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Spiritual Conversion: A Study of Religious Change Among College Students

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This study examined the nature of spiritual conversion in a sample of 130 Christian college students. More specifically, this study offered a definition of spiritual conversion and tested it by comparing the ways in which spiritual conversion differs from both gradual increases in religiousness, and from no religious change. Spiritual converts, nonconverts who increased in religiousness gradually, and religious adherents who did not experience religious change were selected using a screening questionnaire. A questionnaire battery was used in the assessment of the research questions, and was supplemented with 10 interviews which provided personal examples of the students' religious experiences. There were significant differences between the religious change groups and the group not experiencing religious change in terms of their pre-change experiences, post-change experiences, and amount of pre-post change. However, the study did not strongly differentiate between spiritual converts and nonconverts who had experienced religious change. The theoretical implications of these results were discussed.

Within the social sciences, researchers have argued over the process of religious conversion for nearly a hundred years and have arrived at anything but a consensus. Attitudes toward the process have ranged from the positive view held by many of the early researchers (James 1961/1902; Starbuck 1899) to concerns that religious conversion is a form of thought reform presented by a few contemporary writers (Schwartz and Kaslow 1979). Definitions of conversion have ranged from a rapid personality change (Wallace 1956) to a "reorientation of the soul" (Nock 1933, cited in Snow and Machalek 1984). And finally, methods of studying the process have ranged from interviews to questionnaires to theoretical discussions.

Current conceptions of conversion have not adequately specified the process of conversion nor clearly demonstrated the effects of the conversion process on the self. There are some commonly identifiable features to religious conversions which will be discussed below, but no powerful overall explanation. This lack of a consensual explanation may be attributed to three factors. Previous research has generally failed to distinguish among different types of religious conversion experiences and, instead, grouped different converts together within a single sample. Also, previous research on religious conversion has not distinguished religious conversion from nonreligious ideological change or non-conversion religious change. And finally, previous research investigating the effects of conversion on psychosocial functioning have provided mixed results.

Instead of proposing a single theory for all types of conversion (e.g., Lofland 1977; Seggar and Kunz 1972), this paper will define one specific type of religious conversion — the spiritual conversion — and investigate the changes in the convert associated with it. Relig-

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ious conversion shall be defined as a radical change in the self in response to either emotional turmoil or enduring stress through which the self becomes identified with the sacred (Pargament 1996). Furthermore, the spiritual conversion shall be defined as one type of religious conversion in which the self becomes identified with a spiritual force (Pargament 1996).

In order to place these definitions in the context of previous research, we turn to the literature on religious conversion.

Previous Explanations of Conversion

As summarized by Hood, Spilka, Hunsberger, and Gorsuch (1996), research on religious conversion reflects either a "classic" or "contemporary" research paradigm. Classic definitions of the process draw heavily from Christian biblical conceptualizations of Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus (Richardson 1985). Religious conversion is characterized as a sudden or gradual process by which the self is radically transformed for the better. Predisposing psychological factors are often examined as precursors to the religious transformation. This perspective is evident in many of the early studies on conversion by Starbuck (1899), James (1961/1902), and Coe (1917). In contrast, the contemporary paradigm stresses a gradual, rational process of active search and self-realization. Contextual and situational factors are often examined as contributors to the course of the gradual process. This perspective appears to be a recent development within the fields of sociology and social psychology and represents a humanistic alternative to the determinism of the classic paradigm (see Richardson 1985).

Some recent models of the conversion process combine elements of the classic and the contemporary research paradigms (Richardson 1985). For example, some sociologists have developed and tested predictive models (Lofland 1977; Lofland and Stark 1965; Seggar and Kunz 1972) that characterize conversion as the result of personal predisposing factors and situational determinants. These models, however, have had limited success in predicting who will experience conversion, and have not provided a complete explanation of the conversion process (Seggar and Kunz 1972; Kox, Meeus, and Hart 1991).

Other conceptual attempts to bridge the classic and contemporary research paradigms identified by Hood et al. (1996) have included the specification of conversion "careers" (Richardson 1978) and the identification of conversion "motifs" (Lofland and Skonovd 1981). Lofland and Skonovd's motifs include six different types of conversion that differ on five different dimensions. The six types include both classic and contemporary conceptions of conversion and are labeled as intellectual, mystical, experimental, affectional, revivalist, and coercive. Hood et al. (1996) suggest that Lofland and Skonovd's (1981) typology of conversion motifs may prove theoretically broad enough to encompass the varied phenomena associated with the religious conversion, but at present it lacks empirical operationalization and verification.

The definition of religious conversion presented in this paper draws from the previous research in the classic paradigm on sudden or "crisis" conversions (Meadow and Kahoe 1984), includes elements characteristic of the contemporary paradigm, and corresponds closely to the "mystical" conversion motif presented by Lofland and Skonovd (1981). Consistent with the classic research paradigm, the spiritual conversion process entails a radical change following a period of stress; this change is intrapsychic, the change involves the sacred, and the change has identifiable effects on the mental health of the convert. Additionally, in line with the contemporary research paradigm the spiritual conversion process views the convert as actively seeking the conversion experience to resolve life difficulties.

Spiritual Conversion Involves Radical Change

While there exists a good deal of disagreement over the process of conversion, most researchers agree that it involves a radical change. In fact, in their survey of research on conversion, Snow and Machalek (1984) declared that "the notion of radical change remains at the core of all conceptions of conversion" (169). Starbuck's (1899) early investigation characterized conversion as a sudden outburst of religious life that changed the attitudes, habits, and consciousness of the convert. Likewise, James (1961/1902) described conversion as a change in "the habitual center of [a person's] personal energy" through which religious ideas take a central place in a person's consciousness.

Other writers have also agreed on the radical nature of the change involved in conversion (e.g., Lofland 1977; Heirich 1977; Ullman 1989) and have differentiated it from other less radical changes. To distinguish it from a conversion, which he labeled a "drastic change in life," Travisano (1970) described the process of alternation as a change in life which is easily accomplished and which grows out of existing behavior. Likewise, Gordon (1974) distinguished the radical discontinuity of life and identity experienced in conversion from consolidation, the adoption of an identity which is not radically discontinuous from a former identity.

Additionally, researchers from the contemporary paradigm have suggested that radical change is not something which simply occurs as a consequence of the conversion experience, it is a solution actively sought by the convert (Richardson 1985). Pargament (1996), writing from a coping perspective, conceives of the religious convert as someone who is experiencing great difficulty in his or her life. In an attempt to deal with the situation, the convert realizes that something is wrong. The old self and way of life are seen as inadequate, and the only solution is to seek a radical change: "Existence itself has become the problem and a fundamental change is called for. The object of conversion is to transform an entire life, to create a substantive change in both destinations and pathways of living." (Pargament 1997: 248). Thus, the convert is motivated to achieve a radical change. This conception of the conversion process thus blends the contemporary and classic conversion paradigms by portraying the convert as one who actively seeks and chooses radical change.

