20

Conversion, Deconversion, and Spiritual Transformation

A Multilevel Interdisciplinary View

Raymond F. Paloutzian, Sebastian Murken,
Heinz Streib, and Sussan Rößler-Namini

This chapter summarizes recent research on religious conversion[1] and deconversion, both part of the larger category called "spiritual transformation." In particular, it highlights two important research programs conducted since the publication of the first edition of this *Handbook* (Paloutzian & Park, 2005) and provides an overview of other studies published since then. Thus, this chapter is a follow-up, extension, and companion to the previous chapter (Paloutzian, 2005) rather than a simple update of it. The information presented and connections made then still stand as authoritative for the scope of literature examined and the meaning system components on which the findings from that literature were mapped. Thus, there is no reason to repeat it. In order to enrich one's understanding with the most complete picture of the longer history of past research on conversion and spiritual transformation and, therefore, put the present chapter in the best conceptual context, the interested reader is advised to examine the chapter on conversion in the first edition of the *Handbook* as companion reading to the present chapter. See also the extensive summaries of research on this topic in a comprehensive review article (Paloutzian, Richardson, & Rambo, 1999) and in two companion handbook chapters on conversion and spiritual transformation (Paloutzian, in press; Paloutzian & Lowe, 2012). In this chapter, we present the most recent research that adds to and illuminates, and perhaps begins to answer, some of the questions raised by the previous lines of research. In the process, we summarize research conducted in Europe in order to accent the increasing international scope of the research and to document similar and dissimilar trends in converting to and from a religious group in a major European country, Germany, and the United States. Doing this is in keeping with current awareness that cross-cultural comparisons are increasingly important (see Saroglou & Cohen, Chapter 17, this volume).

Among the key integrative themes that are intended to help knit the topics in this handbook together, the two pivotal ones are the multilevel interdisciplinary paradigm (MIP; Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003) and the model of religion as a meaning system (Park, 2005, Chapter 18, this volume; Silberman, 2005) (see also Paloutzian & Park, Chapter 1, this volume). In this chapter, we conceptualize and integrate research within an MIP and illustrate how the probability that a transformation will occur is influenced by an optimal and interdependent fit between what converting (or deconverting) might mean to the individual and to the group.

After a brief synopsis of the past research on the psychology of conversion and spiritual transformation just described, we present a recent body of research whose intellectual roots combine ideas from psychology with ideas from sociology, the outcome of which is a picture of conversion not as a function of the person, or of only social pressures, but of an optimal fit between the needs and wants of a person and whatever the environment, group, or ideology has to offer. The conclusion emphasizes the interaction between person and context, not the personality, mental states, emotions, or cognitions of the convert per se. Following that, we present research on a topic mostly new to scholarship on the psychology of conversion and spiritual transformation: research on deconversion. Deconversion *from* a religion is as much a change—a spiritual transformation—as conversion *to* a religion is. However, except for a few pieces of past research on allied topics such as atheism (Hunsberger & Altemeyer, 2006) and apostasy (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1997), the topic has only recently been examined in a comprehensive research program (Streib, Hood, Keller, Csöff, & Silver, 2009). Finally, we document a set of recent studies, noting the theoretical context of each, in order to provide an up-to-date, user-friendly *Handbook* chapter capable of facilitating future research.

We believe the data are compelling that (1) applying knowledge from multiple levels of analysis is essential for a complete understanding of spiritual transformations (whether conversion to a religion or deconversion from one), and that (2) combining evidence from multiple methods can yield insights that cannot be gained by use of any one method alone. Thus, quantitative, qualitative, and other companion methods are essential to blend together in order to lead to a more complete understanding of transformative processes that explain how a human undergoes such a major change.

SYNOPSIS OF RECENT HIGHLIGHTS

A brief sketch of recent comprehensive overviews provides a context for appreciating the main lines of research that will follow. First, Paloutzian et al. (1999) examined the varied lines of research on conversion (e.g., psychoanalytic, social-cognitive, sociological) around the question of whether a religious conversion causes someone's personality to change. The overall pattern of evidence led to the conclusion that when personality is understood at the level of basic traits or temperaments, there is little to indicate that an individual's personality is different after he or she is converted. Converts may feel as if everything about them, including their basic traits, is different, but there was little evidence to support that conclusion. On the other hand, other aspects of personality such as midlevel functions, goals, purposes, and strivings, and aspects of the more overarching level of personality such as purpose, meaning, and worldview often become

different after a religious conversion. Thus, "what the person is about" may be substantially altered after a spiritual transformation, although the particular trait-based style with which the person lives out the change may not be appreciably different.

