



All Theses and Dissertations

2014-06-01

Attachment Changes Post-Conversion in Committed Converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Laura Jane Page

Brigham Young University - Provo

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Counseling Psychology Commons](#), and the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Page, Laura Jane, "Attachment Changes Post-Conversion in Committed Converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (2014). *All Theses and Dissertations*. 4450.
<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/4450>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Attachment Changes Post-Conversion in Committed Converts to
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Laurie Page

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Marleen S. Williams, Chair
Kristin L. Hansen
Lane Fischer
Aaron P. Jackson
Jennifer A. N. Cannon

Department of Counseling Psychology and Special Education

Brigham Young University

June 2014

Copyright © 2014 Laurie Page

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

Attachment Changes Post-Conversion in Committed Converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Laurie Page

Department of Counseling Psychology and Special Education, BYU
Doctor of Philosophy

Religious conversion has been described as a “spiritual transformation” where converts experience an “intimate ‘union’...[with] divine presence” (Sandage & Shults, 2007). To better understand motivators of conversion, several studies have examined how attachment patterns affect the likelihood, and speed of religious conversion (e.g., Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999; Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2004; Kirkpatrick, 1998; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990; Schnitker, Porter, Emmons, & Barrett, 2012). Converts’ changes in personality, self-definition, and meaningfulness following conversion have been noted (Halama and Lačná, 2011; Paloutzian, Richardson, & Rambo, 1999). However, little, if any research has been conducted examining changes in attachment patterns of converts that occur following conversion. The current study, a follow-up to Hansen, Page, Fischer, and Williams (2014), examined the post-conversion attachment changes for 39 committed converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (ranging in time since baptism from 2 months to 35 years). Interviews were conducted previously (see Hansen, et al., 2014) in a semi-structured format by two undergraduate researchers (ranging from 30-60 minutes in length) and then transcribed by a third undergraduate research assistant. Two additional research assistants listened to the recordings and edited the transcriptions (Hansen, et al., 2014). Beginning with a theory-driven conceptual framework in the analysis, a qualitative hermeneutic interpretive method (see Jackson & Patton, 1992; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) was used in the current study to explore the converts’ transcripts. The converts were not asked specific questions regarding their relationships at the time of the interview. However, the converts spontaneously revealed various attachment patterns in the way that they spoke of themselves, their family, and their friends in their narratives. Three overarching themes were drawn from the analysis. The converts (a) demonstrated evidence of attachment patterns in their narratives; (b) experienced a spiritual conversion or an experience of having a new or closer relationship with God beyond a projection of their parental attachment style; and (c) experienced a spiritual restructuring of their attachment patterns. In other words, they described feeling that their closer relationship with God dramatically changed the way they viewed themselves and how they interacted in relationships with others. The findings of this study have implications for understanding the impact of spirituality on attachment patterns.

Keywords: religious conversion, attachment, attachment to God, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, conversion career approach, hermeneutic, qualitative

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I feel deep gratitude to many people for helping me in far more ways than I can express on this page. Thank you to my committee members for supporting me in this process: Marleen Williams, Kristin Hansen, Aaron Jackson, Lane Fischer, and Jenny Cannon. I would like to offer a special thank you to Kristin Hansen for guiding me in writing, and for mentoring me, both in this project and in my professional development. I have been continually touched by Kristin's dedicated time, energy, and effort in helping me all along the way. I would also like to extend a special thank you to Marleen Williams for believing in me even before I began this graduate program. It has been a great honor to have such a patient, generous, and kindly supportive research advisor throughout my graduate school years.

Thank you to my hard-working and devoted research assistants, Jill Rockwood and Joshua Bishop. Thank you, Jill and Josh, for being my partners in this analysis and for bringing your unique insights to this research. You made this process fun (in addition to productive) with your enthusiasm.

I would also like to offer a special thank you to my mother, Ginger Hamer, for being my tireless editor on this project. Only a mother's love would induce a person to review a dissertation as many times as she has. After years of reading my papers throughout junior high, high school, college, and graduate school, this was the culminating project of her writing mentorship. Thank you, Mom, for teaching me to write.

And finally, I would like to thank my husband, Nate, for being my biggest cheerleader. It's hard to imagine how I would have gotten through this project without his partnership and his constant support of my educational and career goals.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
DESCRIPTION OF DISSERTATION FORMAT	viii
Attachment Changes Post-Conversion in Committed Converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	1
Attachment	4
Attachment and Religion	6
Attachment and Religious Conversion	7
Current Study	9
Method	10
Participants	11
Procedures	11
Original Study Phase One Analysis	13
Original Study Phase Two Analysis	13
Current Study Design	14
Current Study Data Analysis	16
Researcher Assumptions	19
Results	20

Theme 1: Evidence of Convert Attachment Patterns	20
Theme 2: Spiritual Conversion Beyond Projection of Parental Attachment Style.....	24
Theme 3: Spiritual Restructuring of Attachment Relationships	25
Summary	31
Discussion	32
Implications.....	37
Limitations	39
Recommendations for Future Research	44
References.....	45
Appendix A Review of Literature.....	57
Appendix B Participant Recruitment Flyer.....	87
Appendix C Consent to be a Research Subject.....	88

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Demographic Information for Convert Participants	12
Table 2: Interview Questions Used to Guide Qualitative Interviews	12

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Four-group model of attachment.....	5
Figure 2: Levels of individual religious activity in the conversion career approach (Gooren, 2010; 2007).....	63

DESCRIPTION OF DISSERTATION FORMAT

This dissertation, Attachment Changes Post-Conversion in Committed Converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is formatted differently than the typical dissertation layout. Instead of having sections separated by chapters (as are most traditional dissertations), the body of this dissertation is written in the length and style of a standard journal article. The full literature review is included as one of the appendices to the body of the text. The preliminary pages and supporting documents in the appendices in this document remain in the traditional dissertation format.

**Attachment Changes Post-Conversion in Committed Converts to
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**

To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong[,] inferior[,] and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right[,] superior[,] and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities. (James, 1902/2007, p. 176)

William James was essentially the first psychologist to write about religious conversion in his seminal work, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902/2007). He, in a sense, legitimized the scientific study of religious experiences by arguing that spiritual phenomena are no more removed from reality than any other scientific pursuit.

Since James' time, researchers from a range of behavioral science fields have tried to capture the depth and complexity of religious conversion by presenting various descriptions, categories, and levels of the experience. For example, Travisano (1978) differentiated types of religious conversion by a convert's level of transition. He designated the term *conversion* to describe a dramatic change in one's identity in which one is wholly committed to a new cause. He used the term *alternation* to describe those who have affiliated with a new religious organization, but whose beliefs have only slightly changed.

Several researchers have presented models for understanding converts' motivation and/or precursors to religious conversion. Lofland and Stark (1965) identified seven conditions that a person must experience to be motivated for religious conversion: (a) a perceived tension; (b) a problem-solving perspective; (c) religious seeking; (d) a life turning point; (e) positive contact with the new religious group; (f) outside relationships that are supportive of the conversion or, if

negative, the neutralization of their disapproval; and (g) a high level of participation with the religious group. Another explanation commonly applied to religious conversion is rational choice theory (e.g., Gartrell & Shannon, 1985; Stark & Finke, 2000), a concept borrowed from economics. This theory holds that converts are rational actors choosing between competing religious organizations. Rational choice theory has been criticized because findings in behavioral economics challenge the notion that choices are strictly based on rational reasoning (see Ariely, 2008). Ariely, Loewenstein, and Prelec (2006) argued, instead, that choices are influenced by “coherent arbitrariness” and that major life decisions “involve streams of heterogeneous experiences that are... even more vulnerable to arbitrary influences and conventions” (Ariely, et al., 2006, p. 8). Thus, from this perspective, rational choice theory fails to account for the lived experiences in which choices are made, which would include the order and the way in which religious groups are encountered (see Ariely, 2008).

More recent models of religious conversion include Gooren’s conversion career approach (2007, 2010) and Rambo’s (1989) process oriented model (see also Rambo & Bauman, 2012). Gooren (2007, 2010) defined various levels and patterns of religious activity: *pre-affiliation*, *disaffiliation*, *affiliation*, *conversion*, and *confession*. *Confession* denotes the highest level of participation and a strong “missionary attitude” toward those outside the religious group. Although Gooren argued that the levels should not necessarily be considered developmental stages, he explained that people often move from one level to another. The conversion career approach is inclusive of a variety of factors in the context of conversion: *contingency factors*, *social factors*, *institutional factors*, *cultural factors*, and *personality factors*. Gooren claimed that analysis of such factors can aid researchers in identifying converts’ shifts in levels of religious activity. In addition, he recommended that researchers could distinguish the five levels

using conversion indicators originally introduced by Snow and Machalek (1983) and reflected in the following attributes: (a) making biographical reconstructions, (b) adopting a master attribution scheme, (c) suspending analogical reasoning, and (d) embracing the new role. Rambo (1989) similarly presented a holistic model. He described conversion as a “process,” explaining that “conversion is contextual and cannot be extricated from the fabric of relationships, processes, and ideologies which provide the matrix of religious change” (p. 48). In keeping with Rambo’s model, the term *conversion* in this paper will refer to a process, rather than a single event (e.g., baptism).

Other researchers have focused on changes that occur for converts after they have experienced a religious conversion. Zinnbauer and Pargament (1998) found that converts reported increases in self-esteem and improvements in self-identity following conversion. Similarly, Pargament (1997) noted that converts experienced a change in self-definition after undergoing religious conversion. Paloutzian, Richardson, and Rambo (1999) argued that individual personality temperaments and traits remain relatively stable post-conversion, whereas other aspects of personality such as personal concerns, strivings, identity, and self-definition could change dramatically depending on the degree to which one converted. Halama and Lačná (2011) found, however, that converts reported several significant personality changes following conversion. In a finding that questions Paloutzian, et al.’s (1999) notion that personality traits remain stable following conversion, Halama and Lačná (2011) noted that converts’ levels of self-esteem, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion increased, while levels of narcissism decreased. The converts also reported a significant increase in meaningfulness.

Although not specifically focused on converts, Richardson (1995) performed a literature review concerning members of new religious movements and found that new religious

movement members experienced a variety of positive outcomes including higher levels of perceived social support, lower levels of depression, higher levels of emotional openness, higher levels of introspection, and lower levels of social anxiety. These outcomes are consistent with the general finding that adaptive forms of spirituality and religiosity are positively correlated with mental health and wellbeing (see Hackney & Sanders, 2003; Rogers, Skidmore, Montgomery, Reidhead, & Reidhead, 2012; Rowold, 2011; Ryan & Francis, 2012). In addition, certain religious beliefs appear to strengthen marital bonds (Lichter & Carmalt, 2009; Mahoney et al., 1999; Mahoney, Pargament, Murray-Swank, & Murray-Swank, 2003; Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2001). However, more research is needed to better understand the impact of religious conversion on psychological well-being.

Attachment

Attachment theory is a construct that could be utilized to further understand the depth of religious conversion. Attachment theory conceptualizes “the propensity of human beings to make strong affectional bonds to particular others” (Bowlby, 1977, p. 201). Various findings support the notion that healthy attachments contribute to positive mental health outcomes (e.g., Cooper, Shaver, & Collins, 1998; He, Zhang, & Yang, 2010; Love & Murdock, 2004; Nishikawa, Hägglöf, & Sundbom, 2010). Conversely, insecure attachments have been correlated with negative mental health outcomes (e.g., Allen, McElhaney, Kuperminc, & Jodl, 2004; Berger, Jodl, Allen, McElhaney, & Kuperminc, 2005; Kuscu et al., 2009; Nishikawa, et al., 2010).

The history of attachment research has been described as developing across three phases: first, the introduction of attachment theory by John Bowlby; second, Mary Ainsworth’s empirical research and development of the attachment theory; and third, the expansion and application of

attachment theory to adults and relationships across the lifespan (Main, 1996). During the 1990s the study of adult attachments became one of the most widely published research areas in personality and social psychology (Simpson & Rholes, 1998).

To expand the theoretical framework of attachment theory, Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) proposed a four-group model of attachment style in which positive or negative self- and other-models underlie the basic patterns of secure attachment and insecure attachment (including preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful attachments). *Secure attachment* designates a positive view of self and others. *Insecure attachment* can designate a combination of feelings and perceptions including, “a sense of unworthiness (unlovability)... an expectation that others will be negatively disposed (untrustworthy and rejecting)... [and] a negative disposition toward other people” (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991, p. 227). Figure 1 depicts the four-group model. Dilmaç, Hamarta, and Arslan (2009) added to this conceptual definition of attachment by researching how locus of control (see Rotter, 1966) compares to the four-group model of attachment styles. They found that securely attached individuals had an internal locus of control and insecurely attached individuals had an external locus of control.

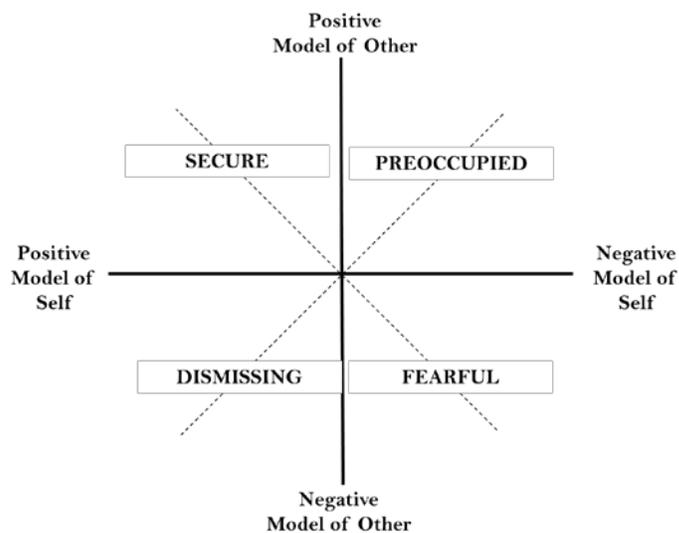


Figure 1. Four-group model of attachment (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Attachment and Religion

One notable example of the application of attachment theory is its pairing with the study of religion. Researchers have found that attachment styles of believers are consistent with their image of God (Noffke & Hall, 2007). For example, those with insecure attachments tended to have more authoritarian and/or distant representations of God (Granqvist, Ivarsson, Broberg, & Hagekull, 2007; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992). Byrd and Boe (2001) compared attachment styles with types of prayer and found that “avoidance [was] negatively associated with prayer that maintains closeness with God without making material requests” (p. 21). In other words, avoidant attachment was negatively correlated with contemplative and conversational types of prayer. They also found that individuals with anxious attachment patterns were more likely to use help-seeking/pleading styles of prayer.

Two competing hypotheses have been used in the literature to describe how religious behaviors relate to attachment theory: the correspondence hypothesis and the compensation hypothesis (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008; Kirkpatrick, 1994; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). According to the correspondence hypothesis, human attachment patterns often correspond with patterns of attachment to deity, and according to the compensation hypothesis, people turn to God to compensate for the unavailability or loss of a principle attachment figure (Beck, 2006). Much of the support for the compensation hypothesis comes from studies which support the notion that insecure persons are more likely to experience sudden religious conversion than secure persons (e.g., Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999; Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2004; Kirkpatrick, 1998; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990; Schnitker, Porter, Emmons, & Barrett, 2012). However, both hypotheses have received support in the literature (Hall, Fujikawa, Halcrow, Hill, & Delaney, 2009). Hall et al. (2009) argued that this mixed evidence is the result of an unclear

compensation model and an overly simplified explanation of spirituality in the literature. They suggested that religiosity should be considered on both an implicit (e.g., one's relationship with God) and an explicit level (e.g., outward behaviors and conscious beliefs). They proposed and found support for the notion that implicit levels of spirituality *correspond* with adult romantic attachments, and explicit levels of spirituality serve as *compensation* for adults with insecure attachments.

Most of the research regarding God image and attachment is based on the naturalistic assumption that the reality of God's existence is irrelevant in empirical research (O'Grady & Richards, 2007). From such a perspective, attachment to God is a static and/or one-sided concept. These studies lack the richness to be found in relational constructions of attachment to God. Some researchers have not only used a relational construct, but have also described God image as a more dynamic concept, one that can change as the individuals' relationship with God further develops (e.g., Hall & Brokaw, 1995; Owen, 2005; Parker, 1999; Poll & Smith, 2003). Religious conversion research may provide an important avenue for examining such changes.