A study by Seggar and Kunz (1972), however, seems to argue with the notion that sudden conversion involves radical change. In this study, Seggar and Kunz studied new members of the Mormon church, and defined conversion as a change in group membership. From this study they concluded that conversion is a gradual process which unfolds when social circumstances are ripe, and that the change in the "converts" was not a change in core beliefs, but rather a slower developmental process whereby the individual became more and more identified with the Mormon Church.

The results of this study underscore one of the difficulties of previous research on conversion. Religious conversion has been equated with a change in religious group. As defined in this paper and by researchers such as Starbuck (1899), Heirich (1977), and others, religious conversion involves a change in the self and life, and may or may not include a change in group membership. Those who change religious groups experience widely varying degrees of change in self and life. Religious group changers can include religious converts, alternators (Travisano 1970), consolidators (Gordon 1974), and others who have changed groups for nonreligious reasons. By assuming that those who change religious group represent all converts, Seggar and Kunz's (1972) conclusion that conversion is not a radical process is cast into doubt. The more appropriate conclusion from this study is that joining a new religious group is not necessarily a radical change, and that joining a new religious group is not tantamount to a religious conversion (Meadow and Kahoe 1984).

Spiritual Conversion Follows a Period of Stress

Much of the research on sudden conversion suggests that it follows a period of stress or emotional difficulty. Starbuck (1899) noted that the preconversion state in adolescent converts involved a sense of sin, dejection, confusion, and depression which was resolved through conversion. James (1961/1902) also characterized conversion as a normal adolescent phenomenon which shortens this stressful period. As noted by James, "Emotional occasions . . . are extremely potent in precipitating mental rearrangements" (1961/1902: 166).

Nearly 50 years after Starbuck, Pratt (1946) reiterated this conception in his case studies of four converts. The notion that conversion often follows emotional turmoil and stress has also been noted in a number of theoretical discussions and literature reviews (e.g., Bragan 1977; Galanter 1982; Meadow and Kahoe 1984; Richardson and Stewart 1978; Schwartz and Kaslow 1979; Travisano 1970; Wallace 1956; Wooton and Allen 1983).

Recent researchers have documented this relationship of stress and emotional turmoil to subsequent sudden conversion experience. Examples include Nichol's (1974) study of Harvard/Radcliffe students, Galanter's work with Charismatics (1982), Gordon's (1974) study of members of the Jesus People, Levine and Salter's (1976) study of "fringe" religious groups such as the Hare Krishnas and the Unification Church, Rosen and Nordquist's (1980) study of a Yogananda Commune, Lofland's (1977) study of members of the Divine Precepts, and Wilson's (1972) study of Protestants all indicate that tension or emotional turmoil were prevalent preceding the conversion. In a recent study by Ullman (1989), during the two year period prior to the conversion, 80% of the converts reported serious distress including feelings of despair, doubts of self-worth, fear of rejection, and estrangement from others.

Finally, long-term stressors have also been linked to sudden religious conversions. For example, Ullman (1989) found that converts tended to have problematic relationships with their fathers. Also, Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) found an association between retrospective accounts of child-mother attachment and conversions. In particular, insecure-avoidant attachments were found to predict adolescent and adult sudden conversions.

Spiritual Conversion Involves a Change in the Self

A construct which has frequently been used in research on conversion is that of the self. In William James's landmark work *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, changes in the self are defined as a vital part of the process: "[Conversion is] the process, sudden or gradual, by which a self, hitherto divided and consciously wrong inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right superior and happy." (1961/1902: 160)

Others have also used the construct of self in their investigations of conversion (e.g., Coe 1917; Levin and Zegans 1974; Pratt 1946; Rhodes 1986; Ullman 1989). However, the question remains: to what does "self" refer? Here it is helpful to borrow from ego psychology:

The self includes . . . a system of ideas, attitudes, values, and commitments. The self is a person's total subjective environment; it is the distinctive center of experience and significance. The self constitutes a person's inner world as distinguished from the outer world consisting of other people and things (Jersild, cited in Hamachek 1985: 136).

This inner world includes beliefs about the self and beliefs about the world. The change in the self in conversion, therefore, is a change in the core elements of a person's beliefs about himself or herself (Travisano 1970; Gordon 1974; and Bragan 1977), and beliefs about the world around him or her (Galanter 1982; Heirich 1977).

Conversion and Mental Health

Most classic definitions of sudden conversion characterize the process as having neutral or positive emotional effects on the convert (Meadow and Kahoe 1984; Hood et al. 1996), but several investigations have characterized the conversion process as negative or even pathological. Included in this group are those studies such as Schwartz and Kaslow's (1979) which claimed that conversion is a result of dysfunctional family dynamics, Simmonds' (1977) study which viewed conversion as a result of an addictive personality, and Wooton and Allen's (1983) study which compared the conversion process to a schizophrenic decompensation.

However, these negative conclusions are contradicted by several other studies. Roberts' (1965) study found no correlation between neuroticism and conversion. Wilson's (1972) study indicated that converts reportedly felt significantly less distressed and more productive after their conversion experience. Paloutzian's (1981) study found that converts reported a significantly greater purpose in life following a conversion experience than nonconverts. Levine and Salter's (1976) interview study concluded that conversion provided a newfound meaning in life for converts. And finally, Nicholi (1974), in his study of 17 Harvard/Radcliffe students, reported several beneficial aspects to conversion. All but one stopped using drugs and alcohol, nearly 50% changed their career paths to helping professions, and most felt as if they possessed more spiritual resources, more tolerance and concern for others, less self-hatred, fewer feelings of hopelessness and despair, and less fear of death. Therefore, despite the fact that the results are not conclusive at present, there is evidence to suggest that religious conversions may have a positive effect on mental and emotional health.

Religious Conversion Involves the Sacred

One element that is neglected in the literature surrounding religious conversion is the term "religious." Most researchers do not specify whether the process is a uniquely religious one, or what role religion plays in the process; it seems one could just as easily have a religious conversion to a political movement or to a philosophical society. In fact, in many studies of religious conversion (Galanter 1982; Gordon 1974; Kox et al. 1991; Levine and Salter 1976; Lofland 1977; Paloutzian 1981) the term "religious" describes little more than the group to which one belongs or is identified. "Convert" itself is most commonly defined by researchers as a person who has changed religious affiliation within the past several years (Galanter 1982; Heirich 1977; Kox et al. 1991; Lynch 1978; Seggar and Kunz 1972; Simmonds 1977). Missing in these conceptions, however, is a reference to what it is about religion that makes a religious conversion different from ideological change (Toch 1955) or a secular conversion (Meadow and Kahoe 1984).

