith to the purity that they believe existed only in the early Christian church (Hatch, 1989). Many Americans felt that Christ's return was imminent and that he would establish a New Jerusalem, possibly in the United States (Ostling & Ostling, 2007). According to American historian Nathan Hatch (1989): "The first generation of United States citizens may have lived in the shadow of Christ's second

coming more intensely than any other generation since” (p.4). Sociologist Thomas O’Dea (1957) noted that the older Calvinist churches were associated with the burgeoning business class and the university-educated elite, including the professional clergy. It was clear that the common, uneducated American had been left by the wayside and that these new, popular religious movements offered common people and the impoverished enticing notions of self-respect and an overall sense self-confidence (O’Dea, 1957).

Joseph Smith, Jr., the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and his family were among those 19th century Americans who were not able to connect with the educated elite and the upwardly mobile (Ostling & Ostling, 2007; Talmage, 1914). Smith’s father was suspicious of institutional religion, though his wife and children were deeply religious (Ostling & Ostling, 2007). Joseph Smith, Jr., despite being troubled by the competing religious denominations, persisted in his search for a true and pure church. He read in James 1:5 (King James Bible): “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (p. 1342). Smith was convinced that he should pray to God directly for guidance on joining a church. After praying intently, Smith reported that “two personages” appeared to him: Smith identified one of the beings as God the Father. The second being was identified as “the beloved son” Jesus. It was Jesus who instructed Smith not to join any of the denominations, that their creeds were “an abomination.” Smith was 14 years old when he received this message. In addition, according to adherents of Mormonism, Smith would go on to receive numerous messages from various divine sources, including John the Baptist and an angel named Moroni. These revelations provided for the foundation and the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and are the sole source for most of the Church’s doctrine and sacred texts (Ostling & Ostling, 2007).

Mormons, their history, and their beliefs are characterized by a number of distinctions (Ostling & Ostling, 2007). Members of the church often refer to themselves as a “peculiar people,” taking this term from a passage in Deuteronomy (King James Bible): “For thou art an holy people...and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people.” Another basis for this term is found in 1 Peter (King James Bible): “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people...” In its infancy, members of the church adopted a lifestyle that historians consider more encompassing than those of their contemporaries, a lifestyle as well as a system of beliefs that were not always compatible with American pluralism (Ostling & Ostling, 2007). Mormons in the 1840s left their homes in the Northeast and in the Midwest for the largely unsettled American West:

But in the rude experience of the 1830s and 1840s the Mormons developed their sense of being a chosen people through persecutions, communal solidarity, millennial expectations, and commitment to building the kingdom of God on earth for the faithful. That tribal identity forged in the holy experiments of Missouri and Nauvoo was carried with the Saints as they embarked on a remarkable hegira into the wilderness of Utah (Ostling & Ostling, 2007, pp. 36-37).

Scholars cannot agree on the number of Mormon pioneers who migrated westward in 1846; however, at the time of Joseph Smith’s death in 1844, there were approximately 26,000 Mormons worldwide (Ostling & Ostling, 2007). Today, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is one of the most rapidly-growing Christian denominations in the United States (Ostling & Ostling, 2007). Citing data that was compiled by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, the Mormon Church’s membership increased 45.5% between the years 2000 through 2010 (Stack, 2012).

Mormons are also known for certain values, beliefs, and practices that are not held or observed by most, if not all, mainstream Christian denominations. Mormon doctrine includes the

belief that a lost tribe of Israel, composed of the Nephites and the Lamanites, settled in Central or South America approximately 600 years before the birth of Christ (Ostling & Ostling, 2007).

One of the more controversial practices within Mormonism is that of plural marriage or polygamy, a practice that was abandoned nearly a century ago (Ostling & Ostling, 2007).

Perhaps one of the most recognizable practices in the Mormon Church is its reliance on missionaries (Merrill et al., 2009). Other well-known practices include their self-reliance, self-discipline, and their charitable attitudes (Ostling & Ostling, 2007). Mormons believe that two of their sacred texts, the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants, were revealed to Joseph Smith through supernatural means (Ostling & Ostling, 2007). Mormons also believe that Smith, after translating a number of documents, produced *The Pearl of Great Price*, which Mormons view as another sacred text (Ostling & Ostling, 2007).

Defining Burnout

In his seminal article on the topic, Freudenberger (1974) wrote that burnout is a "failure" or a "wearing down" of a working professional's strength, energy, and personal resources. Researchers later expanded on Freudenberger's definition, citing that burnout can be broken into three discrete subsets: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (or cynicism), and feelings of low personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1984). In addition, burnout typically occurs among professionals who are engaged in people-intensive work (Maslach & Jackson, 1984). A number of researchers have since reinforced this notion (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Greer & Wethered, 1984; Jackson et al., 1986; Leiter & Maslach, 1988; Maslach, 1982; Van Tonder & Williams, 2009).

An initial challenge during the early stages of the study of burnout is that there was no standardized definition of the disorder, and researchers continued to add various symptoms and

descriptors to the ever-growing body of literature, thus broadening the umbrella under which nearly anything could be considered as “burnout” (Maslach, 1982, Maslach & Goldberg, 1998, Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Einsiedel and Tully (1981) developed a list of 84 burnout symptoms while Carrol and White (1982) listed an additional 47 separate symptoms. In the early stages of the study of burnout, it appeared that nearly any symptom of emotional duress would constitute a "diagnosis" of burnout (Kahill, 1988). According to Maslach (1993), descriptions of burnout varied so broadly that often writers were describing entirely different phenomena.

To complicate matters further, Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) mention that prior to its formal study in the mid to late 1970s, researchers referred to burnout by various names: overstrain neurocirculatory asthenia, surmenage, and industrial fatigue. Though people referred to burnout by many different names, the idea was the same: researchers intended to study a psychological syndrome that resulted in imbalance of work demands and personal expectations (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998). Though definitions varied in the early stages of its study, researchers agreed that burnout is a sustained response to nearly-constant emotional and interpersonal stressors which result from an incongruence between the worker and the job (Cohen & Gagin, 2005; Maslach, 2003). The burned-out professional does not perform his/her duties well, and has become fatigued by responding to excessive demands on his/her personal resources (Freudenberger, 1974; Maslach et al, 2001).

Schaufeli et al. (2008) write that Maslach's three-tiered conceptualization of burnout is one of the most frequently-cited models within the research on burnout. In an examination of several recent articles on the subject, only one author out of seven actually defined burnout – and that definition still contained the three core concepts of burnout (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007). Central to most researchers’ definitions of burnout, are words like emotional exhaustion,

depersonalization, and feelings of low personal accomplishment (Jackson et al., 1986; Kulkarni, 2006). What started out as an anecdotal reflection on the emotional condition and plight of volunteer workers in the 1970s quickly grew into a popular and widely-researched topic in the 1980s, 90s, and 2000s (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007).

The Nature of Burnout

Maslach (1978) supports the notion that an antecedent of burnout is indeed related to the workplace, citing client demands on the social services professional. Maslach (1978) also indicates that recipients of social services not only make frequent demands of their providers, but they also tend to vent their frustration on those providers. These exchanges often occur on a daily basis and are sufficiently intense that the caseworker will emotionally detach from her clients (Maslach, 1978). Unfortunately, providers of social services often have inadequate training that would allow them to deal effectively with stress-inducing clients, so this emotional detachment strategy becomes a way of life for the employee (Lee & Ashforth, 1993). Maslach (1978) asserts that the unintended consequence of this coping mechanism is an unhealthy emotional detachment from the client. This emotional detachment (depersonalization) then leads the employee to treat her/his clients impersonally and even callously (Cordes & Daugherty, 1993; Jackson et al., 1986; Leiter & Maslach, 1988; Maslach, 1978). The progression of burnout, namely in terms of the interrelatedness of emotional exhaustion leading to depersonalization, can be seen at this point (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Other antecedents to emotional exhaustion are the interpersonal difficulties that take place among co-workers and these antecedents have been cited as a key contributor to stress (Gaines & Jermier, 1983), increased workload, demands from clients, and other work-related issues (Maslach, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

Cordes and Dougherty (1993) grouped the antecedents of burnout into three categories: job and role characteristics, organizational characteristics, and personal characteristics. Job and role characteristics include the role that the employee serves in the organization (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Components of this category are client contact, role overload, and ambiguity. Organizational characteristics include contingency and non-contingency of organizational outcomes (rewards and absence of rewards) and job context. Personal characteristics include demographic characteristics (gender, age, personality) and social support systems (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Cordes and Dougherty (1993) suggest that burnout occurs when the employee fails to align emotionally with her/his job. Researchers have reinforced the notion that antecedents of burnout are associated with the employee-organization dynamic, and that these antecedents are not simply personal shortcomings of the employee (Lee & Ashforth, 1993; Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Maslach et al., 2001). Maslach and Leiter (2008) refined this theory by conceptualizing burnout as an association between the employee and her / his job role, and that burnout occurs when a rift emerges between the employee and the following six areas of her work-life: workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values (Maslach et al., 2001). The greater the rift, the more likely the employee will become burned out (Maslach et al., 2001). This rift contributes to the employee's overall sense of burnout because the employee no longer feels aligned with the important components of her job (Maslach et al., 2001).

Some of the earliest research conducted on burnout has grouped the symptoms of burnout into two categories: physical and behavioral (Freudenberger, 1974). Physical exhaustion, headache, gastrointestinal disorders, “quickness to anger” and “...instantaneous irritation and frustration” were also considered symptoms of burnout (Freudenberger, 1974, p.160). Kahill (1988) provides a thorough review of the symptoms of burnout, citing that researchers have

listed as many as 84 separate signs of the syndrome. The signs of burnout were grouped into five main categories: physical, emotional, behavioral, interpersonal, and attitudinal (Kahill, 1988). Freudenberger (1974) and Kahill (1988) agreed that the symptoms of burnout can lead to physical and emotional duress. In a review of the literature, Kahill (1988) also mentions that important relationships exist between burnout and health/physical conditions; these relationships ranged between $-.16$ and $-.44$. The relationships between burnout and general illness ranged between $.20$ and $.88$. Lee and Ashforth (1990) report that mental and physical problems are associated with greater amounts of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Research has also discovered that victims of burnout have reported feelings of anxiety and tension, particularly when returning home from the workplace (Jackson & Maslach, 1982).

In addition to physical and emotional effects, burnout can also negatively affect interpersonal relationships within and beyond the workplace. Maslach (1978) and Jackson and Maslach (1982) reported that burnout has an adverse effect on employees' personal, home, and family lives. At work, employees who are suffering from burnout have also reported that they tend to withdraw from work duties and from clients by socializing with co-workers or by taking extended lunch breaks (Cordes & Daugherty, 1993). Maslach and Jackson (1985) reinforce the notion that employees who are experiencing burnout tend to avoid spending excessive time among their clients.

Burnout can influence the employee's attitude and behavior, both of which can have potentially adverse effects on the employee's organization and family (Cordes & Daugherty, 1993; Maslach, 1978). Freudenberger (1974) reported that the employee who is experiencing burnout often reports feeling as though "everyone is out to screw him, including other staff members" (p. 160). Indeed, people who are suffering from burnout often find that they have

begun to develop negative attitudes toward their co-workers and even toward their clients (Kahill, 1988). Freudenberger (1974) and Cordes and Daugherty (1993) reported that employees who are experiencing burnout have resorted to substance abuse. Negative effects of burnout on an organizational level include increased employee turnover (Jackson et al., 1986), employee attendance (Firth & Britton, 1989), and deterioration in the quality of work as well as a decrease in productivity (Freudenberger, 1974; Maslach & Jackson, 1985).

Who Gets Burned Out?

Despite its potential for affecting employees within other professions, burnout is most frequently associated with those people who are employed in the social services, “high touch”, and helping professions (Cherniss, 1980; Freudenberger, 1974; Leiter & Maslach, 1988; Maslach, 1978; Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Skovholt, Grier, & Hanson., 2001). Research has focused increasingly on burnout among various occupations; however, generally speaking, people continue to associate the condition with professionals in the helping professions (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). By the mid-1980s, burnout's effect on certain professionals, namely clergy, was said to be "grossly overestimated" (Fichter, 1984). Though more recent studies have verified that burnout among clergy is a very real problem (Coate, 1989; Davey, 1995; Evans, 1999; Fletcher, 1990; and Kirk & Leary, 1994). Several article have been published on the effects of burnout on ministers and other members of clergy (Francis & Rutledge, 2000; Rodgeron & Piedmont, 1998; Stanton & Iso-Ahola, 1998; Strümpfer & Bands, 1996; Warner & Carter, 1984). Because their duties closely resemble those of social workers, counselors, and other professionals who are employed in "high-touch" professions, researchers argue that clergy are just as likely to experience burnout (Francis, Hills, & Kaldor, 2009). Miner et al., (2010) indicated that

additional studies are needed on burnout as it is experienced among clergy and other people who are engaged in some type of religious ministry.

Advancing the Study of Burnout

Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) credit H.B. Bradley with first asserting that burnout is a psychological phenomenon that is encountered by people who are employed in the helping professions. Another early example of a study of burnout is seen in a case study that was published in 1953. The case study was on "Miss Jones", a psychiatric nurse who exhibited classic symptoms of burnout (Maslach, 2003). However, burnout did not become the focus of the scientific and research community until the mid-1970s (Maslach, 2003). In 1974, Herbert Freudenberger, an American psychiatrist, published a detailed paper in which he described a syndrome that he personally observed while employed at a substance abuse clinic in New York (Freudenberger, 1974). The syndrome, which he dubbed as "burn-out" (a colloquial term that referred to the effects of drug abuse) affected many of the volunteer staff at Freudenberger's clinic (Freudenberger, 1974). He noted that the staff member who suffers from burnout "becomes inoperative to all intents and purposes" (Freudenberger, 1974). In addition, Freudenberger (1974) wrote that burnout usually occurs among not only new volunteers, but also volunteers who display a certain zeal or enthusiasm for their work. The demands of the clinic and its clients, the type of emotional investment that the work required, and the tension that resulted from the personal expectations that the volunteers placed on themselves eventually took a toll on these volunteers (Freudenberger, 1974).

Shortly after Freudenberger's article, Maslach and Jackson published two key articles on the subject of burnout (Francis, Loudon, & Routledge, 2004). In these articles, Maslach and Jackson suggested that burnout is composed of three distinct, yet interrelated subsets: an

increased sense of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment (Francis et al., 2004). Researchers have offered a number of theories on the interrelatedness of the three basic elements of burnout. One proposal included the notion that emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and the reduced sense of professional efficacy serve as an indicator of the degree to which burnout has occurred within an individual (Golembiewski & Munzenrider, 1986). Maslach and Leiter (2008) later proposed that a sequential relationship exists between the three: The occurrence of one component precipitated the occurrence of the next component. A subsequent proposal from Maslach supported a revised version of this relationship: Emotional exhaustion occurs first and will lead to the occurrence of depersonalization. Maslach and Leiter (2008) noted that the reduced sense of personal accomplishment will develop separately.

Maslach writes that a significant amount of the original research on burnout is based on personal experiences and commonly-occurring problems, rather than on “derivations from the literature” (Maslach, 2003, p. 189). According to Maslach (2003): “...burnout was clearly grounded in the realities of peoples experience in the workplace” (Maslach, 2003, p. 190). As a result, early researchers were better able to establish an understanding of the conditions in which burnout occurs and they were better able to develop new approaches for preventing the onset of burnout (Maslach, 1982; Maslach, 2003; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

According to Maslach (2003), this grass-roots trajectory also presented some difficulties: “The origin of this research had some initial liabilities, as early studies were dismissed as flimsy popular psychology” (pp. 189-190). Cordes and Dougherty (1993) and Kahill (1988) point out that Maslach Burnout Inventory, now a well-known, widely-used, and highly-validated psychometric instrument, was developed during the early 1980s when the study of burnout was

relatively new. When Maslach first submitted her joint psychometric instrument for publication, the journal returned the article, unread, but with a note that said its reviewers do not accept fad or pop psychology (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Despite this initial setback, the study of burnout continued to progress. In addition, Maslach (2003) points to the substantial body of international literature and models on burnout, all of which she asserts have lain to rest the belief that the study of burnout is a fad.

Perlman and Hartman (1982) noted that in the late 1970s there were only 21 known empirical references to burnout in the literature. However, by the end of 1981, there were nearly 400 listed references to burnout, 266 of which were found in the scholarly or professional press (Kahill, 1988). Maslach & Jackson (1984) described burnout as consisting of a pattern of symptoms which includes emotional exhaustion and cynicism. Researchers also noted that burnout syndrome most often occurs among people who are employed in professions that require frequent and sustained contact with people (Maslach & Jackson, 1984). As research on burnout began to increase, researchers also began to rely on systematic, clinical language when describing burnout (Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Jackson, 1984; Pines & Maslach, 1978). Perhaps this transformation of burnout from a single-component concept into a three-component concept reflected a new trend among researchers: burnout was becoming more clearly defined (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Additional research revealed that burnout has two components: domain and time (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993). Domain consists of three sub-components, namely emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and an overall sense of reduced personal accomplishments (Dunford, Shipp, Angermeier, Boss, 2012). Further refinement of the concept of burnout revealed workload and control play important roles in contributing to burnout; however, on their own, they are not sufficient in determining the extent to which burnout occurs (Leiter &

Maslach, 2009). On the other hand, reward, community, and fairness add more power in predicting values (Leiter & Maslach, 2009). It should be noted that the category of employee values has been critical in predicting levels of burnout among nurses, especially when a nurse's job satisfaction has been undermined by a conflict in ethics or other types of workplace mores (Begat, 2005; Hegney, 2006).

Missionaries, Religious Orientation, and Religious Coping

Christian missionaries have traveled and worked abroad for hundreds of years and their motivations for engaging in missionary work are as diverse as the people that they serve (Navara & James, 2005). Though their denominations vary, their aim is usually to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to non-believers or to people who have fallen away from the faith (Merrill et al., 2009). In addition, missionaries perform any number of duties, including promoting literacy, assisting in economic development, and providing basic educational services to local inhabitants (Merrill et al., 2009).

There is considerable research on the adjustment strategies of professionals who are employed in foreign countries, there are actually very few studies that have been conducted on the adjustment strategies of people who are engaged in missionary work (Navara & James, 2005). One study indicated that missionaries who are working abroad often rely on different kinds of adjustment strategies than their non-missionary counterparts (Navara & James, 2002). In addition, Navara and James (2005) assert that additional research should be conducted on these adjustment strategies and on the effect that religious orientation has upon the missionary's acculturation process. Missionaries who are working abroad will inevitably experience differences in their host country, which often produce stress (Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1974). The perceived difference between the missionary's home and his/her placement in a new

location plays an important role in the missionary's adjustment to his/her new location (Berry, 1992; Searle & Ward, 1990). The perceived differences in the standard of living, climate, pace of life, values, and belief systems will cause the missionary to respond by responding or withdrawing from the host society (Berry, 1992). Becoming acquainted to a new culture and to a new location not only produces stress, but these processes can also cause the missionary to experience feelings of depression and anxiety (Aycan, 1997).

Researchers have also theorized that a missionary's religious affiliation can be predictive of the stress that the missionary expects to experience once deployed into his/her new location (Navara & James, 2005). There are three types of religious orientation that have been the focus of research: intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest (Navara & James, 2005). The missionary who has an intrinsic religious orientation is motivated by his/her religious organization, the goals of that organization, and by faith itself (Burris, 1999). The missionary who has an extrinsic religious orientation engages in observable behaviors that appear to be religiously-oriented, but are actually a means of obtaining approval, social prestige, comfort, and protection (Burris, 1999). A third religious orientation, quest, is characterized by "the degree to which an individual's religion involves an open-ended, responsive dialogue with existential questions raised by the contradictions and tragedies of life" (Batson & Schoenrade, 1993, p.169.) Other features of quest orientation include higher levels of cognitive complexity with regards to religion and existential matters, openness to inconsistent beliefs, an association with pro-social motivation in helping situations, and lower levels of bigotry and baseless personal biases (Batson & Burris, 1994; Batson & Raynor-Prince, 1983; Batson & Schoenrade, 1993; McFarland & Warren, 1992;). In their 2005 study, researchers found that missionaries who identify very strongly with the quest orientation tended to expect lower levels of stress while deployed on their mission; missionaries

who identify strongly with the extrinsic orientation tended to expect higher levels of stress while deployed in the field (Navara & James, 2005).

According to Bjorck and Kim (2009), a number of studies revealed that religious coping styles add variation to the prediction of health and wellness, beyond those effects of non-religious coping. Clearly, religious coping is a distinct style of coping and, in terms of major life events, it can have positive implications for a person's health (Bjorck & Kim, 2009). In their discussion of two theoretically grounded models, Merrill et al., (2009) provide an overview of the prevention and stressor response models. The prevention model emphasizes avoiding behaviors that are not conducive to good health, whereas the stressor response model assumes that stressful life events will cause people to embrace and rely on religious beliefs and to increase participation in religious activities in order to respond in a healthy manner to aversive states and daily stressors (Merrill et al., 2009). An abundance of research has shown that both models successfully promote wellness and recovery from illness (Merrill et al., 2009). In addition, the stressor response model has shown that church attendance, prayer, studying scripture, emotional and spiritual support (from church members, neighbors, friends) have helped people in coping with stressful life events as well in recovering from physical trauma (Jain et al., 2002; Merrill et al., 2009; Merrill & Salazar, 2002). Other researchers have identified three specific forms of religious styles of coping: deferring, self-directing, and collaborative (Pargament et al., 1988). A person who copes by deferring has become passive and asked God to solve the problem; a person who is self-directive relies on people, not God, for assistance; and collaborative coping is a shared problem-solving approach between the person and God (Bjorck & Kim, 2009).

Bjorck and Kim (2009) point out that researchers have largely ignored the area of religious missionaries, particularly with regards to stressors and coping strategies. Many articles

on the topic of missionaries simply point toward the change in culture, the missionary's expectations of that culture, and traumatic events as significant sources of stress (Bagley, 2003; Bjorck & Kim, 2009; Goode, 1995; Navara & James, 2005). In addition, research has revealed that missionaries are especially prone to experience traumatic events than are people in the who are engaged in other types of work (Irvine, Armentrout, & Milner, 2006; Schafer et al., 2007). However, Bjorck and Kim (2009) mention that in some cases, missionaries have demonstrated more resilience to trauma, which may indicate that other factors may decrease the overall effect that such traumatic events have on psychological functioning. It also seems more likely that, given the nature of religious missionary work, missionaries would rely on some form of religious coping style (Bjorck & Kim, 2009). Numerous research projects have demonstrated that that a person's perception of support from that person's religious denomination is an asset when faced with stress, challenges, or other types of difficulties (Ferraro & Koch, 1994; Neighbors et al., 1982). Other studies have shown that personal associations, namely the perceived presence of family, friends, and community attachment are all significant sources of support (Cohen et al., 1997; Cohen & Wells, 1985; Leavy, 1983; Matton & Wells, 1995; Uchino, Cacioppo, & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996). In addition to social support, Maton (1989) determined that spiritual support from God is beneficial in coping with stressful situations. In this study, Maton (1989) showed that people who experience higher forms of stress do indeed benefit from this particular type of spiritual support.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview and description of the nature of qualitative research, of phenomenology, and of the phenomenological process. In this chapter I have included explanations of the data collection and preparation techniques, the role of the researcher, the conceptual model, the guiding questions, the population and sample, the selection strategy, the process for ensuring credibility, confidentiality and informed consent, and the pilot study. As with any type of qualitative research, there is the potential for ethical dilemmas to arise, particularly during the collection and analysis of data. In addition to a description of the data collection and analysis processes, I have included a section that addresses potential ethical dilemmas. I relied on the modified van Kaam method in the organization, analysis, and synthesis of this data and have included an explanation of the modified van Kaam method in this chapter (Moustakas, 1994).

The focus of this study was to describe the lived experiences of returned Mormon missionaries who served two year missions in the southeastern section of the United States. A benefit of this study is that it will assist organizations that deploy missionaries in better understanding the field experiences of those missionaries. In addition, this study will enhance the quality of missionary training programs because it identifies and describes protective factors and strategies that insulate missionaries against burnout. These strategies are drawn from and described by the missionaries themselves. This project attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of Mormon missionaries who served a mission in the southeastern United States?

2. To what extent did their beliefs, their companions, church members, and other institutional resources protect the missionaries against burnout?

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is strongly rooted in empiricism: one of its basic assumptions is that the researcher obtains knowledge through experience (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In addition, qualitative research offers a broad approach to the study of certain social phenomena and its ultimate goal is to inform action and enhance decision making (Denzin, 1994; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). A primary goal of qualitative research is to investigate phenomena that occur in some facet of the social world, to obtain data through observation, and to transform that data into knowledge (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The qualitative researcher's "laboratory" is the environment in which the phenomenon occurs, so it is said that qualitative research occurs in a naturalistic setting (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

According to Denzin (1994) and Rossman and Rallis (2003), qualitative research is interpretive: its purpose is to describe, analyze, and interpret data through the lens of the researcher; qualitative researchers also typically avoid attempting to exert control over the phenomena that they are studying. Rather than collecting data through questionnaires, the researcher is in fact the research instrument, gathering data from what he/she sees, hears, observes, and experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In addition, because of the "exquisite sensitivity to personal biography", the qualitative researcher is aware that his/her experiences, worldview, and biases will have bearing on his/her interpretation of the data (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Rossman and Rallis (2003) have described qualitative research as emergent: through the process of analyzing the data, the researcher will uncover themes which will guide the direction

of the study. Qualitative researchers attempt to avoid imposing rigid frameworks on the social world, choosing rather to learn from the participants what constitutes important questions (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Other common features of qualitative research are the absence of a formal hypothesis and the use of inductive, rather than deductive, reasoning. In addition, when beginning a project, qualitative researchers construct a flexible, well-thought out conceptual framework, one that focuses their questions, guides their actions, and prevents them from pursuing any tangent that does not relate to the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Phenomenology and the Phenomenological Method

Phenomenology is a qualitative research technique that attempts to understand the lived experiences of small group of people (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Other researchers have described phenomenology as the exploration of the shared meaning of some social phenomenon as seen through the eyes of numerous individuals (McCaslin & Scott, 2003). Through dialogue and reflection, phenomenology is an attempt at understanding the structure and essence of some experience (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Holstein and Gubrium (as cited by Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 94) assert that "language is viewed the primary symbol system through which meaning is both constructed and conveyed." Patton (2002) adds that an important philosophical underpinning of phenomenology is the assumption that we awaken a conscious awareness of an event or a phenomenon when we attend to our perceptions and meanings. A core component within phenomenology is the importance of perception: it is the primary source of knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). Patton (2002) asserts that within phenomenology, there is no distinction between a person and objective reality. A person's perception of an experience and the meaning that a person attaches to an experience is that person's reality (Patton, 2002). This perspective – the emphasis on a person's perception of an event, rather than on the actual event – is unique to

phenomenology (Munhall, 1994). The researcher is focusing on describing some object, often from multiple perspectives, as it appears to the person who sees and experiences that object (Moustakas, 1994).

The phenomenological process is exploratory and it can involve prolonged engagement and iterative, in-depth, and intensive interviews with its respondents (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The researcher, through dialogue and reflection, is attempting to understand how people experience a certain phenomenon, what meaning they make of that phenomenon, and how people understand their own experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The researcher's focus is not on predictions or explanations; the researcher's focus is on describing some experience or phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher's primary goal is to understand some deeper meaning of a person's experiences, and how that person articulates those experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Van Manen (cited by Patton, 2002, p. 106) writes:

From a phenomenological point of view, we are less interested in the factual status of particular instances: whether something happened, how often it tends to happen, or how the occurrence of an experience is related to the prevalence of other conditions or events. For example, phenomenology does not ask, "How do these children learn this particular material?" but it asks, "What is the nature or essence of the experience of learning (so that I can now better understand what this particular learning experience is like for those children)?"

There are two assumptions that are at the heart of the phenomenological approach: that which is important to know is what people experience and how they interpret the world (Patton, 2002). The second assumption is that the researcher must experience the phenomena that he/she is studying, as directly as possible, through intensive interviews of those people who have experienced those phenomena (Patton, 2002). The essence and nature of an experience is only

adequately described if the description reveals the lived experience in deeper or more profound manner (Van Manen, as cited by Patton, 2002).

Patton (2002) also mentions that the concept of *essence* is a unique feature of phenomenology. Researchers attempt to capture the essence of some lived experience by identifying and describing the core meanings of some phenomenon (Patton, 2002). The assumption that essence is real is central to the phenomenologist's approach (Patton, 2002). The researcher arrives at the essence of an experience through intuition and through a conscious reflection on experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenological Processes

In this study, I have employed four phenomenological processes as described by Clark Moustakas (1994). Those processes are Epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis. It is this researcher's belief that these four processes were conducive to the overall process of comprehending and drawing meaning from the experiences of returned Mormon missionaries.

Epoche

Epoche is the process by which a researcher looks within him or herself in an attempt to identify and suspend any bias, preconceived notions, or any other impulse that would slant or color the data (Patton, 2002). "We 'invalidate,' 'inhibit,' and 'disqualify' all commitments with reference to previous knowledge and experience (Schmitt, 1968, p.59). Moustakas (1994) asserts that the challenge of the Epoche is to maintain such an acute awareness of our own biases that we will be able to perceive data as though we are seeing it for the first time. In short, the purpose of Epoche is for the researcher to approach the data and the data analysis from a new, fresh

perspective. Ihde (cited by Patton, 2002) asserts that Epoche requires that looking should precede judging.

Phenomenological Reduction

Phenomenological reduction is an analytical process that occurs after Epoche and it has several components: bracketing, horizontalizing, and the grouping of horizons into clear descriptions of the event that is being investigated (Moustakas, 1994). According to Patton (2002), phenomenological reduction is an analytical process that requires the researcher to ignore or “bracket out” anything that would contaminate the data that is being analyzed. Husserl (cited by Patton, 2002) writes that bracketing requires an intense inspection of some experience, an inspection that reveals the most basic and essential structures of that experience. Denzin (cited by Patton, 2002) indicates that this inspection is accomplished by identifying key phrases or statements that describe or speak to the experience; determining the meaning of these phrases; seeking the respondent’s interpretations of these key phrases; examining the meanings for what they reveal about the essence of the experience; and offering a tentative definition or statement about the experience, based on the essence of that experience. According to Moustakas (1994), the researcher should bracket the research question according to themes, which discourages the researcher from pursuing tangents that are not related to the original study.

After the researcher has bracketed the data, all features and aspects of the data are treated with equal value (Patton, 2002). The researcher, at this point, should begin horizontalizing the data. After the researcher has examined the data, he/she will then organize the data into meaningful clusters known as horizons (Patton, 2002). Irrelevant and overlapping statements are also removed (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher should also attempt to locate within the data different perspectives of the same event; at this point identifying the invariant themes

(Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990). An invariant theme is not unlike viewing an inanimate object from multiple perspectives. According to Moustakas (1994), even though the viewer's perception of the object has changed, the object has not changed at all.

Imaginative Variation

Imaginative variation is the process through which the researcher is attempting to arrive at a structural description of an experience; this is the central purpose of imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher, relying on intuition, develops expanded or alternate versions of the experience (Patton, 2002). This process is a way of determining the meaning and the essence of an experience (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) asserts that before an object can exist, one must identify and understand its structures. Imaginative variation allows the researcher to identify the structural themes based on the textural descriptions that were generated from the phenomenological reduction process (Moustakas, 1994).

Synthesis

This process is “an integration of the composite textural and composite structural descriptions, providing a synthesis of the meanings and essences of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, page 144). Husserl (cited by Moustakas, 1994) indicates that “essence” is an essential, universal feature of an experience; without this feature, the thing cannot exist. In addition, Moustakas (1994) points out that, though the essence of an experience is never completely exhausted, the basic textural-structural synthesis is the essence of an experience at the time and place from the viewpoint of a researcher who has just concluded an exhaustive imaginative and reflective study of the event.