Attachment and Religious Conversion

Researchers have paired religious conversion with attachment theory when considering the factors that influence conversion. For example, as noted above, researchers have correlated the length of time one takes to convert with the relative security of one's human attachments and found that individuals with insecure attachments are more likely to experience sudden religious conversion than individuals with secure attachments (e.g., Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999; Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2004; Kirkpatrick, 1998; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990; Schnitker, et al., 2012). These studies, and the bulk of research concerning religious conversion and attachment, were primarily focused on converts' attachments *prior* to conversion. Two dissertations,

however, investigated converts' attachments *after* the conversion occurred. Loewen (2009) performed a qualitative study with married adult converts who converted to the same religion as their spouse and found that converts reported their marriages were positively influenced by their new religious values, and that they felt increased commitment to their spouses. Warner (2006) explored the nature of the father/son relationship before and after the father's Christian conversion and found that the father/son relationship improved in the following areas: (a), increased quality and quantity of time spent together, (b), increased emotional and physical affection, (c), increased communication, and (d), the fathers' increased thoughtfulness of their leadership roles and the sons' increased appreciation of their fathers' influence. These studies support that notion that human relationships change and are positively affected by religious conversion.

Most of the literature on conversion and attachment, of which a sample has been reviewed here, examines how converts' attachment histories influence their religious conversions. Very little research has been devoted to changes in attachment that occur after religious conversion. If religious conversion is indeed a dramatic change in one's identity, as according to Trivisano (1978), or a transformation of one's "universe of discourse", as according to Snow and Machalek (1983), then we can expect dramatic changes to occur in the life of the convert post-conversion. Mahoney and Pargament (2004) argued that conversion is unique from other types of personal transformation because conversion involves "the integration of the sacred into the destinations and pathways" that are adopted by the individual (p. 487). Research examining post-conversion attachment changes will contribute to the expanding literature of religious conversion and spirituality. In particular, the current qualitative study in its examination of post-conversion attachment changes contributes to the expanding literature of

religion and spirituality by focusing on this one aspect of a relational understanding of persons and spirituality (e.g. Sandage & Shults, 2007).

Current Study

The current study employed a qualitative design using data from semi-structured interviews of forty Latter-day Saint (LDS) committed converts' post-conversion experiences (Hansen, Page, Fischer, & Williams, 2014). Early phases of the prior analysis indicated that post-conversion changes in attachment did occur. Further analysis was needed, however, to understand what these specific changes were. The current study is a continuation of this prior study and looks specifically at attachment patterns pre-conversion and post-conversion.

Thus far, most of the literature on conversion and attachment examines how converts' attachment history influences their religious conversions. This study differs from previous research in that it focuses on attachment changes *post*-religious conversion. In other words, rather than studying how conversion is affected by attachments, this researcher focused on how converts attributed changes in their attachments to their conversions. Based on an earlier study (Hansen, et al., 2014), themes emerged which provided initial support for the notion that converts did indeed experience changes in their attachments after undergoing religious conversion to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). The current study utilized a qualitative design to analyze previously collected semi-structured interviews (Hansen, et al., 2014) to explore the types of changes in attachments experienced by committed converts after joining the LDS Church, in both their individual and collective narrative.

The LDS Church provides an interesting context for studying converts' experiences because it is a centrally organized institution and its doctrines are uniformly taught cross-nationally (Porter, 2011). Members are encouraged to live similar lifestyle practices which

include participating in personal daily prayer and scripture study (Golden, 2007), attending weekly Sunday services (Perry, 2006), paying tithing and caring for the poor (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church), 2011a), following health practices such as getting adequate sleep (LDS Church, 2000a) and abstaining from coffee, tea, alcohol, and tobacco (LDS Church, 1998), and following the law of chastity which means abstaining from pre-marital sex and practicing monogamy within marriage (LDS Church, 2011b). Members are taught that all persons are children of a loving Heavenly Father, that “marriage is ordained by God,” and that children are “an heritage of the Lord” (The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of the LDS Church, 1995). Families are encouraged to pray together daily and to spend at least one evening per week at home together (LDS Church, 2000b). In addition, members are taught to live in harmony together symbolically as the body of Christ (Holland, 1980). Church congregations are operated by an unpaid ministry (“Lay Leadership,” n.d.). Congregation members are called upon to speak in Sunday worship services and teach classes (LDS Church, 2010). Adult LDS members are assigned to visit with and serve fellow members of their congregation on at least a monthly basis (“Home Teacher,” n.d.).

Method

This study is a continuation, and further in-depth qualitative analysis, of a pre-existing data set of transcribed interviews of 40 converts (20 North American and 20 international) to the LDS Church. The data analysis for the original study (Hansen, et al., 2014) occurred in two phases prior to the current study. The participant data, procedures, and original phases of analysis are briefly explained here as they pertain to the current study. The method and data analysis procedures for the current study will then be described in further detail.

Participants

Participants were a self-identified sample of students or employees of Brigham Young University (BYU) who responded to flyers posted on campus (Hansen, et al., 2014). (See Appendix B for a copy of the participant recruitment flyer and Appendix C for the consent form.) They were offered \$10 for their participation in the study. To be included in the study, participants were required to meet following criteria: (a) at least 17 years of age; (b) at least 12 years old at age of baptism; and, (c) conversion was not caused by the family converting together as a group. Forty LDS convert participants were randomly selected for interviews from the 60 persons who responded to the poster. Twenty of the participants were originally from the United States, and 20 were international students from 15 countries outside the United States and Canada. The ages of participants ranged from 17-54 ($M=26.6$). Twenty-three of the converts were female and 17 were male. One male was dropped from the analysis for reasons which will be further detailed. Table 1 specifies the demographic information of the 39 convert participants used in the analysis.

Procedures

The converts participated in interviews conducted in 2007 by two LDS undergraduate research assistants who had been trained in qualitative interview technique. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997) and they ranged from 30-60 minutes in length. (See Table 2 for a list of guiding questions used by the interviewers.) Interviewees signed a consent form and then completed a brief demographic questionnaire before beginning the interview. Interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed by a third undergraduate research assistant. Two additional research assistants (one of whom is the author

of the current study) listened to the recordings of the interviews and edited the transcriptions as an additional validity check.

Table 1

Demographic Information for Convert Participants

<i>Time Since Baptism</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>
< 4 years	14	Female	23
5-10 years	16	Male	16
> 10 years	9	<i>Age</i>	
<i>Family Marital History</i>		≤ 23	15
Parents married	28	24-30	16
Parents divorced	11	≥ 31	8
<i>Prior Religion</i>		<i>Ethnicity</i>	
Catholic	10	<i>North American Sample</i>	
Christian, non-Catholic	12	European American	14
non-Christian religion	5	Latin-American	3
atheist, agnostic, "no religion"	12	African American	3
<i>Education</i>		<i>International Sample</i>	
In college	24	South & Central American	6
College degree	6	East Asian	6
Some graduate school	2	former Soviet bloc	7
Graduate degree	7	<i>Participant Total</i>	39

Table 2

Interview Questions Used to Guide Qualitative Interviews

How did you come to join the LDS church?
Tell me about your conversion experience. What was your previous religious/spiritual culture?
What do you like/dislike about your previous experience before converting?
How is LDS culture similar/different?
Tell me about the process of adapting to the LDS culture?
Was it consistently easy or hard or did it vary?
Were there parts of your pre LDS experience that you kept and parts you did not?
How did you make these choices?
How has your thinking changed? Your emotions/feelings? Your behavior?
How do you experience LDS doctrine and LDS culture?

Original Study Phase One Analysis

During the original study, transcripts were read and analyzed for themes across converts' post-conversion narratives. Utilizing a variation of the Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) approach (Hill, et al., 1997), the research team precluded developing hypotheses prior to their analysis in order to remain open to findings they might otherwise not have anticipated. The author of the current study was one of the members of the original research team that performed a qualitative analysis of the interviews. A preliminary theme that emerged from the first analysis was that converts experienced changes in their attachment to God and to others following their conversion to the LDS Church. For further details regarding the original analysis, including other prominent themes that emerged, see Hansen, et al., 2014.

Original Study Phase Two Analysis

After the first phase of analysis, two raters from the team (one of whom is the author of this study) reread all of the transcripts in order to categorize the converts according to Gooren's (2007) individual levels of religious activity (i.e., *pre-affiliation*, *affiliation*, *conversion*, *confession*, and *disaffiliation*). For specific details regarding the classification criteria for each level of religious activity, see Hansen, et al., 2014. Thirty-nine of the 40 converts were categorized in the *confession* stage. One convert did not meet criteria as a *confessing* convert and was categorized in the *disaffiliation* stage. He was dropped from analysis in the original study (Hansen, et al., 2014). The *disaffiliated* convert was also excluded from the analysis of the current study. The *disaffiliated* convert will be mentioned further in the discussion section. The intent of the current study was to draw themes from the narratives of multiple committed converts. All of the participants in the analysis of the current study were active converts to the

LDS Church and were considered to be in the same conversion career stage (*confessing*) at the time of their interview (see Gooren, 2007, 2010).

Current Study Design

The current study utilized a theory-driven conceptual framework in the analysis to gain greater depth around the theme of post-conversion attachment changes. Although theory-driven approaches are not widely used in qualitative research, several health researchers have used them in guiding their qualitative analyses (MacFarlane & O'Reilly-de Brún, 2012). Strong (1991) argued for the importance of theory-driven research to aid the pursuit of scientific knowledge in counseling psychology; his argument, however, was based on the notion that theory-driven methods are purely quantitative and that qualitative methods are “naïve empiricism.” Patton and Jackson (1991) responded to Strong and argued that “theory-driven methods are not exclusively quantitative, nor are empirical methods exclusively qualitative” (p. 214). They further argued that both theory-driven and empirical approaches to research are useful in the pursuit of scientific knowledge, each answering different questions, and that qualitative methods can be used in both approaches. MacFarlane and O’Reilly-de Brun (2012) argued that beginning with a theory or orienting concept in qualitative approach, when used critically, can add “conceptual density” to findings.

A theory-driven design was chosen for this research as the logical extension to the exploratory design previously employed (i.e., Hansen, et al., 2014). As noted, one of the themes that emerged from the analysis by the original research team was that converts experienced changes in attachment following conversion. The original research team did not intend to use attachment theory to explain the findings before beginning the analysis, but the idea of employing attachment theory as a descriptor of changes came about organically through the

group's discussions. The current study, as a continuation of the original study (i.e., Hansen, et al., 2014), utilized the lens of attachment theory as a tool to help make meaning of the converts' stories. Although beginning with a working theory could have potentially blinded the researchers to new ideas in some respects, the decision to use attachment theory as a guide was made intentionally so as to provide the current research team the opportunity to achieve greater depth in findings.

A hermeneutic interpretive method (Jackson & Patton, 1992; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) was used to analyze the convert transcripts. As Jackson and Patton (1992) have commented, the hermeneutic interpretive method is difficult to describe as it does not contain a "delineated stepwise procedure in itself" (Jackson & Patton, 1992, Method section, para.1). Rather, the process is better explained as a set of guiding principles beginning with the researchers' recognition of their own biases and a dedicated effort on the part of the researchers to continue to question findings and seek out contradictions (Jackson & Patton, 1992; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), analysis occurs during and throughout the process of data gathering, and themes are developed as a "continuous back-and-forth process between parts and the whole" (p. 210). Informed by these concepts, the analysis for the current study occurred through a process of reading, discussing, meaning-making, revisiting data, revising, and drawing themes. Jackson and Patton (1992) explained how findings develop and evolve through the hermeneutic process:

Hermeneutic analysis cannot really be conceptualized in terms of "beginning" and "end" other than those arbitrarily determined by the researcher. The process over the course of an analysis can best be likened to a "spiral" (Polkinghorne, 1983) of deepening meaning—again, similar to the experience of reading and pondering literature. Though

one returns again and again to the phenomenon (or text), the experience is not simply repetitive because the depth of understanding achieved by each “re-reading” has increased. The understanding of a phenomenon does not literally begin with a study nor does it end when results are recorded. A deeper level of understanding is conveyed, however, by the willingness to ignore prior conceptualizations of the phenomena and “see them again for the first time.” (Method section, para.4)

Although the analysis for this study was based on initial findings of previously collected data (Hansen, et al., 2014), the integrity of a hermeneutic approach was honored because analysis occurred with circular fluidity (see Jackson & Patton, 1992; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This paper presents the method section and the results section in a mutually exclusive, linear fashion, but in reality the processes of method and results were interwoven (see Jackson & Patton, 1992; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The data analysis section will describe this process as accurately as possible without changing the format of this paper (i.e., inserting the method section into the results section). This fluidity of methodology is intentional on the part of the principle researcher, as it is a more accurate description of the hermeneutic process (see Jackson & Patton, 1992).

Current Study Data Analysis

Two undergraduate research assistants were hired and trained in hermeneutic qualitative analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). These two students and the author of this study reread the transcripts, paying attention to each convert’s report of his or her relationships and attitudes toward self and others. Before the analysis began the research assistants were briefed on the findings from the original study (i.e., Hansen, et al., 2014) and were trained in the basic principles of attachment theory. After the initial training, the group met on a weekly basis for

three months. The group followed a coordinated reading schedule and all group members read the same transcripts independently each week. Then during meetings the group discussed their individual observations. The meetings were held in an open discussion format and disagreements were a welcome part of the process as the readers expressed their opinions.

The team focused the discussions on attachment themes, specifically looking at each convert's descriptions of her or his relationships with God, family, friends, church congregations, church culture, and self, prior to, during, and following conversion. Each convert narrative was individually considered in detail and the group discussed what changes, if any, they noticed in the converts' relationships. As mentioned earlier, post-conversion change in attachment was an early theme that emerged from the first phase of analysis in the original study (i.e., Hansen, et al., 2014). Therefore, the research team began with the expectation that further analysis regarding this theme would be possible. However, the team remained open to the possibility that this theme might not be present in all of the narratives, and that specific types of changes could potentially vary widely by individual. During these discussions, the group noticed several patterns in the converts' descriptions of their relationships and their feelings towards themselves and others.

The team included a discussion of the evidence of the security or insecurity of the converts and agreed upon whether or not attachment patterns were evidenced by most of the converts in the analysis. Early in the analysis process, the team noticed that the majority of converts talked about their own attachment patterns (without using attachment terminology) in their narratives. (This evidence of attachment patterns emerged as the first theme in the analysis and will be discussed in greater detail in the results section.) The security or insecurity of converts' attachment patterns was evidenced in their descriptions of trust/distrust or

acceptance/avoidance of self and others over time. In noticing these patterns, the group decided to identify which converts were evidencing patterns of secure or insecure attachment. Therefore, after discussing each convert narrative holistically, the group decided whether they felt there was sufficient evidence to classify the convert as securely or insecurely attached before conversion. This decision was based on the converts' own self-report as well as the researchers' combined innate perceptions about each convert following the discussions. The group used the basic underlying structure of positive or negative self- and other-models proposed by Griffin and Horowitz (1991) as a definition to guide their understanding of secure and insecure attachment. According to Griffin and Horowitz (1991), *secure attachment* indicates “a sense of worthiness (lovability) plus an expectation that other people are generally accepting and responsive” (p. 227); and *insecure attachment* can indicate a combination of feelings and perceptions including, “a sense of unworthiness (unlovability)... an expectation that others will be negatively disposed (untrustworthy and rejecting)... [and/or] a negative disposition toward other people” (p. 227). (See Figure 1 for a visual depiction of the four-group model.) The converts were not asked specific questions regarding their relationships at the time of the interview (see Table 2 for guiding interview questions), so the group could not classify every convert as securely or insecurely attached according to a detailed coding system.

At the conclusion of these meetings, the author of this study held a series of discussions with the principle researcher of the original study (i.e., Hansen, et al., 2014). The initial purpose of these secondary discussions was to provide a validity check of the findings that emerged from the meetings with the undergraduate researchers. Through these secondary discussions, however, findings continued to develop and emerge, and as a result of this process, the author and the principle researcher of the original study continued to redefine the overarching themes

that will be outlined in the results section of this paper. As part of this process, the author reviewed notes from the discussions with the undergraduate researchers, summarized their findings, and presented these ideas to the principle researcher of the original study. The two then discussed meanings and other potential areas to investigate. Both researchers continued to revisit the transcripts during this time, and the third theme (which will be discussed in detail in the results section) emerged from these discussions as findings were reviewed and individual convert narratives were revisited. This back-and-forth process included questioning findings, revisiting transcripts, and continuing in the process of meaning-making until both researchers felt confident about the results.