In the case of religious conversion, the change in the self is of a particular kind. Again, in the words of James, "To say that a man is 'converted' means . . . that religious ideas, previously peripheral in his consciousness, now take a central place, and that religious aims form the habitual centre of his energy" (1961/1902: 165). What one considers to be the sacred takes a central place in the convert's life and consciousness. The "convert" to a political movement, in contrast, does not experience a shift to a grounding in the sacred, but rather a focus on the secular. Such a conversion would be more akin to a change in ideology (Toch 1955) than a religious conversion. For the religious convert, the self becomes identified with the sacred (Pargament 1996). It is the sacred that informs the universe of discourse (Travisano 1970), is the basis for the convert's "root reality" (Heirich 1977), gives purpose to life, shapes identity, and occupies the central place in the life of the convert. A key question follows: What is the sacred to which a convert converts?

Spiritual Conversion Involves a Spiritual Force

At this point it is necessary to refer again to the concept of the spiritual conversion. Previous definitions of the sacred have included everything from God (Oates 1973) to one of Ullman's three possibilities (1989): a powerful authority figure who is perceived as an omnipotent father; a group of peers who offer a social network and loving acceptance; or an unconditionally loving transcendental object. Alternatively, Pargament (1996) offers three possibilities: the sacred object may be God's people or the whole of humanity (universal conversion), such that the person feels a greater sense of connection to the larger social world and feels a desire to help others; the sacred object may be a religious group or leader (religious group conversion); or the sacred object may be a spiritual force (spiritual conversion). It is the last of these which this study focuses on. In a spiritual conversion, the sacred is a spiritual force, identified as God, Christ, Allah, Buddha, or another to which the convert feels connected. This force is not only transcendent but is also a part of the convert's immediate experience (Pargament 1996). The convert feels in touch with the sacred spiritual force.

THE PRESENT STUDY

Previous research on religious conversion offers some empirical support for several elements of the proposed definition of spiritual conversion, including the concepts of radical change, change following stress or emotional turmoil, and change in the self. However, these studies have not specified three aspects of the spiritual conversion experience. The nature of the sacred as the object of devotion and grounding has not been specified. Is the sacred a spiritual force, a religious group, or something else? Also, the spiritual conversion has not been clearly distinguished from other types of religious change. And finally, it is unclear whether researchers' conceptualizations of religious conversion correspond to the personal accounts of individuals who have experienced religious conversion.

The present study seeks to investigate the proposed conceptualization of spiritual conversion and to address the weaknesses in previous research outlined above by focusing on two goals. The first goal is to determine the extent to which this conception characterizes the experience of spiritual converts. The second goal is to determine the ways spiritual conversion experiences differ from experiences of increased religiousness which do not qualify as conversion experiences, and from the experiences of religious individuals who have not undergone a change in their religiousness.

Hypotheses

Preconversion experiences (i.e., experiences during the six-month period before the conversion or increase in religiousness).

The Experience of Life Stress: It is hypothesized that spiritual conversion is precipitated by stressful life situations. This stress is manifested in one of two ways: either the convert experiences a number of objectively stressful life events before the conversion, or the person perceives his or her life as stressful and difficult. In comparison, nonconverts should experience less life stress than spiritual converts during a similar time period.

A Divided Sense of Self: The inner change associated with spiritual conversion begins with a previously incomplete or divided self manifested in three ways. Before the conversion, the person has negative feelings about the self, perceives the self to be limited, unreliable, and inadequate in the face of life's demands, and lacks a coherent and integrated sense of identity. In contrast, nonconverts should have more positive feelings about the self than spiritual converts during a similar time period.

A Motivation for Radical Change: It is hypothesized that before the spiritual conversion, the convert experiences life stressors, realizes that the self and present way of life are inadequate to deal with them, and is actively motivated to find a solution to his or her difficulties. That hoped for solution is a spiritual conversion, a radical change through which the old self and way of life pass away and the life is transformed. The motivation is for change, the goal is radical transformation (Pargament 1993). Comparatively, nonconverts should not be similarly motivated for radical change in their lives.

Pre-conversion to post-conversion changes (i.e., changes from the time period before the spiritual conversion or increase in religiousness, to the time period after the conversion or increase in religiousness).

A Unified Sense of Self: The inner change in the spiritual convert which began with a divided and incomplete self has been completed and the self has been transformed. This change in the self will be evident in three domains. First of all, the convert's formerly negative ideas about the self are replaced with a greater sense of self-esteem. Next, the former sense of limitation and inadequacy to deal with life's demands is replaced with a greater sense of competence, self-reliance, and self-efficacy. Finally, the perception that the self lacked coherence and integration is replaced with a self identity perceived as more developed and integrated. By contrast, nonconverts should not experience such change in their sense of self over a similar period of time.

The Sacred Becomes Incorporated into the Self: Before the spiritual conversion, the sacred is poorly incorporated into the convert's self. More specifically, the convert lacks a strong belief in the existence of the spiritual force, feels little connection between the self and a higher spiritual force, and does not perceive that a spiritual force dwells within him/her. After the conversion experience, the convert's self and life are changed and the self is identified with a spiritual force. The person is more convinced of the existence of the spiritual force than before the conversion, feels connected and close to the spiritual force, and believes that the spiritual force dwells within. In comparison, nonconverts are not expected to experience a change in the degree to which the sacred is incorporated into the self over a similar period of time.

A Life Transformed: The convert recognizes the change in the self and feels that life has been transformed in a positive manner. The old self has passed away, and there is a new center around which the self and life are organized. It is hypothesized that the spiritual convert is able to reflect on the process and recognize those elements of life that have been significantly altered by the experience, such as changes in the outlook on life, the sense that life is meaningful, and relationships with family and friends. Compared with nonconverts who have become more religious, converts should report greater life transformation.

METHOD

Participants

Participants in this study were Christian undergraduate and graduate students at a Midwestern state university, aged 18 to 26, who were enrolled in introductory psychology courses. Individuals were selected for participation according to their responses to a short screening questionnaire about religious experiences. All participants responded positively to the question "Do you consider yourself to be a religious person?" From this group, spiritual converts (convert group) were identified as those who indicated that they had become more religious/spiritual in the last two years, had experienced a conversion to Jesus, God, a higher power, or a transcendent force in the last two years, and had not changed religious denomination in the last two years. Ten respondents who indicated that they had a conversion experience but also changed religious denomination within the last two years were

identified as group converts and excluded from the subject pool. Nonconverts who had become more religious/spiritual (more religious group) were identified as those who had become more religious/spiritual in the last two years, but had not experienced a conversion nor changed religious denomination in that time. Nonconverts who had not experienced religious change (no change group) were those who indicated that in the last two years they had not experienced a change in their religious/spiritual lives, had not experienced a conversion, and had not changed religious denomination.