Data Collection Preparation

I have presented the research questions in chapter 1 and I have provided a review of the literature in chapter 2. The following section describes the conceptual model, researcher role, guiding questions, reliability and validity, population and sample, selection criteria, informed consent, and the pilot study.

Conceptual Model

I relied on the literature review to generate my general assumptions for this study. Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend using a conceptual model in order to focus the project and for bounding the data collection. The model is a graphic depiction of six factors that act either to support the missionary or that act against the missionary. These six factors are drawn from the literature on burnout, and were the focus of the data collection, the bounding of data, and the development of the leading questions.

The three protective forces that are depicted in the model that insulate the missionary against burnout are *organizational structures*, *personal habits*, and *sacred beliefs, attitudes, and practices*. The literature suggests that organizational support and personal habits are two protective factors that insulate a person against burnout. However, this researcher was not able to locate evidence that supports the idea that religious beliefs, attitudes and practices will serve as a protective factor against burnout. However, as a point of curiosity, I have included this last factor as a possible protective factor against burnout.

The literature also supports the idea that when certain factors are mismatched between the employee and the job, namely in the areas of workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values burnout can occur (Maslach et al., 2001). In the conceptual model, I have included three factors that may act against the missionary to produce burnout: *intense contact with people*,

adjustment issues, and other work-related issues. It is estimated that an average missionary will make 25 new contacts per day, in addition to any number of requests for assistance from church members, or the missionaries' supervisor, the Mission President (T. Murphy, personal communication, October 15, 2012). Having limited contact with family and friends can potentially cause the missionary to experience feelings of anxiety, depression, and isolation. In addition, if the missionary and his companion do not get along, or if the missionary finds that he has limited or no support from his area supervisor, or from the Mission President, the missionary may experience an increased sense of anxiety.

By identifying the factors that serve to protect or hinder the missionary's work, I have bracketed the research question. Moustakas (1994) suggests this technique in order to focus the researcher's data collection to areas that are directly related to the research study. It also prevented me from straying in directions that, though interesting, are not relevant to the current study.

Figure 1 depicts the missionary in the center of the model and the forces are shown acting against or in support of him. These forces are constant, though they can differ in frequency and intensity. These forces can come from multiple sources. In addition, the forces that act against the missionary have the potential to move the missionary away from a healthy working environment toward burnout. The protective factors have the potential to move the missionary away from an unhealthy work condition toward a healthy, rewarding work experience.

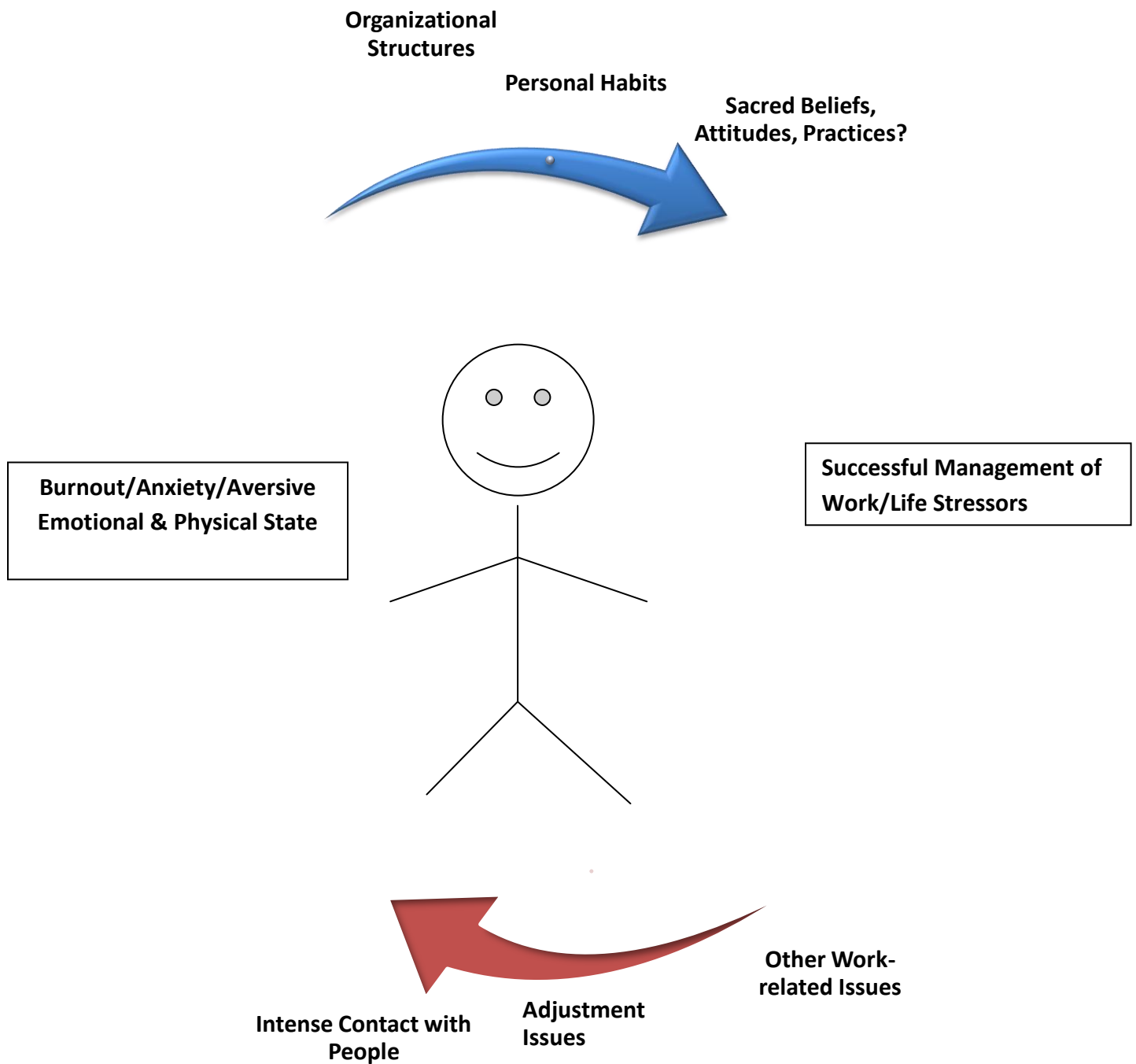


Figure 1: A Conceptual Model of the Forces that Work to Support or that Work Against a Missionary.

Credibility

Golafshani (2003) writes that, although the term “reliability” is most frequently associated with evaluating quantitative research, the notion of reliability is applicable to qualitative research. Morse (1994) also suggests that we should avoid using labels that are frequently associated with quantitative research because the process of addressing issues like reliability and validity in qualitative research are so different in quantitative research. Rossman and Rallis (2003) suggest that, with the development of qualitative research, a new way of determining the veracity of that research has also developed. Rather than use the term “validity”, qualitative researchers typically use terms like credibility, dependability, conformability, and trustworthiness (Seidman, 1998). Patton (2002) asserts that, in order to ensure a study’s integrity, validity, and accuracy of the findings, a qualitative researcher should address the paradigmatic assumptions that underlie that study. In addition, the researcher should provide personal information on his/her qualifications, experiences, and perspectives (Morse, 1994; Patton, 2002).

According to Patton (2002), *triangulation* is one method for ensuring the veracity and integrity of a qualitative study. Denzin (as cited by Patton, 2002, p. 555) writes: “By combining multiple observers, theories, methods, and data sources, [researchers] can hope to overcome the intrinsic bias that comes from single-methods, single-observer, and single-theory studies.” Triangulating analysts requires the presence of two or more researchers who engage in an independent analysis of the same qualitative data set and then compare their findings (Patton, 2002). Another technique for ensuring credibility is through the use of a *peer debriefer* (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The peer debriefer will assume the role of an “intellectual watchdog” throughout the life of the study; the primary purpose of this person is to assist the researcher in modifying design decisions, developing analytic categories, and in building an explanation for

the phenomenon of interest (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Rossman and Rallis (2003) also recommend using a *community of practice* as another means of ensuring credibility. The community of practice ensures credibility through posing critical questions and engaging the researcher in ongoing discussions, thus causing the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon that he/she is studying (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

In an attempt to ensure a high level of credibility, and in keeping with the recommendations that have been mentioned above, I relied on a system of triangulating analysts throughout the data analysis process. In addition, I have included a brief biography in this section in order to familiarize the reader with my history and my points of view. I have also relied on using a community of practice and a peer debriefer so that I may increase the overall integrity of this research project.

The Researcher's Role

Rossman and Rallis (2003) have described the qualitative researcher as an active learner, one who seeks to obtain a deeper understanding of some phenomenon. In addition, the qualitative researcher attempts to transform his /her learning into knowledge, with the intent of making that knowledge available for others to apply in various ways (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Moustakas (1994) also mentions that it is not uncommon that the researcher has some personal interest in the phenomenon that is being studied and that the researcher's knowledge and background are critical in the learning and understanding that takes place in the study, and also in the knowledge that is generated from the study. Indeed, it is important that researchers recognize how their own lens - their beliefs, their politics, their age, their ethnicity, their gender - will affect the research. Qualitative researchers must reflect on who they are and on how their experiences can affect a project (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Moustakas (1994) reminds us that

personal reflection provides a logical, systematic, and coherent resource for the analysis and synthesis that brings about an essential description of experience. Moustakas (1994) writes:

The challenge of transcendental phenomenology was to develop a method for understanding the objects that appear before us. Such a science requires a return to the self and employment of a self-reflective process that enables the searcher increasingly to know herself or himself within the experience being investigated. For example, as I come to an understanding of the meanings and essences of anger, I also gain knowledge of my own experience of anger (pp 47-48).

My dissertation focuses on two areas that are of paramount interest to me: religion and the study of burnout. I have included a brief personal biography, which includes a description of the events that have shaped my worldview, and that have provided me with the interest and motivation to pursue this dissertation.

I am a 40 year old Caucasian male and I have lived my entire life in south Louisiana. I grew up in a predominantly Catholic community where I received 12 years of Catholic schooling. My family and I attended Mass every week and on holy days of obligation. Throughout junior high and high school, I served in my home parish as an altar boy. I made my first confession at the age of 6, received my first solemn Communion at age 7, and I was confirmed in the Catholic Church at age 21. As a child and as a teenager, the vast majority of my friends and neighbors were Catholic. With the exceptions of my paternal grandfather, my stepfather, and my stepbrother, the majority of my family was Catholic. In elementary school, my brother, my close friends, and I tended to categorize people on the basis of their religious affiliation: People were either Catholic or non-Catholic. We usually kept a very close eye on the non-Catholics. Looking back at my childhood, I realize that my friends and I viewed non-Catholics as oddities, even exotic. It was not so much that we feared them, marginalized them, or were intolerant of them. We did not judge them. However, by virtue of their different religious

affiliations, we viewed them as fundamentally different people. In retrospect, I realize that we were not very comfortable with this perceived difference because we did not know what it meant to be something other than Catholic. As far as I was concerned, the Roman Catholic Church was home, fellow Catholics were extended family, the Virgin Mary was mom, and Pope John Paul II was grandpa.

My father passed away when I was 18 months old, so my upbringing fell squarely on the shoulders of my mother, my maternal grandparents, my older sister, and a housekeeper who, for all intents and purposes, became part of our family. All of these people had some influence on my worldview. One message that my family consistently communicated to me is that there was no value and no wisdom in marginalizing another person based on ethnicity, religious affiliation, or the like. My paternal grandfather, Greely Cox, was a gentle and patient man and he had a subtle sense of humor. One of the most memorable comments someone has made about him is, "Everything was always ok with your grandpa." He recognized the importance of listening, of not making judgments, and of accepting people and situations for what they are. Shadows of these values are in my mother, my older brother, and me.

Now my stepbrother is a Southern Baptist and I credit him for awakening in me an awareness and an appreciation for the various religious denominations - whether Catholic, Protestant, or non-Christian. Through our frequent, lengthy, and sometimes stormy discussions on faith and doubt, thought and practice, belief and non-belief, I recognized the value in learning about the beliefs and practices of other religious denominations. By the time I was in college, I read extensively on any number of religious groups, namely Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Anglicanism, and Mormonism. I also continued to read about Catholicism. When I started graduate school, I enrolled in a course on comparative religion. The professor, Miles Richardson,

not only encouraged me to cultivate an even deeper appreciation for the differences in beliefs and practices among the various groups of the faithful, but he also taught me how to make non-threatening inquiries into areas that often caused people to assume a defensive posture. I learned to present myself to people of different beliefs as a student, as someone who was curious about their faith, their beliefs, and their practices, and as someone who viewed people with unconditional positive regard. It was (and still is) very important to me that people understand that my inquiries were based on personal curiosity and genuine interest. When I asked anything about their faith, their traditions, or their practices, I asked respectfully. This is a habit that I adopted as a young man and that I continue to practice as a man who is approaching middle age. It was the differences in beliefs and in practices that fascinated me. Indeed, these differences continue to fascinate me.

My first contact with Mormons came at age 10 when a family from Utah moved into the house next door to me. I remember the daughter telling me that she was a Mormon. As she recalled the details of her Church's history, I sat quietly and listened. I was captivated. Later that year, the Mormon Church had launched a national public relations campaign, buying slots of air time on the major networks. The commercials focused on the appearance of Christ in the New World. Whenever these commercials were on the television, I stopped what I was doing and watched them. Over the years I have met with Mormon missionaries to discuss doctrine, scripture, and nearly anything else related to their Church. In addition, I have cultivated several close friendships with a number of Mormons in the Baton Rouge area. My interest in Mormonism has spanned the course of my life.

I have 18 years of professional work experience, 11 of which are in the field of mental health counseling, and 6.5 of which come from the field of human resource management,

specifically benefits administration, training and development and compensation. I have been a licensed professional counselor since January 2005 and have maintained a small private practice since June of 2006. I hold a Bachelor of Arts degree in French and History, a Master of Arts degree in Community Counseling, and a Master of Public Administration degree. I earned all of my degrees from Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College. Before attending college at a public university, I attended and graduated from Catholic High School and St. George Catholic Elementary school. I also attended one year of pre-kindergarten and one year of kindergarten. At the time of this writing, I have been in school for a little more than 36 years.

One of my master's degrees is in community counseling. As part of that program of study, my former department required that I complete courses in interpersonal communication, counseling for disabling conditions, and issues in multicultural counseling. These courses made significant contributions to my professional and to my personal development. For example, in the class on interpersonal communication, I learned a great deal about how to structure an effective interview and how my posture and tone of voice can affect a respondent's willingness to communicate openly throughout an interview. In addition, I learned a great deal about psychopathology, namely recognizing the presenting symptoms of illnesses such as major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, transition issues, and other lower-grade forms of the major illnesses. Perhaps the most beneficial lesson that I learned while I completed this degree was to offer each of my patients unconditional positive regard. That is, I learned that I should suspend any judgments about my patients and to accept them for who they are, essentially conveying this message to them: "I accept and support you for who you are and I make no judgments about you."

The bulk of my professional experience has been in fields that are characterized by frequent and prolonged contact with people; people who pursue careers in these “helping professions” are especially prone to experiencing burnout (Cherniss, 1980; Freudenberger, 1974; Leiter & Maslach, 1988; Maslach & Pines, 1977; Maslach, 1978; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Skovholt et al., 2001). As a counselor, I have worked in various settings and with various populations. I have provided career counseling to college students and I have provided psychotherapy to “healthy neurotic.” In addition, I have provided individual counseling, couples counseling, and group therapy. I first became aware that I was at risk for burnout when I was working as a mental health counselor at a day treatment facility for the chronically mentally. The majority of the patients that received care through this facility suffered from the more extreme types of mental illness, namely bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, and major depressive disorder. The pathology caused significant clinical impairment in the patients’ daily functioning, often disrupting their educational aspirations, family relationships, and their careers.

As a result of the severity of their illness, many of the patients required close attention and support from the clinical services staff. I found that offering this level of care was indeed rewarding, and I was glad to offer this level of assistance. Supervisors always warned us about being “too helpful” with our clients, suggesting that this would create an imbalance in the professional relationship between patient and therapist. I observed one patient, “Opal”, who expected her counselor to not only open her mail, but also to read her mail to her. The counselor was too happy to oblige “Opal.” Some of my patients made similar requests of me. If I had time, I would indulge those requests; however, given that my average caseload consisted of 12 patients, I seldom had time to such special requests.

I became close friends with one of the nurses who boasted having in excess of 20 years of experience in psychiatric nursing. One of the things that struck me about this friend is her “no nonsense” approach to work: nothing ever seemed to rattle her and her patients never made “special requests” to her. Now she routinely complained of a decreased sense of personal accomplishment and that by day’s end, she “had nothing left to give” of herself. Behind closed doors, particularly in staffings, she would use impersonal, dehumanizing terms when she referred to her patients. One day as we reviewed our work schedules, she informed me that she had “a schizophrenic at 10:00, a borderline at 11:00” and that she would finish her day with a visit to “the depressive.”

My patients required a great deal of support from me. For nearly a year, I quietly feared that I would adopt the same view of my patients that my friend and co-worker had of hers – that they were somehow a bother, that their illness was somehow their fault, and that they probably deserved to live in poverty. Fortunately, I never reached the same level of exhaustion as this friend. I also do not recall ever referring to any of my patients in a de-humanizing or impersonal manner. However, I was aware of a significant drain on my personal resources. I felt exhausted at the end of a work week. Usually by Saturday afternoons, I would start to dread returning to work on Monday mornings. I eventually began to fear that I too would suffer the same symptoms as my friend. After nearly 18 months of working with the chronically mentally ill, I knew that I could not work with this population for much longer. My decision to leave was hastened by an incident in late July 2003. Midway through an individual counseling session, a patient of mine attacked me. Shortly after this, I very quietly began looking for work in other settings. By September 2003, I accepted a position as a career counselor at a local university. Though I was still working as a counselor, the students (my “clients”) with whom I worked did not place the

same level of demands on me as the patients with whom I had previously worked at the mental health clinic. Though I enjoyed working as a career counselor, I eventually accepted a position with my employer's human resource management department. Though my duties were more demanding in this new role, I still did not experience that same level of dependence that I had experienced when I worked with the chronically mentally ill. In fact, no work experience has ever come close to placing the kinds of demands on my time and on my personal resources as those 18 months in which I worked with the mentally ill.

One benefit of having worked in such a stressful environment is that, as a member of one of the helping professions, I am very much aware of the necessity of achieving balance between the workplace and my private life. I am also aware of the importance of having a supportive supervisor, that this is one of the protective factors that insulates against burnout. I am also aware of how burnout "feels" and how burnout "looks." Though I have never suffered from burnout, at least one close friend and co-worker has.

Moustakas (1994) reminds us that phenomenological research often requires that we derive evidence from our personal, first-person experiences. I approached this study not just as a student, but as someone who has witnessed firsthand the effects of burnout. I am aware of and appreciate the short- and long-term effects of burnout. I realize that burnout adversely affects the working professional's quality of life, but it can also affect the working professional's career trajectory. In addition, I acknowledge and respect the differences in beliefs among the faithful; I am fully aware of the necessity of being respectful when making inquiries into those beliefs. I described the data that I retrieved based on my experiences with Mormon missionaries and working in professions that are prone to suffer from burnout.

Guiding Questions

I formulated a list of guiding questions based on information that I retrieved in the literature. My advisor and I evaluated each of these questions before gathering any data. I also collected some demographic information from each participant, namely the participant's age, the length of the participant's church membership, the length of time that elapsed since the termination of the participant's mission, and whether or not the participant's parents were temple-worthy. The original questionnaire contained a total of 9 questions. I used this questionnaire only during the pilot study. In addition, I relied on a semi-structured interview format.

1. Looking back at the time you spent on your mission, how would you describe the experience? What are thoughts and feelings that stand out most?
 - a. What did you like most about the experience?
 - b. What did you like least about the experience?
2. Think about how you spent your time while on your mission. What did a typical day look and feel like?
 - a. Describe a typical bad day. What did it feel like? What are some common thoughts associated with a bad day while on your mission?
3. How did you cope with the negative experiences that you encountered while on your mission?
 - a. To what extent, if at all, did negative experiences affect you?
 - b. What strategies or resources allowed you to recover from these negative experiences?
 - c. How effective were these strategies?

4. What were some of the biggest obstacles that you encountered while on your mission?
 - a. At what part of your mission did you experience these obstacles?
 - b. How did you navigate around these obstacles?
 - c. What was it like for you to navigate around these obstacles? What thoughts and feelings stand out the most?
5. What made it possible for you to successfully engage in the daily activities of a missionary, every day for two years?
6. Overall, how effective do you feel that you were in your daily efforts as a missionary?
7. What role(s) did your spiritual beliefs, the church, church members, and investigators play in your mission?
 - a. What was your greatest source of support?
8. How did your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes toward your mission change as the mission progressed? Compare your thoughts and feelings at the beginning of the mission to your thoughts and feelings at the middle and at the end of your mission.
 - a. Talk about any changes in your attitude or feelings that you experienced toward your companions, investigators, church members, and people that you met, interacted with or taught while on your mission.
9. Think about how you expressed your faith before, during, and after your mission.

Describe any changes that you have noticed in your attitudes and feelings toward those practices and beliefs.

Sampling Strategy

Rossman and Rallis (2003) suggest that a purposive sampling strategy is an appropriate sampling strategy for qualitative research, particularly when the researcher is looking for specific

characteristics within his/her respondents. I decided to rely on primary selection as my sampling strategy. Morse (1991) writes that primary selection, which is a form of purposive sampling, often involves that the researcher have a relationship and some knowledge of the potential respondents. Essentially, when engaged in this type of sampling strategy, the researcher has an idea of which respondents would be willing to participate in the study, and which respondents would constitute a high-quality participant. In her description of what constitutes an appropriate sampling strategy, Morris (1991) stated that informant characteristics and the information that is being sought by the researcher should help guide the sampling.

I was concerned with finding appropriate candidates for the study, namely respondents who met certain characteristics with respect to their mission and with respect to their parents' level of devotion to Mormon doctrine. I was looking specifically for male respondents who had successfully completed a two year mission. I was interested in finding respondents whose mission had terminated more than two years prior to my interview with them. I was also intent on finding respondents whose parents are temple-worthy. Because I had certain criteria in mind for potential respondents, I was not concerned about obtaining a random sample. In addition, because this is a qualitative research project, I was not concerned with sampling large numbers of participants. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), a sample size of eight to ten participants is usually appropriate for a study such as this one. In addition, I expected to reach data saturation, the point at which I no longer collected new information from the respondents, by the 8th interview (Rossman & Rallis, 2008).

For this study, I defined "returned missionary" as: a male member of the Mormon Church, as someone whose mission had recently ended (no more than two years could have elapsed between the close of the mission and the point at which the returned missionary

participated in this study), and someone whose parents are temple-worthy. My advisor and I developed these criteria because we believed that they would produce high-quality respondents. We believed that a missionary whose parents are temple-worthy would be indicative of a higher level of religious devotion. In addition, we believed that interviewing male members whose return from their mission was less than two years prior would decrease the likelihood of recall bias. In other words, the respondent would have an accurate and clear recollection of his experiences from his mission.

I began to search for prospective respondents during the latter half of the fall semester of 2012. A number of my friends and colleagues are members of the Mormon Church, so I was able to rely on their assistance for distributing my call for respondents. These contacts in turn distributed my advertisement to appropriate candidates within the church. I relied on word of mouth in order to disseminate information regarding the project and the call for respondents. I also personally approached some potential respondents, people who met the criteria for participating in the project.

Informed Consent, Confidentiality, and Selection Process

The institutional review board (IRB) at Louisiana State University reviewed and granted approval to conduct this study (IRB # E8027) on October 31, 2012. I explained to all respondents that their participation in this study is completely voluntary and that they may discontinue their participation at any point. I also explained that withdrawing from this study would include the removal of the respondent's interview data. I have worked to ensure that participants' names and other identifying information has been withheld from any tape-recorded interviews, in the transcriptions of those interviews, or anywhere in the body of this dissertation. When I reference any respondent during the course of this study, I replaced the respondent's name with a fictitious

name. I also kept all recorded interviews and transcriptions in a secure place to prevent access from the public.

I began contacting potential respondents in the latter half of the fall 2012 semester by direct contact or with the assistance of various church members. I relied on a purposive sampling strategy in order to ensure selection of an appropriate respondent (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Respondents were selected from the Baton Rouge area and from select areas in the western United States, namely Provo, Utah and Mesa, Arizona. The initial announcement was sent to various contacts in the Mormon community in Baton Rouge. These contacts distributed the announcement via e-mail to several adult male members of the Mormon community who potentially met the participation requirements. In addition, I personally contacted potential respondents, showing them the announcement, and asking that they consider participating. The announcement e-mail asked that potential respondents contact me either by phone or e-mail, and to provide me with a means for following up with them. Respondents provided me with their e-mail addresses and phone numbers.

For the purpose of this study, respondents were required to meet the following qualifications:

1. Respondents must be actively practicing members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
2. Respondents must be males no older than 25 who have successfully completed a mission within the past two years.
3. Respondents' parents must be temple-worthy.

During the development of the selection criteria for this project, it was decided that the study would focus on male missionaries who had successfully completed their missions. In addition, the study focuses on younger missionaries, rather than on senior missionaries. In order

to prevent recall bias, we decided to conduct interviews with respondents whose missions were successfully completed no more than two years from the time of the interview. Our rationale was that we wanted the respondents' recollection of their missions to be as clear and accurate as possible.

Once a respondent contacted me to participate in an interview, I requested that the respondent designate a place for carrying out the interview. Those respondents who lived in the Baton Rouge area selected a neutral location for the interview. Those respondents, as a result of their proximity to Baton Rouge, requested that we conduct the interview through internet video conferencing. I e-mailed all respondents a participant packet prior to the interview. This packet included a statement that informed them of their rights as participants of the study and a copy of the questions that I intended to ask during the course of the interview. The packet also included a basic demographic information questionnaire, which requested information about the respondent's name, age, gender, place of residence, length of mission, and termination date of mission. In addition, the packet provided the respondents with an opportunity to select a fictitious name in order to protect the respondent's identity. Prior to commencing the interview, I explained to each participant about informed consent and confidentiality and that I would vigorously safeguard each respondent's anonymity. I did not begin recording any interviews until I had obtained each respondent's informed consent.

Upon the completion of an interview, I made an entry in my field notes about the setting in which the interview took place, the respondent's non-verbal behaviors, and anything else that may have impacted the overall interview. At the conclusion of each interview, I also recorded in my field notes my own thoughts and reactions to the interview. This is standard practice for qualitative researchers (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The interview was transcribed within 48 hours

of the completion of an interview. In addition, once the interviews were transcribed, I began an analysis of the data (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). During the data analysis, I was mindful of the point at which no new themes were emerging. Once no new themes emerged, I knew that the data was saturated and no additional interviews were necessary (Sim, 1998). During the debriefing process, I used the e-mail address from the respondent's demographic information sheet to send the respondent a transcription of his interview.

Pilot Study

Prior to meeting with my committee, I conducted an initial interview on Friday November 16, 2012 in order to determine whether or not the guiding questions were effective. Prior to the first interview, I e-mailed Tim, the first participant, a copy of the respondent packet. He returned the completed forms to me shortly before the beginning of the interview. Before starting the interview, Tim said that he had read and understood all of the questions. I did not begin the interview until I had received his informed consent. The interview lasted approximately one hour. Tim spoke freely and did not appear to have any negative reactions to the questions. I met with my committee on the morning of November 21, 2012 to discuss my proposal. I also discussed the outcome of the interview with Tim. After some discussion, the committee members asked that I obtain information from the remainder of the respondents in two additional areas: the number of transfers for each missionary, the average length of time in any one area, their definition and perception of a failed mission, and the general definition and perception of a failed mission. I drafted two additional questions that would allow me to obtain this information. One of the questions contains four sub-parts. I have included these questions below:

1. What is the timeline of your mission? What was the average amount of time that you spent in one city/town?
 - a. What is your perception of transfers?
 - b. Describe your experience of anticipating a transfer.
 - c. Describe your experience of receiving confirmation that you would be transferred.
 - d. After you had been transferred, what changes, if any, did you notice in yourself, in your attitude toward your work, and in your interpersonal relationships with your companions, Church members, and investigators?
2. What is your perception of a failed mission? Do you know of any missionaries whose missions were not successful? What is the general perception of a failed mission?

Data Collection

The data collection was a three-step process: I engaged in the Epoche process, I bracketed the questions, and I conducted the interview.

The Interview Process

For the purpose of this study, I interviewed a total of ten respondents; this is a typical sample size in a qualitative research project (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Five of the interviews were conducted through internet video conferencing; the remainder of the interviews were face-to-face interviews and they were conducted in a setting that was chosen by the respondents. The interviews lasted from 55 to 90 minutes and I used part of this time to familiarize myself with each of the respondents. I also used the processes of Epoche and bracketing during these interviews to prevent or limit my personal bias, and also to avoid straying from the spirit of the questions (Moustakas, 1994). In addition, upon the close of each interview, I recorded in my field notes my impressions of the interview, noting anything that may have affected the overall

interview. I transcribed all of the interviews within 48 hours of the conclusion of those interviews.

Each of the respondents spoke freely during the course of the interview, particularly with regards to their evaluation of the success of their mission and their feelings, thoughts and attitudes toward the mission experience, the Mormon Church's organizational support structure, and their interactions with peers, non-church members, and their companions. In addition, none of the respondents were hesitant to discuss any negative experiences, thoughts, or feelings related to the mission. I was concerned that, because of this popular image of Mormon missionaries, the respondents would feel ill-at-ease discussing any problems that they experienced with the church's support structures, with colleagues, or with members of the church. However, during their assessment of the Church's support structures, or any other type of support provided by the Church, none of the respondents appeared ill-at-ease. I was also concerned that the respondents would attempt to minimize or omit any personal problems, namely feelings of anxiety or depression. My concern was that the respondents who said that they experienced personal challenges would consider statements like this to be analogous to admitting that their beliefs in God and their trust in the church were insufficient. However, the respondents spoke freely with regards to the challenges they faced; none of the respondents expressed concern over any of the statements that they made throughout the interview.

I will also focus on being aware of my own biases, particularly with regards to identifying symptoms of burnout. My primary concern is that I may feel as though I am on "witch hunt" and that I will attempt to incorrectly characterize non-pathological behaviors as pathological. In other words, I am concerned that I will believe that a respondent suffered from burnout when he actually did not suffer from burnout. However, by virtue of the Epoche process,

I do believe that I will maintain an awareness of this tendency and that I will suppress it. I believe that, as the interviews progress, I will become more aware of any additional biases that may inhibit my ability to view the data with a fresh perspective, one that is free of supposition. In addition, I am concerned that I may unconsciously send non-verbal cues to the respondent, thus causing the respondent anxiety over his response. Again, I believe that by making an effort to be aware of my own biases and issues that I will minimize any unconscious cues that I may transmit to the respondent during the course of the interview. My training as a counselor will benefit me at this point during the study. I have received training and practice in assuming a posture that is conducive to the counseling process. I expect that the first couple of interviews will be the most challenging, namely because I am new to this process and I will still be learning the basics of conducting interviews of this type. I do expect that I will enjoy the interview process once I have successfully navigated through the first two interviews.

Ethical Dilemmas

Rossman and Rallis (2003) provide an overview of a number of theoretical ethical perspectives, encouraging the researcher to become familiar with each perspective and how that perspective will influence the researcher's study. I reflected on my behavior during the course of this study could affect the respondents. As a result of this reflection, I took measures to ensure that my actions benefited the respondents and their families, the academic community, and anyone else who received some benefit from this research project. Immanuel Kant (cited by Rossman & Rallis, 2003) reminds us that human beings are of immeasurable value and that a human is never to be treated as a means to an end.