Researcher Assumptions

The principle researcher made several assumptions in approaching this analysis. First, it was assumed that it would be possible to distill attachment styles from the convert narratives. This assumption included the supposition that converts were forthright in their interviews and not coerced in their answers. The strengths and weaknesses of this methodological approach are further mentioned in the limitations section. In addition, there are several assumptions associated with the principle researcher's theistic worldview, beginning with the belief in the existence of God. This assumption meant that the researcher took seriously the converts' descriptions of spiritual feelings and phenomena. Further, it was assumed that God is a relational being with whom converts could develop a relationship and that *confessing* converts (meeting Goren's, 2007, 2010 criteria) desired to continue on the path of conversion to the LDS church. This researcher assumed that some approaches to religious observance are adaptive and can bring positive psychological consequences and some are maladaptive and can bring negative psychological consequences. If the principle researcher had started with other assumptions, the

findings of this study might have been different. However, this study is also undergirded by the assumption that the hermeneutic interpretive method produces trustworthy results because the researchers' biases always remain in question with regard to the findings.

Results

In a focused analysis of the converts' descriptions of their relationships with themselves, others, and God, three themes emerged and are elaborated here. The first was simply that through their narratives various converts described patterns of secure and insecure attachments both before and after baptism. Secondly, converts reported a spiritual conversion beyond a projection of their parental attachment style. Whether securely and insecurely attached, converts provided descriptions of growing closer to God through the conversion process. Thirdly, the converts experienced what this study author has labeled a *spiritual restructuring of attachments* through their newfound relationship with God. Both securely or insecurely attached converts reported that the process of conversion changed their relationships with themselves, others, and God. Converts who were classified as securely attached before conversion also appeared to experience a deepening of their human relationships as they grew closer to God. Converts who were classified as insecurely attached before conversion dramatically changed their human relationships through their relationship with God. In both cases the converts described the way God had become an intervening and life-shaping force in their relationships.

Theme 1: Evidence of Convert Attachment Patterns

Although attachment patterns were not specifically addressed by the interviewers, these patterns became apparent as the stories of the converts unfolded. They told their experiences in relation to their context, which included themselves, their family, and their friends. Some converts placed more emphasis on their relationships than other converts, but the majority of the

converts (approximately 90%) presented some evidence of attachment patterns. As gleaned from the converts' narratives, the researchers found converts who demonstrated insecure attachments before and shortly after baptism, as well as converts who demonstrated secure attachments before and shortly after baptism, irrespective of any support they did or did not receive from their family and friends. Secure and insecure attachment are defined here according to Griffin and Horowitz's (1991) underlying structural description of attachment patterns—in which reported positive self- and other-perceptions are used to indicate *secure attachment*, and reported negative self-perceptions or negative other-perceptions combined with positive or negative self- or other-perceptions are used to indicate *insecure attachment*. Using this approach, approximately 40% of the converts seemed to have secure attachment patterns prior to conversion, and approximately 50% of the converts seemed to have insecure attachment patterns prior to conversion. The remaining 10% of converts spoke about their relationships, but did not go into enough detail for the researchers to consider their pre-conversion attachment patterns.

Many converts who appeared securely attached spoke positively about their relationships with their parents and families prior to conversion. One female convert from Columbia said, “I have this wonderful relationship with my parents all my life...” As she talked over her decision to be baptized with her parents, she reported that they were supportive and told her they knew they could trust her decisions, “I remember my parents telling me that they knew... I don't... [make] crazy decisions and I like to...know the benefits and the things that may not be beneficial to me... I had total... support from them.” Other converts spoke respectfully of their upbringing and included descriptions of extended family, as explained by a female convert from Mongolia “[After I was baptized] I kept lots of things that my grandfather and parents used to teach me—like to be honest and helping others because I grew up like that.” It should be noted, however,

that not all converts who appeared securely attached received support from their families regarding their conversion to the LDS faith. Some who expressed sadness spoke of their concerns about stepping away from family traditions. A Peruvian female convert emphasized this point: “I thought I was going to be betraying my family... and I was going to become too different from them.”

The converts who seemed to be securely attached prior to conversion made friends easily with their new LDS congregations, and they perceived themselves as warmly received by others both before and shortly after their baptisms. A white North American male described his feelings of comfort when he first joined the LDS Church: “As I went to church I felt instantly comfortable. The members welcomed me. They treated me as their son or their brother so in that sense the transition into membership was easy...” A similar sense of trust was demonstrated by a Nepalese male convert who had been baptized just two months prior to his interview: “Everywhere we go, everyone is so willing to help us. Everybody is trying to be friendly...we didn’t have homesickness, because we had friends from all over and they were trying to learn from us—not trying to impose their things—but trying to learn from us.”

Converts with secure attachment patterns also seemed confident in their perceptions of themselves. They talked about their decisions from the framework of an internal locus of control (see Rotter, 1966) both before and after conversion. For example, one Puerto Rican female convert who faced strong opposition from her aunts and uncles about her conversion responded with intrinsic confidence in her own beliefs: “I just let it roll off of me. I knew it was true and I ignored everything else that was not true.” She carried this confidence into her interactions with LDS Church members shortly after her baptism: “Even when members of the Church said things... I sometimes felt they weren’t saying it with their heart and when people were correcting

me... [it] really actually hurt me [but] I knew... that they were trying to help me and I shouldn't take it in a negative matter [*sic*].”

Other converts demonstrated insecure patterns of attachment when they spoke of troubled relationships with their families and negative perceptions of themselves prior to conversion. One North American white female explained, “I felt extremely unhappy [before I was baptized]... I didn't know how to overcome... negative self-talk... and I didn't know I had worth. I had bad situations before, people that hurt me and I didn't know how to deal with that pain so I blamed myself for everything and I kept putting pain back on myself and it was extremely destructive.” A Mongolian convert, when talking about his life before conversion, explained, “I didn't like anything. I hated my life and I was very distant from my family... I thought maybe I would suicide myself [*sic*]... I hated my life because I never heard someone say ‘I love you’ or encouraging words.” Another convert, a North American white female, described her family of origin as “dysfunctional.” She said “they [didn't] accept each other...”

Converts who seemed to have insecure attachment patterns described feelings of distrust for their new congregations while investigating the LDS Church and shortly following their baptisms. A North American white male convert did not trust the LDS members who invited him to sit with them in church. “Families would have me sit with them and I'd think, ‘well yeah,’ but then I think, ‘you're just pitying me, you're making me a charity case’ so... at the beginning it was difficult.” The Mongolian convert, mentioned above, recalled a time shortly after his baptism when he was asked to speak in church and he felt threatened by others' reactions: “I was going to speak... and... I said something and got stuck and... my face turned red and people were laughing at me and I couldn't speak. I was really nervous... so I went outside and went home...” A Chinese female convert who seemed to demonstrate an anxious

insecure attachment pattern spoke idealistically of others while devaluing herself. She expressed concern for her ability to live up to Mormons' expectations of her, and she reported that when she sometimes wanted to go back to her old ways she told herself, "No, you are wrong! You shouldn't think that. What's wrong with you? You've gotten baptized; people treat you so well... if you do this you will disappoint them." The convert narratives, as expected, are individual and unique. However, patterns of attachment are discernible from their comments.

Theme 2: Spiritual Conversion Beyond Projection of Parental Attachment Style

All of the converts in the study experienced a spiritual conversion beyond a projection of their parental attachment style. Regardless of their attachment patterns in human relationships, most explicitly reported feeling closer to God through the process. In this context the term *conversion* is used to denote a "process" (see Rambo, 1989) rather than a single event (e.g., baptism). The converts described their conversions as a relational process in which they felt the presence and interaction of deity in their lives. They described forming, and growing in, "real" attachments with God regardless of the psychological health (i.e., security or insecurity) of their human relationships. Notably, the few who did not specifically speak of their *relationship* with God did, however, indicate that God was intervening in their lives. For example, a white North American male convert spoke of the events leading up to his baptism as "divine intervention."

The converts classified as securely attached reported that they developed a closer relationship with God through the process of conversion. These converts came from diverse religious backgrounds. Several reported atheism or no religion in their lives prior to investigating the LDS Church. For example, one male convert from Korea who seemed securely attached reported that he had no religion prior to his conversion. However, following his conversion he reported that his most fundamental change occurred through his relationship with

God, “after I learned the gospel... I realize[d]... my mission here.... That idea changed me a lot because [I realized] I’m not a single person, I’m a child of God... and I felt something really important that God loves me and God wants me to do [good things] in my life.” Other converts classified as securely attached reported that they had already believed in God before encountering the LDS Church but that their relationship with God was strengthened through their conversion. A securely attached female Hungarian convert explained, “Since I was a little child I had a spiritual connection with God.” And following her conversion, she said, “I really felt like I was getting closer to God.”

The converts who were classified as insecurely attached described growing feelings of security and dependence upon God because of the conversion process. One Chinese female convert, a former atheist, who seemed to be anxiously (insecurely) attached, described how she had come to trust God: “I didn’t think there was a God at all, but after I joined [the LDS Church] I could pray and it really help[ed] a lot. If you... pray every day, your life will go through very smoothly and your heart will be more peaceful.” Another convert who was classified as insecurely attached, an American male and former atheist, described his amazement to learn that God existed and cared for him: “[I was surprised] not only that He existed, [but] He cared about me and that was different because throughout my life nobody cared about me that much. So that was something amazing... to realize the Creator of the universe took time out of his extremely busy schedule to touch my heart...”

Theme 3: Spiritual Restructuring of Attachment Relationships

The themes that emerged from analysis of the narratives build on each other. As already discussed, the converts spontaneously revealed various attachments patterns in the way that they spoke of themselves, their family, and their friends. They also disclosed how their attachments

to God changed and deepened through the process of spiritual conversion. The following discussion of the third theme brings to light the unexpected but not surprising synergy of the first two themes. That is, the converts reported that the changed relationship with God dramatically transformed their attachments to themselves, their family and their friends. The researchers noted that this reported change was so fundamental and far-reaching, so life-changing that it can appropriately be called a *spiritual restructuring of attachments*. The term *restructuring* is borrowed here from McCullough et al. (2003) to depict a similar type of transformation that occurs in spiritual attachments, or specifically, in an individual attachment to or with God. The converts in this study reported that they made changes in their behaviors, attitudes, and life meanings that directly impacted their human relationships, but they described these changes occurring through a relationship with God or a spiritual process.

Indeed, it would be impossible to ignore the spiritual restructuring that the converts reported that they experienced. They eagerly described the changes that took place in the broader context of their lives as a result of their conversion. They looked on this transformation as positive and fundamental. A female Russian convert typified a convert's total change in perspective as she discussed her conversion. A spiritual restructuring gradually replaced previously insecure attachments, negative self-views, and feelings of inadequacy with trust in God, self-trust, and feelings of hope. "I'm able to look at the future with more confidence.... Before [my conversion] I was shy and wasn't able to know... what's going on... [but now I know] Heavenly Father will never ask [me to do] something [I] can't do. Before [my conversion] I said I could never do anything... and [now] even the most difficult thing I can achieve." The narrative of a male convert from Mongolia provides an example of the overarching changes encompassed by this theme. He explained that his life was dark before his

conversion, full of anger, loneliness, and suicidal thoughts: “If I was angry... I acted like a wild dog... [and] I had many fights in high school.... I couldn’t control myself. I was just angry and couldn’t keep it inside...” Nine years after his baptism he described several transformations in his life that came as a result of the conversion process. He gradually developed an internal locus of control and felt less threatened by others: “I have more patience and I’m very calm and happy now.... There were rude people in Church but I didn’t pay attention.” In addition, he described positive feelings about himself, love for his wife, and new feelings of hope for his future family: “I don’t worry about tomorrow. I think about my future children and my faith.... I consider [myself] to have become Christ-like.... I feel nice in a good way... and I love my wife and we talk about... our relationship every day.” This convert’s story illustrates several sub-themes of spiritual restructuring that will now be delineated.

Although the details of the convert stories differ with regard to their specific attachment changes, several spoke of a spiritual restructuring that placed them on a relational level with God (e.g., as his “child”) as opposed to existing individually. The converts classified as securely attached talked about how their sense of personal worth increased through a relationship with God, and that this affected the way they interacted with others. A female Taiwanese convert reported that understanding her relationship with God helped her feel the confidence to make positive changes in her life, “Now I know where I am and who I am and I have the courage...to try to be a better person.” A North American male convert of mixed race explained that he became more outgoing through his increased sense of personal worth, “I was more reserved [before my conversion]... then I started to open up a little more... and my people skills improved a little bit. I could communicate with people more and be more comfortable with who I am.” Others spoke about how they came to appreciate themselves on deeper levels. As one female

Mongolian convert put it, “I found more talent in myself.” Although many of the converts classified as securely attached already presented evidence of having an internal locus of control prior to conversion, most also reported growing significantly in this area through a deeper relationship with God. For example, one securely attached Mongolian female convert talked about how she used to feel pressured to perform perfectly before her conversion, but following her conversion she learned to accept her weaknesses and her emotions as she felt supported in her relationship with God. Thus in a paradoxical sense, by letting go of how she controlled others’ perceptions, she increased her trust in herself. In her words, “Growing up... I never accepted my weakness, but [following my conversion] I accepted that there were some things I did not know and I accepted help from a higher being.” She further explained that her increased sense of self-acceptance was directly related to this spiritual relationship.

For these converts classified as already securely attached prior to conversion, the spiritual restructuring included their ability to make major strides in their attachment learning. For example, several securely attached converts commented on how they began to see their families more positively following their conversions and treat them accordingly. The female Columbian convert, mentioned in the discussion of Theme 1, explained that her favorite change since her conversion was her increased care for her family. In her words, “it was strong before, and now... it got stronger.” The securely attached male Nepalese convert, also mentioned in Theme 1, remarked, “I have an emotional attachment to [my family] much more than from before I accepted the Gospel, and to all of [my] relatives. I think I love them much more than I used to—and the same thing to all my friends.”

Converts who had previously been insecurely attached reported that their new relationship with God helped them view themselves with a new sense of worth. As one white

North American female convert put it, “I’m a daughter of God and I’m always loved and if I feel that way all the time I’ll be fine.” Previously insecurely attached converts also talked about how this relationship helped them increase their internal locus of control. One white North American male, who described himself as a people-pleaser prior to his conversion explained that afterwards he was “not looking to please others, but better yet looking for what Heavenly Father wants [me] to do.” In addition, he said, “I feel a lot more constant because I know... exactly where I stand, it’s not as iffy as before [my conversion]... now I can look to one source and that’s the most helpful thing for me.” Similarly, several converts who reported experiencing a spiritual restructuring mentioned feeling less controlled by others’ perceptions of them. This change allowed them to make intentional, positive strides in their attachment behaviors.

Converts repeatedly made comments about how their interactions with others had changed dramatically. Some who seemed to have been avoidant spoke about having an increased openness to others following their conversions. A female Ukrainian convert talked about how she used to avoid people she didn’t like but following her conversion she felt that she was more open to others, “Now when I have trouble with friends or... someone I don’t really like... I accept them. [I’m] more directed towards how Jesus would look at them. Before I would just try not to spend as much time with this person... so it won’t [*sic*] be as difficult... kind of avoiding that person. And [now] I accept [others].... Now I’m more like ‘I don’t care if you treat me bad, but I’m still going to treat you well.’” One white North American female convert who had been anxiously attached spoke about how she came to view others less fearfully, “[My conversion] allowed me to love better and more fully.... It allowed me to see people more as people instead of what I would make believe [I] wanted them to [be]. I’ve

always been a [people] pleaser and... [used to get]... in trouble to make people happy at whatever cost to myself...”

Converts spoke about caring more for their families and putting their families first when they had not cared for them in the past. A North American white female who had been insecurely attached explained, “My family is pretty dysfunctional so I guess I never cared if I was with [my family] forever... but now family is a lot more important to me.” In some cases converts reported that their relationships with their families were strengthened as a result of this new caring. For example, the North American white male who was quoted earlier as distrusting Latter-day Saints when they would invite him to sit with them in church described himself as going through a transformation and he reported that his relationships with his family improved: “I do want to impress upon you that I do have a good relationship with my parents now. They are... not members of the [LDS] Church, but they are good people and I do enjoy a good relationship with them.” In other cases converts reported that their relationships with families were still strained, and some cases grew more distant, but the converts noted that they *themselves* changed. They reported that they viewed themselves differently and they experienced increased acceptance of their families. A North American white female convert explained, “Some family relations have changed from good to bad in relation to [my baptism]. [However,] I think I’ve become wiser... so I understand people and... the rest of the world.” She went on to describe how she learned to cope, “I’ve learned since joining... that I can control, or I can choose, how I will react to a situation.” In addition, several converts who had been insecurely attached spoke about how they now felt a greater sense of care and responsibility for their future families. The white North American female who had described her family of origin as dysfunctional explained, “[My family] didn’t spend a lot of time together [when I was growing up]... but my husband and

our [future] children will.... Marriage is hard work and we're in it for the long haul [and] we're going to treat it like [it's] something special.”