The scope of Paloutzian et al.'s (1999) review on personality as the main factor in the conversion process was incomplete because it placed all the attention on personal aspects of the individual convert, with the primary question being whether conversion caused change. However, some of the studies reviewed suggested that a person's personality might predict the type of group that he or she would convert to, rather than the type of group causing a change in the individual's personality after the person was in the group. Thus, a subsidiary finding emerged such that a particular personality might be drawn to a particular type of group.

Going beyond personality (trait) questions, however, Rambo (1993) laid out a comprehensive conceptual map of all the factors that have to be taken into account in order to have a complete understanding of the conversion process. The individual's personality was only one of them. His model made it clear that the combined and interactive effects of a vast array of factors, personalistic and contextual, need to be accounted for. These include demographic, mental, emotional, group, circumstantial, sequential, temporal, social, environmental, cultural, and other factors, with subcategories of each one. Thus, the long history of research that looked primarily at the individual convert seems inadequate. Because of this, Paloutzian (2005, in press) put spiritual transformation processes in the larger context of a meaning system model (Park, 2005; Chapter 18, this volume; Silberman, 2005; see Park, 2010, for comprehensive review) that includes components of a meaning system (beliefs and attitudes, values, goals, overall purposes, identity, and worldview and ultimate concern) that can be put under pressure to change by various means, and that can show outcomes that are evidence of internal change if the pressure on the system reaches some threshold. The specific empirical and theoretical question guiding the movement from the 1999 review focusing on personality factors to the 2005 chapter centered on whether the data on all the raw variables in the myriad studies of conversion would map clearly and straight-forwardly onto the components of a meaning system model. They did. This suggests that religious conversion is not mediated by psychological processes unique to it, but that it is instead is one instance of a larger category of human change processes: the spiritual transformation of a meaning system. Spiritual transformation can be seen as an overall process of change, which can occur in gradations from smaller to larger amounts and in parts or as a whole, within a meaning system. When that change is large enough and is about certain categories of content,[2] we call it a religious conversion.

The movement from seeing religious conversion as a personality process to seeing it as a change in a meaning system helped carry our conceptualization of the processes involved to a more complex level, one that is amenable to generating hypotheses and doing research within an MIP as a guiding idea. That movement allowed us to cast the notion in broader conceptual terms, with the hope that it might be possible within its framework to begin to integrate research from allied disciplines. Consistent with this, we believe this approach addresses human change more generally. That is, we want to understand all human change, not only religious conversions as if they were unique and mediated by processes unlike those that are involved in other kinds of human change. Fundamentally, we see whatever we learn about spiritual transformation as one instance

of human change in general. The principles involved are part of and applicable to general psychology as a whole, not narrowly or singularly applicable to religiousness only.

This chapter expands our picture of spiritual transformation processes by including research on person–group fit, and deconversion, and other recent studies. The first highlights the importance of interactive processes in addition to personality processes in human change; the second highlights that the decision to leave a religion is just as central to questions about human change as is the decision to believe in and practice one. Spiritual transformations happen in both directions; people are drawn to and repelled from religions. The person–context fit approach integrates ideas and research from both psychological and sociological traditions. The deconversion research does the same. Combining these recent lines of research is in keeping with our efforts to take one step toward explaining spiritual transformations within a MIP (see also Paloutzian & Park, Chapter 1, this volume).

A FIT MODEL

The Notion of Fit

In addition to individuals who convert to specific religions differing in their personality structures, experiences, and biographical backgrounds, the existence of myriad religions means that the individuals also face an enormous religious marketplace (Gooren, 2006; Rambo & Farhadian, in press). Various churches, religious groups, and new religious movements (NRMs) cannot be conceptualized as being one category ("religion") because the differences among them are so great (see Oman, Chapter 2, and Taves, Chapter 7, this volume, for inherent difficulties with the single generic category "religion"). Thus, if one wants to understand the dynamics of religious conversion, a central question to investigate becomes: "*Which* person joins *which* religious group and why?" As already mentioned, research on conversion has to assume that the answer to this question depends on the interaction between individual characteristics and the environment provided by the specific religious group to which the convert turns. That is, personal factors drive the individual's tendency to change, while the nature of the group welcomes the changed one. In line with this consideration, recent conversion research has focused on the aspect of *fit* between different psychosocial patterns and specific religions as a key factor in religious change.