A total of 695 screening questionnaires were administered to potential participants. Of these, 214 individuals qualified for inclusion in the study and received questionnaires. Of the 214 questionnaires administered, 141 were returned for a response rate of 66%. Five of the participants were excluded because they fell outside of the study's target age range of 18 to 26 years old, four questionnaires were returned incomplete, and two questionnaires were eliminated on the basis of respondent's indicating non-Christian religious affiliation.

The final sample consisted of 130 individuals (40 converts, 40 nonconverts who had become more religious, and 50 nonconverts who had not experienced religious change) aged 18 to 26 ($M = 19$). The sample was 62% female and 95% Caucasian. Fifty-two percent indicated that their religious denomination was Protestant, 39% indicated they considered themselves Roman Catholic, and the remaining 9% identified themselves simply as Christian without indicating denomination. The convert group and both nonconvert groups contained approximately the same number of participants from any given local religious church or group. Within the convert group there were 24 women and 16 men, within the more religious group there were 23 women and 17 men, and within the no change group there were 34 women and 16 men.

Procedure

The screening questionnaire was distributed during introductory psychology classes and students who qualified were invited to complete a questionnaire about their religious experiences. Completed questionnaires were collected in the introductory psychology classes and through campus mail. Participants received research credit for their involvement in the study.

In addition, five individuals from the convert group and five individuals from the more religious group were contacted and invited for an interview with the researcher about their religious experiences. The selection process was nonrandom and was based upon participants' completion of the questionnaire and nomination by their teaching assistants as verbally skilled individuals. The structure of the interview was open ended. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for later analysis.

Measures

The measures used in this study included questionnaires and interviews intended to assess those global dimensions of spiritual conversion outlined previously. Participants were not informed that the study was designed to explore religious conversions but rather that it was a study of religious/spiritual change.

The questionnaire contained questions about two time periods in the participants' lives. Participants were asked to retrospectively assess their experiences before their conversion experiences or increases in religiousness (retrospective measures), and to assess their current experiences or feelings (current measures). With regard to these two time periods, the questionnaire instructions differed slightly for the three participant groups. For the retrospective measures, the convert and more religious groups were asked to answer the questions in terms of what they experienced or felt six months before their religious/spiritual

change. The no-change group was asked to answer the questions in terms of what they experienced or felt six months before participating in the study. For the current measures, all three groups were asked to answer the questions in terms of what they experienced or felt now in the present.

Retrospective Measures

Life Events: To assess stressful life events, the Inventory of College Student's Recent Life Experiences (ICSRLE) developed by Kohn, Lafreniere, and Gurevich (1990) was used. The ICSRLE contains 49 items which list recent life experiences of college students. Respondents can indicate which events they have experienced and rate the intensity of the experience. Kohn et al. (1990) reported the Cronbach alpha reliability of this scale as .89, and reported that this scale is correlated (.67) with a related measure of life stress, the Perceived Stress Scale. Kohn et al. (1990) also reported that responses to items on this scale were not significantly different for males and females. Higher scores on the ICSRLE indicate a greater number of intense recent life experiences.

Perceived Stress: To assess perceived stress, the Perceived Stress Scale developed by Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein (1983) was used. The PSS is a 14-item scale which measures the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful. In developmental studies of this scale, Cohen et al. (1983) reported that the scale demonstrated Cronbach alpha reliabilities between .84 and .86, and a test-retest reliability of .85. With two different samples, this scale was correlated with the College Student Life-Event Scale (.35, .24), The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (.76, .65), and the Cohen-Hoberman Inventory of Physical Symptoms (.52, .65). This scale also provided prediction of physical symptomology independent of the depression scale cited above (CES-D). Higher scores on the PSS indicate greater perceived stress.

Motivation for Radical Change: To assess the degree of change sought by the spiritual convert to deal with life difficulties, participants were asked to read four vignettes and indicate which vignette best described their pre-conversion experience. The vignettes differed on two dimensions: degree of motivation for change (motivation) and the degree of change sought (goal) (see Appendix B). Since these vignettes were created for this study, there is no reliability or validity information available for them. Therefore, a pilot study was performed using nine graduate student researchers as judges to assess whether the vignettes varied as expected on the dimensions of motivation and goals. Judges were given the vignettes without labels and asked to indicate for each vignette whether it described high or low motivation for change, and radical or minimal change sought as the goal. Results of this pilot study indicated nearly complete agreement. A single judge rated the degree of change sought in one vignette in the opposite direction of what was expected, but in all other cases the vignettes were judged to vary as expected on the dimensions of motivation and goals.

Measures of Retrospective and Current Experiences

Sense of Self: To assess sense of self before and after the religious experience, five subscales from the Omnibus Self Test developed by Jensen, Huber, Cundick, and Carlson (1991) were used. Positive or negative feelings about the self and level of self-esteem were measured using the Self-esteem subscale. Perceptions regarding the adequacy of the self and confidence in one's competence and self-efficacy were measured using the Self-confidence subscale. To assess the degree to which the person feels autonomous and self-reliant, the Self-reliance subscale was used. Finally, abstract perceptions of the self as coherent and integrated were measured with the Self-identity subscale. Jensen et al. (1991) reported the test-retest reliability of the scale as .79. Cronbach alpha reliability for each

subscale used in this study was reported as follows: .71 for Self-esteem, .79 for Self-confidence, .53 for Self-reliance, and .73 for Self-identity. Face validity for the scale was established using a group of psychology graduate students and a group of psychology professors to eliminate nonvalid items. Higher scores on the OST and its four subscales indicate lower sense of self-esteem, self-confidence, self-reliance, and self-identity.

Degree Sacred Is Incorporated into the Self: In order to assess this dimension before and after the religious experience, the Index of Core Spiritual Experiences (INSPIRIT) scale developed by Kass, Friedman, Leserman, Zuttermeister, and Benson (1991) was used. This scale consists of seven items that measure the occurrence of experiences which convince a person that God exists and evoke feelings of closeness with God. Closeness with God includes the perception that God dwells within. Kass et al. (1991) report the Cronbach alpha reliability of this scale to be .90. Additionally Kass et al. (1991) report that this scale is correlated .69 with the Intrinsic scale of the Religious Orientation Inventory (ROI), and -.26 with the Extrinsic scale of the ROI, and that higher scores on the INSPIRIT scale were significantly predictive of increases in Life Purpose and Satisfaction as measured on the Inventory of Positive Psychological Attitudes to Life. Higher INSPIRIT scores reflect more experiences which indicate God exists, more closeness with God, and more of a sense that God dwells within.