Summary

The participants in this self-selected group of confessing converts were eager to share their conversion stories and openly talked about the changes they experienced. Their comments revealed various patterns of attachment before conversion and showed that conversion occurred regardless of their attachment style. An assessment of the transcripts also showed clear patterns of significant change as a result of conversion; this change was overarching enough to be termed a *spiritual restructuring* of their relationships.

At first, as the converts reported that they felt a new awareness of God and they began to develop a greater dependence on him. Converts who were classified as securely attached prior to conversion explained that they felt closer to God after conversion. Their attachments improved and they also spoke of increased love for their families. They explained that their new relationship with God gave them confidence, increased their sense of internal locus of control, and helped them be more communicative in other relationships. Those that had been classified as insecurely attached also reported that they experienced growing feelings of security and self-confidence as they felt closer to God. They explained that gradually their insecure attachments and negative self-views were replaced with more positive concepts and increased internal locus of control. They reported that as they began to see themselves as important to God, their interactions with others changed. They became less anxious and more open; they felt increased love for family members. Even those who continued to experience strained family relations, often as a result of familial disapproval of their conversion, felt better about themselves.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the changes in attachment that occurred in the lives of committed converts following their conversion to the LDS Church. This study was a continuation of Hansen, Page, Fischer, and Williams' (2014) qualitative study of 39 converts. The current study utilized the interview transcripts to provide a further in-depth analysis of the converts' attachment themes. A hermeneutic interpretive method (Jackson & Patton, 1992; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) was used to examine convert themes within the framework of attachment theory. (For a discussion on theory-driven qualitative research, see Strong, 1991, and Patton & Jackson, 1991). Three overarching themes were drawn from the analysis: (a) converts demonstrated evidence of attachment patterns in their narratives; (b) all of the converts experienced a spiritual conversion beyond a projection of their parental attachment style; and (c) the converts experienced a *spiritual restructuring of their attachment patterns*; or, in other words, they described feeling that their closer relationship with God dramatically changed the way they viewed themselves and how they interacted with others in their relationships with others.

The first theme that arose from the analysis was that the converts demonstrated evidence of attachment patterns in their narratives. Converts who appeared securely attached seemed confident in themselves and spoke positively about their relationships with their families prior to conversion. They spoke respectfully about their upbringing, and in some cases, they expressed sadness in stepping away from family traditions. The converts who seemed securely attached also reported that they made friends easily with, and felt accepted by, their new LDS congregations. The converts who appeared insecurely attached conversely reported their family relationships as troubled prior to conversion. They also reported having negative perceptions of

themselves. The converts with insecure patterns reported that they felt unwelcomed by their new LDS congregations, and they distrusted them at first.

The second theme that emerged was that all of the converts included in the analysis experienced a spiritual conversion beyond a projection of their parental attachment style. Regardless of their attachment patterns, the converts described experiencing a positive, new spiritual relationship with deity through the process of conversion. For some converts, this relationship was an extension of earlier beliefs or spiritual experiences, but for others, they reported that this newfound relationship with God was the most striking and positive change that they had experienced. This change in their spiritual relationship occurred for both insecurely attached and securely attached converts. These findings contrast with the classic conceptualization of God image, in which one's image of God is created by the ego to satisfy unconscious desires stemming from unmet childhood needs (see Owen, 2005). In that construct, for example, someone with an insecure relationship with his father might project that relationship onto his image of God. However, both the securely and insecurely attached converts in this analysis described gaining a warm and loving relationship with God which was not simply a reflection of parental projections. They described their relationship with God as a two-way interaction in which they felt a spiritual presence that was intimately involved in their lives.

Some of the converts with insecure attachments reported that they were initially motivated as spiritual seekers because they were hoping to compensate for the lack of support in their human relationships. Thus, this study provides some support for the traditional notion of the compensation model that individuals lacking a primary attachment figure are more likely to use religious coping strategies (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008; Kirkpatrick, 1994; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). However, the converts in this study commented that as their relationship with

God changed, or as they felt a more intimate, trusting connection with God, they no longer felt the need for a compensatory figure. In other words, as their religious beliefs became implicit (i.e., they described themselves developing a close relationship with God), they reported that they no longer felt the need for a compensatory figure, and their human attachments improved as well. These findings align with Hall et al.'s (2009) argument that the traditional compensation hypothesis is oversimplified. In a quantitative study of 483 students from a Protestant university, Hall et al. (2009) directly tested the correspondence and compensation models. Their findings differentiated between explicit and implicit forms of relational and spiritual knowing (see Lyons-Ruth, 1999) in understanding these models; that is, explicit levels of knowing serve as *compensation* for adults with insecure attachment, but implicit levels of knowing *correspond* with adult romantic attachments. Like Hall et al. (2009), the findings of this study also reveal the complex nature of the relationship between adult attachments and attachment to God.

The third theme that resulted was that the converts experienced *a spiritual restructuring of their attachments* following conversion. As mentioned earlier, the term restructuring is borrowed here from McCullough et al.'s book (2003), *Treating Affect Phobia: A Manual for Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy*, in which McCullough et al. referred to the psychological restructuring of defenses, affects, and relationships to self and others. They defined *restructuring* “as reorganizing the way people view, experience, and remember the world” (p. 9). The converts explained that through their relationship with God, their patterns of relating to themselves and others went through dramatic changes. They began to see themselves in the context of a relationship with God—as their “Heavenly Father”—and converts who were previously insecurely attached felt a new sense of meaning and worth. The converts’ descriptions of their relationship with God are consistent with Sandage and Shults’ (2007) model

of “relational spirituality.” Sandage and Shults (2007) explained that after undergoing a spiritual transformation people often have a unifying experience with God in which “they come to understand, perceive, and interpret themselves and the world in the ‘light’ of the divine presence...[T]his intimate ‘union’...is sometimes described as an ‘infusion’ of the absolutely gracious gift of divine presence” (p. 264).

Given a new perception of their relationship with God, converts also experienced a change in their connection with themselves. The research team saw evidence for this in both the converts they had classified as secure and the converts they had classified as insecure. The converts reported an increased sense of personal worth and a more internalized locus of control (see Rotter, 1966). This change was more pronounced with converts who were classified as insecurely attached prior to conversion, but converts who were classified as securely attached also talked about making major strides in their sense of personal confidence and their ability to direct their lives. For all, this inner sense translated into improved relationships with others, and particularly with their families. Both securely and insecurely attached converts described increased feelings of love and acceptance for their families. A shift toward a greater internal locus of control was one of the themes reported by Hansen, et al. (2014) when the interviews were originally examined. The findings of the current study support this shift and add the essential detail that the shift was more dramatic for previously insecurely attached converts. Where the converts who were classified as securely attached reported making a movement in this direction, many of the converts who were classified as insecurely attached reported that they experienced this sense of an internal locus of control for the first time after conversion. Research comparing locus of control to attachment styles is limited (Dilmaç, et al., 2009), however this shift fits with Dilmaç et al.’s (2009) finding that an external locus of control correlates with

attachment insecurity, whereas an internal locus of control correlates with attachment security. This idea is also consistent with Paloutzian, Richardson, and Rambo's (1999) analysis of religious conversion research in which they argued that religious conversion can change the way "a person expresses his or her traits or adapts to diverse situations in the real world... sometimes in profound ways" (p. 1068). They further stated that religious conversion can mean a change "in identity, in life definition, [and] in worldview" (p. 1068). Although they did not specifically address attachment restructuring or locus of control, the changes addressed in the current study closely relate with Paloutzian, et al.'s (1999) description of profound change.

Spiritual perspective-taking, described in Hansen, et al. (2014) is related to the *spiritual restructuring of attachments* observed in this study. Hansen, et al. (2014) examined the acculturation that converts experienced as they entered a new religious culture after they joined the LDS Church. One of the notable findings from this original study was that the converts felt the presence of divine help in their acculturation process. In other words, through a newfound relationship with God they felt a new sense of meaning, purpose, and direction: "converts gained a new view of reality that enhanced their ability to acculturate in spite of some of the psychosocial challenges they faced" (p. 23). Sandage and Shults (2007) argued for a similar concept with their notion of *spiritual transformation*:

By spiritual transformation, we mean profound, qualitative or *second-order* changes in the ways in which a person relates to the sacred. First order change is limited to one's current set of coping skills, whereas second-order change involves a more complex systemic transformation that changes coping strategies and ways of relating to a system altogether. (p. 264)

They further argued that these changes are “typically associated with positive mental health rather than psychopathology despite the intense stress and emotional turbulence that is frequently a precursor” (p. 264).

Implications

The findings of this study have implications for understanding psychology and religion in general, and more specifically, for understanding the impact of spirituality on attachment patterns. The results of this study expand the definition and understanding of religious conversion for *confessing* converts (see Gooren, 2007, 2010). The converts in this analysis experienced a change in their relationships with themselves, God, and others so profound that it has been labeled here as a *spiritual restructuring of their attachments*. As the converts described it, this restructuring took place through a spiritual process that was marked by a gradually intensifying, personal relationship with a loving God, or “Heavenly Father,” a relationship which the converts considered reciprocal because they began to believe that God was intimately concerned with their thoughts and actions as individuals. This deepening, intimate relationship with Deity gradually expanded to improve the individual’s concept of self-worth (For example, the person might think “If God loves me, I must be okay.”) and eventually encompassed a changed and more positive relationship with others, including family members. Converts who were already securely attached prior to conversion found new respect and love in some of their central relationships. Strikingly, previously insecurely attached converts, because of the spiritual restructuring of their attachments, became open to working on relationships that had been flawed or nonexistent in the past. Some, who had thought that certain relationships would be impossible to heal, found that they were able to begin nurturing positive bonds.

One of the unique aspects of this study is that it seeks to answer the call that Rambo (1989) made to “take the religious sphere seriously” (p. 50). As such, this study is undergirded by the assumption of what Slife, Stevenson, and Wendt (2010) have labeled *strong theism*. Slife, et al. (2010) conceptualized strong theism as the notion that “a currently active God is central and pervasive, not superficial or an ‘add-on’” (p. 165). Being informed by a strong theism, the researchers involved in this study were able to explore the richness of spiritual descriptions provided by the converts. This kind of richness can be missed when researchers’ biases contradict theistic worldviews of the persons interviewed (see Slife & Whoolery, 2006). Slife and Whoolery (2006) argued that the naturalistic assumptions in most mainstream psychological research is biased against many religious worldviews:

Psychologists run the risk of being fundamentally prejudiced against theists. This prejudice is not only unethical by psychology’s standards but also potentially misleading. Using incompatible values and assumptions to study theism can mean selectively attending the wrong variables, studying them in the wrong manner, misinterpreting them, and essentially missing the whole point of theism and its adherents—God. (p. 228)

This study reports how the converts acknowledged God’s influence in the way they approached themselves, God, and others, and has labeled this approach as a *spiritual restructuring of attachments*. Taking God’s influence seriously in forming and restructuring attachment patterns has significant implications for the field of attachment theory research. In the majority of current attachment literature, God’s influence is not considered a factor in the formation and evolution of attachment patterns. The findings of this study not only take the concept of attachment to God seriously, but connect this concept with, and show its impact on, adult attachment patterns as well.

This study also has implications in clinical applications. Might psychotherapists assist their clients who are learning to restructure their attachment patterns by helping them draw on their spiritual resources? Psychotherapists could potentially use ecumenical spiritual approaches with their clients within the therapeutic context (see Richards & Bergin, 2005). To help clients draw on their spiritual resources, Richards and Bergin (2005) outlined a number of potential interventions that psychotherapists could utilize. These include encouraging meditation, reading sacred writings, and validating worship and ritual. The findings of this study, highlighting that converts recognize a reciprocal relationship between God and themselves and that this relationship is a factor in the restructuring of their attachments, points to further research that could be done to guide psychotherapists' understanding of how their clients' relationship with God could potentially impact their attachments to themselves, to family, and to others. For psychotherapists themselves, assisting clients in drawing on their spiritual resources would begin by recognizing that they can view their clients' spiritual beliefs through a multicultural lens. Richards and Bergin (2005) noted that major health organizations consider religion to be a form of diversity that is to be respected within their ethical guidelines.

Limitations

One limitation of the current study is that the analysis included only confessing converts to the LDS Church. The research was conducted at Brigham Young University, an LDS institution, and all of the participants were affiliated with the university either as students, faculty, or staff. Given the location in which the interviews were conducted, participants were more likely to be active, committed members of the LDS Church. In the data pool only one interviewee was classified as *disaffiliated* and the rest of the participants were classified as *confessing* (see Gooren, 2007, 2010). Another study could be conducted using a different

recruitment method to find a sample more representative of all of Gooren's (2007, 2010) affiliation levels (i.e., *pre-affiliation*, *disaffiliation*, *affiliation*, *conversion*, *confession*, or *disaffiliation*). If the converts had been in a conversion career stage other than *confession* at the time of interview the manifestations of the God image theme would likely have been different. For example, unlike the interviewees in the *confessing* stage, the interviewees in other stages might not have talked about a having spiritual relationship with God, or their descriptions might have been more correlated to their parental images, as fitting with classical God-image conceptualizations.

The *disaffiliated* convert provides an interesting example of the above suggestion. Therefore, this author will briefly elaborate on some findings from his interview as they present a contrast to the *confessing* converts' interviews. This convert, a male from Uganda, was classified as insecurely attached prior to his baptism. Talking about his relationships and his outlook, he explained, "My dad told me you're alone in this world—which is kind of true." He further went on to describe trauma he had experienced, "I've seen... bad things happening to myself... I've seen kids die and people starving.... Religion and church can make you feel good but... intentions can't change the world.... Life's a bitch... and there is no way you can change that." As compared to the confessing converts in the analysis, the disaffiliated convert did not experience emotions characteristic of the spiritual conversion described by the confessing converts (see Hansen, et al., 2014). Instead, he explained that his decision to get baptized was purely logical: "things made sense to me... it felt practical." He did not experience a *spiritual restructuring of attachments* following his baptism. He made many statements that expressed his avoidant attachment pattern at the time of the interview. In a comment that typified his attitude, he explained, "I think I can connect to the Church just as long as it stays out of my business." As

Hansen, et al. (2014) recommended, it would be useful to study persons at different conversion career stages in comparison to the sample of confessing converts in this study.

Another limitation of the study was the fact that it is a cross-sectional analysis; that is, although the themes deal with past and present relationships, the narratives were told from one point in time. However, this study at least partially compensates for this limitation because, when the converts were interviewed, the time since their baptisms ranged from 2 months to 35 years (see Table 1 for demographic information of the convert participants). The mention of this limitation is essential because of the progressive nature of conversion. Rambo (1993), for example, described conversion as a holistic “process” rather than an event. In addition, as Snow and Machalek (1983) have pointed out, one aspect of religious conversion is a biographical reconstruction, in which the convert makes new meaning of her or his experiences from the standpoint of the newly adopted worldview. Therefore, in one sense, examining the converts’ perspective at the time of the interview can be said to honor the biographical reconstructions of their attachments. The cross-sectional analysis used for studying their experiences yielded useful information, but the researchers acknowledge that some information may have been lost in the retrospective nature of the convert narratives.

The sample, itself is limited in that it is not a stratified representative sample of LDS converts. Most of the participants were university students under the age of 30. Therefore, it was difficult for the researchers to determine how developmental stages may have influenced the results. In addition, although the converts ranged in time since baptism from 2 months to 35 years, the majority of participants had been converted for fewer than 10 years at the time of the interview. Also, the sample contained fewer men than women. As is common in qualitative studies, the researchers were not attempting to create a stratified representative sample in order

to generalize results to all LDS converts. Instead, the researchers found meaning in the participants' narratives and have distilled some of the results here with the caveat that these findings do not necessarily apply to all LDS converts.

Another limitation of this study is that the researchers did not investigate how cultural factors mediated the findings. Nineteen of the 39 converts in the analysis were born outside the United States and Canada. However, the researchers were not able to assess ethnic differences among the converts because they felt that there were too few converts from any given country to draw themes about the influence of ethnicity. In addition, the researchers did not generalize the international convert group as a whole because of the sizable within group differences. This is not to say that culture was ignored; instead, the researchers honored culture on an individual level when trying to make meaning of each convert narrative.

As mentioned earlier, the method employed in this study for classifying the converts as securely or insecurely attached is both a strength and a limitation of the study. The converts' attachment patterns were never directly assessed at the time of the interview, and, in fact, the converts were never directly asked about their relationships. Instead, the converts spoke about their relationships organically as part of the discussion about their religious conversion. Attachment patterns were later assessed through in-depth readings and discussions focusing on the converts' narratives regarding their relationships with themselves, God, and others. The researchers assessed each convert holistically after reading, discussing, and rereading the transcripts. Ultimately, the decision to label a convert as securely or insecurely attached was based on the researchers' combined innate perceptions that went beyond the converts' own self-report. Because their relationships were not the focus of the interviews, the converts were likely to be less conscious of the way they were portraying their relationships to the interviewer.