It postulates that specific individual needs may be fulfilled particularly well by particular religious groups, and that the fit between the needs of the person and what the religious group has to offer is a major determinant of entry into or exit from the group as well as the consequences arising from association with it. Thus, the concept of a *person–religion fit* can enhance our explanations of at least three phenomena: (1) mechanisms of conversion to a religious group, (2) the course of membership in the group (continuance vs. deconversion), and (3) psychosocial consequences of conversion (positive vs. negative). Relevant individual variables from which specific needs may arise include religious and biographical background, actual life situation/problems, and personality structure, whereas relevant religious group variables include teachings, rituals, hierarchy or social structure, and norms and rules. Neither the characteristics of the person nor the features of the religious group is alone sufficient to explain the membership process, but

the interaction—more precisely, the fit—between the person and the group is assumed to increase explanatory power significantly. To quote Rambo (1993), "What makes any voluntary conversion process possible is a complex confluence of the 'right' potential convert coming into contact, under proper circumstances at the proper time, with the 'right' advocate and religious option" (p. 87).

Past research supports this line of thought. Although some authors—mainly in the context of research on NRMs—came to the conclusion that there was one clear profile of the "typical convert" regardless of the particular religious group that the person joined (e.g., Richardson, 1985a, pp. 209–210), an increasing number of cases that were exceptions to the profile were postulated (see Barker, 1989, pp. 14–15; Beckford & Levasseur, 1986, pp. 39–41; Hunt, 2003, pp. 96–98). Thus, generalizations about the characteristics of converts seemed to be oversimplified. Implicit or explicit references to a fit approach began to emerge (e.g., Klosinski, 1996, pp. 85–86; Poling & Kenney, 1986). Already by the late 1970s, Richardson and colleagues (Richardson & Stewart, 1977; Richardson, Stewart, & Simmonds, 1979) sketched a conversion process model that assumed that, in addition to affective bonding, ideological congruence between what the person was seeking or needed and what the group or ideology offered was pivotal to the process. The conceptualization of congruency is close to that of fit because it suggests that the individual chooses a religion by taking into account the degree to which a specific group addresses his or her general orientations, perspectives, and ideologies.

During the past decade, Murken, Namini, and colleagues conducted a comprehensive research program in which they applied the idea of fit to the study of self-chosen membership in religious groups (Murken & Namini, 2007; Murken, 2009; Namini & Murken, 2008; Namini, 2009; Namini, Appel, Jürgensen, & Murken, 2010). Within the framework of a longitudinal and comparative study design, they collected data from converts to three religious groups—a Pentecostal parish (PP), the New Apostolic Church (NAC), and Jehovah's Witnesses (JW)—in Germany between 2003 and 2006. Before reporting findings from their research, a look at two key examples of past studies consistent with a fit approach will provide some empirical background and context and set the stage for examining this recent research.

First, Klosinski (1983, 1985) compared members of two NRMs—the Neo-Sannyas movement (NSM; Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh) and the Society for Transcendental Meditation (TM; Maharishi Mahesh Yogi)—via biographical interviews and personality tests. He examined the psychodynamic aspects of conversion and assumed that specific features of each religious movement would prompt the conversion of a person whose personality and inner conflicts would make for a proper fit. He reported that the NSM group had a greater number of women with symptoms of hysteria, which he related to the sexual and erotic features of the Bhagwan ideology. On the other hand, the TM sample had proportionately more obsessive men, who he concluded would have the characteristics that would lead them to find the constant repetition of the TM mantra appealing. Similarly, the NSM group orientation was such that there was much emphasis placed on the figure of the spiritual leader and the group members' relationship with him. Thus, Klosinski found that converts to the group tended to be high in the need for a sense of group cohesion and to perceive a special relationship with a leader. In contrast, the TM group put more emphasis on its teachings and ideology, which Klosinski interpreted as basis for a better match with the cognitive structure of the TM followers.

Second, Kuner (1983) examined data from members of the Children of God (CoG), the Unification Church (UC), Ananda Marga (AM), and a student control group on the nature of their familial socialization and life circumstances shortly before their encounter with the religious group. He focused especially on the specific needs an individual developed through his or her life experiences. The results identified some general patterns that differentiated members of the three NRMs compared with those not in an NRM; there were also small differences between members of the three NRMs in loss of parents, birth order, and degree of preconversion religious quest, although there was no clear overall fit patterns to distinguish members from among these three NRMs. Converts to all three NRMs tended to come from families with many siblings in which the mother was dominant and the father was weak; these converts also characterized their personal situation prior to contact with the group as one of alienation. More specific results showed that conversion to the UC seemed to occur gradually and tended to include a theological quest, whereas conversion to the AM and CoG had stronger roots in a sense of deprivation of emotional needs and human contact, which were quickly met by the characteristics of these two groups.