Measure of Current Experiences

Degree Life Is Transformed: The degree to which the person believes that life has been transformed by the religious experience was assessed by an 8-item scale developed for the study. Items from this scale include such questions as "To what degree do you feel that your religious/spiritual change has altered your outlook on life?" and "To what degree do you feel that your religious/spiritual change has changed your goals in life?" Participants were asked to rate their degree of change on a 7-point Likert scale. (See appendix C for the text of the scale). Higher scores on this scale indicate greater life transformation.

Interviews

The format and follow-up questions for the interview were developed by the first author based upon the theoretical assumptions and hypotheses presented in the introduction. The interview was designed to allow the participants an opportunity to tell their own stories about their experiences, and was primarily qualitative and process-oriented rather than standardized and objective.

RESULTS

Group Differences on Retrospective Measures

Separate ANOVAs were performed to investigate differences between the convert group, the more religious group, and the no-change group in their retrospectively reported levels of recent life experiences and perceived stress. Scores on the Inventory of College Student's Recent Life Experiences served as the measure of recent life experiences, and scores on the Perceived Stress Scale served as the measure of perceived stress. Findings indicated no significant differences between the three groups in terms of recent life experiences ($F(2, 127) = 1.88; p = .15$). There was a significant main effect for group on the perceived stress measure ($F(2, 127) = 7.83; p = .001$; convert $M = 32.02$, more religious $M = 31.30$, no change $M = 26.84$). Analyzing group differences at the .05 level using the Tukey

HSD test revealed that both the convert group and the more religious group reported more perceived stress than the no-change group. No other group differences reached significance.

A logit loglinear analysis was performed to investigate differences between convert participants, more religious participants, and no change participants in their degree of motivation for change and their degree of change sought before the religious change. The dichotomous variables motivation for change (high/low) and degree of change sought (radical/minimal) were used to predict participant group. Results of this analysis indicated no main effect for motivation for change ($\chi^2(6) = 8.63; p = .20$) or for degree of change sought ($\chi^2(6) = 2.16; p = .90$). Additionally, the motivation for change and degree of change sought interaction was not significant ($\chi^2(4) = 1.42; p = .84$).

Group Differences over Time: Retrospective and Current Measures

A mixed model repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to examine differences between the three groups in the sense of self over time. Two planned comparisons were examined to explore the previously outlined hypotheses. First, the no-change group was compared with the mean score of the two religious change groups (convert and more religious). Second, the convert and more-religious groups were compared. Participant group means and standard deviations for the repeated measures ANOVA can be seen in Table 1. Note that for all of the OST scales, higher scores indicate lower levels of self-esteem, self-confidence, etc. Overall scores on the Omnibus Self Test (OST), and scores on the Self-Esteem, Self-Confidence, Self-Reliance, and Self-Identity subscales served as the repeated measures. Of most relevance to the previously outlined hypotheses were the sense of self by group interaction effects.

TABLE 1
SUBJECT GROUP MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS ON THE OMNIBUS SELF TEST AND THE INSPIRIT SCALE

Criterion	Total (n = 130)	Group		No change (n = 50)
		Converts (n = 40)	More Religious (n = 40)	
Overall OST score				
Pre	53.88 (12.05)	58.08 (12.88)	54.60 (9.80)	49.96 (11.96)
Post	43.58 (9.51)	43.48 (8.39)	40.45 (6.89)	46.10 (9.51)
Self-Esteem				
Pre	14.13 (4.13)	15.30 (4.29)	14.75 (3.93)	12.70 (3.78)
Post	10.46 (3.35)	9.68 (3.03)	9.62 (2.37)	11.76 (3.87)
Self-Confidence				
Pre	17.71 (5.16)	19.75 (5.48)	18.15 (3.91)	15.72 (5.13)
Post	13.56 (3.72)	13.72 (3.46)	12.78 (2.34)	14.06 (4.64)
Self-Identity				
Pre	8.86 (2.88)	9.65 (3.04)	9.25 (2.47)	7.92 (2.85)
Post	6.75 (2.31)	6.52 (1.80)	6.12 (1.96)	7.44 (2.74)
Self-Reliance				
Pre	13.18 (3.28)	13.38 (3.57)	12.45 (3.32)	13.62 (2.96)
Post	12.81 (3.28)	13.55 (2.95)	11.92 (3.59)	12.92 (3.16)
Inspirit				
Pre	19.14 (4.20)	19.42 (4.00)	18.22 (3.94)	19.64 (4.51)
Post	22.03 (4.28)	24.58 (2.56)	22.72 (2.93)	19.44 (4.85)

Religious Change Groups vs. No-change Group

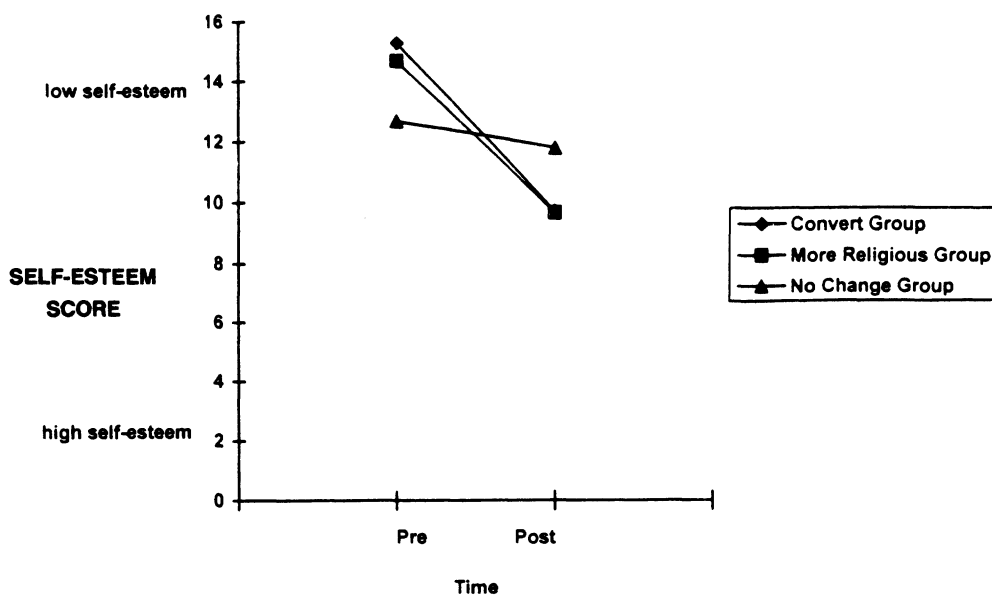
Findings indicated a significant overall OST score by group interaction ($F(1,128) = 30.59; p < .001$). The significant interaction indicated that the religious change groups improved more over time in overall sense of self than the no-change group.