However, by not asking questions specific to relationships, some information was lost to the research team that could have provided the team with more detailed information regarding the converts' attachment patterns. This circumstance prevented the research team from labeling the majority of converts into specific categories of attachment beyond the labels of "secure" and "insecure." Schnitker, et al. (2012) utilized a similar method to classify the attachment patterns of adolescents in their study. Using Hazan and Shaver's (1987) descriptors of attachment indicators as a guide, Schnitker, et al. analyzed the adolescents' narratives and categorized the participants into the general categories of secure or insecure. There has been, however, considerable disagreement in the literature regarding how best to assess for adult attachment patterns (Onishi, Gjerde, & Block, 2001). Studies which compared the validity of self-report measures of adult attachment to the validity of interview measures found that both types of assessment had strengths and weaknesses (see Gjerde, Onishi, & Carlson, 2004; Onishi, et al., 2001; Riggs et al., 2007). Further, Riggs, et al. (2007) found that the differences between the types of measures (i.e., interview vs. self-report) were not significant.

Finally, the researchers' bias is both a strength and a limitation of the study. By being fellow Latter-day Saints, the researchers were able to discern a richness from the interviewees that might not have been achieved with interviewers of other faiths. The interviewees may have been more open in discussing their experiences because they were speaking with fellow members. In addition, by sharing a religious worldview and value system with the convert participants, the research team was aware of nuances of meaning and language unique to LDS culture and was able to see themes that might not have otherwise been noticed. However, as with all bias, beginning from a particular worldview potentially blinded the researchers to themes outside of their realm. Slife and Williams (1995) remarked that every theory begins with a

particular bias, and each bias impacts both the research design and the way findings are interpreted. The researchers in this study tried to compensate for this limitation by including open explicit discussions of their own personal worldviews and constantly questioning their interpretations of the convert transcripts throughout the process of this study. In addition, the researchers were thoughtful and explicit about their biases in framing the guiding interview questions. During the interviews they were particularly mindful of making space for the converts to express all of their feelings, both positive and negative, to encourage an open dialogue about their post-conversion experiences. (See Hansen, et al., 2014, for a more detailed discussion of researcher biases accounted for in the interview process.)

Recommendations for Future Research

One recommendation for future research would be to examine if similar changes in attachment occurred for persons converting to other faiths. It would also be helpful to conduct further qualitative research on the compensation and correspondence hypotheses more explicitly as these models have been called into question from the findings of this study (see Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008; Kirkpatrick, 1994; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). As mentioned above, it would be interesting to look at the experiences of converts in other conversion career Stages (i.e., *pre-affiliation, disaffiliation, affiliation, or conversion*; see Gooren, 2007, 2010). Are the attachment patterns of persons in other affiliation levels likewise similar to each other? What is their relationship to God and how does it affect their attachment patterns? As individuals move from *pre-affiliation* to *affiliation*, do the attachment patterns begin to change? And if so, at what point? How do they perceive the changes as their conversion deepens? Answers to questions such as these would broaden understanding of spiritual restructuring of attachments.

References

- Allen, J. P., McElhaney, K. B., Kuperminc, G. P., & Jodl, K. M. (2004). Stability and change in attachment security across adolescence. *Child Development, 75*, 1792-1805. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2004.00817.x
- Ariely, D. (2008). *Predictably irrational: The hidden forces that shape our decisions*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Ariely, D., Loewenstein, G., & Prelec, D. (2006). Tom Sawyer and the construction of value. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, 60*, 1-10. doi: 10.1016/j.jebo.2004.10.003
- Bartholomew, K., & Horowitz, L. M. (1991). Attachment styles among young adults: A test of a four-category model. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 61*(2), 226-244.
- Beck, R. (2006). Communion and complaint: Attachment, object-relations, and triangular love perspectives on relationship with God. *Journal of Psychology & Theology, 34*(1), 43-52.
- Berger, L. E., Jodl, K. M., Allen, J. P., McElhaney, K. B., & Kuperminc, G. P. (2005). When adolescents disagree with others about their symptoms: Differences in attachment organization as an explanation of discrepancies between adolescent, parent, and peer reports of behavior problems. *Development and Psychopathology, 17*, 509-528. doi: 10.1017/s0954579405050248
- Bowlby, J. (1977). The making and breaking of affectional bonds: I. Aetiology and psychopathology in the light of attachment theory. *The British Journal of Psychiatry, 130*, 201-210. doi: 10.1192/bjp.130.3.201

Byrd, K. R., & Boe, A. (2001). The correspondence between attachment dimensions and prayer in college students. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 11*, 9-24. doi: 10.1207/s15327582ijpr1101_02

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (1998). Lesson 26: The Wisdom of the Word of Wisdom. In *Preparing for Exaltation: Teacher's Manual* [lesson manual]. Retrieved from <http://www.lds.org/manual/preparing-for-exaltation-teachers-manual/lesson-26-the-wisdom-of-the-word-of-wisdom?lang=eng&query=word+of+wisdom>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (2000a). Lesson 8: I am Thankful for the Day and the Night. (2000). In *Primary 1: I am a Child of God* [lesson manual]. Retrieved from <http://www.lds.org/manual/primary-1/lesson-8?lang=eng&query=sleep>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (2000b). Lesson 13: Strengthening the Family through Family Home Evening. (2000). In *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood: Basic Manual for Priesthood Holders, Part B* [lesson manual]. Retrieved from <http://www.lds.org/manual/duties-and-blessings-of-the-priesthood-basic-manual-for-priesthood-holders-part-b/home-and-family-relations/lesson-13-strengthening-the-family-through-family-home-evening?lang=eng&query=family+home+evening>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (2010). 18.2 Ward Meetings. In *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [manual]. Retrieved August 30, 2013, from <http://www.lds.org/handbook/handbook-2-administering-the-church/meetings-in-the-church/18.2#182>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (2011a). Chapter 32: Tithes and Offerings. In *Gospel Principles* [lesson manual]. Retrieved from <http://www.lds.org/manual/gospel-principles/chapter-32-tithes-and-offerings?lang=eng>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (2011b). Chapter 39: The Law of Chastity. In *Gospel Principles* [lesson manual]. Retrieved from <http://www.lds.org/manual/gospel-principles/chapter-39-the-law-of-chastity?lang=eng>

Cooper, M. L., Shaver, P. R., & Collins, N. L. (1998). Attachment styles, emotion regulation, and adjustment in adolescence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *74*, 1380-1397. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.74.5.1380

Dilmaç, B., Hamarta, E., & Arslan, C. (2009). Analysing the trait anxiety and locus of control of undergraduates in terms of attachment styles. *Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Bilimleri*, *9*(1), 143-159.

The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (1995, November). The Family: A proclamation to the world. *Ensign* [official statement]. Retrieved from <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1995/11/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world?lang=eng>

Gartrell, C. D., & Shannon, Z. K. (1985). Contacts, cognitions, and conversion: A rational choice approach. *Review of Religious Research*, *27*(1), 32-48.

Gjerde, P. F., Onishi, M., & Carlson, K. S. (2004). Personality characteristics associated with romantic attachment: A comparison of interview and self-report methodologies. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *30*, 1402-1415. doi: 10.1177/0146167204264291

Golden, C., Jr.. (2007, November). Small and simple things. *Ensign* [article]. Retrieved from <https://www.lds.org/ensign/2007/11/small-and-simple-things?lang=eng>

- Gooren, H. (2007). Reassessing conventional approaches to conversion: Toward a new synthesis. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 46, 337-353. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-5906.2007.00362.x
- Gooren, H. (2010). *Religious conversion and disaffiliation: Tracing patterns of change in faith practices*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Granqvist, P., & Hagekull, B. (1999). Religiousness and perceived childhood attachment: Profiling socialized correspondence and emotional compensation. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 38(2), 254-273.
- Granqvist, P., & Kirkpatrick, L. A. (2004). Religious conversion and perceived childhood attachment: A meta-analysis. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 14, 223-250. doi: 10.1207/s15327582ijpr1404_1
- Granqvist, P., & Kirkpatrick, L. A. (2008). Attachment and religious representations and behavior. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications (2nd ed.)*. (pp. 906-933). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Granqvist, P., Ivarsson, T., Broberg, A. G., & Hagekull, B. (2007). Examining relations among attachment, religiosity, and new age spirituality using the Adult Attachment Interview. *Developmental Psychology*, 43, 590-601. doi: 10.1037/0012-1649.43.3.590
- Hackney, C. H., & Sanders, G. S. (2003). Religiosity and mental health: A meta-analysis of recent studies. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 42(1), 43-55.
- Halama, P., & Lačná, M. (2011). Personality change following religious conversion: Perceptions of converts and their close acquaintances. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 14, 757-768. doi: 10.1080/13674676.2010.522564

- Hall, T. W., & Brokaw, B. F. (1995). The relationship of spiritual maturity to level of object relations development and God image. *Pastoral Psychology, 43*, 373-391. doi: 10.1007/bf02282629
- Hall, T. W., Fujikawa, A., Halcrow, S. R., Hill, P. C., & Delaney, H. (2009). Attachment to god and implicit spirituality: Clarifying correspondence and compensation models. *Journal of Psychology & Theology, 37*(4), 227-244.
- Hansen, K., Page, L., Fischer, L., & Williams, M. (2014). Religious acculturation and spirituality in Latter-day Saint committed converts. *Issues in Religion and Psychotherapy, 35*, 16-9.
- Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. (1987). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52*, 511-524. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.52.3.511
- He, Y., Zhang, Y.-l., & Yang, H.-y. (2010). Relationship between adult attachment, self-esteem and social support of college students. *Chinese Journal of Clinical Psychology, 18*(2), 247-249.
- Hill, C. E., Thompson, B. J., & Williams, E. N. (1997). A guide to conducting consensual qualitative research. *The Counseling Psychologist, 25*, 517-572. doi: 10.1177/0011000097254001
- Holland, J. R. (1980, April). Belonging: A view of membership. *Ensign* [article]. Retrieved from <http://www.lds.org/ensign/1980/04/belonging-a-view-of-membership?lang=eng&query=now+ye+are+the+body+of+christ>
- Home Teacher. (n.d.). *Mormonnewsroom.org* [press release]. Retrieved August 30, 2013, from <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/home-teacher>

- Jackson, A. P., & Patton, M. J. (1992). A hermeneutic approach to the study of values in counseling. *Counseling and Values, 36*, 201-209. doi: 10.1002/j.2161-007X.1992.tb00788.x
- James, W. (1902/2007). *Varieties of religious experience*. Charleston, SC: Bibliobazaar.
- Kirkpatrick, L. A. (1994). The role of attachment in religious belief and behavior. In K. Bartholomew & D. Perlman (Eds.), *Attachment processes in adulthood*. (pp. 239-265). London, England: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Kirkpatrick, L. A. (1998). God as a substitute attachment figure: A longitudinal study of adult attachment style and religious change in college students. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 24*, 961-973. doi: 10.1177/0146167298249004
- Kirkpatrick, L. A., & Shaver, P. R. (1990). Attachment theory and religion: Childhood attachments, religious beliefs, and conversion. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 29*, 315-334. doi: 10.2307/1386461
- Kirkpatrick, L. A., & Shaver, P. R. (1992). An attachment-theoretical approach to romantic love and religious belief. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 18*, 266-275. doi: 10.1177/0146167292183002
- Kuscu, M. K., Dural, U., Önen, P., Yaşa, Y., Yayla, M., Basaran, G., . . . Bekiroğlu, N. (2009). The association between individual attachment patterns, the perceived social support, and the psychological well-being of Turkish informal caregivers. *Psycho-Oncology, 18*, 927-935. doi: 10.1002/pon.v18:910.1002/pon.1441
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

- Lay Leadership: Volunteer Ministry of the Church. (n.d.). *Mormonnewsroom.org* [press release]. Retrieved August 30, 2013, from <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/mormon-lay-ministry>
- Lichter, D. T., & Carmalt, J. H. (2009). Religion and marital quality among low-income couples. *Social Science Research, 38*, 168-187. doi: 10.1016/j.ssresearch.2008.07.003
- Loewen, K. (2009). *An exploratory study of religious conversion motivated by marriage: Adult attachment style and the marital relationship*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Proquest Information & Learning. (3356841)
- Lofland, J., & Stark, R. (1965). Becoming a world-saver: A theory of conversion to a deviant perspective. *American Sociological Review, 30*(6), 862-875.
- Love, K. M., & Murdock, T. B. (2004). Attachment to parents and psychological well-being: An examination of young adult college students in intact families and stepfamilies. *Journal of Family Psychology, 18*, 600-608. doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.18.4.600
- Lyons-Ruth, K. (1999). The two-person unconscious: Intersubjective dialogue, enactive relational representation, and the emergence of new forms of relational organization. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry, 19*, 576-617. doi: 10.1080/07351699909534267
- MacFarlane, A., & O'Reilly-de Brún, M. (2012). Using a theory-driven conceptual framework in qualitative health research. *Qualitative Health Research, 22*, 607-618. doi: 10.1177/1049732311431898
- Mahoney, A., & Pargament, K. I. (2004). Sacred Changes: Spiritual conversion and transformation. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 60*, 481-492. doi: 10.1002/jclp.20007

- Mahoney, A., Pargament, K. I., Jewell, T., Swank, A. B., Scott, E., Emery, E., & Rye, M. (1999). Marriage and the spiritual realm: The role of proximal and distal religious constructs in marital functioning. *Journal of Family Psychology, 13*(3), 321-321.
- Mahoney, A., Pargament, K. I., Murray-Swank, A., & Murray-Swank, N. (2003). Religion and the sanctification of family relationships. *Review of Religious Research, 44*(3), 220-236.
- Mahoney, A., Pargament, K. I., Tarakeshwar, N., & Swank, A. B. (2001). Religion in the home in the 1980s and 1990s: A meta-analytic review and conceptual analysis of links between religion, marriage, and parenting. *Journal of Family Psychology, 15*, 559-596. doi: 10.1037//0893-3200.15.4.559
- Main, M. (1996). Introduction to the special section on attachment and psychopathology: 2. Overview of the field of attachment. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 64*, 237-243. doi: 10.1037/0022-006x.64.2.237
- McCullough, L., Kuhn, N., Andrews, S., Kaplan, A., Wolf, J., & Hurley, C. L. (2003). *Treating affect phobia: A manual for short-term dynamic psychotherapy*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Nishikawa, S., Hägglöf, B., & Sundbom, E. (2010). Contributions of attachment and self-concept on internalizing and externalizing problems among Japanese adolescents. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 19*, 334-342. doi: 10.1007/s10826-009-9303-9
- Nishikawa, S., Sundbom, E., & Hägglöf, B. (2010). Influence of perceived parental rearing on adolescent self-concept and internalizing and externalizing problems in Japan. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 19*, 57-66. doi: 10.1007/s10826-009-9281-y
- Noffke, J. L., & Hall, T. W. (2007). Attachment psychotherapy and God image. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health, 9*(3/4), 21.