I made certain that the respondents understood their rights during the course of the study. I also took measures to ensure that each respondent understood that his participation in this study

was voluntary, that he could withdraw from the study at any point, and that upon his withdrawal from the study, I would refrain from using data that was obtained from his interview. I shared with potential respondents the steps that I took in order to protect their identities; however, I reminded potential respondents that even though I worked to safeguard their anonymity throughout the study, I could not guarantee that the respondents would be entirely free from any harm that may result from their participation in this interview.

Prior to commencing an interview, I reminded the respondents that I will only report very general information about each of them, namely their age, the location of their mission, and a confirmation that their mission ended less than two years before their participation in this study. I would only rely on very general information when describing each of the respondents. In addition, I cautioned the respondents, when referencing people whom they encountered during their mission, to speak in equally general terms, particularly if any of these people were engaged in any type of unacceptable behavior. Wengraf (2001) cautions respondents against providing sufficiently detailed information on others, stating that such behavior could be construed as libel, and that a lawsuit could result.

I reminded the respondents that re-visiting past experiences could potentially cause a level of emotional duress, particularly if the event was sufficiently unpleasant. According to Patton (2002):

Because qualitative methods are highly personal and interpersonal, because naturalistic inquiry takes the researcher into the real world where people live and work, and because in-depth interviewing opens up what is inside people-qualitative inquiry may be more intrusive and involve greater reactivity than surveys, tests, and other quantitative approaches (p.407)

Educating a respondent to these types of negative reactions is a way of making certain that the respondent understands some of the potentially negative implications of participating in such a study. Before I started any of the interviews, I reminded each of the respondents that I would stop the interview in the event that the respondent experienced a negative, emotional response to any of the questions. In addition, once we finished the interview, I reminded each of the respondents that they could withdraw from the study should they become sufficiently troubled at any point after the interview. I explained to all respondents that I would remove their data should any of them withdraw from the study.

Organization, Analysis, and Synthesis of Data

The data analysis and interpretation will require a great deal of time to process and review all data, field notes, and other related materials (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In addition, I will invest a significant amount of time organizing the data into themes, writing the results of the analysis, and constructing individual and composite thematic textural-structural descriptions of the lived experiences of returned Mormon missionaries (Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). Krisanna Machtmes, PhD, the chairperson of my committee, specializes in qualitative research and she served a dual role in the process of analyzing the data: she served as the peer-debriefer and the community of practice member. With the assistance of Dr. Machtmes, I reviewed and analyzed the data; this process of triangulation ensured the overall credibility and integrity of the data and the project as a whole. Dr. Machtmes and all respondents reviewed the transcribed interviews, and commented on the accuracy of the information contained therein. I corrected inaccuracies in one of the data manuscripts. Once the manuscripts were validated, I met regularly with the peer debriefer and colleague from the community of practice in order to determine at which point data saturation had been achieved.

I relied on the modified van Kaam method for my data analysis. Machtmes et al., (2009) provided an overview of the steps involved in this method and I have included a copy of the modified van Kaam method below.

1. Listing and preliminary grouping.
2. Reduction and elimination.
3. Clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents.
4. Final identification of the invariant constituents and themes by application.
5. Construct for each participant an individual textural description.
6. Construct for each participant an individual structural description.
7. Construct for each participant a textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

In this chapter I will provide an overview and explanation of how I reviewed, organized, analyzed, and synthesized the data. The triangulating analyst and I analyzed the data according to the Modified van Kaam method (Moustakas, 1994). In addition, I have arranged and presented the data according to the following categories: horizontalization, meaning units, themes, textural-structural descriptions, and composite textural-structural descriptions.

Horizontalization

Horizontalization is the first step in the modified van Kaam method of data analysis (Moustakas, 1994). A horizon is essentially a key statement that is drawn from the transcription; it conveys some meaning or reveals some insight into a participant's experiences (Moustakas, 1994). A single statement can potentially have multiple horizons (Moustakas, 1994). The process of horizontalization requires a careful and deliberate review of the transcribed interviews. The researcher, peer-debriefer/community of practice members, and the participants all participated in this process. It should be noted that one participant in the study did request that I make minor corrections to his transcribed interview. After I made these changes to this participant's transcribed interview, I, along with the peer-debriefer accepted all transcriptions as fair and accurate descriptions of the participants' experiences. The peer-debriefer and I read each of the transcribed interviews multiple times. We also reflected on the transcriptions between each reading session. The peer-debriefer and I regarded all data as having equal value and meaning. In order to increase our understanding of the participants' experiences, and in order to validate the data analysis process, the peer-debriefer and I met at regular intervals to discuss our understanding of the transcriptions. In order to avoid subjecting the data to personal biases and

suppositions, I practiced Epoche as I read the transcriptions (Moustakas, 1994). I gradually increased my understanding of each participant's experiences, gaining a conscious awareness of their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Once I had completed the review and reflection of the participants' transcribed interviews, I was then able to begin organizing the data into units of meaning, also known as invariant constituents.

Meaning Units

A meaning unit is a statement that, according to Moustakas (1994) stands out from the data, that is most relevant, or that may have special value to the topic. I derived and constructed meaning units from multiple reviews of the transcriptions, and from multiple reflections on those transcriptions. I then organized and clustered the meaning units according to the order of the guiding questions. The meaning units are the participants' actual responses and I have removed any phrases, expressions, or words that would have diluted or clouded the meaning units. I have included meaning units from all ten participants' interviews below.

1. Looking back at the time you spent on your mission, how would you describe the experience? What are thoughts and feelings that stand out most?

Tim: I'd say that it was one of the best experiences that I ever had. It's not at all what I expected it to be. I probably had to work harder than ever before in my life...which made me really reflect on myself personally. I didn't expect the massive amounts of work...So you kind of go out with this mindset of, "It's gonna be happy times, it's gonna be a lot of fun, you're gonna see amazing things, you're gonna meet amazing people, you're gonna see baptisms on every corner..." It wasn't that way at all....you put your nose to the grindstone and you work and you work and you work and if you're lucky and if you have enough faith, then miracles start to happen for you. Certain companions will have a lasting impact on you, for better or worse.

Marty: ...the better experience of my life... it was the most that I ever learned in a short amount. You grow to be a lot more responsible than what you're used to. It is kind of bitter-sweet oftentimes when you get transferred...it's hard to lose those people that you built relationships with... and then you have to leave them and start in a new area...and you meet new people. It keeps you on your toes, really... it's kind of fun...to accept a new challenge each time...there's a lot of joy when I think about my missionary experience.

Alex: I think one of the biggest things that occurred to me is how much charity I have for the people there. The more you serve people, your heart just kinda changes a little and you start loving those people. It was really amazing to see that. I guess I was less and less judgmental of people. And it's just amazing to see people...just understand... so helping people understand truth was something...kind of the underlying theme of my mission.

Paul: It was an extremely positive experience for me, something that I'm very glad that I've done. I'll never forget a lot of it. I have friends now that I wouldn't have if I hadn't taken the mission. The way that my mission has affected my marriage is a big thing, the way I learned to interact with people has helped me, the biggest things for me as the way that it affected my life and other people's lives.

Henry: ...is probably to that point, probably the best experience that I've ever had in my life... It's been one of the best choices that I've ever made...it was a good experience. I was able to meet a lot of people, really learn a lot about myself, and about how to communicate with others...and most of all, it was something that helped me to live my religion, to live the teachings that I believe to...to see the beliefs that I have in action, to see them in real, every day experiences.

Brandon: Um...incredible...there's not exactly one word you could use to describe a mission. I really...I enjoyed every bit of it...you learn more in two years than most people would....what I've learned and...who I've become are what stand out the most. That and seeing what happened to other people as well. So I guess the changes that occur...um...would be the things that stand out most.

Chip: It was a grand ... because you could only serve others, you could only be a blessing to others as much as you improved yourself, as much as you made yourself as much like Jesus Christ. And as we improve ourselves, God ... is able to work through us... that it's a feeling of humility and of deep gratitude.. The biggest takeaway that I got...I was finally able to live and experience the principles that I'd been taught my entire life...it became real.

Charlie:...(I) would say overall the experience was amazing...even though they were hard at times and, um, and it was a lot of work, at the same time...I never felt so free as well. I never felt like better about what I was doing. So I would say just the overall experience was very rewarding, self-fulfilling, I felt like it helped me grow as a person more than like I'd grown in the 19 year previous.

Mika: I guess a sense of accomplishment. It just seems daunting to give two years up and to do something that you're in a completely different environment. I had no expectations. I made an impression on someone's life...I helped someone...paralleling those feelings are feelings of “could I have done more?” The days just seemed long and almost to the breaking point...just surprise that you were able to...to do that or that you were able to get up the next day and go a little further. Because it was the most demanding thing that I'd experienced so far.

Robert: I would describe...my mission experience (as) uniquely....opportunity...very joyful experience... challenging as well... happiness and just friendship... an experience that I'll never forget and that I'm glad that I had the opportunity to do it. It was a stretch in and of itself... more spiritually, I think, than physically.

A. What did you like most about the experience?

Tim: Being in the field was definitely what I enjoyed the most... I think working with investigators is what I enjoyed the most. So every once in a while you have one of those lessons that things just kind of click and you just feel the spirit really strongly. Those are definitely some of the fondest experiences of the mission.

Marty: ... definitely it was being able to just being to witness peoples' lives change for the better... being able to see what kind of impact that a change of lifestyle can have on them and seeing them be happy.

Alex: ...helping people understand (the things) that I've come to know are true - that was a lot of fun... And it's just amazing to see people...just understand... so helping people understand truth was something...kind of the underlying theme of my mission... the privilege that I had to learn from the mission president... I had the privilege to serve with a lot of different missionaries and...I learned a lot from them.

Paul: It was probably just the friends that I made...the way that I grew spiritually, the way that I learned how to pray, and to talk with my Heavenly Father, and learn how to listen to him talking to me as well as...uh...how I learned how to study the scriptures was a big deal.

Henry: I think my favorite things about the experience was probably the people that I met, the new relationships that I formed, the friendships, uh...and I think the experiences that I had that drew me closer to God, that drew me closer to others.

Brandon: ...I think the feelings that you ...you receive. Um...when you see the joy in people's faces and realizing what they've just received.

Chip: What I loved so much on my mission is that it demanded that we are - - that we live, and that we gain personal testimonies through experience with those experiences.

Charlie: the amount of time that you get to spend with one specific person ... just going to a new place and seeing a completely different world, like it was nothing that I'd expected at all.

Mika: It was interesting to be put into a situation where... I had to go out and introduce myself and kind of enter into people's lives... So I think what I liked most about it is that I was able to learn a lot more about people and what they go through.

Robert: I would say one of things that I liked most about mission was the opportunity to meet so many different people.

B. What did you like least about the experience?

Tim: ...certain companions drove me up a wall... there were days which absolutely nothing happens...so those are days when you tend to beat yourself up a lot.

Marty: I think the thing that I like least was probably the rejection.

Alex: ... we wanted people so badly to make changes that we know will bring them happiness or... we couldn't control it (the investigators)...one of my least favorite parts about...the overall experience, um, was when people listened to bad sources (about the Church).

Paul: ...when people were really, really rude. I didn't enjoy that.

Henry: I don't have any.....everything in that whole experience taught me something, even those things that I look at as negative experiences.

Brandon: ...It's when people don't accept what you're teaching or when they don't realize what they're turning down or they don't realize what they are giving up.

Chip: ...one thing that I didn't like and that I struggled with is that...everybody was on a different plane. Everybody was at their stage of the game. (There were) very exacting rules that you are to abide by.

Charlie: ...I would say too when things just aren't working or the times when you feel like you're doing everything that you can, but you're still not having any success, or you don't feel like you're having any success.

Mika: One would be my working with certain people. Then coupled with that also goes just...maybe sometimes how I reacted to it...so it was just that doubt of wondering, "Could it have been better?" Those doubts are one of my least enjoyable experiences.

Robert: ...probably not as much "me time" or free time.

2. What was the timeline of your mission? What was the average amount of time that you spent in one city/town? (This question was not in the pilot. There is no data for the respondent "Tim.")

Marty: My first area was in Patterson, Louisiana-Morgan City, that area. I was there for about three months. I was transferred...to...uh..Denham Springs and a little bit of Baton Rouge. I was there for only about a month and a half, then I was transferred to the LSU campus where I served there for about six months. After (the) LSU campus, I went to the Alexandria-Pineville area where I served for about three months. Then from there I went to...back to Baton Rouge, and

served in the mission office with the mission president and his wife. I was there for about six months...then...um...from there I went to New Orleans. I was only there for about a month and a half before I was transferred to ...uh...my last area, which was in Gonzales. And I was there for about 4 months before I went home.

Alex: I served my mission from May of 2009 to the beginning of June 2011..um...so it was a little over 24 months...I served in just 5 areas. First area I served there for 7.5 months. Then I went to New Orleans and served there for 6 months. Then I went to the West Bank of New Orleans and served there for 3 months, and then went to Baton Rouge and served for 6 months, and then I went down kinda by New Orleans...Chalmette..and served there for my last transfer, which was a month and a half.

Paul: My first area was in Opelousas, Louisiana and I spent twelve weeks there. I was transferred to Denham Springs, but I only stayed there for five days, so I ended up in Baker. I spent about six months in Baker, then from Baker, I went down to the West Bank, Louisiana. I spent about four and a half months. After West Bank, I moved to Baton Rouge...actually I skipped one. After Opelousas I had Baton Rouge. I only stayed there for six weeks, then I went to Baker for another six months, and then I went to the West Bank. Then I ended up in Baton Rouge again and I stayed there for the rest of my mission. I was there for almost...twelve months. I guess my average time in an area was five of six months.

Henry: My mission was two years...long. The average amount of time that I spent in any one area was probably about six months. I had...let me think. One, two, three, four, five -- five areas? I spent, on average...I'd say six months, because one area I just spent six weeks. The other two

areas I spent 7.5 months and. I think that averages out to about six months in any one town or one place.

Brandon: When I first arrived in Chile, I stayed in my first area, which was on the island of Chiloe, I was there for about six months and then my next area, I was there for about four months, and the next area, I was there for about three. And then I was at another area for four and then the last part of my mission, I was in three different areas - one of them for three months, the other for a month and a half, and the last one for a month and a half as well.

Chip: I was (first) assigned to Amite, Louisiana. I served there for the first six months of my mission. I went down to New Orleans for two months. Then I was transferred into the office, um, in Baton Rouge and I served there for six weeks. I went up to Pineville, Louisiana and served there for two transfers. Then I was transferred down to Leesville, Louisiana...I served there for two transfers with the same companion. Then I was moved back to Alexandria, Louisiana where I served for six months. Then for the last two transfers of my mission, I was transferred down to the West Bank, Louisiana...Harvey-Marrero-Gretna -- that general area...and then I went home on May 10, 2012.

Charlie: I guess it was there for the first four months, I served in my first area. It was Jamaica, Queens. Then my second area, I was there for 4.5 months. It was Dyker Heights, Brooklyn. I was just there for a month and a half. My third area, Midwood, Brooklyn...I was just there for a month and a half. Then after Midwood, I went out to Long Island, Huntington. I was there for 3 months. Then I went to Rego Park...I was there for 4.5 months. Then I went out to Hempstead for the one transfer, for the month and a half. Then I finished my mission, the last three months, I was in Ridgewood, Brooklyn.

Mika: I started out in the western part of Louisiana in a place called De Ridder... I guess it was three transfers that I was there. I then moved down to a place called Patterson. I think that was four transfers total, so that would be maybe a little bit more than six months. Then from Patterson, I moved up to McComb, MS .We stayed there for two transfers and then went down to a place called Mandeville. I think I was there for two transfers and so that would be about three months. Then I moved down to...I -- I want to say it was Lacombe? Or was it La Place? I was there for I think it was two transfers and then I moved back over toward Patterson in a place called Franklin. I think it was three or four days before I left, that area was closed and I moved up to New Iberia, I believe. I helped out two or three missionaries there for those last four days. Then I went home.

Robert: So I was in my first area for 6.5 months. Then I was in my second area for 6 months. Then my last area, I was just there for 1.5 months.

A. What is your perception of transfers?

Marty: ...definitely bittersweet... you get a little nervous to be transferred, but I think that it, it was always necessary.

Alex: That was a...uh...interesting feeling...it was always bittersweet because, you know, if I left I'd be leaving a lot of people. I knew it was through the inspiration of God that we are transferred places...so I knew I was going to a specific place for a specific reason, whether it be for one person that the Lord wanted me to touch, or a family, or whatever it be.

Paul: I also got to see an interesting perspective on transfers because...I was...serving as what was called the assistant to the president. We helped decided what transfers were gonna happen

and where people were gonna go. So that put a whole new perspective on it because when I was in that position. I knew before I was getting transferred and when I did get transferred...I helped decide where I would go and who my companion would be. Um...and that was an interesting perspective as well because...because I could still feel ...um...the Lord directing it, but it wasn't a surprise. So that was interesting.

Henry: I enjoyed transfers because, if you were leaving, it was an opportunity for you to take what you'd learned in that area and move on. If you were staying, it meant that there was more that you needed to do there, or more that you needed to learn. So I just thought it was always to just an opportunity for everybody to participate in it... I met lots of people...who really played a huge impact in my life, who really I think about daily. I just loved transfers.

Brandon: They're interesting. They're always a little hectic because of having to pack but at the same time trying to stay focused on what you're doing. It was fun because you had a new experience, but at the same it was sad to leave an area...because of the people.

Chip: I hate surprises. It was sometimes really difficult to leave a companion because we were really close and we worked really well together but sometimes it was all I could do to not be happy. I got transferred away from certain companions. It's life. You don't choose who you serve with or where you serve, but you learn to love them and you learn from each one of them.

Charlie: I always had kind of mixed feelings. I think it depended on the area that I was in, how much I liked my companion, and, um, also the kind of time length of the area that I was in. I liked transfers just because it was kind of like an exciting time, even if I wasn't leaving, usually there were new missionaries coming in. And then if I was getting transferred, a lot of times I was

really sad to leave the area. That was tough, but it was always kind of exciting too, like, find out who your new companion was going to be. I think also going to a new area, it's kind of hard because you have to re-learn the area and you don't know anybody. That was hard and difficult at the same time it was almost kind of refreshing at times. You get...to make new impressions on people. So I think...that's kind of nice thing about transfers.

Mika: (Respondent misunderstood the question – answered in terms of responding to news of a transfer).

Robert: Um...at the very beginning, I was actually terrified of transfers... I was just so nervous. I was almost throwing up....but after that (first transfer)...I didn't have any nervous feelings after that...things went pretty smoothly...leaving behind these people that I'd come to know for a period of time, it was very bittersweet.

A. Describe your experience of anticipating a transfer.

Marty: I think most of the time I was usually really nervous..you know..kind of getting attached to the area, the people who live there. I think it's just a little of nervousness, generally not really ready to leave, but it's not...not too big of a deal.

Alex: ...I was kind of excited.

Paul: ...for the first half, I used to get really nervous about transfers..um...'cause it was always just...the uncertainty.... a little bit anxious. A lot of anticipation for sure...for the second half of my mission, it cooled just because I knew what was happening every time.

Henry:... my first time ever being transferred was ...a little scary because I'd just been out about three months...those experiences were a little nerve-wracking for me. Every time I got

transferred, it was a new...experience. It was something I never even thought I'd be qualified to do...having to adapt to a new person can be a little frustrating at time, but for the most part it's just a good experience all the way around. I think there was only one time when I thought: "You know, I don't know about this one."

Brandon:...you could always talk with your companion about, "Hey, who do you think's gonna leave? Or do you think we'll stay together another transfer?" Andand...sometimes..sometimes it was like, "I think I'm not gonna be here." But like it really...it really didn't matter. It was more of a, "Hey, let's keep working. Let's finish the work during this six week transfer period the best we can so that..so that if we're still here we'll have a good one for the next six weeks, or if one of us leaves then the next person who comes in will have ...have ..um..relative success.."

Chip:...it was tremendous anxiety.

Charlie: ...that whole last week (before a transfer) was always a little bit nerve-wracking. Especially if you didn't want to leave...I don't know how healthy the anticipation was, but it kind of made it fun, but it also made it nerve-wracking. Also, like when you made your visits that last week, it made it like ...you didn't know if you were going to see the investigator again or anything like. It was kind of weird, I guess.

Mika: I think almost every step of the mission is a bittersweet because you're always leaving something behind. You're always kind of anticipating something that's coming forward in every step. I think it's an interesting exercise of letting and accepting new things.

Robert: In my first area...I was there for 6.5 months. After that amount of time, I was kind of like ready to move on... I was a little excited to move onto the next thing, but definitely it was

a...leaving behind these people that I'd come to know for a period of time, it was very bittersweet.

B. Describe your experience of receiving confirmation that you would be transferred.

Marty: ...still a little anxious until you get settled into the new area and you get your bearings, used to the new things...usually I was ready to ...to start a new chapter.

Alex: I think, there was an element of excitement because I knew the Lord was watching out for me and other children of his.

Paul:... it was exciting and it was sad all at the same time...you develop a lot of relationships, so knowing that you're leaving them is..is a sad and a hard thing, but then knowing where you're going to , you know it's brand new experiences and brand new circumstances.

Henry: It was different every time...majority of the time, there was just a calm because....you knew that either it was time to go on or you'd just accomplished what you needed to in that area. You'd learned what you needed to and you could take that experience and, wherever you were going, that place was going to benefit from you if you were willing to put the work forward. leave this area."... The negative side is that you're gonna leave these people that you've built these relationships with, people that you're in the middle of teaching...you're worried who's gonna come in and continue teaching these people.

Brandon: It depended...there were times when you'd be really tired of... being in an area for various reasons...Maybe you'd be tired of it because it was hard and you weren't being able to do what you were...you were working toward or you were there for a very long time...And sometimes you were only there for a short time...the last time I was transferred out of an area...I received a call from the mission president. It was really surprising because I didn't think I was going to leave the area...it was a surprise and at the same time I had to do it.

Chip: It depends on how much I wanted to get transferred. Sometimes I wanted to get out of there. Um, but most of the time, by the time transfers rolled around, I was..I very much loved where I was at. I was very happy where I was. So it was always..there was always a pit in my stomach. I was like, "Oh, no! Start over again."...it was a pit in your stomach followed by, "Oh, man, I've got to get so much stuff done." It was a pit followed by focus. So, because you knew that there was so much that you had to get done. There were so much..so many people that you had to go see and say good bye to and get their address and phone number, have them add you on Facebook or whatever it is. Then you get up and leave. It's kind of like pulling off a band aid. So I guess in that way that it was nice that there wasn't too much time, but it's still was not pleasant.

Charlie: I think for the most part...it's kind of like the heart drop. Then it's like, "Oh heck. Now I have to pack." We'd also have to lug everything onto the subway -- we didn't have cars in most cases -- and take it all the way to the mission office. So that was tough and just the ...we had to visit all of these people now, like before I'd go because I'd want to say good bye...I felt like it was always really sad up until the point where you were packed and then you hopped on the subway and you head towards the mission headquarters. As soon as you get on the subway,

though, I felt like the excitement kinda comes like, "Where am I going?" You kind of accept the fact that you're going.

Mika: Usually the first thing my companion and I would do is kind of stumble back, dazed. Then immediately start talking about how we were going to adjust the area, how we were going to prepare the people we were working with so they can, um, receive the new elders well, and how we were going to make sure that they were going to keep their commitments that we've given them.

Robert: A relief. In most cases I was relieved for either my companion or myself..., "Ah! Ok, finally! The anticipation's over! Now we know!"

C. After you had been transferred, what changes, if any, did you notice in yourself, in your attitude toward your work, and in your interpersonal relationships with your companions, church members, and investigators?

Marty: Uh..definitely a change..um..I think you know during the..the whole thing you're constantly growing, constantly stretching and so.....each transfer..it's kind of like a fresh start... you're ready to..to maybe make some improvement with how you..how you did things before.

Alex: ..it's hard for me, personally, to...um...I guess begin things...At the beginning it was hard just to, you know, to get the know their area... as well as um..you know, getting to know my companion... Um..in the beginning, it's kinda..pretty difficult, but the excitement of the new experience just pulled me through that.

Paul: ... I felt a lot of responsibility and kind of a lot of stress, a lot of just trying to make sure that I did things right..I really reflected a lot on the weight of my calling...I noticed a big change in myself there too, to start relaxing and to start realizing that what we were doing was just being

friends with people...I just really started enjoying it there...I had a new companion who..was...very, very strictly...by the rule book...and that was good for me because it helped me to become a more obedient and a more dedicated missionary...so I guess what changed me the most was my companions...I guess also what changed me was just ...the feelings that I had towards people... I started realizing ...that being annoyed with preachers and with people who preached and worked against us, and were angry with us -- it did not help at all to be annoyed with them...what made God sad is seeing them be angry against people that he sent to teach and to help, but at the same time...he (God) wasn't annoyed with them. He was just sad...it changed me and how I looked at things because I started seeing it that way...and so transfers, mainly because I just saw different people, and those different people kind of helped me see the world in a different light.

Henry:...with companions, it was fun because you got to move on and meet another companion and learned from him...after you hit that one year mark, you know a little bit more. In your next few transfers, you still feel that sorrow, but you feel a lot more confident in the transfer. You feel that no matter where you go, you've gained enough experience or you know that whoever you're with whether, if they were a good missionary or a bad one, that you're going to do your best to change that area, to make it better than the way you found it, to make sure that everyone benefitted from you being there.

Brandon:...the biggest thing is you'd have to get to know everybody again...it takes a little bit of getting used to and...You'd have to get to know different people. You'd have to get to know your companion really because that's the person you'd be with for the next while...then at the same time, you'd have to get used to going right back to work, because the week of transfers,

depending on where you were transferred to, you'd have to leave a little early from your area, so sometimes it wouldn't be as much as like the normal weeks...It was a little more ...disorganized...for your daily routine.

Chip: I can look back at every transfer and I can pick out something from each transfer...sometimes I'd learn a new way of looking at missionary work, a specific aspect of missionary work...sometimes it would be that I learned more about my relationship with God and how that affected how I did missionary work...for me it was always near the end of the transfer, in retrospect, you'd recognize even in those short weeks the changes and transformations that had gone on inside of you that had happened so regularly and so frequently. That was always really cool. I loved that.

Charlie:... when you get transferred, since you're with a new companion and they don't really know you much, I felt like that helped me to kind of re-focus the work...I think as far as the work goes, it made it a little bit more difficult at first just because you're getting used to each other. Um, but then obviously after about a week, it seemed like things usually - we understood each other's tendencies and what they liked to teach and so I think as far as that goes, it really - other than the initial change - um, the work just kept going kind of normal.. A lot of the investigators, it was like, that missionary may have been the missionary that found them and had been teaching them in the first place. So it's kind of like, "Who's this guy?" So I guess I found that to be a little bit hard, um, just because they don't know you or anything. Once you were able to get to know them and build a relationship with them, then things went along pretty well.

Mika: There were days that it was just sad that a week would go by and you'd have two people that you're teaching and you're just, you know that there's so much more that you could do with

your time, but you're spending it searching for people...searching is not the easiest thing to do... So I think a lot of times on the front, I would be as confident as I could. There were a lot of prayers that were just, "Can I hold on? Can I do this? I can't see how tomorrow's going to be a good example for this missionary."

Robert: It felt very...normal?...When I first met my companion, my trainer...I would say there weren't any specific kinds of feelings...there was so much going on, it was hard to wrap my head around things, butafter meeting my companion and everything...but every time I got a new companion, things just flowed...nice.

3. Think about how you spent your time while on your mission. What did a typical day look and feel like?

Tim:...getting up every morning at 6:30, which was voluntary...exercising, studying scripture, then heading out...We drove around trying to catch people at home, investigators. If we couldn't catch anyone at home, we'd resort to knocking on doors, tracting....you'll have one or two lessons on a typical day with investigators...I'd talk to ten to twenty people about the Gospel...a typical day...you tend to look for a miracle that happened each day, one good thing that happened. And kind of focus on that, look on the positive side..

Marty:...I'd usually get up between five and six. I'd get up, eat something for breakfast, exercise a little bit. ... but after that you get cleaned up, shower, and then you study for a couple of hours with... you study by yourself and then you study with your companion...then plan what you're going to do that day. Then you go out and do...just do what you planned, whether it's knocking on doors or go teaching a lesson to someone or ...doing a service project...just do that until...you have a lunch break and a dinner break. Then you keep going back and do whatever you've got.

Just talk to as many people as you can. Eventually, you come home. You do a quick planning session for the next day that you have. Then you clean up and then you go to bed.

Alex: I woke up at 6:30, ate a little bit of breakfast, did some exercises...then we'd have an hour for small study where we'd study the Book of Mormon and the Bible and then we'd have another hour for companionship study...there we kinda shared with each other about what we learned in personal study as well as practice and prepare for lessons that we have that day...and make plans and back-up plans and what not in case anything fell through...then we'd go out until 9 at night. We'd just find people and teach people with just a lunch and a dinner break.

Paul: I'd wake up at 6:30 but then at 8:00, it was study time...personal study time... I'd always read for at least thirty minutes out of the Book of Mormon. I'd also...read..."Preach My Gospel" which is a handbook for missionaries. I'd study the Bible. I'd study the.. Doctrine and Covenants, another book that Mormons...use. ..I would study, just study my heart out...and then at 9:00, we did what we call "Companion Study" where we'd study together as a companionship. We'd plan out our lesson until 10:00. At 10:00, we'd hit the road and go start teaching people. Sometimes we'd have meetings at 10:00...and then at 12:00...we'd come back in and some lunch for an hour. We'd go back out at 1:00 and then come dinnertime, usually about 5PM, we'd come back in and eat some dinner. At 6:00 we'd go back out and keep teaching and knocking on doors and doing whatever we were doing. Um...we'd go out until 9:00...sometimes we're in a lesson until 9:00 and so we'd come back in by 9:30...then at 9:30 we'd begin our nightly planning until about 9:30 or 10:00...and then at 10:30 we'd go to bed.

Henry: Waking up at 6:30 every day, same routine, wake up, get ready to take a shower, brush your teeth, do all that...but the day was always busy... Every day was a just a little bit different,

but all in all, it was the same work that you were doing every day. "Busy" is really the only word that I can think of that would describe what the day looked and felt like...So the actual hours that we were actually out and about, 9:00 AM until 9:30 PM, usually was what we did. So it was about 12.5 hours of us out there working, out there teaching, talking, knocking on doors, whatever it took. Then there ...you had about, most...most days you had about 8 to..6 to 8 hours of sleep, depending on what you were doing as a missionary.

Brandon:...you would always start off studying. You'd always have that time in the morning to study. And then in the afternoon, or for the most part of the day, that was the time reserved for teaching, contacting people in the street, and doing the things that most people see missionaries doing... we'd usually wake up at 7... and you'd have a little bit of time to do some exercising, say playing some kind of sport, and then you'd get ready and eat.....then you'd have about two hours to study in the morning... we could do about two hours of service in the morning or we could go teach from 10:30 until 12:30. We'd always eat with a member for lunch and then after lunch we'd get ready and then we'd go out and start working. We'd stay out until 9:30 or 10 o'clock at night and then come back in and get ready for the next day, get ready for bed. Then we'd go to bed at 11:00.

Chip:... We'd wake up at 6:30 AM and we'd exercise for about a half hour. We would eat and then be ready for the day by 8:00 AM. At 8:00 we'd go and have what we'd call personal study for an hour...then we'd do that from 8:00 until 9:00. We would go from 9:00 until 10:00 and we'd have companionship study where we would get together with our companion and we'd talk about what we'd learned. We'd plan out the lessons that we were going to teach to the different people that we saw that day. Then we'd make plans for whatever else needed to happen that day. Then

we'd go out just for a couple of hours. Then we'd come back home and take lunch for about an hour or so and then we'd go back out until about 5:00, at which point we'd take dinner, then we'd go back out at 6:00 PM until 9:00PM. We would proselyte all the time that we weren't in our apartment. Um, then between 9:00 and 9:30 we were expected to be back in our apartment. We would plan for the next day, just kind of a skeleton plan, then get ready for bed. Um, usually eat some more food, then go to bed by 10:30 and then 6:30 the next day, you'd start it all over again.