For the OST subscales there was a significant Self-Esteem by group interaction ($F(1,128) = 47.31, p < .001$), a significant Self-Confidence by group interaction ($F(1,128) = 24.92, p < .001$), and a significant Self-Identity by group interaction ($F(1, 128) = 34.30, p < .001$). The Self-Reliance by group interaction was not significant ($F(1, 128) = 1.07, p = .30$).

The significant interactions indicate that the religious change groups improved considerably more than the no change group in terms of overall self-score, self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-identity over time. A representative example of these results can be seen in the graph of the Self-Esteem subscale in Figure 1. The group means for the overall self score, and the self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-identity subscales followed this trend uniformly. The self-reliance scale produced no significant group differences.

FIGURE 1

TIME 1 AND TIME 2 SELF-ESTEEM SCALE SCORES FOR ALL THREE GROUPS



A mixed model repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to examine spirituality score differences between the religious change groups and the no-change group over time. Results from the repeated measures ANOVA can be seen in Table 1. Scores on the Inspirit scale served as the repeated measures. Findings indicated a significant Inspirit by group interaction ($F(1,128) = 68.32; p < .001$). The significant interaction indicates that the religious change groups experienced a greater increase in spirituality and experienced the self-becoming more identified with the sacred over time than the no-change group.

Separate three-way ANOVAs were performed to investigate gender differences between the two groups on the OST and Inspirit scales. Findings indicated significant gender by group by scale interactions for the overall OST score ($F(1, 126) = 4.90; p < .05$), the

Self-Reliance subscale ($F(1, 126) = 3.90; p = .05$), and the Self-Confidence subscale ($F(1, 126) = 4.02; p < .05$). Additionally, the gender by Inspirit interaction was significant ($F(1, 126) = 4.49; p < .05$). No gender by group interactions reached significance.

The significant three-way interactions involving the overall OST score and the Self-Confidence subscale indicated that women who experienced religious change improved more in overall sense of self and self-confidence over time than other women and men. The significant three-way interaction involving the Self-Reliance subscale indicated that men who experienced religious change decreased modestly in self-reliance over time in contrast to the modest increases in self-reliance reported by other men and women. The gender by Inspirit interaction indicated that women increased in spirituality over time more than men.

Convert Group vs. More Religious Group

Findings indicated no significant differences between the convert group and the more religious group in pre-post change on the OST scales or the INSPIRIT scale. This indicates that both the convert group and the more religious group both changed similarly in sense of self and spirituality from before to after their religious change.

However, there were gender differences with respect to these measures. The results of a three-way ANOVA indicated a significant gender by group by Self-Reliance interaction ($F(1,76) = 4.38; p < .05$). The significant three-way interaction indicated that, compared with convert men and women, men who became more religious became less self-reliant over time, and women who became more religious became more self-reliant over time. No other three-way interactions or gender by group interactions reached significance.

A *t*-test was performed to investigate differences between convert and more religious participants in reported levels of life transformation following the experience of religious change. Since the no-change group did not experience religious (or comparable) change they were excluded from this analysis. Scores on the Life-Transformation scale were used to measure levels of life transformation. The results indicated that the difference in reported levels of life transformation was significant ($t(78) = -2.34, p = .022$; convert $M = 48.23$, more religious $M = 45.02$). Thus, convert participants reported greater life transformation than more religious participants after the religious experience.

DISCUSSION

In this study, an attempt was made to generate a definition of spiritual conversion and to test it by comparing the ways in which spiritual conversion differs from more gradual religious change and from unchanged religiousness. The results provided moderate support for the previously outlined hypotheses, and are encouraging for the conception of spiritual conversion presented in this study. When compared to a group of religious believers who had not experienced a change in their religiousness, the convert group did report more pre-conversion perceived stress, a greater sense of personal inadequacy and limitation before the conversion, greater pre-post improvement in sense of adequacy and competence, and a greater increase in post-conversion spiritual experiences. These results support the definition of spiritual conversion as a radical change in the self in response to a great deal of perceived stress through which the self became identified with a spiritual force. Additionally, these results support a benign rather than a malevolent conception of conversion. Although no clinical measures of mental health were used in this study, spiritual converts reported positive life transformation and significant improvements in their sense of self, self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-identity following the conversion experience. As James (1962/1902: 160) characterized it, the self "hitherto divided and consciously wrong inferior and unhappy, ... [became] unified and consciously right superior and happy."

In terms of the outlined hypotheses, the results only weakly differentiated spiritual conversion from gradual increase in religiousness/spirituality. The only significant difference between these two groups was converts' report of greater post-conversion life transformation than that reported by nonconverts after they became more religious. On other measures, the nonconverts who became more religious reported the same pattern of differences from the nonconvert no-religious-change group as the convert group; before becoming more religious they reported more perceived stress and more personal inadequacy and limitation, and afterwards they reported more spiritual experiences and greater personal adequacy and competence. In effect, the nonconvert group who became more religious reported experiences which paralleled those of the spiritual convert group.

There are several possible explanations for the failure of the study to differentiate spiritual converts and nonconverts who became more religious. The first such explanation has to do with the design of the study itself. Out of 695 potential participants who filled out screening questionnaires, only 214 qualified to participate. Of those 214, 52 people qualified as spiritual converts, and 40 of these returned completed questionnaires. Because of the difficulty in recruiting spiritual converts, the sample size was of necessity limited to 130 people. If the differences between the spiritual convert group and the nonconvert more-religious group were subtle, this study may not have had sufficient power to detect such differences. In support of this possibility, the differences between the means for the convert group and the more-religious group were all in the expected directions on the Perceived Stress Scale, the Inventory of College Student Recent Life Experiences, and the INSPIRIT scale. A larger sample may have provided the power to detect these subtle differences.

A second explanation is that differences between the two groups were not fully captured by the measures used in the present research. If the self includes such diverse elements as ideas, attitudes, and values, and operates as the center of one's experience and significance (Jersild, cited in Hamachek 1985), then the relatively brief questionnaires used in the study may not have been thorough enough. The measures may have been sensitive enough to detect gross differences between the religious change groups and the nonreligious change group, but not sensitive enough to detect the differences between converts and nonconverts who became more religious. This does not invalidate the use of the measures, but it does challenge researchers to find or develop more sensitive measures to tap the multifaceted nature of the self. Qualitative research methods may also yield additional information about aspects of the self which might emerge more fully as narrative responses (e.g., Epstein 1994; Mishler 1986) than as answers to Likert scale questionnaire items.