- O'Grady, K., & Richards, P. S. (2007). Theistic psychotherapy and the God image. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health, 9*(3/4), 26.
- Onishi, M., Gjerde, P. F., & Block, J. (2001). Personality implications of romantic attachment patterns in young adults: A multi-method, multi-informant study. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27*, 1097-1110. doi: 10.1177/0146167201279003
- Owen, S. D. (2005). *Spiritual intimacy: A qualitative investigation of relationships with god and their association with well-being*. 65, ProQuest Information & Learning, US. Retrieved from <https://www.lib.byu.edu/cgi-bin/remoteauth.pl?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2005-99008-388&site=ehost-live&scope=site> Available from EBSCOhost psych database.
- Paloutzian, R. F., Richardson, J. T., & Rambo, L. R. (1999). Religious conversion and personality change. *Journal of Personality, 67*, 1047-1079. doi: 10.1111/1467-6494.00082
- Pargament, K. I. (1997). *The psychology of religion and coping: Theory, research, practice*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Parker, S. (1999). Hearing God's Spirit: Impacts of developmental history on adult religious experience. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 18*(2), 153-163.
- Patton, M. J., & Jackson, A. P. (1991). Theory and meaning in counseling research: Comment on Strong (1991). *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 38*, 214-216. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.38.2.214
- Perry, L. T. (2006, April). As now we take the sacrament [online article]. Retrieved from <http://www.lds.org/general-conference/2006/04/as-now-we-take-the-sacrament?lang=eng>

- Poll, J. B., & Smith, T. B. (2003). The spiritual self: Toward a conceptualization of spiritual identity development. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 31*(2), 129-142.
- Porter, B. D. (2011, February). Worldwide leadership training: Uniformity and adaptation [transcribed speech]. Retrieved from <http://www.lds.org/broadcasts/article/worldwide-leadership-training/2011/02/uniformity-and-adaptation?lang=eng>
- Rambo, L. R. (1989). Conversion: Toward a holistic model of religious change. *Pastoral Psychology, 38*, 47-63. doi: 10.1007/bf01040947
- Rambo, L. R. (1993). *Understanding religious conversion*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Rambo, L. R., & Bauman, S. C. (2012). Psychology of conversion and spiritual transformation. *Pastoral Psychology, 61*, 879-894. doi: 10.1007/s11089-011-0364-5
- Richards, P. S., & Bergin, A. E. (2005). *A spiritual strategy for counseling and psychotherapy* (2nd ed. ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Richardson, J. T. (1995). Clinical and personality assessment of participants in new religions. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 5*, 145-170. doi: 10.1207/s15327582ijpr0503_1
- Riggs, S. A., Paulson, A., Tunnell, E., Sahl, G., Atkison, H., & Ross, C. A. (2007). Attachment, personality, and psychopathology among adult inpatients: Self-reported romantic attachment style versus Adult Attachment Interview states of mind. *Development and Psychopathology, 19*, 263-291. doi: 10.1017/s0954579407070149
- Rogers, D., Skidmore, S., Montgomery, G., Reidhead, M., & Reidhead, V. (2012). Spiritual integration predicts self-reported mental and physical health. *Journal of Religion & Health, 51*, 1188-1201. doi: 10.1007/s10943-010-9425-9

- Rotter, J. B. (1966). Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. *Psychological Monographs: General and Applied*, 80, 1-28. doi: 10.1037/h0092976
- Rowold, J. (2011). Effects of spiritual well-being on subsequent happiness, psychological well-being, and stress. *Journal of Religion & Health*, 50, 950-963. doi: 10.1007/s10943-009-9316-0
- Ryan, M., & Francis, A. (2012). Locus of control beliefs mediate the relationship between religious functioning and psychological Health. *Journal of Religion & Health*, 51, 774-785. doi: 10.1007/s10943-010-9386-z
- Sandage, S. J., & Shults, F. L. (2007). Relational spirituality and transformation: A relational integration model. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 26(3), 261-269.
- Schnitker, S., Porter, T. J., Emmons, R. A., & Barrett, J. L. (2012). Attachment predicts adolescent conversions at Young Life religious summer camps. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 22, 198-215. doi: 10.1080/10508619.2012.670024
- Simpson, J. A., & Rholes, W. S. (1998). Attachment in adulthood. In J. A. R. Simpson, W. S. (Ed.), *Attachment theory and close relationships* (pp. 3-21). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Slife, B. D., & Whoolery, M. (2006). Are psychology's main methods biased against the worldview of many religious people? *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, 34(3), 217-231.
- Slife, B. D., & Williams, R. N. (1995). *What's behind the research?: Discovering hidden assumptions in the behavioral sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Slife, B. D., Stevenson, T. D., & Wendt, D. C. (2010). Including God in psychotherapy: Strong vs. weak theism. *Journal of Psychology & Theology, 38*(3), 163-174.
- Snow, D. A., & Machalek, R. (1983). The convert as a social type. *Sociological Theory, 1*, 259-289.
- Stark, R., & Finke, R., (2000). *Acts of faith: Explaining the human side of religion*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Strong, S. R. (1991). Theory-driven science and naive empiricism in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 38*, 204-210. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.38.2.204
- Travisano, R. V. (1978). Alternation and conversion as qualitatively different transformations. In G. P. Stone & H. A. Farverman (Eds.), *Study of psychology through symbolic interaction*. Waltham, MA: Ginn-Blaisdell.
- Warner, J. A. (2006). *Context and character: Christian conversion as a pivotal experience in the father and son relationship*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Information & Learning. (AAI 3212945)
- Zinnbauer, B. J., & Pargament, K. I. (1998). Spiritual conversion: A study of religious change among college students. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 37*, 161-180. doi: 10.2307/1388035

Appendix A

Review of Literature

Religious conversion is a subject that has been widely studied in psychology, sociology, anthropology, and other social sciences from a variety of different viewpoints. William James was essentially the first psychologist to write about religious conversion in his seminal work, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902/2007). James argued for the importance of studying spiritual experiences as genuine psychological phenomena. He, in a sense, legitimized the scientific study of religious experiences by arguing that spiritual phenomena are no more removed from reality than any other scientific pursuit. James (1902/2007) used the following as a general description of religious conversion:

To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong[,] inferior[,] and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right[,] superior[,] and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities. (p. 176)

James (1902/2007) described two types of conversion, the *volitional type* and the *type by self-surrender*. According to James, the volitional type is a slow and conscious process of moving away from one's former self with occasional moments of rapid change. This process, he described, "consists in the building up, piece by piece, of a new set of moral and spiritual habits" (p. 190). James described the type by self-surrender, on the other hand, as sudden and subconscious. He compared this type of conversion to the moment when a musician stops playing by conscious technique, but instead *becomes* the very instrument of inspiration. He explained that these types of conversions are not mutually exclusive. The volitional type

includes small moments of self-surrender, and, James explained, that the final step in a volitional type conversion is a transition to a self-surrender where “the personal will... must be given up” (p. 191).

Religious Conversion: Descriptions, Terminology, and Levels

Various researchers since James’ time have tried to capture the depth and complexity of religious conversion by presenting various descriptions, categories, and levels of the experience. For example, Lofland and Stark (1965) made the distinction between *verbal converts*, those who merely “professed belief and were accepted by core members as sincere”, and *total converts*, those “who exhibited their commitment through deeds as well as words” (p. 864). Travisano (1978) differentiated types of religious conversion by a convert’s level of transition. He designated the term *conversion* to describe a dramatic change in one’s identity in which one is wholly committed to a cause. He used the term *alternation* to describe those who have affiliated with a new religious organization, but whose beliefs have only slightly changed. The convert and the alternator can appear similar to outside observers, but the convert experiences a change in intrinsic beliefs. He argued that criteria for understanding religious conversion should include a reevaluation of convert’s self-concept, changes in the convert’s personality, and changes in how the convert interacts with others.

Rambo (1993) used labels to identify the organizational status of the conversion. He highlighted the difference between a person’s change from one religious organization to another and a person’s change *within* a religious organization. He termed *tradition translation* is when a person changes from one major religion to another (e.g., from Christianity to Judaism), *institutional transition* when a person changes institutional subgroups within a religion (e.g., from Lutheranism to Presbyterianism), *intensification* when a person becomes more devout

within a religious organization, and *affiliation* when a person is converted to a new religious movement. Stark and Finke (2000) identify *conversion* as “shifts across religious traditions” and *reaffiliation* as changes within a religion (p. 114).

Early Religious Conversion Models

Several theorists have developed models to explain and attempt to understand the causes behind religious conversion. A couple of conventional theories, the Lofland/Stark (1965) model and rational choice theory (e.g., Gartrell & Shannon, 1985; Stark & Finke, 2000) will be described here.

The Lofland/Stark model. Lofland and Stark (1965) identified seven conditions that a person must experience to be motivated for religious conversion. They included both passive and active elements in their model, and they rejected the idea that people are merely “pushed” in a direction by social forces. They claimed that the following attributes and conditions were necessary to lead one to religious conversion: (a) a person experiences tension “characterized as a felt discrepancy between some imaginary, ideal state of affairs and the circumstances in which these people saw themselves caught up” (p. 864); (b), a person approaches life with a problem-solving perspective; (c), a person defines him or herself as a religious seeker; (d), a person experiences a turning point in life (e.g., job loss, migration, new educational pursuit, etc.); (e) a person experiences “cult affective bonds”, or in other words, a person experiences positive bonds with “the [religious] group or some of its members” (p. 871); (f) a person’s “extra-cult affective bonds”, or relationships external to the religious group, are in support of the conversion or their disapproval of the conversion is neutralized; and finally, (g) a person experiences “intensive interaction” with the religious group, or in other words, a person puts forth a high level of participation. Lofland and Stark identified conditions one through three as “‘background’ factors

or pre-dispositions” and conditions four through six were identified as “situational conditions” (p. 870). The seventh condition, the authors stated, is the distinguishing factor between *verbal converts*, those who proclaim religious conversion without taking an active role in the new group, and *total converts*, those who show “commitment through deeds and well as words” (p. 864).

Rational choice theory. Rational choice theory, a concept borrowed from economics, is based on the assumption that people will make life choices based on an instrumental framework of cost/benefit analysis. Some theorists have applied rational choice theory to the study of religious conversion (e.g., Gartrell & Shannon, 1985; Stark & Finke, 2000). In this framework converts are seen as rational actors who choose to affiliate with religious groups for the purpose of perceived personal gain. Religious organizations are conceptualized as competing religious markets which vie for the attention of the potential recruits. Gartrell and Shannon (1985) claimed that religious converts act “as if they weigh rewards and sanctions from affiliation with members and nonmembers in addition to weighing the attractiveness of movements’ beliefs and ideas” (p. 34). The rewards which converts sought out included “social-emotional outcomes like...approval, love, respect, and cognitive outcomes...” (p. 34). By framing individuals in a religious market setting, Gartrell and Shannon (1985) claimed that their theory provided “a linkage between individual attributes and dispositions and movement goals and ideologies” (p. 45).

Stark and Finke (2000) also applied rational choice theory to the study of conversion, but they provide a more passive description of converts. They claimed that “converts very seldom are religious seekers, and conversion is seldom the culmination of a conscious search” (p. 122). Instead of a conscious search, they claimed religious converts were those “whose interpersonal

attachments to members overbalanced their attachments to nonmembers. In part... because... social networks make religious beliefs plausible and *new* social networks thereby make *new* religious beliefs plausible” (p. 117). In other words, from this perspective not only will persons choose to affiliate with a religious group because of their interpersonal attachments, but their beliefs will be influenced by their social group as well. This argument is set in the framework that people will make these passive choices because they reap the most benefits by aligning themselves with their core social group.

Rational choice theory has been criticized because more recent findings in behavioral economics challenge the notion that choices are strictly based on rational reasoning (see Ariely, 2008). Ariely, Loewenstein, and Prelec (2006) argued, instead, that choices are influenced by “coherent arbitrariness” in that “valuations of goods and experiences have a large arbitrary component, yet, after one valuation has been made, people provide subsequent valuations that are coherent in the sense that they are scaled appropriately relative to the first” (p. 2). From this perspective, value is largely a constructed concept, and important decisions (such as whether or not to join a religious group) “involve streams of heterogeneous experiences that are...even more vulnerable to arbitrary influences and conventions” (Ariely, et al., 2006, p. 8). Thus, according to this argument, rational choice theory fails to account for the lived experiences in which choices are made, which would include the order and the way in which religious groups are encountered (see Ariely, 2008).

More Recent Models

More recent models of religious conversion incorporate a holistic view of human nature in explaining the phenomena of conversion. A couple of models outlined here, Gooren’s (2007,

2010) conversion career approach and Rambo's (1989) process oriented model, are less deterministic than earlier conventional models and include a wider variety of contextual factors.

Gooren's conversion career approach. Gooren (2007, 2010) borrowed the term *conversion career* from Richardson (1978) to introduce a theoretical model that combines individual and social contexts to represent "a systematic attempt to analyze shifts in levels of individual religious participation" over time (p. 349). In his conversion career approach, Gooren (2007, 2010) defined various levels and patterns of religious activity: *pre-affiliation*, *disaffiliation*, *affiliation*, *conversion*, and *confession*. *Pre-affiliation* is a miscellaneous category to describe when a person has not committed to a religious organization, is between religious faiths, or is temporarily or permanently "unchurched." *Disaffiliation* is a similar category, in that it is used to describe a variety of possible levels of participation. It includes atheists, agnostics, people who are unaffiliated with a religious organization, people who have "fallen away" from a faith tradition, and those who identify with a particular religion, but have a low level of participation. *Affiliation* is official membership within a specific religion or church, but the religion is not central to the person's identity. *Conversion*, in Gooren's categories, refers to a higher level of participation, when a person has affiliated with a religion and has conformed to the doctrines and laws of that religion. Gooren used the term, *confession*, to describe a highly active level of participation within a religion. Religion is central to the person's identity and the person is a core member of the religion, participating in church service and recruitment. Although Gooren argued that the levels should not necessarily be considered developmental stages, he explained that people often move from one level to another. Figure 2 depicts the possible transitions between levels that a person may experience.

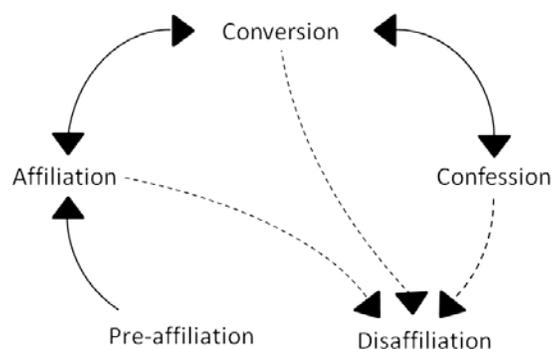


Figure 2. Levels of individual religious activity in the conversion career approach (Gooren, 2010; 2007).

Gooren's (2007, 2010) conversion career approach is inclusive of a variety of factors which fit into the context of conversion. These include *contingency factors*, *social factors*, *institutional factors*, *cultural factors*, and *personality factors*. *Contingency factors* include life turning points and crises. *Social factors* include relationship with family, friends, and interactions with people in the old and new religious cultures. *Institutional factors* include doctrinal issues and specific ways in which religious institutions recruit new members. This factor is reminiscent of the religious competing markets within rational choice theory because it takes individual preference and belief into account. *Cultural factors* include governmental as well as social forces at the national and global level. And finally, *personality factors* include pre-dispositions (e.g., openness to religion, spirituality) that may influence one's direction toward religious faiths. Personal development could fit into contingency and personality factors. Gooren (2010) also emphasized the importance of considering divine influence as a factor. All of the above factors are considered the "context" within which a convert's agency interacts with the world.

According to Gooren (2007) the above mentioned factors should be analyzed in religious conversion research to help researchers identify converts' shifts in levels of religious activity. In addition, Gooren (2007) recommended that researchers could distinguish the five levels using

conversion indicators originally introduced by Snow and Machalek (1983). Snow and Machalek (1983) described religious conversion as a transformation of one's "universe of discourse" (p. 265). They claimed that because converts make such a dramatic change that their newfound way of being will reflect the following attributes: (a) making biographical reconstructions, (b) adopting a master attribution scheme, (c) suspending analogical reasoning, and (d) embracing the new role. *Making biographical reconstructions* is the notion that converts will "retell" their life experiences from a newly converted perspective (e.g., seeing a higher purpose behind one's former experiences). *Adopting a master attribution* scheme is the idea that the convert will see the world from the perspective that God is in charge and impacting the events in one's life. *Suspension of analogical reasoning* is the idea that converts who previously reasoned by analogy will begin to talk instead in metaphor (e.g., *God is love*). And finally, *embracing the new role* is the notion that converts will express enthusiasm for their newfound religion (i.e., actively participating in recruitment).

Rambo's process oriented model. Building on Lofland and Stark's (1965) research, Rambo (1989) described a seven-stage process model of conversion. Rambo's theory differs from typical developmental models because his nonlinear "stages" might better be understood as "phases" or "facets" that are not "universal, unidirectional, nor invariant, and there is feedback and dialectic between the stages" (Paloutzian, Richardson, & Rambo, 1999, p.1072). His holistic model begins with the following assumptions:

It is assumed that (a) conversion is a process, rather than a single event; (b) conversion is contextual and cannot be extricated from the fabric of relationships, processes, and ideologies which provide the matrix of religious change; and (c) factors involved in the conversion process are multiple, interactive, and cumulative. While there are unique

aspects of conversions, it is assumed that there can be broad descriptions of conversion that are useful in the comparison and assessment of conversion theories. There is no one cause of conversion and no one simple consequence of the process. (p. 48)

A brief summary of his seven stages are: (Stage 1) *Context*, the ecologies within which the convert interacts; (Stage 2), *Crisis*, a “disruption” of the convert’s world; (Stage 3), *Quest*, the convert exercises his or her agency in seeking new direction; (Stage 4), *Encounter*, the convert and members of the new religious group interact with one another; (Stage 5), *Interaction*, the convert and religious representative(s) engage in a more complex interaction (this stage may also include the adoption of new beliefs); (Stage 6), *Commitment*, the convert makes commitments that may include leaving aspects of the past behind; and finally, (Stage 7), *Consequences*, the convert continues to assess the effects of the new religion and continues to make decisions about how to proceed. In keeping with Rambo’s model, in this paper the term *conversion* refers to a process, rather than a single event (i.e., baptism).