Childhood and Familial Experiences

As the prior examples of studies indicate, an important domain to which a person–religion fit approach may apply is the biographical background and childhood familial experiences of the convert (see Murken & Namini, 2007, for review of findings summarized below). Mainstream psychology can provide empirical and theoretical frameworks such as (1) child developmental models, (2) psychoanalysis, (3) attachment theory, and (4) knowledge of birth order effects. For example, as a generality, early developmental influences such as traumatic events (e.g., divorce of parents, death of a parent, child abuse) and specific childrearing patterns (e.g., dominant mother and weak father) were repeatedly reported to facilitate conversion to religious groups. Members of NRMs often report that their fathers have been either absent, passive-unavailable, or actively rejecting, and they, more than nonconverts, perceive their relationships with their mothers as having been problematic (see also Cowan, in press; Yang & Abel, in press). Similarly, individuals interested or involved in new forms of religiosity tend to show insecure attachment histories (Buxant, Saroglou, Casalfiore, & Christians, 2007; Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2004). They typically come from relatively large families with several siblings.

Similarities in findings are not surprising if one considers that many of the groups studied share structural and theological characteristics. However, a closer look at single studies, especially those with comparative designs (e.g., Kuner, 1983; van der Lans & Derks, 1986), again indicates that differing family backgrounds route persons to involvement in certain groups. Thus, an application of a fit approach extends further. For example, thinking within a psychodynamic approach, the concept of person–religion fit may help illuminate possible connections between a specific pattern of familial experiences and the specific religious group to which the individual turns. Some individuals with difficult family backgrounds may find a solution for the resulting conflicts in a group that offers some kind of ideal family, whereas others may prefer groups that provide therapeutic experiences or that emphasize individualism. Some may choose a group that offers an emotional relationship with a religious figure or an especially personal father-like God

concept as a substitute for deficits in their early relationships. Others whose needs are primarily intellectual may choose a faith that claims to have a compelling rational argument that theirs is the true religion.

Some findings from Namini and Murken's (2008) comparison of the family backgrounds of converts to a PP, the NAC, or JW further illustrate this point. Regarding loss of a parent, the authors found a significant difference in whether a person lost a parent before she or he was 15 years of age: Only 10% of the PP group reported such a loss, whereas 23% of the JW and 43% of the NAC groups did. The rate for the PP group was comparable to that for the general German population, whereas the rate for the NAC was more than four times higher. The extraordinarily high proportion of NAC converts who grew up without their biological father can be seen in the context that one of the church's primary provisions is a father-oriented theology and a hierarchy with a chief apostle—a presumedly strong father figure—at the top. On number of siblings, the authors found a trend: 68% of the JW group had two or more siblings, whereas 64% of those in the NAC grew up as a single child. This difference again seems consistent with the theologies and practices of the two religious groups. For example, in the JW theology the group is emphasized over the individual, which, moreover, is subordinated to a strict theology and weekly schedule that combines activities with others, properties consistent with having grown up in a group.

Person–Environment Fit

Research in the psychology of religion can profit from invoking theories established in general psychology. For example, the notion of a person–environment (P–E) fit model (see, e.g., Caplan, 1983, and Van Harrison, 1978) can be helpful to further our understanding of religious fit processes. The P–E fit approach has early intellectual and theoretical roots in the Gestalt psychology of the 1930s as expressed in the social psychological writings of Kurt Lewin (1936). Lewin's way of accounting for behavior was captured in his famous equation $B=f(P,E)$, where behavior is a function of the person and the environment. The dynamic interaction between personal and environmental variables to which Lewin points is also at the heart of P–E fit models. The theory states that strain or stress develops when there is a discrepancy between the motives or needs of the person and the supplies of the environment, or between the demands of the environment and the abilities of the person to meet those demands. Crucial for the well-being of the individual is the subjective fit between needs and supplies *(needs–supplies fit)* or between demands and abilities *(demands–abilities fit),* whereby a perception by the individual that there is either "too much" or "too little" in the way of supplies or demands can have negative psychosocial consequences. Also, a perfect fit is not necessarily optimal since it can lead to understimulation and stagnation, because if what is needed and what is supplied are always exactly the same, then the growth that comes from new information, learning, and challenges is less likely.