The third, and perhaps simplest, explanation is that the two groups in the study were not in fact all that distinct from each other. It is possible that the two groups simply took alternate paths to the same goal. In essence, they may have adopted different means (i.e., slow religious change versus sudden change), to the same end of greater religiousness. The questionnaire data revealed that both the convert and nonconvert groups experienced a great deal of positive change in their sense of self and their spirituality from before to after their religious change. It may be the case that what took the converts a short time to accomplish, the nonconverts achieved over a longer stretch of time. In the present research, this element of time was not accounted for; catching both groups after they have completed their changes may have obscured significant differences between them. In essence, rather than studying two distinct groups with different attributes, this study may have gathered two groups of converts who differed only in their rates of conversion.

Alternately, the two groups may have been similar in rates of change and resultant greater religiousness, but differed in terms of how they personally define religious conversion and how they identified themselves as converts or nonconverts. Converts in the present study identified themselves on the screening questionnaire as having a conversion experience in the last two years, but no attention was given to how the participants defined

“having a conversion experience.” A study by Pargament, Sullivan, Balzer, Van Haitsma, and Raymark (1995) foreshadows the difficulty. Working with religious college students and clergy using a policy-capturing approach, they found that different people attached different meanings to the term “religiousness.” One person viewed religion largely as church attendance, another as adherence to church dogma, and another as closeness with God. Perhaps a similar process occurred in the present research. Based upon the interviews done with 10 participants, it seems as if there were indeed differing perceptions of what constitutes a conversion experience. One interviewee described her experience:

It was like a big accumulation of things. It wasn't exactly one day, I just sat around with one of my friends and he was always explaining things to me because I kept saying 'but I don't understand it, so come over and explain it to me.' And I was like 'I want to accept Christ in my life' and he said 'Good' and so I did. And so basically that's what happened. And it was really emotional. He is my best friend. . . . Some people talk about having these awakenings and they stop everything they did the day before and start a whole new life. I don't think that I did that because I think that I carried a lot of what they call Christian characteristics already within me.

This experience contrasts with that of another convert:

A couple of years ago, about this time of year actually, I was reading in the Bible and stuff, something I did about once a week, and for some reason I was reading in the book of Revelations [sic] and it really freaked me out. So I was really freaked out by it and the next day I went and talked to my minister . . . and I was worried about going to hell basically and having all this horrible stuff happen to me that they described. And he said that the way to do it so you don't go to hell is to accept Jesus Christ into your life. And so that's what I did that day and my life has been much better since then.

Contrast these experiences with the religious experience of a male nonconvert:

It really just happened suddenly. One of my good friends on the track team in high school died, and he was really religious and I was never really religious. I went to Catholic school and everything. I made a deep connection through his death to God. . . . I kinda appreciate going to church. I don't really go all that often but when I do go I appreciate it more. And I take solace in praying to Him and asking for advice, or asking for mental or moral support.

Another nonconvert woman shares her story:

I don't know if this is because of my Baptist upbringing, but if you don't believe in Jesus Christ and God, then you go to hell. And so I just felt that there was something missing and if I didn't fill it that I was going to be in trouble, that kind of thing. But I don't think that I was motivated by fear, I just really felt that I had something missing. You know, that I wasn't as whole as I could be. . . . And now I just feel overall stronger and more sure of myself because I feel that I am connected with God.

There seems to be some overlap in these stories, and it appears that radical change can occur even among those individuals who do not define themselves as converts. Thus, self-identified converts and nonconverts alike may report radical change through gradual and sudden experiences, but they differ in the labels they apply to their experiences. This suggests the need to further study the meanings that religious believers attribute to the term conversion. Research methods such as single-case studies and policy-capturing studies may be helpful to address this issue.

Three final notes regarding the results of the study need to be mentioned. While the general definition of spiritual conversion was supported, two elements of it were not. First, there were no significant differences among the three groups on the measure of stressful life events. It appears that the radical change for both religious change groups came after a great deal of perceived stress instead of a number of objectively stressful events. Thus, as precipitants to religious change the subjective appraisal of one's stress level and life situation appeared to be more important than objective measures of stressful events. It is impor-

tant to recognize that life stress was the only precursor to conversion examined in this study. Further investigations are needed to determine whether life stress is a reliable cause of the conversion process, and whether other personal experiences (e.g., mystical and aesthetic experiences) may also produce religious change and transformation.

Also, the three groups showed no differences on the vignettes which were designed to assess differences in motivation for radical change. Having no reliability and little validity information on these vignettes, it is difficult to explain this failure. The concept of the active agent seeking change is a central one for much of the coping literature (e.g., Pargament 1997) and contemporary conceptions of conversion (e.g., Richardson 1985), but it is unclear as to whether the spiritual convert actively seeks a spiritual conversion or can express this active search consciously. Further investigation is needed to determine how actively and consciously converts seek radical change.

Finally, an interesting result from the present study was that women seemed to benefit more from an increase in religiousness than men. Women who experienced religious change reported greater improvement in sense of self and self-confidence than other women and men. Also, compared with those who did not change in religiousness, women who experienced religious change became more self-reliant, and men who experienced religious change became less self-reliant. And finally, women in this study generally increased in spirituality over time more than men. The reasons for this are unclear. One pervasive finding in research on religion is that on a wide number of measures of religion, women report being more religious than men (De Vaus and McAllister 1987), and girls and young women report being more religiously committed than boys and young men (Tamminen 1994). It may be the case that when faced with stressful life situations, religious conversion may be a more salient and empowering solution for women than men. Why this may be the case, and whether these gender differences are reliable for those who have experienced religious change are interesting questions in need of further study.

Retrospective Self-Reports in the Study of Conversion

An alternate explanation for the results found in this study has to do with the retrospective nature of the research design. As with nearly every study of conversion to date, the data were collected after the experience had taken place. Whether participants can reliably describe and contrast their pre- and post-change religious experiences is unclear. Authors such as Beckford (1978) and Richardson, Stewart, and Simmonds (1978) have maintained that converts' retrospective conversion accounts are not objective reports but rather reconstructed biographies that tend to describe the past as being worse than it actually was to contrast with a present, more favorable religious state. Beckford (1978) even goes so far as to argue that the reports of converts should be treated as "skillful accomplishments of actors" who rehearse their "scripts" consciously or unconsciously to remain consistent with the official ideology of their particular religious group. If these concerns are accurate, this "report bias" may limit the validity of converts' accounts and the conclusions that can be drawn from their reports.