Charlie:... we'd get up at 6:30 in the morning...and usually, because I really like basketball, we would find a court nearby and go play basketball for a little bit for exercise. Then we would go back, have breakfast, get ready, and then at 8:00 we'd have our personal studies and then we'd just study the scriptures and prepare for things that we thought we'd be teaching that day. Then at 9:00 we'd have companionship study. At 10:00, we'd do the language study for a half hour or an hour. Then typically at 11:00, we would go out and work and for the most part, we almost always had appointments that we were able to set up for the entire day. We had what we'd call "3 to 5." That was just our lunch and dinner break. Then from 5:00 until 9:00 we would go to the rest of our appointments. Then at 9:00 we would go back home and before changing or anything, we'd look over our plans and goals that we'd made for that day, or that we'd made the night before. We'd see what we'd accomplished and then we'd talk about. Then we'd make plans, set goals for the next day. Then at 10:30 it was lights out.

Mika: I woke up early morning about 6:30...they had about, I think it was an hour or so to shower and get ready. Then we had our personal study in which we...sat at our desks, had a free rein of what we wanted to look at, what we were going to study, and then we took that into a companion study for an hour. Then we kind of finalized our plans and got things together,

particularly for the people that we were working for. And then we'd have a few hours out tracting. Usually a typical day was more tracting than teaching. A lot of the times when you had set up a teaching appointment, the person wouldn't be there or they would fall through and have to re-schedule. We'd have lunch around noon. We'd have a couple of more hours to go out and tract, then we'd have dinner. It was either contact until it got too late or too dark, so sometimes we'd try to go see a member to share a message with that member. In the evening we'd come back into our apartment. We were expected to have a planning session.

Robert:... we'd wake up at 6:30 and exercise for 30 minutes and at 7:00 we'd have to start getting ready, eat breakfast. 8:00 rolls around and it's time for your personal studies. 9:00 till 10:00, you know, you do your companion studies and then ...what my companion and I did was we'd go out and proselytize and during those morning hours, it would be difficult to find people at home. So most of the time what we did was...just walk around downtown, just a busy place where people are...and then we'd just take an hour lunch and then in the evenings it would be mostly, you know, try to find potential investigators...trying to find new investigators, you know, either tracting or just talking to people on the street...and then...dinner and just...after dinner...just going to back to the same old thing, going ...going out and, you know, teaching people.

a. Describe a typical bad day. What did it feel like? What are some common thoughts that associated with a bad day while on your mission?

Tim:...the mornings will be unproductive. It tend to gives you a bad taste in your mouth as you go into the rest of the day...particularly when we plan..we don't have any set appointments planned, that's usually an indicator for a bad day coming because you don't have anything specific to do for the next day. You're going to be doing a lot of knocking on doors...just aimlessly...then throughout the day...randomly trying to catch different people home...trying to

get lucky somewhere..you know, you don't have enough appointments....on a bad day, you're really not seeing the success.

Marty: I definitely feel a frustration... when things fell through or people reject you or don't want to talk to you. You get... kind of down in the dumps, disappointed, discouraged. You start wondering, you know, what are you doing wrong? You know...why is nothing working out today? What do I need to change? When you get discouraged, it's kind of a snowball thing... it's kind of downhill and gets worse and worse.

Alex:...lonely...Sometimes I would just kinda go into myself and beat myself up a little bit because we weren't having success. Or just our plans...fell through..it would be kinda frustrating at times. I would sometimes just take it out..on me...I was thinking I wasn't doing something right... If I had a bad attitude that day, then no matter what happened, it just felt like a bad day... If I happened to not have strong desire to exercise, the exercises would just kinda be like ...wimpy, not very long, not really put my heart into it. And then personal study, maybe, I read but I didn't really actively seek in my study... just kinda went through the motions of the day...then we came across different people, my mind may have been blank and I didn't really know what to say or how to go about teaching people sometimes...as well as if we had plans to teach people, you know, who had been doing really well, and they either..say the plan fell through or they called us and said to us, "... I've kinda changed my mind. I don't want you guys to come over." ...It would make it really difficult to have a good attitude.

Paul:...typical bad days were usually my own fault. It wasn't any external forces, things happening to me or somebody was mean, or somebody bailed on an appointment with us that we were really excited for. I was usually getting home sick because I was thinking about this or that

at home...it was mostly me...not controlling my own thoughts and not staying in the moment where I needed to be...The bad days came...when we usually screwed up.

Henry:... having maybe ten appointments for the day, or maybe having places that you needed to be, you had plans, you had goals set...a bad day would be every single one of those appointments fell through within the first hour of your day...You're calling everybody and nothing seems to be working out... the doubt of like..."Man, are we even gonna get to talk to anybody or is everyone just gonna be rude today?" It was the hope that would just form in those bad days, just hoping that it would change...it had a little beacon of light at the end.

Brandon: The typical bad day was when no one wanted to listen to us...for us we always judged a good or bad day by whether or not we were able to help someone and if we weren't able to do that, it would always be hard...the...sort of weighing on your heart, knowing that you had something so incredible and nobody wanted it.

Chip:...unrealized...expectations. We would set up appointments with people that we wanted to go see...we were only allotted a certain number of miles on our vehicles...If you're stressed about miles, that always made for a bad day...you'd hear about stuff going on at home and that would affect you because you're powerless to do anything about it... I would get so upset about going to see somebody and they'd cancel...That was really frustrating at times.

Charlie:...a typical bad day would be when you or your companion were sick...being unfocused. ... me or maybe my companion not getting up on time...when there wasn't enough focus in our studies or anything like that... all your appointments would fall through and you have to go find or go knock doors...depressed... you'd feel like you're not helping anyone...you feel like you're

out there not accomplishing anything so you kind of wonder, "Is what I'm doing even worth like anything, um. Am I even making a difference or would I be better off at home? I could be at school right now, you know, getting on with my life and accomplishing other things." ...constant rejection... and you keep telling yourself like, "What's the point? Nobody cares."

Mika:... when there was frustration among missionaries, when my companions and I weren't well together.. I had been name-called. I had soda thrown on me, on, on different days...to have someone who you are genuinely trying to help and who should be trying to help you, those were the days where I was like, "How can you recover from this?"

Robert:...there would be times when we'd be knocking on doors for hours and hours and hours and...either nobody was at home or nobody was interested in talking to us...people were saying really mean and hurtful things...days where nothing seems to go right...I can remember...feeling bad, upset, frustrated, disappointed, unproductive.

4.How did you cope with the negative experiences that you encountered while on your mission?

Tim: Um..at different time we did different things. Most of the time I'd study more of the scriptures. I ...I ...would have an hour lunch break and an hour dinner break, which I'm sure you know, and I would spend the entirety of that studying..um..trying to find some certain comfort from the scriptures. You try to strengthen that relationship with Heavenly Father. And then, depending on who your companion was at the time, a lot of the time you would turn to your companion for support...he's the only one that you have there who has your back 24/7...hash things out with him (companion) to see what you can improve on. Sometimes you just need to get jokes, someone can who can make you laugh, someone who can make you shake off all that's

going wrong. So each week there was a chance for the zone leaders or the mission president to kind of talk with you one-on-one... that's a good time for them to chime in and say, "Hey, I've been through that. I know it sucks. Just keep your head up." Uh...and then there's other times that the zone leaders and mission president will say, "Ok, are you guys really working hard? Are you having a hard time?"...the mission president was always one you could turn to for support and for advice. Especially when we got together and we'd meet each week and talk about the struggles in the area...and offer support and offer encouragement.

Marty: Definitely prayer. I..uh.. relied on prayer, focusing on that ..that relationship with ...with God. And faith that ..that things will turn up. Realize that life isn't perfect and not everything's perfect and you just have to look forward to what could be if you have a ...uh...better attitude... if you work a little bit harder... to read the scriptures and that was a big reinforcer for me. But another ...big...uh...go-to for me was definitely...each week you get to e-mail your family...those letters were always a huge help to me. They were always uplifting, even if there were bad things happening attitudes, they always just had good attitudes and...that was always, you know, kind of a tender mercy to be able to read those letters.

Alex: But like, personally, the next experience like that, personally, I would want to do to help me overcome it...um..is a prayer. Sometimes..sometimes I didn't feel like praying. But the experiences I've had, when you don't feel like praying, that's when it's most important for you to pray. Um...also...part of the wisdom of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with having missionaries have companions with them all the time...just so when times are ..are hard, you know, you can talk things out and we can help each other and we can support each other. So, you know, talking with companions helped me a lot with those experiences as well as um..I'm

sure you've heard this quote before, "If you want to talk to God, you pray, but if you want God to talk to you, read the scriptures." So I'd say those three things....um...are mainly what I focused on. Prayer and scriptures and my companion.

Paul:...The biggest thing for me as far as coping with negative things...it was always the same as just relying on my....my Heavenly Father. Um....it was really focusing on the Savior and his atonement 'cause, you know...You can rely on the atonement because the Savior's felt it all and he knows how to help you. When things got tough for me, mostly what I did was pray. The Spirit would come and would just...it...it felt like someone was just standing there with me. You know, it helped me out. A lot of the times, also, the other big thing was just having a companion there with you, just a real good friend to be with you the whole time, you know? He...and you know, you could help him when he was having a bad day and he could help you when you were having a bad day. It was...that was just really nice. It just felt like I had a true friend, always. Because even if you didn't agree with him on everything, you just knew they were there for you, even if you didn't like for a day. You were still friends.

Henry: First thing always was just prayer. Um...talking to your companion. That's another big one, making sure that you guys are on the same page. Thinking of stories that family and friends had told you about, maybe an experience that they had and trying to relate to that one, or maybe a new experience that you had for yourself. It was all..I think prayer was the biggest part of coping with negative experiences.

Brandon: Umm...the greatest solution for us would be to remember why we're there. Um...what I learned over the course of my mission was to learn to trust the Savior and learn...and really,

really put everything I have in his hands. Um...always having someone to talk to, always being with somebody, and having that friend with you every day, every part of the day.

Chip: Sometimes I would, uh, sometimes we'd do random things to go blow off steam. We, uh, if it was slow at the end of the night, we'd just go wander around Best Buy and talk to people about different things and ask them about the newest iMac or about a Go Pro camera, or stuff like that. Or we'd go to a sporting goods store and talk about snowboarding, or whatever. Um, a lot of the times it ended up, even those ended up in self-reflection and, um, we would -- I would always ask God to help me to overcome this funk...Um, I would pray and I would study the scriptures and look for principles that other men and women had lived in the past and see how I could apply that to my own life.

Charlie: So I think my coping mechanism was kind of to just, uh, to keep telling myself, "It'll come through. You just have to keep going." So I think that and just remembering, um, for me a big thing, too, was just remembering the happiness that I felt when like I saw somebody that I worked really hard with get baptized. I would remember this success and how happy it made me feel then. That would help me to keep going because I wanted to do it again.

Mika:...We'd grab ((laughs)) towels and just kind of attack each other and "fight" and have like "whipping battles" just to see --- you know, running around the apartment just to let off some steam and joke around with each other...We made videos on our cameras of doing silly, uh, missionary raps or different, creative little outlets... So like a big service project - that was more for me physically to kind of exert myself on something. That was beneficial.

Robert: I remember one of my companions and I...um...being very open with each other. And that really helped out a lot for me in dealing with this. Just being able to talk. Prayer, that's a good one. Open communication with God. Um...other missionaries...um...were a big help as well. You know, your district leaders and your zone leaders. Um...they definitely know...they know the challenges that you go through...um...they are a big help....just helping support...support us...um...and thoughts of friends and family. I carried a picture with me everywhere I went of me and two other missionaries. When I went up to Salt Lake to go to the MTC, they came out and saw me there. So we took a picture there and I carried that picture wherever I went. It was just to remind me that I wanted to be just like those two missionaries.

A. How effective were these strategies?

Tim: I think for the most part, they worked pretty well. I mean, the problems never went away. They never...they were never 100%, they weren't nearly as effective as they were at the end. Towards the beginning, it was a whole new experience for me, which added to the stress. Um...so making...doing these strategies were enough to get me by. Towards the end I had a greater appreciation for what I was doing..the work that I was putting in...one of the biggest things that helped me was seeing the higher purpose to it all.

Marty: Of course, prayers..so..the ...uh prayers, the scripture studies...family letters from home...definitely the temple services. And of course church every week.

Alex: I think the one I relied on most was...reading my scriptures. 'Cause I felt..I loved learning, especially spiritual learning. And...it was just really amazing, but I think the one that helped me the most was actually prayer. It was kind of interesting..an interesting question that you ask. I didn't really realize that until I just thought about it ((laughs)).

Paul: They were... effective. I mean, I wouldn't say that they were the best things that I could have done, for sure. I think the best thing that ended up being the most effective was just getting more and more and more absorbed of doing the work of a missionary. And as I got more involved in what I needed to be doing at that time, then I was a lot more focused on the people who were around me. That was the best remedy, that was really what made a difference to, effectually, get rid of the negative thoughts and things like that.

Henry: I'd say those were some of the ...they were the necessities of dealing with negative experiences...but I mean that's where a companion comes into play. He understands because he had similar feelings. So you guys can relate to one another and would be able to ease each other's pain that you had with those experiences. That was definitely a big one...And then prayer really helped a lot.

Brandon: It really depended. Sometimes it would be more and sometimes it wouldn't affect me at all.

Chip: Um...talking with my companion usually led me to ...they all...mostly all the other tributaries led up to the most effective one, um... screwing around with my companion going to Best Buy to look at a new TV, or whatever, usually led to us having a meaningful conversation that provided perspective, which always led me to seek God and to....seek comfort from him.

Charlie: I think another thing that helped a lot was just the fact that we had goals that we set every day. Um, I felt like a lot of times, those for one helped me to stay focused, which I think kept me from getting unfocused. Um, but I think those also helped at least to have something to look forward to and to help you stay motivated. Like, "We can do this. We can get this done." It

kind of gave both me and my companion, uh, a common goal and a common thing to look forward to.

Mika:...the strategies may have relieved a little bit of tension, but ultimately none of them seemed to be the thing that got me through.

Robert: I would have to say that it would be the one-on-one time with my companion...um...for many reasons, one was just to get things out, to build a stronger relationship with - you know, him and I just being able to support one another when we were going through those..those challenges.

5. What were some of the biggest obstacles that you encountered while on your mission?

Tim: I had quite a few companions that struggled with...whether it was obedience, whether it was with home sickness, whether it was just relating to other people in a positive manner.. so that was a big obstacle... I was...blessed with the opportunity to learn how to work with those missionaries.

Marty:...probably the investigators that were not very interested, just really didn't have a desire to change and to improve their lives, you know, whether it was giving up addiction or improving. That was always hard to witness, to see that experience. Probably the biggest obstacle on my mission was my father passed away two months before I returned home.

Alex: ... just talking to strangers, especially something like spiritual things and the Gospel, it was just really difficult for me just to step out of my shell and..and do that...and another one was when... I started having a pain in my neck and my back...and it's just kind of a constant pain. So that was a really hard thing to go through...The obstacle that was pretty difficult...was when I

was called to be an office elder... it was just...a lot of responsibility...I didn't feel ready at all for it.

Paul: The biggest obstacle was just myself and getting over my own pride and who I was -- so that I could get to a point where I was really able to help other people...the biggest (obstacle) was figuring out exactly what people needed.

Henry:...it's hard to talk to somebody who has no idea what you're talking about.

Brandon: The most challenging obstacle was becoming a person that the Lord wants you to become. The other obstacles in terms of what other people did, those weren't really in my control, so they weren't as ...as challenging.

Chip: I would anxiety before we would go to different appointments.

Charlie: ...it was always really, really hard when like I had someone that I felt that I'd invested a lot of time and love into. Then...you show up one day and they, "Sorry, you guys are cool but I can't hear this anymore." Another big obstacle is...It's how most missionaries don't go home early...my absolute favorite companion...he decided to go home early. That was a really big personal obstacle.

Mika: I know that it was obstacle trying to, uh, particularly with investigators, trying to put myself in their shoes was more of an obstacle.

Robert: ...I had a lot of trouble letting go of these feelings, of going back again and to not feeling like I'm not doing things...like I'm not being productive, even though I'm out there all day, every day and I'm not seeing the results of my work.

A. At what part of your mission did you experience these obstacles?

Tim: I hadn't been out very long.

Marty: Uh..I'd say...um...continuous obstacle.

Alex:...throughout my mission.

Paul: There's always, always obstacles.

Henry: (Respondent did not provide this information).

Brandon: I think one of those was relatively close to halfway through my mission where I had ...had a couple of difficult transfers.

Chip:...for me, it was, uh, early in my mission

Charlie: I was out on the mission for about a year.

Mika: I think more at the beginning of my mission than anything when I was less experienced.

Robert:...very early on in my mission. This was probably the first six months of my mission...

B. How did you navigate around these obstacles?

Tim:...that's when I was studying my scripture the most, praying the most... The companionship inventory helped, you know, hash things out in a constructive manner. Uh...definitely turn to the zone leaders a lot.

Marty: I'd say every single companion...they just taught me a lot...to have...a better attitude in any kind of circumstance...As well as members of the church, or investigators, or whoever, there

was always something to learn from them...there was so many different situations where you learn from them and it...improves your ideas and your outlook on whatever you have to face.

Alex: I studied more. And when you...you study more, it kind of influences every part of your physical body, your mental state, everything.

Paul:...talking with God, and really asking him what he thought. And being humble enough to sit and listen and do what he told me to do.

Henry: I think prayer and your companion were your two biggest weapons in your arsenal to deal with those things. So going to the temple was... a great thing.

Brandon: At one point in my mission I realized that I needed to change this. I needed to be more humble or more willing to serve or something like that.

Chip: I had experiences where I learned that God could use me and that he wanted to use me to serve his other children...(I) realized that my confidence rested in him and his ability to work through me...the responsibility wasn't squarely on my shoulders.

Charlie: I think I just realized that...things were so good for me and things were still going to be, um, ok for that missionary. It wasn't the end of the world...I think it helped a lot that I had a companion who also... really cared about me.

Mika:...but I realized that sometimes it takes a little bit more patience. Sometimes, um, things just have to play out.

Robert:...some counsel that my mission president gave me. He..he said to me thatthat..,"you just do what you're supposed to do and you let the Lord do the rest. You just do what you're

supposed to do. Just do what you're doing and let Him worry about the rest, the baptisms, the investigators."

B. What was it like for you to navigate around these obstacles? What thoughts and feelings stand out the most?

Tim: And so navigating around those obstacles was actually harder than navigating around the physical obstacles...it was definitely very stressful time for me.

Marty: Um...sometimes it was difficult. Sometimes you kind of have a heavy heart when, when you have to ...see people not willing to change... the feelings that stand out most is...just optimism... you can...have more faith - I guess - in those circumstances.

Alex: So that was..was really powerful and motivating for me.

Paul:...a lot of different emotions associated with it....relief that we're actually making progress...part of it was just pure joy...because as those obstacles are overcome, you can watch... people's lives change for the better... it's just so exciting....it was amazing.

Henry: Wonderful. Those were...those were really good days because...it wasn't something that you needed to do often.

Brandon: It's the same exact (thing)...that happens with people who are teaching...when your desire to be more like the Savior to do more as he does overcomes...that desire of wanting to remain the same, it's when you're able to...become more like the Savior is the strongest, that's when you're more open to that change, more open to doing what the Lord wants you to do.

Chip: I remember that I felt liberated and so much more confident. I felt...like I wasn't in a box anymore. I felt like I was able to...get good work done.

Charlie: I guess the "feeling word" would be "comforted." ...it helped me feel just like I was being looked out for.

Mika:...to describe it physically, it's like if you have a tight grip on something, then you let it go after a while, maybe after ten minutes of holding onto something tight and letting it go - just that relief.

Robert:...I definitely felt accomplished even though nothing was accomplished..um..I felt really ...being able to progress further.

6. What made it possible for you to successfully engage in the daily activities of a missionary, every day for two years?

Tim: I think hope is one of the biggest factors. It's the hope that it's going to get better, that it's going to get easier, and knowing that there's got to be something good. It can't get worse than this.

Marty: I think number one was just the preparation of going on a mission. I was fortunate to have enough a father and a family that just really taught me the...the importance of working hard. ...and not only just the physical aspect of working hard, but the spiritual aspect of getting yourself in the right...uh...state of mind, having the true desire...I guess having your heart in the right place, to actually want..want to help people and to have that desire...learning how to pray, reading the scriptures, creating that habit, and that concept in my life was very important before I served a mission.

Alex: ...if I understood that I was a child of God, I could go back to that...all these obstacles that (I) have been sharing throughout this interview..um..were really hard on me, it's ok because I can go back to the fact that I knew that I was a child of God. That helped a lot. Um...as well as in all

and through all of that is, I think the main thing is my testimony, that Jesus Christ lived and that he lives today, and that he is the savior.

Paul: The only thing that made it work was ..um...blessings from Heavenly Father, I really think...((laughs))....So that blessing made a difference, a big difference as well because I was given special permission by Jesus Christ to teach about Jesus Christ...Just to know that I was called and I was set apart and that this was my purpose from Heavenly Father specifically.

Henry:...forgetting about your own needs and really thinking about who you were there for. It wasn't for you. It wasn't for the Church. It was for those people that you knew that you needed to talk to and help.

Brandon: The Savior himself. Without the Savior's help in his own work, it wouldn't have been possible.

Chip: Um, but the biggest thing that allowed me to do it was I would look at ...I would take one day at a time. I would keep that day in perspective. All that was expected then was that I would do the best that I could that day and however it plays out, if it was my best, then so be it.

Charlie: I think definitely the support back at home helped a lot. Um, I think the biggest one was both my older brother and my dad - - my older brother and dad both served missions, um, their e-mails that they sent nearly every week were both always a big help...The goals that I also kind of touched on before really helped me push through day to day because I felt like I was accomplishing something. I had something to reach for and I was constantly improving because of that. Um, I also think what my district president at the MTC told us....by picking something out and continually working on it, I think that helped keep myself in check. We had our district

and zone meetings...we'd meet together as a mission...I think being able to see like a bunch of the missionaries that you spent time with, like at the MTC, and the missionaries that you worked with previously. Getting to see them and all of the progress that they've made, and to hear about the success that they've had.

Mika:... having that protocol, that guidebook to prescribe the times and the amount of time you should put into something was very helpful...I also think the program's emphasis on working with other missionaries...when missionaries would come together and reminisce about areas, we'd hear about success stories...We'd hear about some tough areas and we'd say, "Ok, I don't have it so bad. I can see some good things here."...Um, you'd make jokes about what was going on. You'd just have the camaraderie... I had supportive family throughout...overall the doctrine of the Church, the principles that we were being taught, were probably the most substantial...I had supportive family throughout. Um, it really came down to ideas and principles that you adopt and say that this is a part of me and I'm going to make...it's...it's not going to change... we're able to study things out and learn things throughout your mission, doctrinally, that's probably what I'd say is what got me through, what gave me the strength to do that.

Robert: A lot of self-motivation. ((Clear throat))mainly knowing the reason why we were there..um..and knowing our purpose and why we're out here and why I'm doing this.

7. Overall, how effective do you feel that you were in your daily efforts as a missionary?

Tim:...probably for the first half of my mission, I was more going through the motions...so those were the days that I'd say that I wasn't particularly effective. Towards the latter half of the mission is where I began to dote with the spirit, began to dote with the love for the people that I

was trying to see. I was knocking on the door, not to just knock on the door, but to offer that person something more. That's when I think I began to be much more effective...Towards the latter half, I'd say I was..I was fairly effective ..I really began to find the Spirit behind the work.

Marty: I was ..uh..pretty effective...I worked hard. I didn't want to have any..any type of regrets when I came home, so I did put forth a lot of effort in everything I did. I did what I knew was best at the time, so I felt it was effective not only for those I...I helped but for myself as well.

Alex:...I felt like I was a great missionary in my daily efforts... Um..obviously it went in waves. Sometimes I felt bad and certain days I wasn't as effective as I could have been and should have been.

Paul:...I feel like I was effective to the point where I helped a lot of people. A lot of people helped me...I was working with four other missionaries quite a lot...and so their success also I felt determined my success as well...I feel like I was successful just because I felt like, overall, I did listen to the Spirit and I did what God wanted me to do.

Henry: I would define myself as being an effective missionary because I felt that I tried my hardest in everything I did, whether I came...I fell short of reaching the goal that I'd set or not. I did what I needed to .

Brandon: I feel like I did ok. Uh..I feel like I did what I was supposed to. I don't have any regrets and I think therein is why I can answer the question. I feel like I did my part.

Chip: I don't feel like I left anything on the table. Um, I know that I did the very best that I could have. I take tremendous peace, comfort, and satisfaction even that I acted the very best that I

could have with whatever I information that I had each day. I didn't act against the knowledge that I had.

Charlie: I feel like I was a very effective missionary. Um, and so I felt like I came home a much, much better person and I felt like I learned a lot lifelong lessons. I feel like I also helped a lot of people in many different ways become better.

Mika: Whether I was a successful missionary or not, I think sometimes that I struggled with my own needs too much. Did I care about the people? Yes. I learned how to care about them and in that sense, I think that I was successful. Um, there's a part of success that just comes from the obedience of being able to be a part of that missionary team. I think in that regards I wasn't such a success because I did always kind of consider myself a loner and on my own. There were people who were reaching out to me to make sure that I wasn't alone, but the fact that I did that, you know, kind of separated myself and said that I would do this on my own was a failure on my part.

Robert:... successful in my activities would just be the connection that I had with people.

8. What role(s) did your spiritual beliefs, the Church, Church members, and investigators play in your mission?

Tim:...spiritual beliefs are definitely the foundation for it all...being able to interact with different (Church) members...um...that always helps to kind of spur you on, to give you the energy....And then there's some areas where the church members just see the missionaries as being a nag, a nuisance...that makes you less..less motivated to get the work done in that area. Um..the investigators...that Southern hospitality..the..the investigators were the greatest...They were a huge help to us....the ward mission leaders...were...sometimes helpful... There were companions

that I felt like I was dragging a ball and chain...and then I also had companions that were as enthusiastic about the work, if not more so than I was.

Marty:...having those spiritual beliefs....and the understanding of the principles of the Gospel, the understanding of the joy that people can feel with that in their life. It was definitely everything. And the Church, the church members and investigators - - they were all ...I guess examples to that....um...especially church members, they were able to show me that example and the importance of it.

Alex: ...with spiritual beliefs...with my testimony of Jesus Christ was the biggest role in any success or happiness that I had in my mission....the Church will continue to grow and fill the earth and so that..that kind of bolstered my courage. Um...church members -- that was the main way that we were able to have success in our mission.

Paul: ((Laughs)) Everything...my own spiritual beliefs ..That's played a huge role and that was the driving force for me to teach people. And then other..other people...like Church members were a huge role as well because they were our family... Then the investigators played an enormous role because they were the reason that we were there.

Henry: Spiritual beliefs were the single most important....The investigators were the focus and everything else just revolved around that. The Church members really supported us and the investigators.

Brandon:...and knowing that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is ...this church is the Lord's church....that in and of itself is a driving force to help us missionaries with what we're doing.

Chip: I saw the mission as not , you know, 760 days, um, I was able to see it as an opportunity where I could learn principles that would benefit me for the rest of my earthly life...I knew that my mission would teach me principles, um, that would allow me to be successful for the rest of my life.

Charlie:...the spiritual beliefs, I think, uh, all of that plays a huge role. That's what I was talking about all of the time. That's what I was teaching everybody about. . I actually found the members to be, you know, my number one source of help there

Mika: ..the spiritual beliefs... they would be like the backbone of everything that we did....the Church provided an image. The image was something great, something wonderful. The Church members... a lot of times they meant, I thought, to be...um...instruments in our hands? That was not the case. We learned pretty quickly, um, that we oftentimes kind of had to force ourselves to become (tools) in their hands. Um, oftentimes they wouldn't want to use us. Um, investigators, I think, they were - in a lot of regards, to the mission as a whole, they were the lifeline.

Robert:... my spiritual beliefs are huge...the Church and the church members are very supportive of missionaries...in feeding us or helping us, you know, get rides... the Church and knowing about the Restoration and just wanting to share that. ... but when I was on my mission, I started reading through these scriptures, and seeing the lessons, um, that Christ taught and that the people learned, um...and applying those in...my missionary life and in my daily life...investigators can be really supportive of missionaries.

A. What was your greatest source of support?

Tim:...overall I think prayer...couple that with scripture study, definitely because they go hand in hand. But throughout the two years, really, you begin to develop a relationship (with Heavenly Father)...after two years...of sincerely praying and talking things over with your Heavenly Father, it becomes a very meaningful relationship.

Marty:...my Heavenly Father, the Lord, being able to go to him in prayer. Being able to have that relationship with him...was definitely number one and um...next to that would be my family. Um...I did...did have full support from them.

Alex:...the Spirit...it helped support me and it's helped remind me that God loves me.

Paul: Definitely Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. They were by far the biggest support. I felt like he talked to me in personal revelation as well as through the scriptures and through different things... my dad and my mom were huge supporters as well. Family and friends were just amazing.

Henry: The greatest source of support would be my spiritual beliefs. That's why I was out there. It set the pace for everything else.

Brandon: You have millions of people praying for you every day. You have your family ...who prays for you and who will support you with their words and an occasional letter or package, or whatever. You have your best friend...you have your companion. You have other missionaries. You even have the people who are there with you - the members. And you have the people that you're teaching...and of course you have ...have your Heavenly Father and your Savior.

Chip:...definitely my mom...She was definitely my biggest source of support. She was always, uh, praying for me. I was just so grateful for that because I knew she was a constant.

Charlie:...the family, um, mom's, dad's, brother's letters were always... also my mission president was really good about -- if there was ever anything that you really needed help with, he'd be there for you... I felt like the zone leaders were very helpful..my trainer was really, really good... just the extra help from the district leader and the two zone leaders

Mika: The greatest support probably came from the scriptures and everything, um, those principles something that couldn't be taken away or be taken lightly.

Robert:...I'd probably say my spiritual beliefs.

9. How did your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes toward your mission change as the mission progressed? Compare your thoughts and feelings at the beginning of the mission to your thoughts and feelings at the middle and at the end of your mission.

Tim: I think when I first got into the mission field... I was probably pretty arrogant... you quickly figure out that you've got a lot of work to do on your own... you definitely learn a lot about ...not only about the Gospel, but how to present yourself, how to talk with people, how to...not come off as a condescending little kid ...and then by the time ..it's time to go home..it was only then that I realized that I didn't know anything and that I still don't know anything..and that's when you learn to be humble, to um...realize that it's not...your work that you're doing. It's His work that you're doing and that you have to rely on Him.

Marty:...I think at the beginning it was...my attitude might have been slightly selfish... I wanted to witness a cool miracle or something or have a cool story to be able to tell...moving onto toward the middle of my mission, I was a little bit more humble and I was just willing to learn

and to do whatever it took just to help people...towards the end of my mission..... but it was about helping people, getting the job done.

Alex:... when I first came out on my mission, I felt a little unsure...I ... felt that I was ignorant of a lot of things and my vision was kind small.... as my mission progressed and I experienced more and as I moved around the mission more, the..there was kind of likethe whole mission was on my mind...You know, it was kind of cool to see that my vision had kind of expanded to not just to immediately where I was, but to the entire mission...kind of a unity of mind... you know the different attributes when you think about Christ? You know like patience and love and understanding and hope? All those different things? As my mission progressed, I feel like I improved a lot with those things. Like..like my heart changed and I grew a little more in understanding. I listened better to people in general. And I loved people more.