Post-Conversion Changes

If religious conversion is indeed a dramatic change in one’s identity, as according to Travisano (1978), or a transformation of one’s “universe of discourse”, as according to Snow and Machalek (1983), then we can expect dramatic changes to occur in the life of the convert post-conversion. Mahoney and Pargament (2004) argued that conversion is unique from other types of personal transformation because conversion involves “the integration of the sacred into the destinations and pathways” that is adopted by the individual (p. 487). They noted that the speed in which one undergoes religious conversion (i.e., gradual or sudden) is less impactful on outcomes than the degree to which one converts.

Various types of post-conversion changes have been explored in the literature. For example, Pargament (1997) noted that converts experienced a change in self-definition after undergoing religious conversion. Paloutzian et al. (1999) examined the impact of religious conversion on personality. They outlined three levels of personality structure: *Level 1* is described as temperaments and traits; *Level 2* includes personal concerns, strivings, etc.; and *Level 3* includes identity, self-definition, and narrative. After reviewing the literature they argued that religious conversion can have dramatic effects on *Level 2* and *Level 3* of personality structure, but that *Level 1* most likely remains relatively stable. In a retrospective study of self-identified converts, Halama and Lačná (2011) tested the changes that converts experienced on the Big Five personality traits, self-esteem, and meaningfulness in life following conversion. They found that converts reported several significant personality changes. Levels of self-esteem, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion increased, while levels of narcissism decreased. The converts also reported a significant increase in meaningfulness. These findings question Paloutzian, et al.'s (1999) argument that personality traits remain stable following conversion. In a study comparing (a) converts, (b) persons who have undergone gradual religious change, and (c) persons who have experienced no religious change, Zinnbauer and Pargament (1998) found that converts and person who have undergone gradual religious change both reported increases in self-esteem and improvements in self-identity.

Although not specifically focused on converts, Richardson (1995) reviewed literature assessing the lifestyles and personalities of participants in a number of new religious groups (i.e., Rajneesh, Hare Krishna, and the Jesus Movement) and concluded that contrary to research performed in the 1970s and prevailing stereotypes, participants in new religious movements generally scored positively on measures of mental health. Examples of positive outcomes

included: higher levels of perceived social support, lower levels of depression, higher levels of emotional openness, higher levels of introspection, and lower levels of social anxiety.

These outcomes are consistent with general finding that adaptive forms of spirituality and religiosity are positively correlated with mental health and wellbeing (see Hackney & Sanders, 2003; Rogers, Skidmore, Montgomery, Reidhead, & Reidhead, 2012; Rowold, 2011; Ryan & Francis, 2012). Hackney and Sanders (2003) performed a meta-analysis of 34 studies and found an overall positive relationship between religion and mental health. However, they received mixed results when the data was separated into three primary distinguishing features of religiosity: institutional religion, ideology, and personal devotion. Institutional religion as the primary distinguishing feature of religiosity showed a weak negative correlation with mental health. Ideology produced a stronger positive correlation, and personal devotion produced the strongest positive correlation with mental health. These divisions are closely aligned with Allport's (1966) classic conception of intrinsic religiosity (i.e., faith is the primary guiding value of life) vs. extrinsic religiosity (i.e., religious is used for practical purposes and outward benefits). Ryan and Francis (2012) similarly found that *spiritual integration* (a construct related to intrinsic religiosity) is a predictor of mental health.

Research findings also indicate a positive correlation between religious beliefs and strong marital bonds. In a meta-analysis, Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank (2001) found that higher levels of religiosity correlate with higher levels of global marital satisfaction. Spiritual beliefs have been found to increase individual sense of meaning and purpose in marriage for persons in committed marriages (Mahoney, Pargament, Murray-Swank, & Murray-Swank, 2003). Specifically, the belief that one's marriage is sanctified increases marital satisfaction and commitment (Lichter & Carmalt, 2009). In addition, marital couples who scored

higher on religious variables engaged in less conflict and were more likely to forgive and accept their spouses (Mahoney et al., 1999).

Attachment

The history of attachment research has been described as developing across three phases: first, the introduction of attachment theory by John Bowlby, second, Mary Ainsworth's empirical research and development of the attachment theory, and third, the expansion and application of attachment theory to adults and relationships across the lifespan (Main, 1996). During the first phase, John Bowlby (1969/1982) introduced the concept of attachment, explaining that infants utilize an "attachment behavioral system" to increase proximity with their primary caregiver. He explained that an infant will perform a system of behaviors (e.g., crying, cooing) to draw responses from the primary caregiver. Informed by evolutionary theory, Bowlby argued that by performing attachment behaviors, infants instinctually promote their own survival. His theory countered the predominant view of his time of secondary-drive theories, or the notion that the infant-mother bond was motivated through the infant's hunger drive (Cassidy, 2008). Bowlby (1980) argued that these secondary-drive theories, promoted by psychoanalysts and social learning theorists (e.g., Freud, 1957; Sears, Maccoby, & Levin, 1957), provided an oversimplified and inadequate explanation of the infant-caregiver relationship. He noted that infants and toddlers experience a bond with their caregivers beyond that of feeding, and that if secondary-drive theory characterized the relationship, small children would experience much more fluidity in their bonds with adults, depending on who is feeding them.

Mary Ainsworth spearheaded the second phase of attachment research (Main, 1996) and further developed the notion of attachment by empirically testing the theory and identifying basic patterns of attachment (Bretherton, 1995). After careful study of infant-mother pairs in Uganda,

she and colleagues developed the Strange Situation as a technique to observe infants' reactions across a series of scenarios (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). Infants were placed in an unfamiliar playroom and observed by researchers behind a two-way mirror. The twenty-minute observation period consisted of the following situations: First, the mother and infant enter the room alone. Then a stranger enters the room and interacts with the infant. During this interaction, the mother leaves the room. After a few moments of alone time with the stranger, the mother reenters the room. Shortly thereafter, the stranger and mother exit the room together, leaving the infant alone for a time. Finally, the mother reenters the room and the infant and mother are reunited.

By structurally observing infants' reactions in each scenario, Ainsworth et al. (1978) identified two basic categories of attachment: secure and insecure. Insecure attachments were divided into two types: avoidant and anxious-ambivalent. Secure infants appeared to view their mother as a "secure base." They appeared interested in exploring the room while their mother was present. After their mother left the room they exhibited distress, and they appeared happy to reunite with their mothers upon their return. The mothers of secure infants, in turn, appeared caring and sensitive to their infants' needs. Ainsworth (1985) described the necessary criteria for a secure attachment bond to take place. First, one must maintain proximity with the attachment figure. Second, the attachment figure must be viewed as a secure base of exploratory behavior. Third, the attachment figure must be seen as a haven of safety. And fourth, one must experience separation anxiety when removed from the attachment figure.

Avoidant infants appeared disinterested in maintaining proximity with their mothers and seemed unaffected when their mother's exited and reentered the room. They often expressed more interest in the stranger in the room than the mother (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Anxious-

ambivalent infants exhibited greater levels of pre-separation anxiety, and they exhibited greater levels of distress once their mothers left the room. Yet, they exhibited ambivalence about their mothers' reentry into the room and seemed resistant to reuniting with their mothers (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Main and Solomon (1990) later identified a fourth basic attachment pattern, *disorganized*, to describe infants who did not fit into the previous three categories. Disorganized infants exhibited inconsistency with their mothers. They appeared unable to approach their mothers when they were distressed because their mothers appeared distressed as well. Ainsworth's original findings have been replicated internationally and the majority of infants have been found to have secure attachments (Main, 1996). In addition, infants' patterns of attachment at 12- and 18-months were found to be significant predictors of similar attachment patterns at age six (Main & Cassidy, 1988).

Adult Attachment

The third phase of attachment research has been the expansion of attachment to understanding adult relationships (Main, 1996). Up until 1980, attachment theory was predominantly used as an explanation for infants' and young children's relationships with their caregivers (Beck, 2006). However, attachment theory has since been noted as a relevant explanation for the study of relationships across the lifespan (Main, 2000). During the 1990s the study of adult attachments became one of the most widely published research areas in personality and social psychology (Simpson & Rholes, 1998).

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) found that positive or negative self- and other-models underlie basic attachment patterns. *Secure attachment* indicates "a sense of worthiness (lovability) plus an expectation that other people are generally accepting and responsive" (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991, p. 227). *Insecure attachment* can indicate a combination of

feelings and perceptions including, “a sense of unworthiness (unlovability)...an expectation that others will be negatively disposed (untrustworthy and rejecting)...[and] a negative disposition toward other people” (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991, p. 227). Secure individuals are able to have intimacy with others while maintaining balance and personal autonomy (Welch & Houser, 2010). (See Figure 1 for a visual depiction of the four-group model.) Dilmaç, Hamarta, and Arslan (2009) added to this conceptual definition of attachment by researching how locus of control (see Rotter, 1966) compares to the four-group model of attachment styles. With participants consisting of 480 undergraduate students, they found that securely attached individuals had an internal locus of control and insecurely attached individuals had an external locus of control.

Examples of the many research topics that adult attachment has been applied to include: marital relationships (Mondor, McDuff, Lussier, & Wright, 2011), cross-cultural patterns (van Ljzendoorn & Sagi-Schwartz, 2008), lesbian, gay, and bisexual relationships (Wang, Schale, & Broz, 2010), refugee trauma (De Haene, Grietens, & Verschueren, 2010), elderly parent caregiving (Bernier & Matte-Gagné, 2011), loss and bereavement (Fraley & Shaver, 1999), and friendship (Welch & Houser, 2010).

Attachment and Religion

Granqvist and Kirkpatrick (2008) argued that attachment theory can similarly be applied to the study of religion. They defended the proposition that God can be viewed as an attachment figure by noting that at the core of most religious beliefs is a desired relationship with God. They explained that a relationship with God can be similar to a relationship with parental figures in that God is often viewed as a “haven of safety” (p. 909) and that one’s relationship with God can provide “a sense of felt security” (p. 911).

Competing hypotheses: compensation vs. correspondence. Two competing hypotheses have been used in the literature to describe how religious behaviors relate to attachment theory: the correspondence hypothesis and the compensation hypothesis (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008; Kirkpatrick, 1994; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). According to the correspondence hypothesis, human attachment patterns often correspond with patterns of attachment to deity, and according to the compensation hypothesis, people turn to God to compensate for the unavailability or loss of a principle attachment figure (Beck, 2006). Thus from this perspective, God is viewed as a compensatory attachment figure. Although these hypotheses provide competing explanations, both theories defend the notion that God can be viewed as an attachment figure (Beck, 2006).

Correspondence hypothesis. Various research studies have supported the correspondence hypothesis. For example, McDonald, Beck, Allison, and Norsworthy (2005) found that people who reported coming from homes which were emotionally cold were more prone to avoid intimacy with God (a characteristic typical of dismissing attachment), and people who reported coming from rigid authoritarian homes were more likely to experience anxiety about abandonment from God (a characteristic typical of fearful attachment). Other studies support the finding that having an anxious attachment with others correlates with having an anxious attachment to God (Beck & McDonald, 2004; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). Beck and McDonald (2004) tested the Attachment to God Inventory (AGI) with tests of the correspondence and compensation hypotheses in three different samples. Their results had a slight lean toward supporting the correspondence hypothesis; however, their results supported the compensation hypothesis as well. Hart, Limke, and Budd (2010) compared a measure of adult romantic relationship attachment, the Experiences of Close Relationships (ECR) scale

(Brennan, Clark, Shaver, Simpson, & Rholes, 1998) with a measure of Fowler's (2006) stages of faith development, the Faith Development Scale (Leak, Loucks, & Bowlin, 1999) and they found that higher anxious attachment correlated with lower stages of faith development. Conversely, research findings support the notion that secure current attachments correlate with loving perceptions of God (Brokaw & Edwards, 1994; Hall, Brokaw, Edwards, & Pike, 1998).

The concept of self-esteem is closely related to attachment theory (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). For example, Benson and Spilka (1973) found self-esteem was positively correlated with a loving image of God, and was negatively correlated with a harsh and controlling image of God. Edwards (1976) also found self-esteem, along with emotional stability and an outward focus towards others, to be correlated with a loving God image. Edwards stated that, "the experience of God as close and loving was positively correlated with self-esteem and with the interpersonal variables of empathy, dominance, autonomy, friendly, dominant style, expressed inclusion and expressed affection" (p. 353).

Compensation hypothesis. On the other hand, the compensation hypothesis has also received support in the literature. In a study of 197 religious and nonreligious participants, Granqvist (2005) found that individuals with insecure attachment histories reported more frequent use of religious coping strategies than those with secure attachment histories. Thus, insecure individuals more often viewed God as a safe haven in stressful situations than individuals with stronger parental bonds. In another study of 156 university students, a significantly higher percentage of single students reported a close personal relationship with God than students who were currently romantically attached (Granqvist & Hagekull, 2000).

Religious conversion: compensation. Much of the support for the compensation hypothesis comes from research examining the relationship between attachment history and

religious conversion style. Several studies support the notion that insecure persons are more likely to experience sudden religious conversion than secure persons (e.g., Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999; Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2004; Kirkpatrick, 1998; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990; Schnitker, Porter, Emmons, & Barrett, 2012). In a meta-analysis of 11 cross-national studies, Granqvist and Kirkpatrick (2004) found that individuals who experienced rapid religious conversion were significantly more likely to have an insecure attachment history than individuals who converted more slowly. Similarly, Schnitker, et al. (2012) studied the before and after narratives of 240 adolescents attending summer religious camps and found that participants who rated themselves insecurely attached were more likely to experience a sudden religious conversion, whereas participants who rated themselves as securely attached were more likely to experience a gradual religious conversion. Kirkpatrick (1998) performed a longitudinal study examining religious change in college students and found that female students with preoccupied/ambivalent attachment patterns were the most likely to experience a religious conversion over the period of time being studied. Preoccupied/ambivalent attachment was related to a negative view of the self and a positive perception of others. From this view it is easy to conceptualize how this attachment pattern will be most adaptable to a religious conversion, because people with this attachment style are unhappy with themselves and willing to trust others, or this case, God.

Clarifying mixed results. Although the compensation and correspondence hypotheses appear to be mutually exclusive, both have received support in the literature. Hall, Fujikawa, Halcrow, and Hill (2009) argued that this mixed evidence is the result of an unclear compensation model and an overly simplified explanation of spirituality in the literature. They outlined and labeled three variants of the compensation model in the literature which were

previously undistinguished: (a) *explicit religious compensation*—people with insecure attachments tend to be more religious than those with secure attachments; (b) *motivational correspondence*—people with insecure attachments tend to use religiosity as a means of affect regulation more frequently than people with secure attachments; and (c) *religious change correspondence*—people with insecure attachments are more likely to experience a sudden religious conversion or change than those with secure attachments. They pointed out that there is strong evidence in support of the second and third variations of the compensation model, but only mixed support for the first variation. Additionally, Hall et al. (2009) criticized previous research on religiosity and attachment arguing that religiosity measures were oversimplified. They suggested that religiosity should be considered both on implicit (i.e., one's relationship with God) and explicit levels (i.e., outward behaviors and conscious beliefs). They proposed and found support for the notion that implicit levels of spirituality correspond with adult romantic attachments, and explicit levels of spirituality serve as compensation for adults with insecure attachments.

Attachment Post-Religious Conversion

As illustrated earlier, a significant amount of research is dedicated to the study of how one's attachment style or one's attachment history impacts one's religious conversion (e.g., Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999; Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2004; Kirkpatrick, 1998; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). On the other hand, very little research has been devoted to individual changes in attachment that occur after religious conversion. However, two dissertations provide notable exceptions. Loewen (2009) performed a qualitative study with married adult converts who converted to the same religion as their spouse. The researcher explored the converts' marital experiences and motivation for marriage. A significant finding of this research which relates to

the present study is that converts felt that their marriages were positively influenced by the new religious values they had embraced. Several converts in this study also reported that they felt increased commitment to their spouses because of their faith.

In a qualitative study, Warner (2006) explored the nature of the father/son relationship before and after the father's Christian conversion. One of the themes of this study was that the father/son relationship improved after the father's conversion. The researcher noted that this improvement seemed to be related to an increased self-and other-awareness of both the fathers and sons following the fathers' conversion. The researcher noticed the following improvements in the father/son relationship: (a) an increase in the quality and quantity of time spent together; (b) an increase in emotional and physical affection; (c) an increase in open, considerate and softened conversation; and, (d) a shift in the father's leadership role with his son. In other words, fathers seemed more thoughtful about the influence they had on their sons, and sons seemed more appreciative and accepting of their fathers' influence.