A concern for the present study is that such a retrospective report bias might account for the differences found between the religious change groups and the no-change group, and the lack of differences found between the convert and more religious groups. This concern does raise an important methodological shortcoming in the study of conversion, but for several reasons it may not necessarily diminish the conclusions of this study.

First, the exact nature of the retrospective bias in convert reports is unclear. Examples of bias in the retrospective accounts of converts have been demonstrated qualitatively by Richardson, Stewart, and Simmonds (1978) and Beckford (1978), but differences between the retrospective accounts and the "true" past experiences of converts have yet to

be empirically studied in detail. Several important issues have not been fully explored, such as the severity of distortion from the bias, the conditions under which such bias appears and does not appear in the reports of converts, and whether the bias is limited to converts or also extends to others who experience changes in identity or status. Research in the area of cognitive science may be able to shed light on the cognitive processes involved in identity formation and change, and the effects these cognitive processes have on the veracity of retrospective reports. The study of religious conversion could only benefit from such a collaboration.

Additionally, it could be argued that the use of true pre-post measures would alleviate the spectre of retrospective bias in convert's reports. Presumably, one would pretest a large number of participants and follow up with the small number of those who experience a conversion experience over a set period of time. This may not, however, solve the dilemma. Biases may still be present at the post-conversion assessment, and instrumentation effects may cloud the interpretation of the self-report pre-post data. As several researchers have noted (e.g., Cronbach and Furby 1970; Howard and Dailey 1979; Sprangers 1989), in order to compare pretest and posttest scores a common metric must exist between the two sets of scores. Researchers using self-report measures assume that a subject's internal standard for measuring the dimension of interest does not change from one testing to the next. If the internalized standard were to change, the posttest results would reflect this shift and confound the pretest and posttest comparison.

Howard and Dailey (1979) present this problem, known as response-shift bias, in the context of evaluating the efficacy of training or treatment. Their example is a training seminar on leadership. At pretest, a new executive may feel like an "average" leader. During the course of the training, however, she acquires a greater understanding of what it means to be an effective leader and realizes that at pre-test her skills were actually below average. Now at posttest, in light of her new understanding of leadership, she feels that her skills are average to above average. If pre-post change is compared, the actual effect of the training would be obscured and the erroneous conclusion would be reached that the seminar had been ineffective for her. This example can be extended to the study of conversion. At pretest, an individual may rate himself as average in level of spirituality and sense of self. As a result of the conversion experience, he may introspect more and learn more about his religion and spirituality. In light of this new understanding and self-definition, he may realize that he was not at all spiritual or content with himself at pretest. At posttest he may consider himself to be average in spirituality and sense of self, but a comparison of pretest and posttest ratings would inaccurately yield no significant results, when in fact, significant change had occurred.

A solution to the problem of response-shift bias is the use of retrospective self-reports (Howard and Dailey 1978; Sprangers 1989). Instead of contrasting true pre-ratings with post ratings to assess change, retrospective pre-ratings are contrasted with post-ratings. A number of studies (e.g., Howard and Dailey 1978; Sprangers 1989) have demonstrated the occurrence of response shifts by comparing subjective ratings of pre-post change to objective measures of pre-post change. With regard to the above example, subjective pre-post ratings of leadership skill would be compared with pre-post paper-and-pencil measures of leadership knowledge or observers' ratings of leadership skill. Several studies have found that the use of retrospective pre-post ratings yield results more closely related to objective measures of change than the use of true subjective pre-post ratings (e.g., Howard and Dailey 1978; Sprangers 1989).

Clearly the use of the retrospective self-reports in the study of religious conversion is not without its limitations. However, it does add more information than using only objective behavior as the variables of interest, and it avoids other instrumentation errors associated with pre-post designs. Future research may benefit from further inquiry into the cognitive

processes associated with changes in identity such as conversion, and the creation of better measures of internal states and beliefs such as sense of self and spirituality, but retrospective accounts should not be dismissed as invalid. Rather, the conclusions drawn from this research and the veracity of converts' accounts should be evaluated in light of future social scientific investigation into the phenomenon of conversion.

The present research underscores one important function of religion in the lives of individuals: religion has the transformative power to create radical change. A good deal of past scientific research and theory has focused on the conservational nature of religion: religion helps individuals regain psychological balance after experiencing stress; it offers a system for individuals to make sense of their worlds; and it marks boundaries around individual's values and ways of life (see Pargament 1997). However, religion can also be a factor in the transformation of the self and the creation of personal radical change. In studies of religion through the lens of science, a place must be made for the exploration of dramatic religious changes such as religious conversion. Other religious transformative processes such as forgiveness and rites of passage also deserve further attention (see Pargament 1997). Only by continued investigation into the process and effects of those transformational phenomena can we come to a more complete understanding of the range and power of religious life.

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APPENDIX A MOTIVATION FOR CHANGE VIGNETTES

These vignettes vary along two dimensions, motivation for change and the degree of change sought. Motivation for change is expressed as either high motivation or low motivation. Degree of change sought is expressed as either radical change or minimal change.

1. High Motivation Radical Change

I realized that at this point in my life I needed to change. I was very committed to doing something since this change was important to me. No small change would do either. What I needed was a big change, a radical change.

2. High Motivation Minimal Change

I realized that at this point in my life I needed to change. This change was important to me and I was very committed to it, but I didn't have to shake up my life completely. Small changes would do.

3. Low Motivation Radical Change

I felt at this time that my life was OK the way that it was. Changing anything was not really important to me. If I made any change it would have to be a big change, but I didn't have a strong desire to do it.

4. Low Motivation Minimal Change

I felt that my life was OK as it was, and that changing anything in my life was not really important. If I needed any change, small changes would do. Nothing drastic was necessary for me.

APPENDIX B LIFE TRANSFORMATION MEASUREMENT

You identified yourself on the questionnaire as having experienced a positive religious change. Please answer the questions below as they relate to this change.

1. To what degree do you feel your religious/spiritual change has altered your outlook on life?

Not at All 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 A Great Deal

2. To what degree do you feel your religious/spiritual change has given you a greater sense that your life is meaningful and significant?

Not at All 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 A Great Deal

3. To what degree do you feel your religious/spiritual change has changed your goals in life?

Not at All 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 A Great Deal

4. To what degree do you feel your religious/spiritual change has positively affected your relationships with other people?

Not at All 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 A Great Deal

5. To what degree do you feel your religious/spiritual change has positively affected your relationship with your family?

Not at All 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 A Great Deal

6. To what degree do you feel your religious/spiritual change has positively affected your life at work or as a student?

Not at All 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 A Great Deal

7. To what degree do you feel your religious/spiritual change has changed your day-to-day activities?

Not at All 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 A Great Deal

8. Overall, how much has your life changed as a result of your religious/spiritual change?

Not at All 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 A Great Deal