Paul: I was the same person, you know, in that liked to be around people...but ...uh...inside I felt like I'd changed a lot in that...toward the beginning of my mission? I believed that what I was teaching was true...as I progressed (in my mission), I understood a lot deeper the same simple truths that I knew beforehand...and I'd seen miracles... just making the Gospel of Jesus Christ more of a reality..deepening my understanding of everything was more towards the end of my mission.... I was the same person, but with a deeper appreciation, a deeper understanding, a deeper love for people and for Heavenly Father as well.

Henry: At first there were a lot of "I's" in it... I realized that it wasn't me...It was the fact that I made myself available to God, to work through me....acceptance of people... that to not be successful in other people's eyes doesn't make you a bad person or mean that you're a failure...really becoming selfless and realizing that it wasn't about me...It was all about the

people that I was teaching and making sure that they had a vessel that the Lord could use to pass that onto them, to really teach them. Because that's what the teaching was about. It was never really anything that I said or did. It was what people learned from themselves.

Brandon:....what changed as my mission progressed was the order of importance of certain things. I know I'd be disappointed if I couldn't see certain things, but at the same time, I didn't care because I knew that where I was at that time was where I was supposed to be. I knew that even if I wasn't a leader (of other missionaries) or anything like that, I could still help others out by my example. I didn't need to be a leader to do something like that. I began tobetter understand the "how" and the "why" of doing what I was supposed to be doing. That was the greatest change in attitude was in understanding at a fuller extent the purpose of the missionary work.

Chip: When I first came out on my mission, I thought it was almost like a proving ground... I realized that it wasn't about proving myself. It was about, um, getting outside of myself and not worrying about what anyone else thought of me... loving others and getting over myself and having myself be humble enough to serve others. It happened gradually and it took the whole two years... It went from wanting to serve God to prove that I could do it to realizing that he didn't need to know that I could do it. He already knew....but I realized that I could show my love for him by making myself the best that I could be so that I could help his other children.

Charlie: I think at the beginning I was very wide-eyed... new environment, new everything. I didn't really...I felt like when I got out I had no idea what to expect. It was not just the environment, but also the missionary life was not what I expected at all. Um, and so my initial, like, attitude and everything was just very much, my trainer is the next closest thing to God

almost...and then even my second companion, it was very much like, "You guys know what you're doing... so just teach me and just show me." I just kind of took the back seat a lot, probably a little more than I should have at the beginning. I think it would have helped if I'd stepped up a little bit more to help me progress a little bit faster.

Mika:... (When) I came on my mission there was almost an innocence and optimism ... You hit reality and you kind of go through a low...you make adjustments in how you perceive things... These were real people who had experienced much more than I did... I also recognized ... I was a flawed individual trying to do some really great things and when I realized that, and I realized who I was working for, who I was working with, that was when I began to, um, I guess find a better...a more substantial joy in the work... And it's like, seeing those connections, seeing all of the little things that happened in the mission connect and make something great...That perception that I gained toward the end of my mission was, it was the difference between night and day. It was something that went from an ideal to a real practice and that I would not trade for anything.

Robert: As I look...um..at the different stages that I was in - like I said, the first six months were really challenging....my attitude changed a little bit.....during the first seven and a half months, I was kind of just taking a back seat almost...Then when I went from ... my first to my second to my second area - the president called me on a special assignment, so there was more responsibility that I had to take on. And so I think my attitude changed a little bit more because I had started to pick myself up more...and I think it stayed pretty much constant after that."

A. Talk about any changes in your attitude or feelings that you experienced toward your companions, investigators, church members, and people that you met, interacted with or taught while on your mission.

Tim:...towards the beginningI wouldn't say I really had a firm testimony in the Church at that time...as you go through those doubts...as those doubts get resolved, it strengthens your testimony so much more...so towards the end of these little experiences, these little, tiny testimonies....they begin to add up. It begins to be ...less of a "I'm going out because my dad says I should go out." It becomes, "This is what I believe. This is my faith in action. I'm...honored to be able to do this and I'm honored to be part of this church and to be able to share what I believe."

Marty: Toward the beginning of my mission, you ..you meet people and you ..you just get a ..a visual of what you want for them... when that (visual) doesn't all pan out perfectly, you get disappointed, you get scared, and..you get frustrated....as opposed to toward the end of my mission it was ...realizing that everyone moves at their own pace....it's just gonna work out. You... can't control everything. You're there to help them in any way possible.

Alex: I think it was kind of an ongoing progression throughout my mission...um...concerning investigators ..I wanted them to accept the Gospel in their lives and I wanted them to be happy...but I wanted it in a way that I was forceful instead of loving. Um..so my attitude toward that, as I developed, changed to: "I just want to love you regardless of what you choose in your life."....as well as with my companion, the little things that annoyed me just because we're all..we're all different, I got over those and I completely looked past the little things that annoyed me.

Paul: Um...towards the beginning of my mission...I didn't understand why they (non-Mormons) didn't want to be...Mormon. I realized so much more that God has a plan for every single person...That allowed me to look at everybody with a lot more of an understanding, with a lot

more of a love and...just...an appreciation for who they were. I think I started to realize more that I felt my Heavenly Father's love for me. As that deepened, as I understood that more, I realized: "Wait a second. He loves everybody this way.".....that made me see other people as well with a lot more love in my heart for them, you know?

Henry: My attitude toward people, toward companions, investigators, Church members, everybody -- it's just, I could finally be accepting of everybody and not judge them by what they're doing and know that they're all the same to me. They're people that I needed to help, regardless of who they were.

Brandon:...as I changed, one of the attitudes that would be changing with me was the amount of love I had toward other people. Because as the mission progressed ..the change...the biggest change is that attitude of love toward everyone. And so ... as I went through my mission...that was the attitude that I wanted to foster toward other people, was to be more like the Savior and be an example of him toward those others.

Chip: I came from a home and an area that has many, many strong members of the Church...I thought that my microcosm was, uh, illustrated the macrocosm. What I realized was that it didn't (illustrate the macrocosm). .. I found myself being frustrated that the people weren't as on fire or on top of it as I thought they should be... the missionary purpose of “inviting others to come unto Christ”, doesn't necessarily just mean investigators. As I realized that we can all come closer to Christ, and that I can come closer to Christ as I help anybody and everybody come closer to Christ, I loved them (investigators and Church members) so, so much. The places they were weak, their flaws - they became endearing, rather than irritating.

Charlie: At first, um, I had a hard time connecting with the investigators... at the beginning, it was a lot more ... almost "number hungry"... things really started to change when I went into my second area...I could speak (Spanish) a lot better. I could understand (Spanish) better... there was one girl in particular that I baptized...Me and my companion grew really close to them (the girl and her family) and I think that was like really the first time that I started to like feel like I wasn't just teaching or spewing out information, but I was actually teaching somebody, helping them progress. I think from that point on, whenever I like went into a lesson, it was a lot more for the person, rather than for the "check in the box." So I think that that was probably the biggest change as far as how I viewed really anything.

Mika:... with the investigators, um, it was a lot of just realizing that these are real people, that they have... understanding my relationship to them, just...how to approach them... my companions -- the progression probably went something like: They're perfect. They're flawed ((laughs))...um...they're trying. They're fighting me. And now, ultimately, um, towards the end, I had another companion. ..I could see him as somebody who was trying, with limited faculties, trying very hard to do something. So I think I accepted my companions more....with Church members... I think I was just frustrated a times. I ...thought that if the members would work a little harder, it would be easier for us... I expected probably too much for them...I didn't see them in that right dynamic until later.

Robert:.. it was always the same, um. From the very beginning, I think missionaries just have a natural tendency to be very loving toward everybody. I think that was the case for me which stayed throughout the whole mission, just every companion that I came across or every

investigator or church member. I was very happy to meet them. I was always very loving and caring toward them.

10. Think about how you expressed your faith before, during, and after your mission. Describe any changes that you have noticed in your attitudes and feelings toward those practices and beliefs.

Tim: ...before the mission, I was more or less apathetic towards the Church. I was neutral towards it...the mission was a whole new experience. I went from being neutral to I'm absorbed in it 24/7. So the mission was kind of...kind of a transformation period for me. I went from being this apathetic, lackadaisical kid to someone who has identified his beliefs, what he stands for. And then after the mission, I'm a different person because of that...I'm now living in Mississippi because I want to share the Gospel with other people, that work that I started on my mission.

Marty: I'd say that before my mission.....why I was to do everything that I did...And then, I guess during my mission, I had a lot greater understanding and gained an understanding of why it's important and why it can help people. What can I do more than just obeying these commandments? You know, how can I improve my life...

Alex: ...before my mission...um...I, you know...I had a testimony that the Church is true. Um...like I said before, I was kind of shy... I'd step out of my shell a little bit and say, "Hey! Have you read the Book of Mormon?" You know, something like that. But during my mission, you know, we were ((laughs)) that's what we did for two years, 24 hours a day. So I grew to love that and after my mission, now, I'm a lot more willing and able to serve in whatever capacity. Um...as well as a lot more free with my speech when talking to strangers or neighbors or friends or family. It was a lot easier for me to bring up church. It's a part of my life now .

Paul: Before my mission...I knew that the Church was Jesus Christ's Church that had been established on earth and I knew that the rules and the laws and the principles that guided it. Um...I didn't always live them as well as I should have because I don't think that I really believed that they all applied to me ((laughs))....then as I went on a mission and as I started to teach people these principles and these rules and law and ordinances that they could do for themselves, and I realized, you know, how it helped them. ...when I started to realize that those things were universal and they were not just pick and choose what you want to do... I started to realize that, for me, those things are not optional.

Henry: I think it was the actual teaching that would change a lot. I think ...that...that was just a growth thing, learning more about myself and how I said things. I think ...uh...that I gained a lot of respect for others, for my faith, for people who'd gone before me doing what I was doing...I gained a lot of compassion by expressing my faith. It helped me to learn and to grow so much that...I still feel compassion toward others. My dedication toward my faith...It just grew more intense.

Brandon: I understand more now the importance of ..of what I believe, of what I know to be true. And...and knowing that...um...I know the attitude that I should -- like the things that I need to do. I've learned a greater deal of patience... I was younger and I may have been a little more pushy. But now, from what I learned on my mission, I have to let people come to him on their own terms.

Chip: So before my mission, I never really thought about the exercising of faith... What I realized as I went forward, when I prayed for things and asked God to help me, um, with certain things or for answers, I realized that they, yes, required me -- that I have the responsibility to

make that happen. I realized that my act of faith then, my responsibility is to actually go do it and rely on God to give me the strength that I need. Um, and so I guess summed up, I would identify an act of faith as anything that I ask for from God that I attach a specific action to.

Charlie: I think before my mission I was probably a lot more... reserved about my faith... really at the MTC that really started to expand. .. also at the beginning of my mission, I think that I was also a little bit tentative to say certain things or like I was afraid...it was always kind of like I was standing on a fence or something...but then as the mission progressed, I think it really helped me to feel more confident in what I believed and also helping me realize what exactly it is that I believe.

Mika: ...before my mission, I would say that I was kind of a lukewarm practitioner. On my mission, we had the opportunity, like I mentioned, where we had that personal study and we had a routine. So prayer became not just a daily thing, but an hourly thing....and my prayers where I used to think that it had to be a “kneel down”... every morning and night...Some of my prayers became more powerful...I would be between houses and I would have a dialogue. That closeness that I had, it was amazing..after my mission...I went back to being a lukewarm, daily participant. A lot of my perceptions have changed. A lot of them, ah, strengthened by the experiences on my mission... I still have that faith. I still have that testimony.

Robert: Well before my mission, um...things were just kind of...almost like go with the flow... Then when I went on my mission, um...that's when things really hit home for me. As I started studying, I started doing these things. I began to realize the "why" behind doing those things in the first place. So I gained a deeper personal connection to what I was practicing. As far as after

my mission, it was the same as it was on my mission and I hope to keep that as well.

...doing...knowing now the "why" that's behind doing things has become a richer experience.

11. What is your perception of a failed mission? Do you know of any missionaries whose missions were not successful? What is the general perception of a failed mission?

Tim: No data. This question was not included in the pilot study.

Marty: I would say that the only failed mission would be one having regretted going on a mission. Um...definitely not. Um, I mean I've met people that they were never able to...witness a baptism on their mission, but I would never say that that was unsuccessful.

Alex:...any specific person...no one really comes to mind when I think of ...But if there's someone who's completely able but they're just lazy or they just don't want to, they go home early, that's something that comes to mind when I think of a failed mission...but also if they went on the mission and they came home - and this is regardless of how many people they brought to the waters of baptism - if they didn't really feel a change of heart...The mission would have been a failure if they didn't understand that whole two years that they were serving people and then they come home and they stop serving people completely and just kind of go back to how they were before...

Paul:... someone who really didn't even try and just came and kind of just went through the motions and didn't really care, never developed a love for God, never developed a love for the people he was with. To me, that's...that's kind of..I don't know if I want to say they were a failure, but it seems like they kind of missed the point... the Church views an unsuccessful mission as one that wasn't completed...um...all the way. Maybe they got home early because they were disobedient to the point that they were not allowed to stay on their mission ... generally

what's viewed as an unsuccessful mission...It's almost like they're looked down on a little bit, I guess. That they...uh...like they just disappointed everybody,

Henry: In my opinion, a failed mission is somebody who went on a mission and just didn't understand why they went, who didn't learn anything from it, and I think who didn't better themselves from it... who took it lightly, like it was a vacation rather than an opportunity for them to grow. People who were selfish, I think, who didn't learn anything about compassion or service to others. In my mind they failed...the perception that I get from the general members of the Church. It's if you went there and you didn't draw closer to your Savior and you didn't help others, then I think in that sense your mission was a failure.

Brandon:...a mission serves two purposes: to bring the missionary closer to the Savior and to bring those that they teach closer to the Savior. And if that doesn't happen, then I guess you could call that a failed mission or...a wasted opportunity would be better said.

Chip: A failed mission is one where the missionary absolutely refuses in every case to become more like Jesus Christ. It has nothing to do with numbers. It has nothing to do with - uh - how many people you baptize. It has nothing to do with how long you stayed out on your mission. I've seen missionaries who have failed at being missionaries at times, but not necessarily failed their mission.

Charlie:...I think it would take somebody to almost like apostasize while on their mission, and leave, like, people away from the Church and that kind of thing to completely fail a mission. I think it's really hard to completely fail a mission, but I think that there are different levels of success.

Mika: I think a failed mission is one in which (the returned missionary) doesn't feel satisfied with his efforts. Uh, a failed mission is also - you could easily identify where a missionary, uh, outwardly damages the mission

Robert:...I think when a missionary loses his...his true motivation....I think, for example, missionaries can becomeum...a robotic...um..a of type life not focused on the work... because we're doing the same thing almost every, every day, and so I think...that...((exhales))...I think that's probably when a missionary really needs to know and understand the "why" behind things...one could say a "failed mission" is going out and coming back the same person that you were.

Themes

During the transcription process, and also during the initial perusal of the transcriptions, I began noticing a number of emergent themes. However, it was not until I began to condense and cluster the data into meaning units that I began in earnest to identify and describe any themes that appeared in the data. I originally identified a total of five themes; however, after having met and discussed these themes with the peer-debriefer, we agreed that one of the themes was actually a component of another theme. We believe that these themes are non-overlapping and that they represent the heart or the essence of the lived experience of these returned Mormon missionaries. In addition, we have derived these themes either from the verbatim statements provided by the respondents during the interview process. or from meanings that we inferred based on our multiple reviews of the transcriptions. The four themes, along with their descriptions, can be found below.

Table 1: Emergent Themes

Theme	Description
Attitudes toward the mission.	Positive experience despite difficulties. Opportunity for growth. Transfers as mixed blessings
Changes, growth and development.	Mission promotes personal growth. Humble, fallible, and servant. Emulation of Christ. Principles and practice become “real.”
Success and efficacy.	Personal growth as indicator of “success.” "Helpful" means "success."
Protective factors, motivation, and coping skills.	Link between protective factor and motivation. Attitudes toward the mission itself, people, spiritual beliefs and practices are protective/motivating factors. Individual coping skill important.

Individual Textural-Structural Descriptions

This section contains the individual textural-structural descriptions for all ten participants of the study. The purpose of these descriptions is to capture the essence of the participant’s experience (Moustakas, 1994). These textural- structural descriptions are essentially composites of the individual participant’s experiences while deployed on his mission. I developed these composite descriptions by again reviewing each participant’s transcribed interview, while bearing in mind the identified themes and meaning units. Once I had completed each of the textural-structural descriptions, I relied on imaginative variation and phenomenological reflection in order to discern alternative meanings from the data; the process requires approaching the data from multiple perspectives (Moustakas, 1994). This process allowed me to

develop a “three-dimensional” description of the experience, a description of the structure of the phenomenon.

Tim

Tim is a 22 year old Caucasian male who served a mission in the southeastern section of the United States; however, he is originally from Utah. I interviewed Tim on Friday November 16, 2012 at 3:00 in the afternoon and he is the first participant that I interviewed. Tim completed his mission in early 2012, and is in the process of completing his college degree.

Tim describes his mission as one of the best experiences in his life, while also pointing out that the experience was not what he expected. He stated that his upbringing in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, particularly his exposure to missionaries and to returned missionaries, had some influence over his expectations of his mission. Tim said, “I think that when the missionaries talk about their experiences as though it's positive experiences, they never share that it was the hardest thing they've ever done or it was the most work they've ever done in their lives.” Prior to being deployed in the field, Tim mentions that his expectations of the work, and of the mission itself, would be a series of positive experiences and miracles. Tim stated, “So you kind of go out with this mindset of it's gonna be happy times. It's gonna be a lot of fun. You're gonna see amazing things. You're gonna meet amazing people. You're gonna see baptisms on every corner.” Tim mentioned that while he was deployed in the field, he never worked so hard in all of his life. Upon completing his mission, Tim revised his original expectations of the experience. He stated, “... you put your nose to the grindstone and you work and you work and you work and if you're lucky and if you have enough faith, then miracles start to happen for you.”

Tim mentioned that being in the field and working with investigators were his two favorite parts of the mission. He indicated that some of his fondest memories of the mission were those instances in which he felt a “spiritual enlightenment” while teaching lessons with investigators, though he also mentioned that this enlightenment did not occur during every lesson. Tim also discussed an event that occurred shortly before his mission ended. He had baptized a woman who was originally from Holland. The woman became so moved that she began to bear her testimony. Tim said, “...she was bearing her testimony to us and she broke down in tears. She was from Holland so she spoke kind of broken English, so she was struggling to find the words. She was in tears. That was something that stood out a lot to me.” In addition to experiences and memories that Tim viewed favorably, he also identified and discussed specific other events - events which he described as "struggles," "challenging," and as "obstacles" - it was these events that also had some influence over his perception of his mission. In describing interpersonal difficulties, or in describing the difficult nature of missionary work, Tim said, "... those are the things that make you test yourself, push harder...towards the latter half of my mission, I think I had balance figured out...working hard and working smart, which helped me work around those negative experiences. Towards the end I had a greater appreciation for what I was doing, the work that I was putting in...one of the biggest things that helped me was seeing the higher purpose to it all."

In describing his outlook on the mission, particularly the role that his faith and hope played in the overall mission, Tim stated, “I think that faith...is the reflection of what you believe in the way that you live your life,” but, “...without the hope, I wouldn’t be serving my faith.” During the course of the interview, Tim mentioned that he felt that 65% of his mission was like “fighting an uphill battle.” He identified numerous situations, namely people refusing to

speaking with him and people who cancelled appointments, which contributed to this characterization of missionary work. However, Tim also mentioned that having witnessed certain miracles and other positive events gave him hope that he would continue to see additional positive developments: "And every once in a while, you come home and you're pumping your fists because great things happened that day and you're so excited for the next day for what miracles come."

Throughout the interview, Tim referred to a number of difficult situations, challenges, and other events that were difficult to resolve and these stressors had some type of negative impact on him. It was not uncommon for him to question himself, his motivation, and his approach to the work: "What am I doing wrong? What do I need to do differently? Do I not have enough faith? Am I not being completely obedient?... It was always nerve wracking at times...it seemed like...on a typical street, everyone will slam the door in your face...but definitely after a long stream of seeing nothing happening, it usually happens that you're getting pretty depressed." Tim characterized these events as "stressful" and "discouraging." Despite facing such challenges, and despite the negative self-talk, Tim mentioned that he eventually came to realize that such difficult challenges contributed to his overall growth as a missionary and as a person. Tim said that he was able to develop new attitudes and new approaches to responding to these challenges. He said that when he began to work with his companion on certain personal issues, Tim reported that his (Tim's) mood improved. As time passed, Tim noticed and appreciated the change in himself, stating that he was "impressed" that the situation had worked out so well. In dealing with personal challenges and difficulties, Tim said, "...it's ...not only a time of changing, but it's a time of looking inward and finding out who you really are." Tim said that it was in these difficult

situations that he realized he made the most growth. He described the changes in himself were "huge."

Tim commented at length on how his mission as a whole promoted personal and spiritual growth. He also offered his insight on how his perception of missionary work changed as he experienced that growth. Tim stated that, in the early days of his mission, he felt that he was "just going through the motions" of doing missionary work. In addition, he described certain attitudes toward missionary work, namely that he over-estimated his ability to do the work. He described his attitude as arrogant. Tim said that he assumed that the work was "his." However, as the mission progressed, Tim became aware that his perception of the work, that his perception of the people in the field had also changed. "Towards the latter half of my mission is where I began to see. I was knocking on the door not to just knock on the door, but to offer that person something more...You really want to help them...I really began to find the Spirit behind the work." In addition to his perception of missionary work, his perception of prayer and his relationship with God developed throughout the mission. He stated that, as a result of sincere prayer while on his mission, Tim no longer viewed and experienced prayer as some "rote" practice; rather, he began to view and experience sincere prayer as a way of strengthening his relationship with God. At one point, Tim referred to prayer as "talking things over with God" and he described his relationship with God as "meaningful." Tim stated that by the end of his mission, he had realized that missionary work was "God's work." In addition, he speculated on how effective he would have been as a missionary had he made this realization sooner.

Tim expanded on his thoughts about his own personal effectiveness while in the field. He attributes his success to the fact that he was able to understand his true purpose as a missionary, that he was able to understand his true relationship with God, and that he understood and

appreciated the importance of things like sincere prayer and reading scripture. According to Tim, personal changes - the changes that occur within the missionary as a result of the work - constitute success in the field. In addition, Tim stated that a successful missionary is one who does the work because he loves the people whom he is serving, and that an effective missionary is one who experienced these personal changes while in the field.

Throughout the interview, Tim mentioned a number of attitudes that were either conducive or detrimental toward his performance in the field. For example, when he was experiencing little or no success, Tim stated, "... it wears on you quick. I just tried to maintain a positive attitude." Maintaining positive thoughts had an appreciable effect on his overall mission. Tim said, "It's the hope that it's going to get better... So I'd say mostly hope, hope and knowing that there's got to be something good." Tim identified a number of other sources of support: routine social contact provided him additional support. Tim stated that an enthusiastic companion was a positive influence on him. In addition, when he was new to an area, Tim often looked toward his companion for support and guidance. However, at base level, the companion provided him with camaraderie. Tim also said that when Church members embraced him, he felt more enthusiastic about his work. According to Tim, investigators were another source of support: "...they're excited to see you. They wanted to feed you and they wanted to take care of you and make sure that you, being so far away from home, that you had someone that you could go to. They were a huge help to us. They always made sure that we were taken care of." Tim pointed to the investigators' excitement as a motivating factor to persist with missionary work. Zone leaders, district leaders, and the mission president all served as sources of support. These people listened carefully, they listened well, and they often checked in with Tim during

conferences and other gatherings. In addition, the zone leaders, the district leaders, and the mission president validated Tim's feelings, concerns, and experiences.

Tim identified prayer and scripture reading as two additional and significant sources of support. He said that during stressful times, he would increase the frequency and duration of the time that he spent studying scriptures. In addition, when he was under duress, Tim said that he prayed with more fervor. Tim said that church attendance was also a positive influence on him, that it provided him with time to focus on his beliefs. He said that attendance at the weekly sacrament meetings provided him with the opportunity to clear his mind so that he could return to his work as a missionary.

Marty

Marty is a 23 year old Caucasian male who served a 24-month mission that had ended by nearly two years at the time this interview took place. He is originally from the western portion of the United States; however, he served his mission in the southeastern section of the United States. Marty is the second missionary to be interviewed in this study.

Marty began the interview by expressing his thoughts and feelings about the mission, paying particular attention to themes, high-points, and even some of the things that he did not like about the experience. He pointed out that his upbringing, particularly the lessons that his family taught him about faith, prayer, scripture reading, and the benefit of hard work, helped develop him prior to the start of his mission. He said that he recognized that the lessons that his family taught him essentially prepared him for the work and the challenges that he would face while serving his mission. Overall, Marty indicated that the mission was one of the “better” experiences in his life. He stated that it was indeed “one of the better two years” of his life, that it was a joyful and bittersweet experience. Marty added that the experience was conducive to

personal growth, that he learned a great deal in a short amount of time, and that the overall experience helped him become a more responsible person. In addition to these positive feelings and thoughts, Marty identified specific things that stood out as defining moments or really positive memories from his mission. He said that he enjoyed the service component of the mission, that he did not mind knocking on doors, and that he enjoyed the prospect of accepting new challenges, whether those challenges came in the form of transfers, of meeting new people, and learning new cities or towns. Of those experiences, Marty said, "It keeps you on your toes." He also mentioned that he enjoyed witnessing the personal growth of people that he served. Marty also enjoyed seeing their lives improve as the result of a change in their lifestyle.

On the other hand, Marty said that rejection from potential investigators, and others, could be difficult to endure, particularly when they were "gruff." In addition, Marty said that days in which he and his companions were not productive, perhaps as the result of investigators who canceled their appointments, he would become frustrated, discouraged, and that he tended to blame himself for this lack of progress. Marty also said that it was difficult for him to witness potential investigators who were not interested in improving their lives, and to encounter potential investigators who were indifferent to the missionaries' message. He also mentioned that personal tragedies or bad news from home were also negative sorts of events that made an impression on his overall experience in the field.

At the beginning of the interview, Marty stated that his mission provided him with the opportunity for growth, albeit in a condensed span of time. He indicated that, overall, the mission experience helped him grow emotionally and spiritually. Marty said, "...I think at the beginning of my mission, my attitude might have been slightly selfish." He discussed a number of personal wants and desires that helped him form this opinion. Marty stated that at the beginning of his

mission he had hoped to witness amazing events, meet certain people, and learn interesting lessons. As his mission progressed, Marty added, " I was a little bit more humble and I was just willing to learn and to do whatever it took just to help people and...it wasn't definitely so much about having those experience, but it was just helping people." Marty was able to make that shift in his expectations for his mission, moving from a "self-centered" motive to an "other-centered" motive. Marty also mentioned that by the end of his mission, he was more focused on helping others and caring for people, rather than on seeking out miracles and witnessing other amazing events. Marty also noticed that he interacted with people differently as he progressed through his mission. He said that things that would annoy him at the start of his mission - namely certain personal habits of his companions - did not annoy him as much, if at all, by the end of the mission. Marty also mentioned that he no longer felt an urge to speak back to people who were harassing him about the mission and about the Church in general.

In discussing the lessons that he learned during the mission, namely the personal growth that resulted from associating with people who were not interested in change, Marty said that he began to realize that even though he could not witness the change firsthand, he recognized that these individuals have the rest of their life to change and improve their lives. He also realized that people change at their own pace and that they prefer to develop their own goals. Marty realized that people have their own agency, and that his role as a missionary was to love and support them regardless of their personal choices. In addition, he said that making this realization caused him to increase his faith in scripture and in God. Marty also mentioned that he developed a deeper understanding for a number of the principles that he had been taught throughout his life, that these principles were set up in order to improve the quality of life for everyone. As a result of this realization, Marty increased his determination to adhere to these principles and that he

realized that adhering to these principles would help him attain certain outcomes in his life. Adhering to these goals was no longer optional. It became mandatory.

When asked about whether or not he thought that he had been effective while on his mission, Marty said that he believed that he was indeed effective. He defined "effective" as working hard, experiencing personal change and growth, and the need for ongoing learning. Marty mentioned that, throughout his mission, he recognized that anyone he encountered in the field was potentially a teacher. He made certain that he was receptive to receiving instruction from Church members, investigators, and anyone else.

When asked about protective factors and other sources of support, Marty stated that his relationship with Heavenly Father and his prayer life were perhaps the strongest sources of support. He also said that his family was another significant source of support. Marty also pointed out that witnessing miracles was exciting, and that seeing people make positive changes in their lives provided him with motivation to continue with his work. In addition, Marty said that the Gospel and his spiritual beliefs also motivated him to serve a mission and they sustained him while in the field.

Alex

Alex is a 22 year old Caucasian male who served a 24-month mission. I interviewed Alex on November 30, 2012, nearly 18 months after his mission had ended. Alex is originally from the western portion of the United States; however, he served his mission in the southeastern section of the United States. He is the third person to be interviewed for this study.

In discussing his mission, Alex said that he felt a profound sense of charity toward the people whom he served and that he viewed those same people not as who they were at that particular moment. Rather, he recognized their potential for growth and development. Alex identified an "underlying theme" to his mission: He was concerned with helping people understand truth. Alex said that he received a great deal of fulfillment in explaining to people the basic tenets of Mormonism and the principles that guided his life. In addition, Alex said that he enjoyed discussing with people the benefits of faith, as well as the power of prayer. He enjoyed instructing people in how to find inspiration and revelation; he also enjoyed reminding people that God desired for no one to walk in darkness and that people should make a point of seeking out God. Alex said that he enjoyed seeing the look on peoples' faces as they began to appreciate or comprehend the gravity of the things that they were learning. Alex said that he was not only privileged to teach people these basic tenets, but that he was also privileged to receive instruction from the mission president. Alex said, "...the mission president is very inspiring, very experienced, has a lot of wisdom...and especially he had a lot of love for people, and so that was amazing to be able to learn from him." Alex mentioned that many of his companions helped to make the experience memorable: each of his companions offered some unique talent which enhanced the overall mission experience and they also provided Alex with valuable lessons on any number of topics.

Alex also identified some areas of his mission that he found difficult or challenging. He spoke of feeling lonely, despite the presence of his companion and other people. He also said that he and his companions would become discouraged when their plans for the day fell through, or when they were not making sufficient progress toward their goals. Alex also said that oftentimes it was hard for him to accept the fact that people have free agency, that he, as a missionary,

cannot compel to people adhere to the basic principles that are found in the Bible or in the Book of Mormon. He said that he found it difficult when people would confront him with negative information on the Church, information that they may have obtained from unreliable and biased sources. Alex added that some aspects of transfers were difficult, if not bittersweet: leaving an area with which he was familiar and leaving people with whom he had established rapport was difficult; however, the thought of meeting new people and becoming familiar with new places was exciting. Alex said that learning a new routine, starting a new leg of the mission, and learning the personal habits of his new companion were things that he found challenging.

Alex identified several instances in which he began to experience growth, both spiritually and emotionally. He attributes these changes to the overall mission experience. Alex began by pointing out that as he served people, his heart underwent a certain transformation and, as the mission progressed, he found it easier to love people regardless of their attitudes toward Alex and the Church. In addition, Alex mentioned that he gradually became less judgmental of people. Alex admitted that, prior to beginning his mission, he felt somewhat tenuous about sharing his faith, particularly with strangers; however, as the mission progressed, Alex found his voice and became comfortable sharing his beliefs. Alex also realized the benefit of maintaining a positive attitude, "...it depended on my attitude. If I had a bad attitude that day, then no matter what happened, it just felt like a bad day... If I happened to not have strong desire to exercise, the exercises would just kinda be like ...wimpy... And then personal study, maybe, I read but I didn't really actively seek in my study...then we came across different people, my mind may have been blank and I didn't really know what to say or how to go about teaching people sometimes." However, when assessing his personal efficacy at the end of the day, Alex said, "...it depended on my attitude to be happy...it was kind of hard to develop and understand that at first in my

mission. When I started to understand that and regardless of how my day went, as long I felt that I worked and...tried my hardest, I felt great at the end of the day, it was just an amazing feeling. I was excited for the next day.” Alex also mentioned that he began to understand and appreciate the deeper meaning behind certain events. He spoke about his understanding of transfers, that they were inspired by God, and that they were the means through which God could use Alex’s talents to affect some positive outcome for a potential investigator. Viewing transfers in this manner had an impact on Alex’s overall perception of transfers, “...overall, I think, there was an element of excitement because I knew the Lord was watching out for me and other children of his. He wanted me to go with someone somewhere else.”