In addition to an improved relationship among fathers and sons, participants also reported improved relationships among other family members for both the fathers and sons. Participants noted both improved changes in family structure (e.g., shifts in family member roles, expectations) and improved changes in family environment (e.g., new feelings of mutual acceptance, willingness to serve each other, etc.). Fathers also reported experiencing changes with others outside the family, notably: (a) increased awareness of others; (b) desires to have a positive impact on others; and, (c) closer bonds with others, particularly in the faith community.

References

- Ainsworth, M. D. (1985). Patterns of attachment. *Clinical Psychologist*, 38(2), 27-29.
- Ainsworth, M. D., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). *Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation*. Oxford, England: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Allport, G. W. (1966). The religious context of prejudice. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 5(10).
- Ariely, D. (2008). *Predictably irrational: The hidden forces that shape our decisions*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Ariely, D., Loewenstein, G., & Prelec, D. (2006). Tom Sawyer and the construction of value. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 60, 1-10. doi: 10.1016/j.jebo.2004.10.003
- Barney, R. D., & Chu, G. G. (1976). Differences between Mormon missionaries' perceptions and Chinese natives' expectations in intercultural transactions. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 98(1), 135-136.
- Bartholomew, K., & Horowitz, L. M. (1991). Attachment styles among young adults: A test of a four-category model. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 61(2), 226-244.
- Beck, R. (2006). Communion and complaint: Attachment, object-relations, and triangular love perspectives on relationship with God. *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, 34(1), 43-52.
- Beck, R., & McDonald, A. (2004). Attachment to God: The attachment to God inventory, tests of working model correspondence, and an exploration of faith group differences. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 32(2), 92-103.
- Benson, P., & Spilka, B. (1973). God image as a function of self-esteem and locus of control. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 12(3), 297-310.

Bernier, A., & Matte-Gagné, C. (2011). More bridges: Investigating the relevance of self-report and interview measures of adult attachment for marital and caregiving relationships.

International Journal of Behavioral Development, 35, 307-316. doi:

10.1177/0165025410396766

Bowlby, J. (1969/1982). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Bowlby, J. (1980). By ethology out of psycho-analysis: An experiment in interbreeding. *Animal Behavior, 28*, 7.

Brennan, K. A., Clark, C. L., Shaver, P. R., Simpson, J. A., & Rholes, W. S. (1998). Self-report measurement of adult attachment: An integrative overview *Attachment theory and close relationships*. (pp. 46-76). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Bretherton, I. (1995). The origins of attachment theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. In S. Goldberg, R. Muir & J. Kerr (Eds.), *Attachment theory: Social, developmental, and clinical perspectives*. (pp. 45-84). Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press, Inc.

Brokaw, B. F., & Edwards, K. J. (1994). The relationship of God image to level of object relations development. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 22*(4), 352-371.

Carrothers, R. M. (2005). *Identity consequences of religious conversion: Applying identity theory to religious changing (Sheldon Stryker)*. 65, ProQuest Information & Learning, US.

Retrieved from [https://www.lib.byu.edu/cgi-](https://www.lib.byu.edu/cgi-bin/remoteauth.pl?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2005-99009-087&site=ehost-live&scope=site)

[bin/remoteauth.pl?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&A](http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2005-99009-087&site=ehost-live&scope=site)

[N=2005-99009-087&site=ehost-live&scope=site](http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2005-99009-087&site=ehost-live&scope=site) Available from EBSCOhost psych

database.

- Cassidy, J. (2008). The nature of the child's ties. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications (2nd ed.)*. (pp. 3-22). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- De Haene, L., Grietens, H., & Verschueren, K. (2010). Adult attachment in the context of refugee traumatisation: the impact of organized violence and forced separation on parental states of mind regarding attachment. *Attachment & Human Development, 12*, 249-264. doi: 10.1080/14616731003759732
- Dilmaç, B., Hamarta, E., & Arslan, C. (2009). Analysing the trait anxiety and locus of control of undergraduates in terms of attachment styles. *Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Bilimleri, 9*(1), 143-159.
- Fowler, J. W., & Dell, M. L. (2006). Stages of faith from infancy through adolescence: Reflections on three decades of faith development theory. In E. C. Roehlkepartain, P. E. King, L. Wagener & P. L. Benson (Eds.), *The handbook of spiritual development in childhood and adolescence*. (pp. 34-45). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Freud, S. (1957). Five lectures on psycho-analysis. In J. Strachey (Ed.), *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 11, pp. 3-56). London, England: Hogarth Press.
- Gartrell, C. D., & Shannon, Z. K. (1985). Contacts, cognitions, and conversion: A rational choice approach. *Review of Religious Research, 27*(1), 32-48.
- Gooren, H. (2007). Reassessing conventional approaches to conversion: Toward a new synthesis. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 46*, 337-353. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-5906.2007.00362.x

- Gooren, H. (2010). *Religious conversion and disaffiliation: Tracing patterns of change in faith practices*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Granqvist, P. (2005). Building a bridge between attachment and religious coping: Tests of moderators and mediators. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 8, 35-47. doi: 10.1080/13674670410001666598
- Granqvist, P., & Hagekull, B. (1999). Religiousness and perceived childhood attachment: Profiling socialized correspondence and emotional compensation. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 38(2), 254-273.
- Granqvist, P., & Hagekull, B. (2000). Religiosity, adult attachment, and why 'singles' are more religious. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 10, 111-123. doi: 10.1207/s15327582ijpr1002_04
- Granqvist, P., & Kirkpatrick, L. A. (2004). Religious conversion and perceived childhood attachment: A meta-analysis. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 14, 223-250. doi: 10.1207/s15327582ijpr1404_1
- Granqvist, P., & Kirkpatrick, L. A. (2008). Attachment and religious representations and behavior. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications (2nd ed.)*. (pp. 906-933). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Griffin, D. W., & Bartholomew, K. (1994). Models of the self and other: Fundamental dimensions underlying measures of adult attachment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67, 430-445. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.67.3.430
- Hackney, C. H., & Sanders, G. S. (2003). Religiosity and mental health: A meta-analysis of recent studies. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 42(1), 43-55.

- Halama, P., & Lačná, M. (2011). Personality change following religious conversion: Perceptions of converts and their close acquaintances. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture, 14*, 757-768. doi: 10.1080/13674676.2010.522564
- Hall, T. W., Brokaw, B. F., Edwards, K. J., & Pike, P. L. (1998). An empirical exploration of psychoanalysis and religion: Spiritual maturity and object relations development. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 37*, 303-313. doi: 10.2307/1387529
- Hall, T. W., Fujikawa, A., Halcrow, S. R., Hill, P. C., & Delaney, H. (2009). Attachment to god and implicit spirituality: Clarifying correspondence and compensation models. *Journal of Psychology & Theology, 37*(4), 227-244.
- Hart, J. T., Limke, A., & Budd, P. R. (2010). Attachment and faith development. *Journal of Psychology & Theology, 38*(2), 122-128.
- James, W. (1902/2007). *Varieties of religious experience*. Charleston, SC: Bibliobazaar.
- Kirkpatrick, L. A. (1994). The role of attachment in religious belief and behavior. In K. Bartholomew & D. Perlman (Eds.), *Attachment processes in adulthood*. (pp. 239-265). London, England: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Kirkpatrick, L. A. (1998). God as a substitute attachment figure: A longitudinal study of adult attachment style and religious change in college students. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 24*, 961-973. doi: 10.1177/0146167298249004
- Kirkpatrick, L. A., & Shaver, P. R. (1990). Attachment theory and religion: Childhood attachments, religious beliefs, and conversion. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 29*, 315-334. doi: 10.2307/1386461

- Leak, G. K., Loucks, A. A., & Bowlin, P. (1999). Development and initial validation of an objective measure of faith development. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 9*, 105-124. doi: 10.1207/s15327582ijpr0902_2
- Lichter, D. T., & Carmalt, J. H. (2009). Religion and marital quality among low-income couples. *Social Science Research, 38*, 168-187. doi: 10.1016/j.ssresearch.2008.07.003
- Loewen, K. (2009). *An exploratory study of religious conversion motivated by marriage: Adult attachment style and the marital relationship*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Proquest Information & Learning. (3356841)
- Lofland, J., & Stark, R. (1965). Becoming a world-saver: A theory of conversion to a deviant perspective. *American Sociological Review, 30*(6), 862-875.
- Mahoney, A., & Pargament, K. I. (2004). Sacred Changes: Spiritual conversion and transformation. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 60*, 481-492. doi: 10.1002/jclp.20007
- Mahoney, A., Pargament, K. I., Jewell, T., Swank, A. B., Scott, E., Emery, E., & Rye, M. (1999). Marriage and the spiritual realm: The role of proximal and distal religious constructs in marital functioning. *Journal of Family Psychology, 13*(3), 321-321.
- Mahoney, A., Pargament, K. I., Murray-Swank, A., & Murray-Swank, N. (2003). Religion and the sanctification of family relationships. *Review of Religious Research, 44*(3), 220-236.
- Mahoney, A., Pargament, K. I., Tarakeshwar, N., & Swank, A. B. (2001). Religion in the home in the 1980s and 1990s: A meta-analytic review and conceptual analysis of links between religion, marriage, and parenting. *Journal of Family Psychology, 15*, 559-596. doi: 10.1037//0893-3200.15.4.559

- Main, M. (1996). Introduction to the special section on attachment and psychopathology: 2. Overview of the field of attachment. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 64*, 237-243. doi: 10.1037/0022-006x.64.2.237
- Main, M. (2000). Attachment theory. In A. E. Kazdin (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of psychology, Vol. 1*. (pp. 289-293). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Main, M., & Cassidy, J. (1988). Categories of response to reunion with the parent at age 6: Predictable from infant attachment classifications and stable over a 1-month period. *Developmental Psychology, 24*, 415-426. doi: 10.1037/0012-1649.24.3.415
- Main, M., & Solomon, J. (1990). Procedures for identifying infants as disorganized/disoriented during the Ainsworth Strange Situation. In M. T. Greenberg, D. Cicchetti & E. M. Cummings (Eds.), *Attachment in the preschool years: Theory, research, and intervention*. (pp. 121-160). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Mondor, J., McDuff, P., Lussier, Y., & Wright, J. (2011). Couples in therapy: Actor-partner analyses of the relationships between adult romantic attachment and marital satisfaction. *American Journal of Family Therapy, 39*, 112-123. doi: 10.1080/01926187.2010.530163
- Paloutzian, R. F., Richardson, J. T., & Rambo, L. R. (1999). Religious conversion and personality change. *Journal of Personality, 67*, 1047-1079. doi: 10.1111/1467-6494.00082
- Pargament, K. I. (1997). *The psychology of religion and coping: Theory, research, practice*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Rambo, L. R. (1989). Conversion: Toward a holistic model of religious change. *Pastoral Psychology, 38*, 47-63. doi: 10.1007/bf01040947

- Rambo, L. R. (1993). *Understanding religious conversion*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Richardson, J. T. (1995). Clinical and personality assessment of participants in new religions. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 5*, 145-170. doi: 10.1207/s15327582ijpr0503_1
- Richardson, J. T. (Ed.). (1978). *Conversion careers: In and out of the new religions*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Rogers, D., Skidmore, S., Montgomery, G., Reidhead, M., & Reidhead, V. (2012). Spiritual integration predicts self-reported mental and physical health. *Journal of Religion & Health, 51*, 1188-1201. doi: 10.1007/s10943-010-9425-9
- Rotter, J. B. (1966). Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. *Psychological Monographs: General and Applied, 80*, 1-28. doi: 10.1037/h0092976
- Rowatt, W. C., & Kirkpatrick, L. A. (2002). Two dimensions of attachment to God and their relation to affect, religiosity, and personality constructs. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 41*, 637-651. doi: 10.1111/1468-5906.00143
- Rowold, J. (2011). Effects of spiritual well-being on subsequent happiness, psychological well-being, and stress. *Journal of Religion & Health, 50*, 950-963. doi: 10.1007/s10943-009-9316-0
- Ryan, M., & Francis, A. (2012). Locus of control beliefs mediate the relationship between religious functioning and psychological Health. *Journal of Religion & Health, 51*, 774-785. doi: 10.1007/s10943-010-9386-z

- Schnitker, S., Porter, T. J., Emmons, R. A., & Barrett, J. L. (2012). Attachment predicts adolescent conversions at Young Life religious summer camps. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 22*, 198-215. doi: 10.1080/10508619.2012.670024
- Sears, R. R., Maccoby, E. E., & Levin, H. (1957). *Patterns of child rearing*. Oxford, England: Row, Peterson and Co.
- Simpson, J. A., & Rholes, W. S. (1998). Attachment in adulthood. In J. A. R. Simpson, W. S. (Ed.), *Attachment theory and close relationships* (pp. 3-21). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Snow, D. A., & Machalek, R. (1983). The convert as a social type. *Sociological Theory, 1*, 259-289.
- Stark, R., & Finke, R., (2000). *Acts of faith: Explaining the human side of religion*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Travisano, R. V. (1978). Alternation and conversion as qualitatively different transformations. In G. P. Stone & H. A. Farverman (Eds.), *Study of psychology through symbolic interaction*. Waltham, MA: Ginn-Blaisdell.
- van Ljzendoorn, M. H., & Sagi-Schwartz, A. (2008). Cross-cultural patterns of attachment: Universal and contextual dimensions. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications (2nd ed.)*. (pp. 880-905). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Wang, C.-C. D. C., Schale, C. L., & Broz, K. K. (2010). Adult attachment; Lesbian, gay, and bisexual Identity; and sexual attitudes of nonheterosexual individuals. *Journal of College Counseling, 13*(1), 31-49.

- Warner, J. A. (2006). *Context and character: Christian conversion as a pivotal experience in the father and son relationship*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Information & Learning. (AAI 3212945)
- Welch, R. D., & Houser, M. E. (2010). Extending the four-category model of adult attachment: An interpersonal model of friendship attachment. *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships, 27*, 351-366. doi: 10.1177/0265407509349632
- Zinnbauer, B. J., & Pargament, K. I. (1998). Spiritual conversion: A study of religious change among college students. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 37*, 161-180. doi: 10.2307/1388035

Appendix B

Participant Recruitment Flyer

LDS CONVERTS

Want to be a Research Participant?

Want to Earn Some Extra Money?

You may be just the person we are looking for. We are interviewing students or employees at BYU who are converts to the LDS church. We are studying the experience of new converts in their new religion following conversion.

- You must be 17 or older.
- Conversion must have occurred at age 12 or older and you did not join with your family.
- Unfortunately, those born into the LDS faith or those who converted before age 12 will be excluded.
- You will be compensated \$10 for your participation.
- The interview will last from 30-60 minutes.

If you would like to be interviewed please contact Dr. Kristin Hansen at email: kristin_hansen@byu.edu or (801) 422-1298.

Appendix C

Consent to be a Research Subject

Introduction

You are being asked to participate in a study being conducted by Drs. Kristin Hansen, Marleen S. Williams and Steve Smith at Brigham Young University. We are gathering information related to new converts' experience with their new religion following conversion. You are being asked to participate given that you did not grow up in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and converted to this religious faith as a teenager, young adult or adult.

Procedures

You will be asked several open-ended questions about your personal experiences. The interview will last anywhere from 30-60 minutes depending on how much you want to share. It will be tape-recorded and then transcribed. We will be assigning your interview a number. In this way your identifying information can be kept confidential and it will not be reported in the results.

Risks/Discomforts

There are minimal risks for participation in this study. However, you may feel emotional discomfort when answering questions about personal experiences and beliefs. The interviewer will be sensitive to any discomfort and not push to express any experiences you do not feel comfortable sharing. If you are concerned about the questions or your responses, you may contact Dr. Hansen at the number listed below.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to subjects. However, it is hoped that through your participation, this research can help others better understand the experience of new converts.

Confidentiality

All information provided will remain confidential and will only be reported as group data with no identifying information. Tapes made during the interviews will be destroyed after transcripts are made, and transcripts will be stored for five years in a locked file cabinet. Only those directly involved with the research will have access to the transcripts.

Compensation

Participants will receive \$10 for participating in this study.

Participation

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime or refuse to participate entirely without jeopardy to your standing with the university. We may like to follow up with you at a future date. Please initial here if you are ok being contacted at a future date: _____.

Questions about the Research

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Dr. Kristin Hansen at (801) 422-1298, email: Kristin_hansen@byu.edu.

Questions about your Rights as Research Participants

If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher, you may contact Dr. Renea Beckstrand, IRB Chair, 422-3873, 422 SWKT, renea_beckstrand@byu.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____