Alex spoke about a time when the mission president inspired him to sacrifice an hour of sleep in favor of studying scriptures. For nearly 9 months, Alex dedicated an extra hour per day to studying scripture. During the course of these 9 months, Alex developed a physical condition that caused him chronic pain in his neck and back. Despite this physical condition, and despite the fact that he was losing an hour of sleep every day, Alex said that he was aware that his sacrifice and desire to spend extra time studying scripture could potentially influence his companion, whom he cared about and for whom Alex wished to be a good example. Alex said, “I really wanted to help him. So getting up an hour early was - I hoped - a really good example for him. He even started doing it for a while...as well as throughout the day.” In addition, Alex mentioned that the mission president commented on Alex’s efforts, asking the missionaries to consider how much better the mission would be if all missionaries forfeited an hour of sleep in favor of scripture study.

Alex said that his perception of his role as a missionary changed over the course of the mission. He spoke more than once about the strong desire that he felt toward investigators, that

they should accept the restored Gospel; however, he came to realize that his role was not compel people to accept anything. He came to understand that his role was fundamentally different. Regarding his perception of investigators, Alex said that he loved people regardless of their life's choices. Alex also spoke about his new understanding of his role as a missionary, "...I was a representative of Christ. I wanted them to feel God's love through me rather than, "Hey, you need to do this. It'll help make you happier."

Alex also spoke of what he considers to be a successful mission. He said that a successful missionary realizes that he/she is a representative of Jesus Christ. In addition, missionaries should maintain a charitable attitude, which means that missionaries should love everyone, regardless of their beliefs and regardless of their behaviors. Alex clarified this statement by saying, "That doesn't mean that you accepted the sin they were doing, but that did mean that regardless of what they were doing, you still loved them as people." Alex also mentioned that a successful missionary is not necessarily someone who was able to baptize large numbers of people. Rather, a successful missionary is someone who did not fail to love people.

Alex identified a series of beliefs and one practice, all of which sustained and protected him while he was in the field. He said that, regardless of what happened to him on any given day, he always reminded himself that he was a child of God. "I could always go back to that," Alex said. In addition, Alex identified the most potent belief was his testimony of Jesus Christ: "I think the main thing is my testimony, that Jesus Christ lived and that he lives today, and that he is the savior. So I think that was the main thing that gave me inspiration, gave me motivation, gave me understanding, gave me comfort...everything good...came from the testimony that I have of Jesus Christ." Alex also said that his beliefs in the validity of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, that the Church would continue to grow, "bolstered" his courage. One

message that he received from his beliefs about the Church was, “Keep moving forward.” Alex also mentioned that the promises that are found in scripture also motivated him. In addition, he said that his understanding of his role as a missionary – that he was in the field to love and serve others – provided him with motivation to persevere. Alex attributed any positive outcome, any protection, and any encouragement to the Holy Spirit. Alex said, “It helped support me and it’s helped remind me that God loves me. Any good thing that you could think of, the Spirit has been the instigator of that.” Alex also said that studying scripture was a source of support for him. He said, “...I studied more. And when you...you study more, it kind of influences every part of your physical body, your mental state, everything. It was a big help.”

Paul

Paul is a 23 year old Caucasian male who is originally from the western portion of the United States. He is the fourth person to be interviewed in this study. I conducted the interview on the afternoon of December 3, 2012. Paul served a 24-month mission in the southeast section of the United States. His mission ended approximately 18 months prior to his participation in this interview.

Paul describes his overall mission as an “extremely positive experience,” an experience that he will not forget. He mentioned that the effects of the mission continue to influence his life. Paul said, “I think it’ll continue to have an impact on my life for years to come.” Paul also believes that his experiences in the field have positively affected his marriage, namely in how he interacts with his wife. He also expressed a belief that his mission positively affected other interpersonal relationships. Paul said that one of his most memorable lessons is that he learned how to interact with people. He also discussed the spiritual growth that he encountered while on

his mission. Paul mentioned that he learned how to pray and that he increased his knowledge of sacred scripture, particularly the Book of Mormon. He also said that studying scripture was mandatory for all missionaries and he expressed gratitude for this requirement. In addition, Paul was also mindful of not only how his mission affected his life, but how it also affected the lives of other people. Paul mentioned that, as the result of his mission, he now has friends that he would not have if he had not gone on a mission. In contrast to these positive observations and memories, Paul also identified challenges and unpleasant events that occurred while he was in the field. He said that, prior to going on the mission, he was aware that he would encounter anti-Mormon sentiment among the people he would serve. Paul said encountering people who were “rude” or “obnoxious” was his least favorite thing; however, he also said that these types of encounters are simply part of the missionary experience. Paul added, “It just goes with the territory.”

In terms of transfers, Paul said that he had mixed emotions. He often became nervous when contemplating his transfer, but that he also found them exciting. Paul mentioned that transfers caused him to feel sad, due in no small part to the fact that he would be leaving behind countless friends and associates. However, he said that transfers also provided him with the opportunity to meet new people and to have new experiences. Paul said, “You can correct mistakes that you made in your last area and make...better (decisions)..you know, it... just gives you new opportunities. That part's exciting.” When his duties changed from a regular missionary role to a support role as an office assistant, he viewed transfers in a different light. He attributed this change in perception to his new role and responsibilities. Paul said that he had an active hand in deciding which missionaries were going to be transferred, when they would be

transferred, and who would be their new companions. In addition, he said that he also felt the Lord's hand guiding the entire process of transfers.

Generally speaking, Paul said that many of his companions were responsible for the changes that occurred in him during the mission. He became more aware of how his personality “meshed” with those of his companions. Paul spoke in particular about two different companions, both of whom taught him valuable lessons about the conduct of missionary work. Shortly after being transferred early in his mission, Paul and his companion were promoted into supervisory roles; they became district leaders. This particular companion had more experience than Paul. He had been in the field for nearly a year, and according to Paul, his companion faced these new supervisory duties with a relaxed attitude. Until this point, Paul said that he had always felt the weight of his responsibilities as a missionary. However, his companion showed him that, despite having great responsibility, he could still approach the work with a light-hearted attitude, thus making the overall experience enjoyable, if not fun. As a result, Paul began to conceptualize missionary work differently: He began to see those whom he served as friends and he viewed his work as a matter of “sharing what’s important” with these friends. Paul spoke about another learning experience with another new companion. This new companion had a much different attitude toward his work. According to Paul, this new companion always made certain that he and Paul followed all of the guidelines that governed their duties and responsibilities. According to Paul, this new companion caused Paul to develop a more profound respect for obedience. In addition, Paul said that he became more dedicated to the mission and that he appreciated this new-found respect for the mission's guidelines.

Paul mentioned, while on his mission, he witnessed events that he referred to as miracles. After having witnessed these types of events, Paul began to view the Gospel much differently:

He said that the Gospel became "more of a reality." In addition, Paul developed a "deeper" understanding for some of the simple truths that he had learned earlier in his life:

"I'd seen them change lives and I'd seen them affect people, you know, in ways that I never thought possible." Paul also mentioned that he came to realize that these principles applied to everyone - including him - all of the time. He noted that his feelings toward people changed, particularly toward the people whom he served. At the beginning of his mission, Paul said that he felt that it was obvious why everyone should become a Mormon; however, as his mission progressed, he became more familiar with the people whom he served. Paul gradually came to the realization that God has different plans for different people. According to Paul, "God has a different plan for everybody and I think I understood that more. That allowed me to look at everybody with a lot more of an understanding, with a lot more of a love and...just...an appreciation for who they were. I think I started to realize more that I felt my Heavenly Father's love for me. He described this realization as one of the biggest changes that he encountered on his mission.

In the face of antagonistic people, Paul began to realize that being "annoyed" with these people was "pointless." Paul said that began to realize that God was "saddened" by the fact that people would antagonize missionaries of the Church. Despite being saddened by their behavior, Paul said that he believed that God still loved these people. This thought transformed Paul's perception of antagonistic people: "...he (God) wasn't annoyed with them (the antagonistic people). He was just sad. So it...changed me and how I looked at things." Paul said that this new perspective caused him to develop a deeper love for people. He also said that he understood how the Gospel could help these people and how it could change their lives.

During the course of his mission he came to the realization that it was important that he keep his focus on the moment, rather than allowing his thoughts to drift to things that were not directly related to the mission or to the tasks at hand. During the first half of his mission, he said that he had difficulty controlling his thoughts: “Sometimes I’d wander and think about home a lot more than needed to be thought about and so I’d get homesick and my mind would wander off some days.” However, once he became aware of this habit, and how to respond to it, Paul focused on keeping his thoughts on the tasks at hand. Paul also said that he came to realize that keeping things in perspective allowed him to manage difficult situations. For example, if he encountered a combative person, Paul said that it helped to remind himself that this was just one person, that countless others were receptive to Paul’s message. Paul talked about other types of personal changes and opportunities for growth. Part of that change was Paul’s discovery of his true nature and role as a missionary. As Paul described it, “The biggest obstacle was....figuring out how I needed to be...” He said that, over time, he began to change not only his study habits but also how he prayed. Paul mentioned that he came to realize that prayer was a two-way conversation. He realized that as surely as he asked for God’s feedback, that he should also learn to listen for God’s response. Paul added that it was necessary for him to humble himself before he could do as God instructed him. Paul also started to realize that missionary work was God’s work. Paul said, “And so if I step aside and let him take care of business, there are no obstacles that are really too hard for him (God), ever.” When he made this realization, Paul said that he did not encounter any obstacles that he was not able to overcome.

Paul spoke briefly about his assessment of his personal efficacy in the field: “I feel like I was effective to the point where I helped a lot of people.” Paul also said that he obeyed the promptings of the Holy Spirit and that he did what God wanted him to do. He stated that

"success" is not measured by how many people a missionary baptizes. Rather, "success" is measured by the missionary's obedience to the will of God and by the missionary's understanding of the purpose of the mission. Thus, by virtue of his obedience to God and to the Holy Spirit, Paul viewed his mission as a success. However, Paul attributes his effectiveness to the fact that he worked closely with several other missionaries. Paul said, "...so their success also...determined my success as well."

Paul also said that his relationship with his companions sustained and supported him throughout the course of his mission. He likened his companions to close friends, stating that his companions helped him out during difficult times. Paul said, "Even if you knew that he didn't agree with you on everything, you just knew that he was there for you....You were still friends." However, Paul very clearly credits his relationship with God as the primary source of support throughout his mission and for his overall success as a missionary. Paul said, "That was the only thing...that really got me through it (the mission)." He provided additional information on this particular belief by saying that God provides missionaries with special blessings as they are called to serve in the field. Of those blessings, Paul said, "So that blessing made a difference..." In addition to this special blessing, Paul also mentioned that he believed that Jesus gave missionaries special permission to teach about Jesus. Paul said that his knowledge of this privilege was beneficial. "Just to know that I was called and I was set apart and that this was my purpose from Heavenly Father specifically. This is what I needed to do." Paul also mentioned that reflecting on concepts like Christ's atonement and saving grace were beneficial to him. Paul spoke at length about this belief: I believe that the atonement covers so much more than just sin. I believe that it covers every time you have a bad day...You can rely on the atonement because the Savior's felt it all and he knows how to help you." In addition to reflecting on spiritual

concepts, Paul said that he relied heavily on prayer throughout his mission and especially when he encountered difficulties. As a result of these prayers, Paul mentioned that he felt the supporting presence and spirit of God, saying that it felt as though God were standing next to him, supporting him. Paul also credits various Church members and the investigators with either motivating him or sustaining him while he was in the field. He described having "spiritual experiences" with investigators and the effect these experiences had on him: "When you have experiences with people, um, that are really strong spiritual experiences, that creates a bond a tie between you that isn't just gonna go away. Um...and so...those experiences with the investigators...they made you want to keep looking and want to go find someone else to teach them the same thing." Paul stated that his letters and phone calls to and from his parents provided him with additional support. His parents provided him with words of encouragement and counsel, which Paul said, "They were a big support as well. Family and friends were just amazing."

Henry

Henry is a 23 year old Caucasian male who served a 24-month mission that ended approximately 18 months prior to having participated in this study. Henry is originally from the western portion of the United States; however, he served a mission in the southeastern section of the United States. I interviewed Henry on the evening of December 8, 2012 and he is the fifth interviewee in this study.

Henry described his experience in positive terms. He said that at the time that he had completed his mission, it was the best experience of his life and it was one of the best choices that he had ever made. When describing the nature of the work, Henry said that missionary work was about reaching out to others and representing Jesus Christ "in every way possible." In terms

of the experience itself, Henry said: "I was able to meet a lot of people, really learn a lot about myself, and about how to communicate with others...and most of all, it was something that helped me...to live my religion, to live the teachings that I believe...to see the beliefs that I have...to see them in real, every day experiences." Henry also mentioned that the experience not only drew him closer to God, but it also drew him closer to those whom he served and to those with whom he worked. He also mentioned that the relationships and friendships that he formed while on his mission were among the things that he remembered and valued most about his mission. Henry also said that the missionary experience taught him a great deal about himself and how to communicate with people. While the majority of his time was occupied with meeting and talking with people, and also with doing service projects, Henry stated that there were times that he felt challenged: "Other days, it... was drudgery...you feel like you werebattling uphill the whole time...it went with the territory." He mentioned that even the negative experiences were valuable learning experiences. Because these negative experiences taught him and were of value to him, Henry said that they too were enjoyable experiences.

Henry also viewed transfers in a similar manner, stating that he not only enjoyed them, but also saw them as opportunities to apply what he learned in new settings, with new investigators, companions, and others. Though he mentioned that his first transfer was "a little scary" not only because he had been in the field for three months at the time of the transfer, but also because with the transfer came a change in his duties. He was promoted to a trainer. In most cases, Henry said that he remained calm during transfers, mainly because, in most cases, he felt ready to leave and he felt that he had accomplished what he needed to in that area. Henry said that he felt sad at the prospect of leaving companions with whom he had developed strong rapport and he also felt concern for those investigators who were progressing in their spiritual

journeys. Henry said, "...you're worried (about) who's gonna come in and continue teaching these people. Are they gonna do as good a job as I feel I've done? Or are they just gonna blow 'em off or whatever it may be?" Henry said that leaving these investigators could be difficult for him. However, once he grew accustomed to the nature of transfers, he felt more confident about the process and, upon being transferred, Henry's attitude and perception of transfers was different: he felt that he was ready to work regardless of his location. Though the sadness that came with leaving investigators and companions never went away entirely, Henry said that he required less time to acclimate himself toward new settings and new people.

In navigating through difficulties and challenges, Henry recognized the benefit of those types of experiences. He credits them with contributing to his personal growth; they were learning experiences. Henry said that it was important for him to remember that even though he was facing rejection, cancellations, or other types of setbacks, he remained hopeful. He would focus on the "light at the end of the tunnel." In addition to this type of positive thinking, Henry said that he also made certain discoveries about him and about others. For example, early in his mission, Henry often blamed himself for any setbacks, cancellations of appointments, or even when a lesson did not go the way that he had hoped. Henry realized that any number of factors influenced an investigator's behavior or the investigator's decision to stop having lessons and meetings with the missionaries. Henry said, "But you knew there were other factors at play, or maybe just spiritual factors. They just felt something -- indifferent or they felt...ah..they would disappoint somebody...But, yeah, towards the end, once you learn that you can't control everything... As soon as that realization comes, you say, 'You know there's something there that might not have been right. They maybe needed more time or just someone else to explain it to them.'"

Henry said that not only his faith grew stronger over the course of his mission, but also his dedication to his faith, including those principles upon which his faith rested. He also began to realize that the focus of his mission was on those whom he served. "Once I realized that it wasn't about me, that it wasn't about the experiences that I was going to have," Henry said, "that it was really about the people out there that I was called to help...I took it with a lot more... love." Once his focus shifted toward the people, Henry said that he was more intent on listening to them, paying attention to their needs, and "customizing" lessons based on his assessment of their needs. When people rejected his message, Henry's reaction became one of sorrow because he felt that they were rejecting a chance to be truly happy. He also realized that during his mission, he became more accepting of people, regardless of their education, their employment, etc. He began to view people in a non-judgmental fashion: according to Henry, everyone was the same. They were people who would benefit from some help.

Henry talked about his ideas of what constitutes a successful mission. He stressed the importance of selflessness and personal growth, saying that each day of his mission, he learned something about himself. Henry said that type of self-discovery helped him draw closer to God. He added, "That'll help you become a better tool in his hands...I think that's really how I define effectiveness." In addition, he said that effectiveness and success as a missionary also meant doing some act of kindness for the benefit of someone else. However, he pointed that he was not so much concerned with whether or not someone else thought he was effective. When gauging his efficacy, he would ask himself: "Did I do everything that I could?" If he felt that that he had done everything within his power to help other people, then he knew that he had done enough, that he had been effective. In addition to this self-assessment, Henry also reflected on his personal efficacy in prayer. Henry said that he prayed every night, asking God whether or not he

had done enough. He often felt the assurance from God, which he interpreted as a "yes."

However, he said that sometimes he received the message, "Hey, you know right here? You messed up." Henry said that continual growth, the on-going self assessment, and the feedback that he sought through prayer were all indicators that he was effective and that he had had a successful mission.

Henry said that he also received comfort in the thought that he was effective and that any number of people were receiving benefits from his service. Henry said, "...knowing that you did something that someone else saw and it helped them through the day. That's what helped me most." He attributed his spiritual beliefs as his strongest source of support. In addition, he said that those beliefs were the sole reason for him to have accepted a mission. In times of uncertainty, he found himself reflecting on some of the basic truths that he had learned earlier in his life. In addition to his beliefs about his faith, Henry said that his strong beliefs in the power of his mission sustained him throughout the time that he was in the field. He said that he felt assured that his family would be taken care of while he served his mission. Shortly before leaving for his mission, Henry received an assurance from his father: "If anything happens to anybody, I want you to be out there because that's where you're called to be at this time." In addition, Henry said that he realized that serving his mission was the best way that he could help his family. He also said that he knew his family was supporting him through prayer, and that he could feel this support. Henry was able to contact his family at certain intervals during his mission, either through e-mail or phone calls; however, Henry said had he not been able to have any contact with his family, he would accept that limitation. Henry's faith in his mission, and his belief in his family's support for him, and their beliefs about the necessity of his mission were so strong that Henry did not feel the need to seek support from his family through e-mails or phone

calls (-though he did indeed maintain routine contact with them). Henry's companions provided additional support for him, namely in that he could rely on them to validate his feelings. Of his experience with those companions, Henry said this: "He understands because he had similar feelings. So you guys can relate to one another and would be able to ease each other's pain that you had with those experiences. That was definitely a big one - just having someone there who could understand with you." Henry mentioned that he often prayed with his companions over the course of his mission. Often the prayers focused on seeking some assurance from God that their actions were acceptable. Whether Henry was praying with his companion or whether the prayer was private, he said that prayer was another major asset in the field.

Brandon

Brandon is a 21 year old Caucasian male who served a 24-month mission that ended approximately four months prior to his participation in this study. I interviewed Brandon at his home on December 18, 2012 and he is the sixth person to be interviewed during the course of this study. Though Brandon is from the southeastern portion of the United States, he served his entire mission in Chile. He is the only respondent in this study who served a mission outside of his home country.

When reflecting on his experiences in the field, Brandon stated the he found it difficult to describe the mission in only a few words. He said that his mission was incredible and that he learned a great deal in the two years that he was in the field. In addition, he received some positive benefit from witnessing the people whom he served grow spiritually; he said that this was a joyful experience. Brandon said that he was also aware of the importance of the work that he and his companions undertook and that he was also very much aware of the trust that God placed in him and in the other missionaries. According to Brandon, the work that he and his

companions performed ultimately involved the salvation of people's souls. In reflecting on any negative or unpleasant experiences, Brandon at first said that there was nothing that he did not like about the work, the location of the mission, or the people. However, he spoke about feeling saddened when people rejected the missionaries' message. Brandon said, "...they don't realize what they're giving up...that becomes something difficult and sad because you have something that can help them...the message helps everybody." Brandon also said that he was saddened once his mission ended. In addition to these types of difficulties, Brandon said that he also had difficulty in understanding people when he first arrived in Chile; he was still in the process of learning Spanish, so he relied on his first companion for direction and assistance. Brandon did not report any difficulties in acclimating to Chilean culture: "People are people, wherever you are."

Brandon spoke briefly about his perception of transfers, which he described as "interesting." He said that he tended to focus on his work in the days leading up to an actual transfer, though he and companions did speculate about not only who would be transferred, but also the location of the transfer. Brandon said that his response to transfers varied. If he was ready to leave an area, he welcomed the transfer. He also reported feelings of surprise when he received a transfer call after having been in an area for a very short period of time. Brandon said that the actual transfer process was potentially disruptive of his work schedule, largely due to the logistics involved in moving missionaries from one area to another. He also said that the biggest adjustment that he made after a transfer was in getting to know new people, including his companion, and getting to know the new area. He enjoyed meeting new people and learning new places, but he also felt saddened when he left his former companions and others.

In talking about personal growth, on-going learning, or personal changes that he experienced in the field, Brandon said that over the course of his mission, he learned to place his trust in Jesus's hands. Over the course of the mission, Brandon said that he came to realize that God required the missionaries to focus solely on the mission. According to Brandon, "I thought that I could easily give to the Lord what he requires, but...as you go through the mission and you experience certain difficulties, you start learning what you need to give to the Lord, what things...are standing in the way. And it was always...the thing that would always stand in the way for me and for other people - they said it's what keeps you from doing what the Lord wants you to do - it's that you think you know better than the Lord. So your ways are better than his. Until you realize...that's not the case...he knows everything and he wants you to do it his way, then it becomes easy." Brandon also mentioned that over the course of the mission he gradually realized that some of the difficulties that he encountered - namely a series of difficult transfers and difficulties with companions - were "self-inflicted." He spoke about the desire to become more like Jesus, stating that he realized when the desire to become more like Jesus overtakes the desire to remain the same, at that point, according to Brandon, a person would be more open to doing what God has asked of him. Brandon talked about one final realization that he made from the field: at the start of his mission, he was often pre-occupied with seeing different places, being able to take pictures of the sights, etc. However, Brandon's focus gradually shifted toward serving people, whether it was serving the investigators or in serving his companions. Brandon said, "...what changed as my mission progressed was the order of importance of certain things...I would always enjoy being in the different places but that was never...an issue toward the end of my mission." In changing his focus to serving others, Brandon also realized that his love for the people changed. His love became more like Jesus's love. Brandon said that he also discovered

the true importance of his beliefs, that it was also necessary to live every moment of his life in a manner that reflected the importance of his beliefs. Lastly, Brandon mentioned that he also came to the realization that, in serving people and in bringing them closer to Jesus, he had to allow them to come to Jesus on their own, that he could not compel them, and that he recognized their own agency. Brandon said that, while on his mission, he learned patience.

Brandon spoke briefly about his assessment of his own efficacy while in the field. He said that he felt like he did what was required of him and that he did not have any regrets about his performance while in the field. He also mentioned that he knew that he would never achieve perfection, but that in aiming for perfection, he was able to improve himself. Brandon said that self-improvement and personal growth are the things that God wants for everyone. "He wants them to improve and make changes in their lives that are necessary to come closer to him."

Brandon said that he learned to rely on his companions throughout his mission, stating that his companions were one of the most significant sources of support for him. He said that oftentimes his companions were able to positively affect his mood, particularly after they had experienced any type of setback or when they were experiencing little or no progress. Brandon also credited the local Church members, the investigators, his zone leaders, and the mission president for providing him support. He also mentioned that he felt the support and prayers of "millions of people." Brandon also said that his family supported him through their prayers, letters, and an occasional package. However, he said that one of the main sources of support came from both God and Jesus. Brandon also stated that in order to receive God's assistance, it was necessary to be obedient to God's commands. In speaking about the assistance from Jesus, Brandon stated that only with Jesus's help could he be successful in doing missionary work.

Brandon mentioned that his beliefs in the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were the main motivating factor for him while he was in the field. He said that it was his beliefs that motivated him to accept a mission. Brandon said, "That was everything...and knowing that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is...is the Lord's church, that in and of itself is a driving force to help us missionaries with what we're doing. Because if I didn't know what I was doing was right, I wouldn't be doing it at all."

Chip

Chip is a 21 year old Caucasian male who served a 24-month mission which ended approximately seven months before this interview took place. I interviewed Chip on the morning of December 22, 2012 and he is the seventh of the ten returned missionaries to be interviewed. Chip is originally from the western portion of the United States; however, he served his mission in the southeastern section of the United States.

Chip used the words "gratitude" and "humility" as he described his feelings regarding the mission. He also described his experience in the field as paradoxical. He explained that based on his observations and thoughts about the nature of the work, as a missionary, his focus was on helping people. However, he could not help others until he was able to improve himself. He said, "...you could only be a blessing to others as much as you improved yourself, as much as you made yourself as much like Jesus Christ." In addition, Chip said that when he was in the field, he became aware people's struggles to commit themselves to Gospel principles or to achieving lifetime goals. He said that he believed that this inability to commit to those principles or goals contributed to people's lack of success in life. Chip explained that he was able to recognize this same reluctance in himself, which then allowed him to focus on overcoming that reluctance.

Chip stated, "...what I'm most grateful for is that I was finally able to live and experience the principles that I'd been taught my entire life."

Chip also recognized the potential impact that his mission would have on the rest of his life: "I was able to see it as an opportunity where I could learn principles that would benefit me for the rest of my earthly life, which is where I'm preparing for eternal life in the Celestial Kingdom with my family." So he began to view his mission as an opportunity to learn from others. As a result, he listened more intently to people, knowing that the information that they shared with him could help him not only as a missionary, but also as a mortal preparing for eternal life in the Celestial Kingdom of Heaven. Chip said that he recognized the long-term benefits that a successful mission would have not only on his life, but also on his eternal soul.

Chip began to speak about events that promoted his own personal growth throughout the mission. He stated that, as a missionary, he came to the realization that he could not force people to commit to goals, that this was something that they had to want for themselves. He said that, during his mission, he began to recognize the importance of allowing people to grow on their own and to develop faith on their own and that the missionary plays a supporting role in this process. Chip said, "... and when we weren't so focused on a timeline, or setting goals for them, or anything like that - when they were allowed to, um, exhibit their own faith, and they were accountable to God and not to us, and they decided if they wanted to be accountable to God, and it was my lot to love them and to support them."

Throughout the mission, Chip discussed certain plans and expectations that he had for himself, for the people that he interacted with, and for the mission itself. He admitted to experiencing a certain amount of disappointment or discouragement when a lesson with a particular investigator was not going the way that he intended, or when an investigator was not

progressing as quickly as Chip had hoped. He identified a process that he adopted during his mission; the process required him to take an inventory of his thoughts and feelings. If Chip determined that he was frustrated with an investigator because he was not able to accomplish *his* goals for that investigator, he would work with his companion to re-focus their efforts on supporting an investigator as she/he pursued her/his own goals. Chip recalled the importance of keeping their focus on supporting and loving the investigators, and on recalling the “other-centeredness” of the missionary.

Chip also discussed other ways in which the mission promoted personal growth. He said that by practicing the principles that he learned as a child and teenager, he was able to develop a deeper understanding of those Gospel principles. He said that the very nature of the mission demanded that he develop a personal testimony of those principles: “I learned about charity or the true love of Christ as I sought to develop it in myself so that I could love people that I wouldn't normally otherwise be inclined to love... I learned about faith as I exhibited it. I learned how to pray as I was pleading with our Father in Heaven for answers and for strength and for many different things.” He stated that the Gospel of Jesus Christ became a significant part of his life, and that following the Savior became a priority. Chip stated that he also developed a more profound understanding and a finer appreciation for certain rituals, namely receiving the Sacrament and making covenants with God. He said, “...I got strength and meaning from it that previously I'd never experienced.”

Chip also stated that routine transfers promoted a certain amount of personal growth: the transfers caused him to view not only missionary work differently, but they also caused him to view his relationship with God differently. He stated that with each transfer, he would become aware of changes or transformations, and that these changes and transformations happened

regularly and frequently. In addition, he stated that it took nearly the entire two year mission for him to “get outside of” himself and to “get over” himself in order to become humble enough to serve others. Chip’s attitude toward the mission transformed from one in which he felt that he needed to prove his love to God by serving a mission to one of loving and serving others.

Chip provided an example of personal growth that resulted from his experiences in the field. He said that prior to his mission he gave little thought to the concept of exercising faith. However, during his mission he came to realize that when he prayed and that when he asked God for assistance in obtaining some goal or favor, Chip came to realize that he (Chip) was obligated to share some of the responsibility in achieving that goal. He said that the action he takes in order to achieve those goals is an act of faith, and that God would provide him with strength to achieve those goals.

Chip began to explore his thoughts related to the concept of what constitutes a successful mission. He stated, “...as I look back on my mission, I don’t feel like I left anything on the table...I know that I did the very best that I could...” He later stated that he served his mission with all of his heart and soul. In addition, he stated throughout the interview that the missionary’s primary focus was on supporting the people in the field – the investigators, and anyone else whom he encountered – regardless of whether those people were receptive to the message of the missionary. Chip explained that success in the field was not determined by how many baptisms a missionary performed or how long the missionary remained in the field. Rather, success was defined by the missionary’s willingness to become more like Christ. He mentioned this several times throughout the interview. Chip stated, “I realized that I could show my love for him by making myself the best that I could be so that I could help his other children.” As his mission progressed, Chip stated that he gauged his success by whether or not he felt the Spirit was

present during lessons or during other encounter with investigators, Church members, or anyone else. If the people he encountered felt the Spirit, and if they felt that they had drawn closer to God, then the encounter was a success.

Chip also attributes his ability to successfully manage and navigate through a two year mission to a number of coping skills and other sources of support. He focused a significant portion of his time in identifying those people, events, and other things that helped see him successfully through his mission. He said that contact with family, though infrequent, was a major source of support for him. Chip stated that his mother in particular was very supportive of him and that she knew, based on her contact with him, whether or not he had had a difficult week. Of his mother, Chip said, “She knew where her son was...That was just - - I was just so grateful for that because I knew she was a constant. I was grateful, so, so grateful.” In addition, Chip said that he took comfort in the knowledge that having a successful mission would also bring blessings to his family.

Chip also stated that his mindset often influenced the outcome of any situation. He said that his view of the mission as a whole had some effect on his ability to manage the stress and the workload of the mission. He mentioned that if he viewed the mission as a whole – in other words, if he looked at it as an uninterrupted two year block of time – that thought could overwhelm him, possibly to the point that he would not successfully manage his responsibilities as a missionary. Chip decided instead to view the mission as a series of smaller missions, instead of choosing to view the overall mission as a single experience. He said that he adopted a “one day at a time” sort of perspective. Chip commented on the benefit of viewing his mission in this manner: “All that was expected then was that I would do the best that I could that day...If I could consistently do my best one day at a time, instead of do my best over two years...I felt so much

more energetic.” Chip also provided additional examples of how his mindset would impact his ability to manage the responsibilities of his mission. He stated that it was helpful to remember that God could and would use Chip as a means for helping people. Chip stated, “...that’s when I was able to conquer that anxiety. I realized that my confidence rested in him and his ability to work through me, work with me, and that...the responsibility wasn’t squarely on my shoulders.” Chip said that it was this realization, among others, that made it possible for him to successfully engage in the duties of a missionary.

Chip also mentioned that he and his companions would seek necessary distractions in stores, mingling with people, and talking about various electronics or sporting goods items. He said that these activities, along with light-hearted banter, provided him and his companion with a certain amount of relief from the daily and weekly stressors of missionary life. However, Chip also said that all forms of coping were “tributaries” that led back to the ultimate means of coping: reading scripture and private, quiet communication with God. He said that these two forms of coping brought him the most peace and restored his perspective. Chip described his prayer time with God as intimate, personal, and that he was grateful and humbled that God provided him with such a means for communicating. Chip also mentioned that he found comfort in the thought that God knew him, that God was aware of Chip’s circumstances, and that God loved him perfectly.

Charlie

Charlie is a 22 year old Caucasian male who served a 24-month mission. He is originally from the western portion of the United States; however, he served his mission in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. His mission ended approximately 18 months prior to his

participation in this study. He is the eighth person to be interviewed; the interview took place on the evening of December 21, 2012.

Charlie described his missionary experience as "amazing", saying that he equated his experiences in the field with a popular Mormon movie that is entitled "The Best Two Years." Charlie said that his missionary experience truly was the best two years of his life. He commented that he had never felt so free and he said that he felt great about the work that he did. The overall experience, according to Charlie, was rewarding, self-fulfilling, and it promoted his personal growth. In discussing the overall experience, he said that he enjoyed the personal relationships that he established with his companions, saying that these relationships were among the high points of his mission. Charlie enjoyed the camaraderie with his companions and he also enjoyed that he and his companions "had the same vision." He also enjoyed the new experiences that came with the mission, which included being in new places. Charlie described the location of his mission as "a completely different world." Charlie spoke about the various neighborhoods that he visited, many of which were Hispanic, Chinese, and Jewish. He also mentioned that he appreciated the fact that for most of his mission, he was on foot. According to Charlie, the benefit of being on foot is that it increased the visibility of the mission. He said that he felt more available and accessible to the people, should any wish to engage him and discuss faith or the Church. He also felt that this visibility could somehow positively influence people. However, he mentioned that he did not enjoy being in areas in which he had limited exposure to the people, namely those areas in which he and his companion drove. He felt that being in a car limited his access and visibility to potential investigators.

Charlie also faced challenges in the field. He described difficulties that ranged from illness - stomach flu or a cold - to other issues like being unfocused or investigators who

canceled their appointments. When faced with these types of setbacks, Charlie said that he felt depressed, though he mentioned that "depressed" may be too harsh a word. After periods in which he and his companion were not having success, or when he faced frequent rejection, Charlie said that these experiences caused him to doubt himself and the mission. Charlie said that he would ask himself questions like: "Is what I'm doing even worth anything? Am I even making a difference or would I be better at home? What's the point? Nobody cares."

In terms of transfers, Charlie said that he had mixed feelings. He said that the week leading up to transfers could be "nerve-wracking", particularly if he felt that he was not ready to leave. Charlie said that the anticipation of a transfer could be "fun." He enjoyed moving to new locations and meeting new people, but he also found it difficult to re-locate, particularly if he had established strong rapport with his investigators and with his companions. However, Charlie mentioned that if he had been in an area for a significant amount of time, or if he was in an area in which he experienced difficulties, he often welcomed a transfer. He mentioned a range of emotions, namely sadness, particularly at the thought of leaving friends, investigators, and companions. He also mentioned excitement, usually at the prospect of meeting his new companion, new Church members, and new investigators. Charlie mentioned that learning a new area could be difficult; however, he also felt that transfers provided him with the opportunity to "re-introduce" himself to a new group of investigators and Church members. After a transfer, Charlie also focused on acquainting himself with his new companion and re-focusing on their work. This process could be difficult at first, but usually within a week he and his companion were doing well.

Charlie mentioned throughout the interview areas in which he was able to experience spiritual or personal growth. During his time at the Missionary Training Center, Charlie said that

one of his trainers encouraged him to identify areas within himself that he could develop and improve on throughout his mission. Throughout his mission, Charlie reminded himself of the goals he had set for himself. At the beginning of his mission, Charlie found it difficult to connect with the investigators; he attributed this to his knowledge of Spanish. As his proficiency in Spanish improved, Charlie noticed that he was able to draw closer to the investigators. He said that he no longer viewed his investigators as a "check in the box." Charlie also said that he became more confident about sharing his faith and beliefs with non-Church members. He also began to study the scriptures more closely. He said, "I wanted to eat it up." In addition, the scriptures and the principles that they taught became "real" to Charlie.

Charlie discussed a situation, though difficult, caused him to experience personal growth. When he learned that a close friend and former companion returned home early, despite the success that this particular missionary had experienced, he became upset. Charlie was not permitted to discuss this event with his current companion, so he withdrew into himself; however, when he began to focus on himself, namely that he was doing well and that his mission would continue despite this news, Charlie was able to re-focus and continue with his work.

Charlie spoke about his ideas on what constitutes a successful mission. He believes that a successful mission is one in which the missionary invests hard work and love into his work, into his service of others. Charlie believes that missionary work is about serving others. He does not necessarily believe that a missionary can claim success based solely on the number of baptisms that he performed; however, Charlie believes that baptisms are one indicator of a successful mission. He also believes that he was a successful missionary, namely because he returned home "a much better person." Of his experiences, Charlie said, "I felt like I learned a lot of lifelong lessons. I feel like I also helped a lot of people, in many different ways, become better."

Charlie developed a reputation for optimism. This optimism helped him through a number of difficult situations, particularly when he and his companion were not experiencing the level of success that they had hoped for. Charlie would tell himself things like, "You just have to keep going. If we keep going, something will happen. As soon as it happens, it'll keep rolling." Charlie also reminded himself that slow periods, periods of constant rejection, and "rude" people were all part of the missionary experience. He would also remind himself of the happiness that he felt when he helped other people, or when he witnessed the baptism of someone with whom he had worked. Remembering these happy times caused him to persevere. Charlie mentioned that the work in general helped him to remain focused.

Charlie also found that his companions were a significant source of support, particularly during difficult times. According to Charlie, "I think it helped a lot that I had a companion who also -- that I was with that really cared about me. I could talk to him about other things and still have fun." His companions helped him focus on the positive aspects of the mission and they helped him "put aside" some of the negativity. In addition to his companions, Charlie received a lot of support and emotional bolstering from his family and he felt that letters from his older brother and father, both of whom served missions, were particularly helpful. He compared this support from home to a fan club; he felt that his family was cheering for him. Charlie also felt that this support helped him cope with the daily challenges that he faced while in the field. Charlie was also able to meet with other missionaries during routine mission-wide conferences. Hearing from them, particularly their progress and their success stories, inspired Charlie to continue with his work.

Mika

Mika is a 25 year old Caucasian male who served a 24-month mission. He is originally from the lower Atlantic region of the United States; however, he served his mission in the southeastern section of the United States. Mika is the ninth person to be interviewed in this study; the interview took place on the morning of December 22, 2012.

When asked about his experiences, his thoughts, and his feelings regarding his mission, Mika stated that he associated a sense of accomplishment with his mission. He added that, to a young man, the prospect of a two-year mission in a completely different environment could seem daunting. Mika said, upon the conclusion of his mission, that it was the most demanding experience at that point of his life. Mika said, "It trumps college. It trumps everything that I've done." Mika also shared an interesting observation about the nature of the mission experience. He said, "You're always kind of anticipating something that's coming forward in every step. I think it's an interesting exercise of letting and accepting new things." In terms of the physical toll that the mission took on him, Mika mentioned that sometimes the days seemed long, almost to the breaking point. Mika reported that there were times in which he did not think that he could go any further. "I think of feelings like...just surprise that you were able to...get up the next day and go a little further." Mika also commented that he comes from a family that tends toward introversion; however, while in the field, Mika was required to engage in conversation with strangers, often at very deep levels. Mika remarked, "I don't think that I would ever have had the opportunity or even the courage to talk to those people." He mentioned that one of the things that he liked most about the mission was learning about people and their experiences. In addition, Mika said that one of the strongest thoughts associated with his mission was the idea that he had

helped someone. In addition to that thought, Mika said that he also asked himself whether or not he did enough to help others, and if he can be more helpful now that his mission is over.

Mika also discussed his thoughts about the parts of his mission that he did not enjoy. For example, he said that he had difficulty working with certain companions. Even though he and these companions may have accomplished much together (in terms of their work), because he was not able to establish a positive relationship with certain companions, he felt isolated. Mika observed, "So there would be a six month gap in which...the work might go forward well. We might have some good progress, but on a personal level, the two of us might conflict. For six months, you really feel like...you're kind of alone." For Mika to lose a personal connection, one that was so important to him while he served in the field, was difficult. Mika said that he also did not like the way he responded to certain companions: had been more accommodating, had he been more open, or had he been more willing to allow certain companions the opportunity to lead, Mika wondered if his interactions with some of his companions would have been better. "These doubts are...my least enjoyable experiences."

In speaking about transfers, Mika mentioned several different feelings. He said that he often anticipated them "with some amount of dread and excitement." Mika said that once he and his companions received confirmation of their transfers, they often felt dazed. In addition to these feelings, Mika also said that transfers could be bittersweet, due in no small part to leaving behind people with whom he had become close. Until the transfer took place, Mika reported that he and his companions would make arrangements for the continuation of lessons or other obligations to their investigators. Once the transfer took place, Mika said that he quickly sought to re-establish his routine, that he also focused on familiarizing himself with the new area, and with the new people. Mika mentioned one of the sayings that circulated among missionaries:

"Fake it until you make it." He said that oftentimes missionaries who were new to an area, and who were not yet confident in their abilities to manage their duties, would intentionally, though temporarily, project an image of competence. Once they had mastered their duties, they no longer needed to project that facade of confidence.

Mika spoke a great deal about personal changes and the growth that he experienced while in the field. Prior to his mission, Mika described himself as a "lukewarm practitioner"; however, once he began his mission, he relied more heavily on prayer. According to Mika, "...prayer became not just a daily thing, but an hourly thing." The strength of his praying increased over the course of his mission. He said that his relationship with God changed. Mika said that it was difficult to describe; however, he said that the intimacy was "amazing." He also said that, at times, he felt as though God was walking beside him. He mentioned that he began to appreciate the depth and the personal history of the people he was serving. Mika said that early in his mission, he often prescribed simple solutions for people's problems. In retrospect, he said that he failed to consider the complexity of some of these problems and he failed to consider how complex people are. Mika said, "I didn't realize all of the variables that go into it...I don't think that I lost the feeling that things could be overcome...but I realized that sometimes it takes a little bit more patience." Mika discussed his experience with a particular investigator, an elderly man who Mika described as not progressing quickly in his spiritual development. It was in these experiences that Mika began to realize how hard people's lives could be, and that prescribing simple solutions was not the best way to help them. According to Mika, "...towards the end I realized that in six months of working with this gentleman...I began to learn about his life, about the experiences that he had. They were difficult. They were something that I wouldn't have been able to react to...just in me taking the time to know and understand him, and accepting he is who

is he - it helped him...He actually began to show faith and came to church once, even though it was physically painful for him to do so. It was things like that, I think, just understanding where an investigator was and why they were the way they were. Um, and then getting them a respectful, a responsive, and helpful answer." Mika said that he began to adjust his view of people. He said that they were not "baptisms waiting to happen" or "statistics waiting to be added"; Mika said that they were real people who had experienced a great deal more than he had. In addition, Mika said that he realized that he (Mika) was not a "walking-on-the-clouds, perfect missionary"; he was a "flawed individual" who was attempting to do "great things." In making this realization, according to Mika, it allowed him to find joy in his work. He measured his success not in terms of baptisms or lessons taught, but by the number of events in which people opened up to him.

Mika was very much concerned with his own personal efficacy while in the field. He spoke at length about this concern. At various points during the interview, he made statements about his effectiveness, about whether or not the strategies that he used were the best or the most effective strategies. In addition, he said that during his mission he struggled against the fear that he was making more mistakes than doing things right. At one point during the interview, Mika said that he even questioned whether or not he should have terminated his mission. Mika stated, "But I think early in my mission or by mid-mission...especially when I was a zone leader and in charge of a lot of areas - seeing how things were working out with other missionaries -- this idea of, you know, is it my fault? Is it because of me that these areas are suffering? Because I don't know what to say or I don't know how to do this." Mika stated that he even felt as though he was a flaw in the mission. Mika's second concern was whether or not he did enough to help others and this concern remained with him even until the end of his mission. Mika shared a story; this

event occurred shortly before he returned home. He was at the mission house with a number of other missionaries who were also preparing to return home. Mika said that he and a friend of his were struggling with the same concern: Did they do enough? At one point that evening, the mission president's wife visited with Mika and his friend. She told them, "You know, I know you two. I know what you're thinking. I know what you're struggling with. It's all right. The Lord is really very satisfied with what you've done. You haven't wasted your time." Mika said that he was touched by her comments, particularly her confidence in his efforts. In addition, Mika said that this was a pivotal moment in his mission: he realized that his mission was a success. Despite his doubts and frustrations, and despite the obstacles that he faced, he was still dedicated to the principles of his faith.

Mika credits a number of his companions with being sources of support, pointing toward the camaraderie that resulted in such a close working relationship. In addition, he identified several activities and strategies which helped him and his companions manage the stress that was associated with missionary work. He described instances in which certain companions, as a means of unwinding at the end of a long or difficult day, would engage one another in "towel battles." They would pop one another with the towel. Mika said that this activity was a much-needed break and that it allowed him and his companion to relax. Other times, he and his companions would make videos of one another doing silly things, doing silly "missionary raps", or other creative outlets. Mika said that, while his companions enjoyed playing sports, he preferred to direct his energy in service projects as means for coping with stress. In addition to his companions, Mika said that he received some benefit from the zone leader conferences, which required a number of missionaries from across the mission to meet and to review their progress. It was in these meetings that Mika was able to hear not only about the challenges that

other missionaries faced, but also to hear about their success. Mika said that one benefit of these conferences was it reminded him that success with investigators and others is indeed possible.

Mika said that his most frequently-used coping strategy was something that he referred to as a "patient endurance." He described this strategy as a delaying of expressing his personal feelings so that he could complete the task at hand. He said that he would cope with his feelings at a later time. In evaluating that strategy, Mika said that it was sufficient to get him through the moment, but in the long run he questioned its efficacy. Mika also mentioned another strategy that he referred to as "patient love." In dealing with difficult people or difficult situations, he said that he would respond in the best way that he knew how, and he would also respond with love. Again, he is not certain how effective this strategy was.

He also pointed toward scripture as a significant source of support. Mika said that the principles that are found in the scripture are a part of him, that they could not be taken away from him. In addition, Mika said that the thought of historic figures like Nephi, Moroni, or Jesus was powerful. In addition, Mika stated that through routine and daily study of scripture, which was a requirement for all missionaries, he was able to manage and successfully complete his mission.

Robert

Robert is a 21 year old Hispanic-American male who served a 14-month mission that ended four months before this interview took place. Despite the fact that Robert did not serve the full 24 months in the field, this researcher believed that Robert's perspective would be as beneficial as the other 9 respondents. Robert is originally from the southeastern section of the United States; however, he served a mission in the south-central section of the United States. I interviewed Robert in my home on the afternoon of December 22, 2012. Robert is the last of the respondents that I interviewed.

Robert described his mission as a joyful experience, one that he found to be a unique opportunity. In addition, Robert said that the friendships that he established while in the field are things that he remembers most about the experience. He added that these are “good relationships” that will endure for the remainder of his life. Robert pointed out that, had he not gone on the mission, he would have never made these friendships. Finally, he said that he became friends with Church members and non-Church members alike. In addition to the relationships that he established while on the mission, Robert also associates personal and spiritual growth with his mission: he felt as though his experience as a missionary “stretched” him, that it caused him to improve in terms of spiritual and emotional development.

Robert spent less time talking about the service component of his mission and focused more on the spiritual and emotional growth that he experienced while he was in the field. He spoke at length about this growth, talking about his impressions of the work, and how he handled that work, during the first six months of his mission. He also identified a threshold, a point during which he began to look differently at the work, how he managed the work, and how he responded emotionally and spiritually to the work. Robert stated, “...the first six months were really challenging.” In addition, he felt that the mission really challenged him; however, his thoughts toward the mission itself remained unchanged. He also mentions that his attitudes toward missionary work began to change as he moved from his first to second area. Robert attributes this change in attitude to his personal work habits. He stated that for the first 7.5 months, he “remained in the backseat.” That is, he deferred to his senior companion; he allowed his senior to control the direction of the mission. Of those first 7.5 months, Robert stated, “My senior companion, you know, he’s got it.” However, Robert received a special assignment from his mission president, one that caused him to assume more responsibility for the daily functions

of his mission. It was during this change in assignments that Robert reported that he felt that it was time to push himself “a little harder” than he had during the first 7.5 months of his mission. Robert also reported that he maintained an attitude of “push harder” for the remainder of his mission. In addition, Robert shared a quote from one of the Church’s Elders: “If your mission’s not challenging, then it’s not worth it.”

Robert mentioned that throughout his mission he maintained a loving and caring attitude toward everyone that he encountered; however, he said that the personal changes that he experienced were his recognition of the importance of certain rituals and practices, namely church attendance, church-related activities, and the study of scripture. It was during his mission that he began to understand “the why” – or the deeper meaning attached to studying scripture and attending church meetings. Robert stated that as he studied scripture while on his mission, he gained a deeper personal connection to his practices. This deeper, personal understanding of those practices allowed him to experience those rituals in a richer, more profound manner.

Robert shared his thoughts on what he considers a successful mission. He said that a successful missionary is self-motivated, that he understands his true purpose as a missionary, and that the missionary must know how to use his time effectively. Robert also focused on other types of attributes that he felt were necessary for a successful missionary. One of those attributes is maintaining a loving attitude with people who are indifferent. He said that another necessary component for success in the field is the missionary must understand his true purpose for being on the mission: the missionary must recognize the deeper meaning of the mission. According to Robert, a missionary’s actions cannot be robotic. He adds that a mission is unsuccessful if the missionary is the same person at the end of his mission that he was at the beginning of the mission. Robert even shared a story in which a former companion describes a nightmare. In the

nightmare, the companion returns home the same person. He did not experience any type of spiritual growth while on the mission. Robert stated that he also measured success in the field by the extent to which he incorporated Christ-like attributes into himself and his work. He also said that at the close of his mission, he was the same “Robert,” but that he was also aware that he had experienced a certain amount of spiritual and emotional growth.

Robert also identified a number of coping responses to the stressors that he encountered while deployed in the field. He said that he relied heavily on his spiritual beliefs while on his mission; he indicated that this was one of his major strategies. Robert stated that this reliance on spiritual beliefs provided him with sufficient motivation to remain in the field. He expanded on this concept by saying that prayer and the thought of Jesus, particularly that Jesus was available to him for support, were the two most frequent strategies that he relied on. In addition, he said that he relied heavily on his study of scriptures, particularly the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Pearl of Great Price. Robert said that through such frequent study of scripture he was able to apply those lessons to his work as a missionary. Robert also said that as a result of his heavy and frequent reliance on scripture, he was able to gain a deeper connection to scripture.

In addition to spiritual practices, Robert said that the Church members were very supportive of the missionaries, namely by giving them rides and feeding them. He also said that investigators were very supportive of him and of the other missionaries. Robert recounted a story in which he was suffering from a cold and that an investigator, without having to ask, provided him with cough medicine. He said that this particular investigator was like a mother to him and to his companion. Robert mentioned another investigator who was very supportive of him and other missionaries, “There was another gentleman...who did absolutely everything for the missionaries...he fed us very often...so he was just a huge support for us.”

Robert also received support and encouragement from his companions, other missionaries, including zone leaders, and support from his mission president. He referenced an e-mail that he sent to his mission president at the end of a very difficult week, a week in which Robert felt that he had not accomplished much of anything. In his response, the mission president gave him some reassurance: “You just do what you’re supposed to do and you let the Lord do the rest.” Robert identifies this e-mail message, among others, as a significant source of support and encouragement. In addition to the mission president, Robert said that his companions were also very supportive. He mentioned that having open conversations, particularly about stressors, was a significant source of support and relief (from those stressors). Robert stated that he had one companion with whom he developed significant rapport. The companionship was such that Robert felt that he could speak openly about stressors and about any other concerns. Robert said, “...I can remember, you know, just saying, ‘Hey, Elder, can I talk to you for a minute?’ This would turn into hours of just sitting down and having a really good conversation, a good heart-to-heart. That really helped out a lot.”

Robert also mentioned that the thought of family and friends served as a means of support while he was in the field. He recounted a story in which, prior to his mission, Robert forged a friendship with two missionaries, both of whom visited him when he began training at the Missionary Training Center in Provo, UT. During that visit, he had his picture taken with these friends and he carried the picture with him throughout his mission. Robert stated, “It was just to remind me that I wanted to be just like those two missionaries.” This picture served as another source of support for Robert.

Composite Thematic Textural-Structural Descriptions

Though individual descriptions of their perceptions of the mission varied somewhat from respondent to respondent, the group's consensus is that the mission was a positive experience. The words and phrases that they used to describe their perceptions included "the best two years", "it's not what I expected", "incredible", "amazing", and "grand." At least three respondents referred to the mission as a challenge; one respondent said that it was "daunting." Many of the respondents also commented that they viewed their mission as an opportunity for personal and spiritual growth as well as an opportunity to serve others. The respondents also agreed that the experience, though positive, was challenging. Nearly all of the respondents reported that they had encountered some type of difficulty with a number of their interpersonal relationships, usually a companion. Most of the respondents reported feelings of self-doubt when they encountered limited or no progress. Some of the respondents stated that their expectations for the work and their understanding of their roles as missionaries did not correspond to the actual nature of missionary work. In addition, many of the missionaries reported another difficulty was the occasional encounter with combative people, usually non-Church members who expressed negative or "rude" opinions about Mormons. Many of the respondents expressed distaste when facing rejection from non-Church members; they also reported feelings of sadness and disappointment when investigators dropped out of their lessons, despite the fact that they had been progressing in these lessons. The majority of the respondents stated only that they found these negative sorts of events and challenges to be difficult or unpleasant. At least two of the respondents said something positive resulted from these events, or that these types of events had no negative consequences on them and on their progress.

The respondents also viewed transfers favorably and many of the respondents described the experience as "bittersweet." However, with transfers came any number of feelings. Most of the respondents reported feelings of anxiety as they anticipated transfers early in their mission. One respondent even reported suffering from stomach cramps as a result of the anxiety that came with his first transfer. However, as the mission progressed, the respondents reported that they became accustomed to the routine of re-locating to a new area. They described the process as "nerve-wracking", "exciting", and "fun." Some of the respondents felt that the entire process of transfers disrupted their work routine, due in no small part to the tasks of getting accustomed to a new location, to a new companion, and to new investigators. Several of the members saw transfers as an opportunity to "start fresh" or to "re-introduce" themselves to a new group of people. All of the respondents expressed difficulty in letting go of relationships, particularly companions and investigators. At least one respondent said that he understood and appreciated the higher purpose of transfers: he said that transfers were inspired by God. He also said that he viewed transfers as means of working with new people, perhaps because God intended him to make contact with a particular family or with a particular investigator.

The respondents saw the mission as an opportunity for growth, development, or change. The "growth" could be their own personal and spiritual growth, or it could be growth that they witnessed in other people. Several of the respondents said that witnessing growth in others was "miraculous", "exciting", or "fun." These same respondents verbalized an appreciation for the spiritual significance of these changes. In terms of personal changes and growth, many of the respondents also suggested that the primary purpose of the mission was to encounter some type of personal change, to say that they returned home a "changed person." In addition, a majority of the respondents said that one of the most notable changes was in their self-perception. They no

longer viewed themselves as subject-matter experts; they began to view themselves as humble servants. They also believed that they were "tools in the hand of the Lord", thus they did not take credit for any of the miracles or other positive outcomes that occurred as the result of their missionary work. A significant minority of the respondents also talked about their realization that God's way is the best way. In other words, each of these respondents made the discovery at some point in their mission that their way of solving problems or of managing their affairs was not the best way. The best way, according to these respondents, was God's way. Several of the respondents mentioned that they had to "get over" themselves before they could fully engage in missionary work. At least one respondent spoke of his realization and belief that God required that the missionaries "give 100%" to their missions.

Changes and personal growth usually resulted from at least one of the following events: the respondent experienced growth after having successfully managed some difficult event or interpersonal conflict; the respondent experienced growth as the result of studying scripture, engaging in frequent and sincere prayer, and/or the practice of some principle; or the respondent experienced growth as the result of working in the "real world" with "real people." At least three respondents reported having difficulties with a companion. In each case, the respondent reported that he had successfully navigated through the difficulty, even though it may not have been a pleasant experience. These respondents learned that they were able to manage and resolve interpersonal difficulties. Nearly all of the respondents reported that as they studied scripture, as they embraced Gospel principles, and as they relied more frequently on sincere prayer, many of them reported a change in their outlook on the mission, including the people with whom they worked and whom they served. Many of these respondents reported feeling a more intense and unconditional love for people and many of these respondents said that they also became non-

judgmental. Several of the respondents said that, with routine study of scripture, and with the application of the lessons from the Gospel and from the Book of Mormon, those scriptures became "real" or "three-dimensional." Most of the respondents reported that they developed a more profound respect for scripture, for moral living, and for obedience to God's commandments and instructions. A number of the respondents said that they felt like they understood the "spirit" of the law, that they were no longer "going through the motions" of reading scripture, of observing the commandments, and of attending church.

Some of the respondents discussed their inability to "connect" with their investigators, stating that early in their mission they viewed these people impersonally, as statistics, or as "baptisms waiting to happen." Some of the respondents reported that they focused on their own personal goals, rather than on the "humanity" of their investigators. However, in working with investigators, many of the respondents also reported feeling that they had gained a better appreciation for the people whom they served. Many of the respondents said that usually by the midpoint of their missions they had also recognized and began to respect their investigators' personal agency; the respondents said that they realize that the goals and decisions that investigators set for themselves were more meaningful (to those investigators) than the goals that the missionaries set for them. One respondent who was placed in an area with a largely Hispanic population said that he often felt that the language barrier prevented him from establishing a closer bond with his investigators; however, after he attained a certain level of linguistic proficiency in Spanish, he found it easier to connect with investigators. Several respondents said that the people, their personal history, and their expectations became "real." One respondent in particular discussed his inability to appreciate the complexity of his investigators, nor could he appreciate the difficulties that they had experienced throughout their lives. Through patience and

routine work with this investigator, the respondent said that he became aware of the complexity of this investigator's life and problems.

Nearly all of the respondents reported feelings of anxiety and frustration during the early stages of their mission. These feelings were often the result of a perceived lack of progress on the part of the investigator. Again, many of the respondents spoke about their realization that people have their own agency, that they (as missionaries) cannot compel anyone to have faith, to follow certain rituals, or to seek out baptism. With this realization, according to many of the respondents, came a certain peace of mind and an unconditional positive regard for the investigator. At least one respondent said that a great deal of peace came with the realization that God's plans vary from person to person; he said that this realization caused him to love people more deeply and it also improved his understanding of God. In making this discovery about the investigators' freewill, many of the respondents said that they also began to understand that it was their duty as missionaries to love and support people regardless of the choices that those people made. In addition, many of the respondents echoed the belief that their role as missionary was not necessarily to facilitate peoples' conversion to Mormonism. Their role was to bring people closer to Jesus Christ by loving those people without condition and by serving those people regardless of their beliefs and regardless of their life choices.

In speaking of their perceptions of what constitutes a successful mission, their responses were similar. It was the group's consensus that "success" in the field was not measured by how many people a missionary baptized. One respondent felt that baptisms that a missionary performed would contribute to the overall success of the mission; however, he did not say that baptisms were the only indicator or the main indicator of success. The group's consensus is that "success" is determined by a number of other factors. Many of the respondents said that the

missionary himself must undergo a positive personal change in order for him to consider his mission as a success. Most of the respondents felt that “success” meant helping others. One respondent mentioned that at the end of every day, he asked himself if he did everything that he could to help people. In addition to assisting people, other responses centered on the degree to which a missionary loved and cared for people. Other responses addressed the extent to which the missionary put his heart into the work. At least three missionaries said that "success" was a matter of obedience, that "success" was determined by the extent to which the missionary followed God's directives.

The respondents identified several different sources of support, all of which made it possible for them to complete their missions successfully. Sources of support could be either internal or external. An internal source of support is an image, a message, or a concept that the respondent would reflect on during the course of the mission. An external source of support is a person who provided some counsel or encouragement. In addition, the theme of "support" has one sub-category: "coping skills." A coping skill is an activity that the missionary could engage in with or without the assistance of another person. A coping skill could be a personal attribute, a conversation with another person, a prayer, scripture study, application of principles, a meeting with cohorts, or even recreational activities.

A majority of the respondents engaged in some form of internal support. Respondents who relied on internal sources of support usually engaged in some form of positive self-talk. For example, respondents who were facing rejection or limited success in the field often reminded themselves that a miracle could be waiting around the corner. Other key phrases or messages include: "Keep moving forward" or "just get up and go a little further." In addition to positive self-talk, other respondents said that they relied on mental imagery, namely a beacon of light

which beckoned them to continue to move forward. At least one respondent said that it was helpful to reflect on Biblical figures such as Jesus, or on key figures from the Book of Mormon, namely Moroni and Nephi. Several of the respondents said that they focused on some aspect of Jesus, namely his love and his atoning sacrifice. At least half of the respondents said that reflecting on the Church was beneficial. Many of the respondents said that thoughts of their family, friends, or former companions also motivated them.

All of the respondents reported receiving support and motivation from sources outside of themselves. One of the most frequently-mentioned sources of support was the respondent's companion. Most of the respondents described at least one of their companions in overwhelmingly positive terms. In addition, the benefit of the companion, again according to most of the respondents, is that the companion offered emotional support, either by listening to the respondent as he vented frustration, or by talking through issues and difficulties with the respondent. Several respondents referred to their companions as friends. Many of the respondents said that the benefit of having a companion is that they (the companions) always supported them, even when they had a difference of opinions. Even though the respondents did not get along with all of their companions, they agreed that, generally speaking, their companions were sources of support.

Many of the respondents said that they received a tremendous amount of emotional support from their families, either through letters and e-mails, or through the infrequent phone calls twice a year. One respondent said that he felt as though his family was his "own personal cheering section." In addition, another respondent said that he received strong emotional support from his mother. He mentioned that in a conversation with his family one Christmas, his father said, "We all love you, but your mother loves you the most." This respondent said that this

message provided him with strong emotional support. One respondent said that, though he appreciated his family's support, he did not necessarily require letters and phone calls in order to feel that support. Rather, the assurance that he received from his father before leaving on his mission sustained him throughout the course of his mission. This respondent knew that his family was being taken care of. Many of the respondents also relied on their zone or district leaders and their mission president for support. Though this support came less frequently for some respondents, in many cases this type was no less effective. One respondent mentioned that one particular e-mail of encouragement from his mission president provided him with sufficient support and motivation for the balance of his mission. Another respondent discussed his personal relationship with his mission president: he was provided the opportunity to work closely with his mission president and to learn from his mission president. This relationship became a substantial source of support for this respondent. Other missionaries reported that they often relied on their zone leaders and district leaders when they needed to vent frustration or when they needed guidance. A respondent reported that one of his zone leaders often validated his frustration or offered him encouragement, particularly when this respondent faced a string of setbacks.

Many of the respondents said that the missionaries with whom they served (not necessarily their companions) were a source of external support. Some of the respondents felt that it was beneficial to hear of other missionaries' stories of success or difficulties. Hearing these stories provided them with either validation or encouragement, particularly if they had experienced setbacks. Many of the respondents reported that investigators were a significant motivating factor and a significant source of support. A number of respondents said that their entire purpose for going on a mission was the investigator. One respondent discussed a time in which he did not feel like getting out of bed one morning; he said that the previous day had been

difficult and he reported feeling "exhausted." However, when he began to think about the investigators, he was motivated to get out of bed and start his day. A number of respondents also mentioned that the investigators cared for them, fed them, and always tried to see that they (the missionaries) were being cared for. One respondent talked about a time in which he was suffering from a cold. During a lesson with an investigator, this respondent continued to cough. Without saying anything, the investigator left the room and returned very shortly with some cough medicine for him. At least one respondent mentioned that the investigators were always glad to see him.

A majority of the respondents said that their relationship with God/Jesus was their most effective and significant source of support. Many of the respondents also reported that their prayers became more frequent and more fervent, that they not only learned how to ask for help, but they also learned how to listen for God or Jesus's response. One respondent, after identifying several different coping strategies, said that those strategies always led back to one source: God. Another respondent described a rich prayer life which developed over the course of his mission. He said that he often felt as though God was walking beside him at several points during his mission. In addition to prayer, many of the respondents said that studying scripture was another source of support and motivation.

Two respondents mentioned personal attributes as a means of coping with setbacks and other difficulties. One respondent mentioned that he was an optimist and that this personal attribute was an asset to him. Another respondent identified a personal attribute that he referred to as "patient endurance." This attribute allowed him to endure a difficult situation for a period of time. Then, once he was clear of that situation, he would sort through his feelings. At least three respondents reported that they would engage in certain types of humorous behavior in order to

alleviate stress or boredom. One of the respondents said that he and a companion sometimes engaged in "towel battles" - they would attempt to pop one another with their bathroom towels. Another respondent said that he and a companion would sometimes visit an electronics or sporting goods store. He said that talking about the most recent webcam or looking at some piece of sporting equipment helped him in coping with stress or frustration. One respondent said that, in an attempt to stave off boredom and to break up the monotony of tracting, he and his companion would change the wording of their greetings.

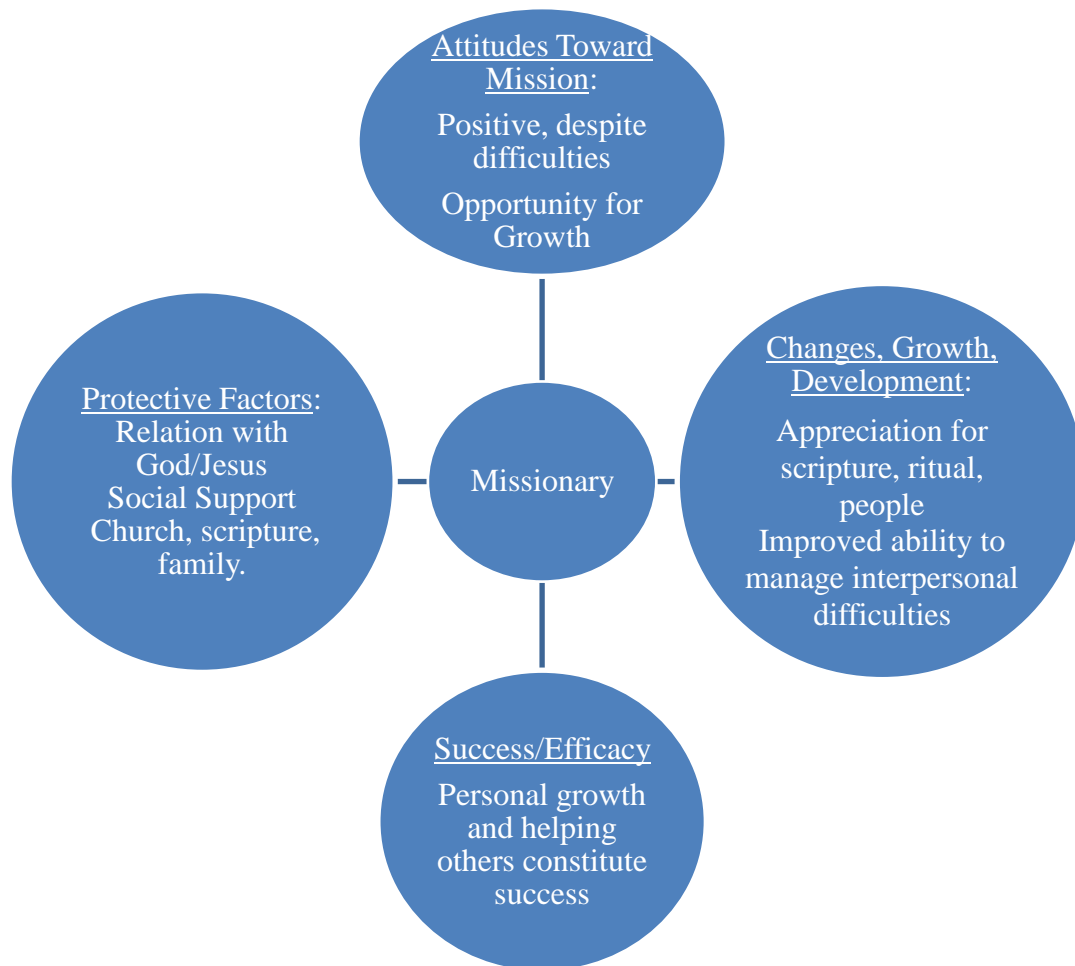


Figure 2: A Composite Textural-Structural Description of the Lived Experience of Returned Mormon Missionaries

I have included a graphic representation of the composite textural structural description (see Figure 2). The four themes are shown as forces acting on the missionary. The themes of Attitudes Toward Mission, Protective Factors, and Changes, Growth, and Development are shown above and beside the missionary and they represent forces that supported and sustained the missionary while he was in the field. The fourth theme, Success and Efficacy, is located below the missionary. It is the outcome of the mission.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, OUTCOMES, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter summarizes the research from this phenomenological study. This chapter also presents a summary of the preceding chapters, including a summary of the data that was presented in chapter 4. The outcomes of this study are presented as the themes that emerged from the data analysis. I then compare these themes to the research that was presented in chapter two of this paper. In concluding this chapter, I present the implications of this study to the education and training of missionaries and for future research in the area of missionaries' coping strategies.

Summary

This phenomenological qualitative study sought to describe the lived experience of returned Mormon missionaries. This study also attempted to identify and understand those factors that protected missionaries from experiencing burnout. The basic research question was thus: What are the lived experiences of returned Mormon missionaries? The study originally intended to determine the extent to which missionaries encounter burnout while deployed in the field. However, during the data analysis process, it was determined that the respondents did not encounter burnout. In addition, the respondents did encounter any number of stressors; however, they relied on any number of coping mechanisms which allowed the respondents to successfully perform their duties.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I provided an overview of the need for this study. I reviewed burnout's effect on people who are employed in the helping professions, namely clergy and healthcare providers. I asserted that, given the various duties of clergy and religious missionaries, and given the long hours that they routinely work, they face an increased risk of

experiencing burnout (Francis et al., 2009). Given the nature of the disorder – that it can affect a person’s mental hygiene, physical health, career trajectory, and the overall quality of service that the person delivers – we cannot ignore the hazards that burnout poses to such an essential group of people (Freudenberger, 1974; Kahill, 1988; Lee & Ashforth, 1990). At the end of chapter one, I also provided a list of operationally-defined terms at the end of chapter one.

In chapter two of this dissertation, I compiled a literature review that was organized thematically. In this review, I examined a number of different areas related to mental health, religion, and the helping professions. I began by providing a brief history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, otherwise known as the Mormon Church. I also provided an overview of burnout, focusing not only on the definition and symptoms of burnout, but I also included a brief history of the study of burnout and a discussion of which types of professionals are more likely to experience burnout. I concluded the review of literature with a brief discussion of the threats that burnout and work-related stress pose to clergy.

In chapter three I identified and discussed the research method that I planned to use during the process of the study. I discussed the nature of qualitative research, focusing on the research method known as phenomenology. I briefly discussed my rationale for the sampling method and I also discussed the factors that would qualify a person to participate in this study. I also presented a conceptual model which guided not only the data collection process, but also the development of the guiding questions. I explained the role of the guiding questions, namely that they would assist me in bracketing the data. I provided a summary of my role as the researcher throughout the course of the analysis process. In order to describe my qualitative lens, I also provided some personal background information, namely my perception of people of

various religious backgrounds, my education, and my work history. I also discussed my experiences with burnout. I identified a peer-debriefer and member of the community of practice, and then discussed how this person would assist with establishing credibility; I also contrasted the concept of credibility with the quantitative concepts of reliability and validity. I reviewed the process for maintaining confidentiality and I also provided a discussion of informed consent. I discussed receiving approval from LSU's Institutional Review Board for this research project and then I explained the details and the outcome of the pilot study. I mentioned that upon presenting the results of the pilot study, my committee asked that I add two additional questions to my set of guiding questions. These two new questions were intended to gather information about the returned missionaries' perceptions of transfers and of a failed mission. I then discussed potential ethical dilemmas. I also identified and discussed the modified van Kaam method, which provided the means for organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing the data.

In chapter four I discussed the modified van Kaam method in greater detail, paying particular attention to how this method assisted with not only the organization of the data, but also the analysis and the synthesis of the data. I spoke again about the role of the peer-debriefer/community of practice member and of the ten participants in the validation of the transcribed interviews. One participant requested that I make minor changes to his interview. After making these changes, I reported that the peer-debriefer and I accepted the transcripts as valid. I also provided details about the creation of the individual meaning units, that these units were based on each respondent's transcribed interviews. I then discussed the emergent themes that resulted from the data analysis. I originally uncovered five themes; however, after meeting with the peer-debriefer and discussing the five themes, we determined that one of the themes

should be condensed into a sub-theme. I reported and discussed a total of four themes: attitudes toward the mission; changes, growth and development; success and efficacy; and protective factors, motivation, and coping. I also discussed these themes with the peer debriefer, who then affirmed that these four themes were supported by each participant's descriptions. I created ten individual thematic textural-structural descriptions based on each participant's transcribed interviews. Finally, I created a composite thematic textural-structural description based on the individual thematic textural-structural descriptions, thus creating a unified description of the lived experience of returned Mormon missionaries.

The data analysis revealed that the returned missionaries viewed their missions positively, even though many of the returned missionaries experienced difficulties, hardships, and challenges. A number of the missionaries recognized the benefits that their mission had on their lives and on the lives of countless other people. A majority of the missionaries reported that they continue to reap benefits of the mission. In addition, the returned missionaries reported that, as a result of their mission, they have gained numerous lifelong friends. Most of the returned missionaries confirmed that they viewed the mission itself as an opportunity for growth and many of the returned missionaries viewed routine transfers as a generally positive experience, though most of them acknowledged the difficulty in leaving behind close friends and in becoming acquainted with new locations and new people. The returned missionaries reported various types of coping skills and they also identified various sources of support and encouragement. It was the group's consensus that each returned missionary had served effectively and, thus, served a successful mission. A majority of the missionaries defined "successful mission" in a similar fashion, though their definitions of "failed mission" varied slightly from respondent to respondent.

Outcomes

I have reported the outcomes of the study as themes that emerged while analyzing the data. I then compared these findings to the information that was discussed in the literature review. Upon analyzing the data, it should be noted that none of the respondents in this study stated that they had experienced burnout nor did they express concern that burnout was an inevitability. Within six months of their mission, many of the respondents indicated that they had begun to experience a certain amount of disillusionment with the work and they also identified instances in which they questioned their own personal efficacy. However, upon learning appropriate coping skills, and upon adopting a different understanding of the nature of their work, the respondents indicated that they were able to overcome the feeling that they were not effective missionaries. They spoke at length of various stressors that they encountered while in the field; however, none of the respondents mentioned that they ever felt as though they did not like the work or that they dreaded doing the work. In addition, did they mention that they had begun to resent the people with whom they worked or the people they served. In no instances did the respondents speak ill of the investigators.

During the process of analyzing the data, it became clear that the respondents' experiences conformed to a timeline (see figure 3). At the beginning of the mission, respondents reported feelings and expectations about the mission, namely that the work, though difficult, would produce immediate and visible results. One respondents said that he had been given the impression that he would encounter an abundance of miracles. Many other respondents said that they felt that they were, essentially, subject-matter experts and their role was to educate people on the Church's message. Usually within 6 months of beginning the mission, the respondents reported feeling disillusioned with the work and they often questioned their personal efficacy.

As a result of this mismatch between their expectations and the true nature of the work, the respondents said that they would begin to re-evaluate their roles and their expectations of the missions. At the conclusion of their mission, the respondents reported that they had a firm grasp on the true nature of missionary work and on their roles as missionaries.

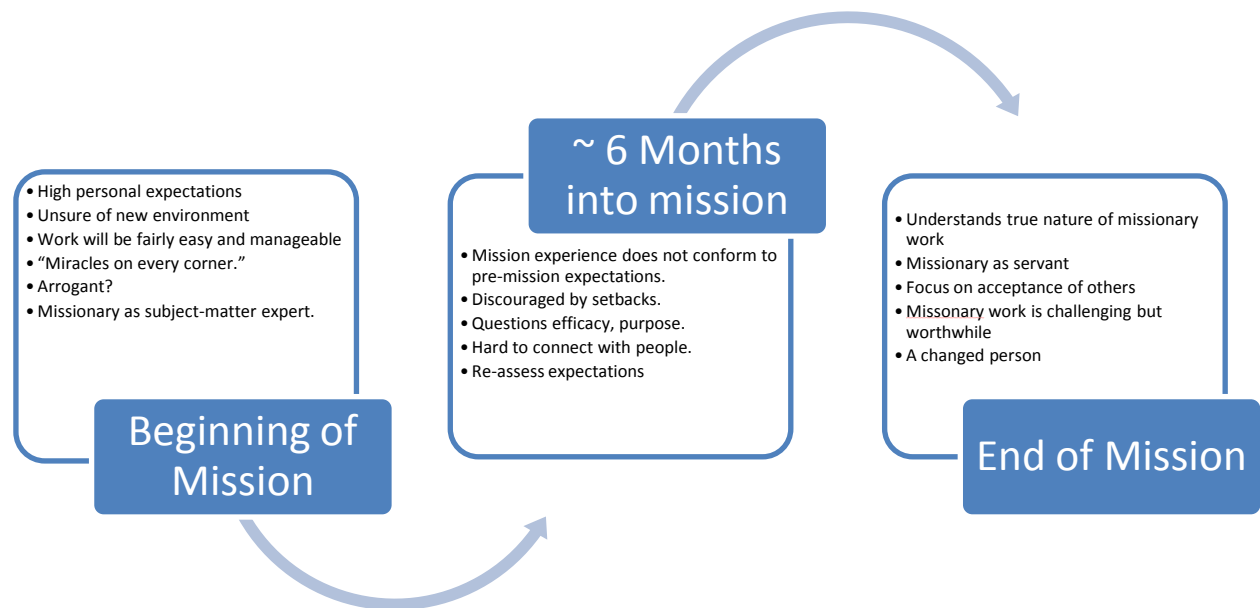


Figure 3: Timeline of the Interplay Between Respondents' Experiences and the Development of Their Perceptions While in the Field

Attitudes Toward the Mission

This study confirmed that each of the respondents viewed their mission favorably, that each respondent felt that he had fulfilled his obligations while serving, and that each respondent felt that he had been effective. Though each of the respondent's views on the mission differed in some degree, one common theme is that all respondents viewed their mission experience as a positive , life-changing event, and that it provided them with an opportunity for personal growth. They identified growth in a number of areas, namely improvement in their ability to manage interpersonal relationships and in their views of the Church, its teachings, and its

practices. In addition, this study confirmed that the respondents felt that their ties to the Church, its teachings, and to people in general had also been strengthened. Indeed, the respondents felt a sense of community and a desire to continue with their work, even though that work was at times difficult. Though I was not able to locate any research that addressed missionaries' perception of their work, I did locate studies that addressed employee commitment to organizations. According to Mowday and Steers (1979), employees who identify with the goals and values of their organizations are more likely to remain with that organization. In addition, those employees who feel a sense of community with their co-workers are equally likely to remain affiliated with that organization (Mowday & Steers, 1979).

The study also confirmed that many of the respondents encountered a bittersweet aspect of their mission, namely in terms of their routine transfers. However, despite these bittersweet feelings, the respondents felt compelled to continue with their work. The consensus among the respondents is that transfers were indeed a positive experience and the respondents also understood the purpose of transfers. However, each of the respondents confirmed that there were definite drawbacks to transfers. Most of the respondents said that they did not like leaving behind close associations and familiar locations. The respondents did not enjoy leaving behind good companions, faithful investigators, and supportive Church members. In addition, many of the respondents reported that it took them some time, usually a week, to become accustomed with their new location, the new people, and their new companions. However, despite these routine changes in location, companions, and other personal associations, the study confirmed that the respondents did not feel discouraged from performing their duties. The respondents verbalized an understanding of the necessity of transfers: They (transfers) were inspired by God. Throughout the course of the interviews, the respondents discussed the importance of obedience

to God and to the teachings of the Church. They also spoke routinely of focusing on the needs of those whom they served. Because respondents understood the rationale behind bittersweet experiences like transfers, they were able to set aside the personal difficulties that accompanied transfers.

Changes, Growth, and Development

This study confirmed that the returned missionaries experienced a number of personal benefits as a result of their mission. One of these benefits was personal and spiritual growth and the respondents identified a number of areas in which the mission experience caused them to experience personal and spiritual growth. The respondents said that, as a result of their mission, they were able to successfully navigate through some challenge or obstacle and their ability to manage disputes or antagonistic behavior had improved. Many of the respondents discussed a change in their perception of themselves, namely that they began to view themselves as servants. The respondents also admitted that, by the end of their mission, they had realized that they had continued to learn about the nature of missionary work throughout the course of their mission, that learning was on-going. This realization came in direct contrast to the attitude that many of the respondents reported at the beginning of their mission, that they had the missionary work "figured out" and that they were on their mission to teach others about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The respondents also reported that their perceptions of people changed. They viewed people as real, complex, and worthy of love and acceptance. Again, this viewpoint was in direct contrast to the perspective that many respondents described at the beginning of their missionary experience. Many of the respondents said that they also realized that they had as much to learn

from their investigators as their investigators had to learn from them. So rather than assuming that they were here to educate the masses, the respondents reported that they began to view themselves as servants and they actively sought ways of helping others. Along that vein, many of the respondents said that they began to recognize the agency or free will of their investigators. Rather than prescribing attitudes and behaviors for them, the respondents recognized the value of allowing their investigators to make their own choices in terms of those behaviors and attitudes that they wished to change.

Finally, the respondents reported that their understanding and appreciation for the principles that are found in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and in other sacred documents as well as their perceptions of prayer began to take on a new meaning. Many of the respondents said that they no longer felt that observance of the tenets of their faith was rote. One respondent described his behavior, prior to the mission, as robotic. A majority of the respondents said that in applying these basic tenets and by engaging in routine and sincere prayer, their experience of these things became richer and more profound. As many of the respondents said, these things became "real" or "three dimensional" as a result of having applied them to daily situations.

Protective Factors, Motivation, and Coping Skills

The respondents' answers varied in terms not only of their sources of support, but also in the extent to which each respondent relied on a particular resource. The respondents identified companions, colleagues, zone and district leaders, their mission president, Church members, investigators, and family as sources of support and motivation. Most of the respondents said that a very effective source of support and motivation was their companion. Many of the respondents talked about the value of having a companion who understood and validated their

thoughts and feelings. Many of the respondents agreed that some companions were more effective at supporting and motivating them than others. A significant number of the respondents said that the investigators and family members were very effective at supporting them and also in motivating them to continue with their work. Some of the respondents reported that colleagues, zone and district leaders, and their mission president were also very effective sources of support and motivation. The respondents said that it was helpful to hear from other colleagues when they experienced success or as they deal with difficulties. Zone and district leaders provided similar support, as did the respondents' mission presidents. In addition, some of the respondents felt that their mission presidents' wisdom and validation of their experiences were significant assets. Only a few of the respondents indicated that Church members were significant sources of support and motivation.

This study also successfully identified a number of coping strategies and other sources of support, all of which allowed the respondents to successfully withstand the various stressors that they encountered while on their mission. A majority of respondents identified certain concepts as protective factors and/or motivating factors. Examples of these concepts include God and Jesus, the mission experience (and the importance of the work), the Mormon Church and its teachings and its sacred texts, and the principles found within the Gospel. The degree to which respondents relied on these sources of support and motivation varied from respondent to respondent. In addition, respondents reported that they relied on some combination of these resources. A majority of the respondents also indicated that prayer and their relationship with God and Jesus were effective at insulating them against the stress of missionary work and in motivating them to continue with the work. Many of the respondents said that contemplating the importance of the work, the Church and its teachings, and Gospel principles were also effective

at insulating them against the stress of missionary work and in motivating them to continue their work.

These outcomes are consistent with research in the areas of burnout prevention and religious coping styles. According to research, individual coping strategies are among the most effective means of preventing and coping with burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). According to the respondents, the individual coping strategies identified above allowed each of them to respond effectively with stressors that could have resulted in burnout. In addition, Maton and Wells (1995) examined the effectiveness of religion as a means of supporting well-being. They focused the study on prevention, healing, and empowerment. In terms of prevention, religion can offer people access to social support, in terms of families, clergy, and other personnel. In addition, it was found that religion provides people with access to lifestyles and values that are important to the seeker. The study also revealed that religion offers “unique and powerful” means for positively influencing a person’s feelings and behaviors. In addition, Neighbors et al. (1982) determined that prayer was significant coping response in dealing with stress, and that informal social networks played a very important role in helping people cope with problems. A study that was conducted in 2010 suggested that faith maturity may likely help workers who are employed in Christian organizations to cope successfully with work-related demands and with stress (Harrowfield & Gardner, 2010). Faith maturity is defined as the extent to which an adherent applies the principles of his/her faith to daily life, living one’s faith in a manner that can be evidenced on a daily basis (Benson et al., 1993). This definition assumes that the person has a secure relationship with God. Finally, in a 1994 study, Ferraro and Koch determined that social support has a positive effect on people’s health. In that same study, the researchers also found that people who practice their faith are more likely to encounter positive health benefits.

In a study that was conducted in 2009, Bjorck and Kim wrote that missionaries who engaged in positive styles of religious coping, and who relied on co-workers and other affiliated personnel for support, experienced an increase in life satisfaction (Bjorck & Kim, 2009).

Success and Efficacy

This study also confirmed the respondents' assessment of their effectiveness as missionaries as well as their ideas of what constitutes a successful mission. Though their responses varied, the respondents defined their personal efficacy in terms of the degree to which their services and contributions benefitted others. In addition, this study determined that the respondents' perceptions of their personal efficacy were tied directly to the overall success of their mission. The consensus among the respondents is that a successful mission is determined not by how many people a missionary baptizes. Rather, a successful mission is determined by whether or not a missionary was able to help other people. In addition, many of the missionaries stated that some positive, personal change was necessary in order to say that they had successfully completed their mission. In fact, one respondent said that he felt that in order to have a successful mission, the missionary should return home as "a changed man." In addition to changing attitudes in terms of personal accomplishment and personal change, some of the respondents said that obedience to God's wishes is an important component to having a successful mission. Only one respondent felt that having conducted baptisms determined a missionary's success in the field; however, this respondent did point out that baptisms were not the only factor that determined a missionary's success.

Implications

The outcomes of this study will have a number of implications for the education and preparation of people who wish to work as missionaries. I have organized a discussion of these implications based on their relevance to preparation of missionaries for field service, and areas for future research in missionary coping and resiliency.

Implications for Training of Missionaries

One of the implications of this study is for organizations that educate and prepare religious missionaries for field service to provide a better understanding of the nature of field service. A majority of the missionaries described their time at the Missionary Training Center as a very positive experience. Indeed, they spoke very highly of their instructors, of the "spirit" of the Missionary Training Center, and of the high quality of the training. The reputation of the Missionary Training Center, particularly the reputation of its instructors and its method of training missionaries is impeccable. In addition to this praise, many of the returned missionaries indicated that their expectations of field service did not match the actual experience of field work. In addition, a number of missionaries indicated that their role expectations were different at the beginning of the field experience compared to their understanding of the true nature of their roles. For example, a number of returned missionaries indicated that by the middle of their mission, they had to adjust their understanding of the missionary's role. Another returned missionary stated that his preparation at the Missionary Training Center and his exposure to returned missionaries over the course of his life had given him the impression that missionary work would be relatively easy and that successful encounters occurred on a daily basis. One returned missionary speculated how much more effective he would have been had he realized sooner in his mission the true nature of missionary work. Many of the returned missionaries

reported feelings of disappointment and discouragement, and they often questioned their own personal efficacy as a result of the disparity between their expectations of the field work and the true nature of the field work. Missionary training centers, whether affiliated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or with other organizations, should make every effort to provide realistic images of the missionary experience to anyone who is being trained for fieldwork. During any "train the trainer" sessions, instructors would be given directives to provide their students with balanced accounts of missionary experiences. In other words, the instructors would balance stories of positive experiences with stories of challenging experiences. The instructors should also be encouraged to refrain from painting a dismal image of the difficulties that are experienced while in the field. Rather, instructors should use words such as "challenge" or "opportunity for growth" as they describe difficult situations or negative experiences. Using this type of language when describing difficult situations would show the missionaries-in-training that the situations, though difficult, can be overcome. In addition, staff members who are involved in missionary preparation work should consistently portray the work as challenging, though rewarding. If staff members give conflicting reports on their experiences in the field, or if they only emphasize the positive experiences, or if they exaggerate some aspects of their description of the mission experience, this can have negative effects on inexperienced missionaries who are just arriving in the field: they could become disillusioned and confused if their own experiences do not reflect the experiences that they learned about while being trained.

Most of the respondents reported feeling discouraged, disillusioned, or even depressed as they experienced difficulties that ranged from slow progress to nearly constant rejection. Given the unique nature of the work, namely that missionaries have limited contact with family and

other traditional sources of comfort and support, and that missionaries are working in unfamiliar locations with unfamiliar people, it becomes imperative that they identify sources of support sooner rather than later in their mission. Missionary training centers should provide additional education on potential sources of stress, including education on emotional burnout. These training centers should also provide additional education on effective means for coping with stress. According to the literature, missionaries are engaged in high-touch, people-intensive work, and are thus likely to suffer from anxiety as a result of the nature of that work (Bjorck and Kim, 2009; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Greer & Wethered, 1984; Jackson et al., 1986; Leiter & Maslach, 1988; Maslach, 1982; Van Tonder & Williams, 2009). In addition to providing missionaries-in-training with education and information on work-related anxiety and burnout, these training centers should also be overt in educating its students on effective forms of coping with occupation-related stress. A majority of the respondents in this study reported that social support, frequent prayer, and the practice of certain religiously-oriented rituals and principles were the most effective means for coping with anxiety and discouragement, among other difficulties and challenges. This information is consistent with what is found in the literature in terms of religious styles of coping. At least two studies have demonstrated that perceived support from a religious denomination is an effective means for coping with occupation-related stress (Ferraro & Koch, 1994; Neighbors et al., 1982). Other studies have shown that interpersonal relationships, particularly family, friends, and community attachment are particularly effective in helping cope with stress (Cohen et al., 1997; Cohen & Wells, 1985; Leavy, 1983; and Matton & Wells, 1995; Uchino et al., 1996). Maton's study also reinforced the notion that spiritual support from God is beneficial in coping with stressful situations (Maton, 1989).

Implications for Research

According to Bjorck and Kim (2009), there is not an abundance of research in the area of coping strategies of religious missionaries. A number of research projects should be conducted among the various populations in the missionary community, giving priority to conducting a similar study with female missionaries who are in the same age group. It would be worthwhile to compare the various sources of support that religious missionaries receive with those sources of support that non-religious missionaries receive. It would also be beneficial to determine whether coping strategies differ among female religious missionaries, male religious missionaries, older missionaries, missionaries who identify as ethnic minorities, and religious missionaries who are married. It would also be beneficial to determine whether coping strategies differ between religious missionaries and missionaries who are employed in non-religious organizations. Another worthwhile study would be to investigate the level to which coping strategies differ from religious missionaries of various denominations. One final area for additional research should be to examine and compare the coping strategies of missionaries who are living abroad with the coping strategies of missionaries who are working in their native countries.

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APPENDIX

Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, all LSU research projects using living humans as subjects or sampling or data sets not from humans, directly or indirectly will require IRB review, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This form helps the IRB determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.



Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert C. Mainwaring, Chairman
111 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.6692
F: 225.578.5933
rmainw@lsu.edu
lsu.edu/irb

Applicant: Please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts A-F, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please submit two copies of the completed application to the IRB Office or to a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee. Members of this committee can be found at: <http://research.lsu.edu/Compliance/Policies/Procedures/Instructions/ReviewBoard/22626329/Item24737.htm>

A Long-term Application Includes All of the Following:

- (A) Two copies of this completed form and two copies of parts B thru F.
- (B) A brief project description (600 words) to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your response to Parts B&C.
- (C) Copies of all instruments to be used.
- (D) If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.
- (E) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information).
- (F) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: <http://pnp.training.com/servlet/signUp.pl>
- (F) IRB Policy of Data Agreement: <http://research.lsu.edu/files/Item26774.pdf>

1) Principal Investigator: Errol Douglas Bordelon Rank: Doctoral Candidate
Dept: Human Resource Education Ph: 225-576-5748 E mail: Bordelon@lsu.edu

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each. If student, please identify and name supervising professor in this space.
Krisanna Machmes, PhD, Associate Professor, School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development, Supervising Professor for this project, Machmes@lsu.edu



3) Project Title: An Exploratory of the Lived Experiences of Returned Mormon Missionaries Serving in the Southwestern Section of the United States

Study Exempted By:
Dr. Robert C. Mainwaring, Chairman
Institutional: Review Board
Louisiana State University
205 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-6692 | www.lsu.edu/irb
Exemption Expires: 10/31/2015

4) Proposal? (yes or no) Yes If Yes, LSU Proposal Number _____
Also, if YES, either ☐ This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant
OR ☐ More IRB Applications will be filed later

5) Subject pool (e.g., Psychology students): Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons)
*Circle any "vulnerable populations" to be tested: ☐ Children ☐ The mentally impaired, pregnant women, the aged, etc. Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature: Errol Douglas Bordelon Date: 10/21/2014 (no per signature)

** I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changed, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time, the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action: Exempted <u>Yes</u> Not Exempted <u>No</u>	Section/Paragraph <u>2</u>
Signed Consent Waived/Declined <u>No</u>	
Reviewer: <u>Mark P. ...</u> Signature: <u>Robert C. Mainwaring</u> Date: <u>10/1/14</u>	

VITA

Errol Douglas Bordelon was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana to Gene and Martha Bordelon. He attended a Catholic elementary and high school in Baton Rouge and he earned his B.A. in history and French from Louisiana State University in 1995. That same year, he began working in state government. He later obtained an M.A. in community counseling in 2001 and began working as a mental health counselor at a local community clinic that specialized in the treatment of the chronically mentally ill. In 2003, Doug accepted a position with at a local university as a career counselor and, later, as a training and development/benefits coordinator.

In 2005, Doug earned his license in mental health counseling and he started a part-time, private practice, focusing on adults and teenagers who suffer from adjustment issues and low-grade depression. He completed a second master's degree in 2006, this time focusing in public administration. In the summer of 2006, Doug enrolled in a doctoral program at Louisiana State University's School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development. He continued to work full time in the field of human resource management. However, in the fall of 2011, Doug decided to focus solely on completing his doctorate. Over the next two years, he worked part time as an instructor, freelance writer, and he continued his counseling practice on a part-time basis. At the time of this writing, Doug has amassed nearly 12 years of experience in mental health counseling, public-speaking, and in the design and delivery of training. In addition, he will graduate with his Doctor of Philosophy in May 2013.