Although P-E fit theory originated in the context of the psychology of work, some researchers have suggested that it can be used to understand stress in all life domains (Edwards & Rothbard, 1999). As applied to the psychological study of religious conversion, the concept of *person–religion fit* can be especially helpful to understand the psychosocial consequences of conversion and shed light upon the observation that religious

conversions can offer benefits as well as pose risks. An early attempt to apply a P-E fit notion to the context of religion was made by Pargament and colleagues (Pargament, Johnson, Echemendia, & Silverman, 1985; Pargament, Tyler, & Steele, 1979), who examined Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish communities on the psychosocial consequences of the degree to which what the individual wanted or needed matched what the religion provided. Individuals whose needs and wants corresponded with those the group provided showed higher psychosocial competencies but lower self-efficacy and less active coping strategies compared with individuals for whom the degree of correspondence was lower. They also found that in churches with an open atmosphere and more possibilities for individual autonomy, the degree to which the members tolerated ambiguity was positively related to various measures of psychosocial competence. Apparently, the more the atmosphere was one of openness, the more individuals who wanted to do so could explore, express themselves, and attempt to apply their skills. These results are consistent with a person–religion fit approach. One general conclusion is that the degree of fit between individuals and the religious environment depends on the relative weight of positive and negative trade-offs—psychosocial costs and benefits—that accrue to each member of the transaction.

In the just-mentioned recent research program, Murken, Namini, and colleagues (Namini, 2009; Namini et al., 2010) applied P–E fit theory to investigate the relation between needs–supplies fit and well-being in the context of conversions to the religious groups studied (PP, NAC, JW). Regression analysis indicated that the degree to which a person's needs for autonomy and relatedness could be met by the group was related to well-being and mental health. Further analysis for autonomy and relatedness showed that well-being and mental health measures tended to decrease when the amount of the need supplied exceeded what was needed. These results suggest that if a group "overdoes it" and floods the convert with more than he or she needs or wants, conflicts can be created that are detrimental to the convert's well-being. They also indicate that it is as suboptimal for a group to provide too much as it is for it to provide too little, insofar as the well-being of its participants is concerned.

Another exploratory analysis (Namini, 2009) investigated differences in the demands–abilities fit of members of different NRMs. It studied how members of the PP, NAC, and JW assessed potential demands–requirements of the group they converted to and their own abilities to fulfill them. Results indicated that the NAC group sensed fewer demands—couched in terms of "living up to God's commandments" and "knowing the Bible and its meaning"—than converts to the other two groups. The highest degree of perceived demands was consistently reported by JW converts. With respect to how converts perceived their own abilities, those in the JW had a higher belief that they could meet the demands of the group than those in either the PP or the NAC. Interestingly, however, those in the JW assessed their own abilities as slightly lower than the demands placed upon them. Thus, it seems that they always had something to strive for—neither too much nor too little, but, at least in their perceptions, enough to provide a continual sense of achievement and accomplishment to sustain their membership. Members of the PP also assessed their abilities as slightly lower than the demands of their religious community, whereas those in the NAC saw their abilities and the NAC's demands as almost equal. These observations suggest that examination of what specific religious groups require of new members compared with the self-perceived abilities of individuals turning

toward these groups can help us identify potential costs and benefits of their involvement with a group.

Implications

The empirical findings suggest that research on conversion has to take into account the fit between characteristics of the individual and specifics of the religious groups. Generally, a fit between a person and the religious group to which the person turns can be assumed to facilitate a conversion, encourage continuance of membership, and lead to positive psychosocial consequences. In terms of the RMS model (cf. also Park, 2005, Chapter 18, this volume; Silberman, 2005; Paloutzian, 2005, in press), a person will more likely turn to a new religion or belief system if he or she can find meaning in it on a cognitive, affective, or social level. As the distinction between various forms of conversion (sudden vs. gradual) suggests, the degree to which a person's meaning system changes in the course of conversion may vary. From an RMS perspective, it can be assumed that people in general will try to maintain their overarching meaning system (i.e., look for a theology and group that fits and only change the appraisal of a situation or event when necessary). Independent of the details of the conversion process, it can be assumed that as long as the overarching meaning conveyed by a religious group fits an individual's experiences (i.e., can be successfully translated into daily life), he or she is likely to continue membership in a group. A sense of meaningfulness through religion can account for psychosocial adjustment in a similar way as a subjective person–religion fit, since the processes by which meaningfulness and its appraisal and by which a subjective sense of person–religion fit operates would seem to mesh well with each other. They may also reciprocally influence each other; for example, the subjective importance of certain personal beliefs, goals, and values may influence the effect of the person–religion fit in the conversion process.

Thinking in terms of a larger MIP, findings from neurophysiology (e.g., that new information that can connect to already available information or that is of special emotional relevance to a person is more easily stored; Goldstein, 2011) support the assumption that a particular religion may seem especially attractive when what it can provide fits individual needs, and can thus be perceived as more meaningful to the person.

However, personal and religious variables are so numerous and their interactions so complex that a simple or clear picture of whether a specific person fits a specific group is difficult to construct. As an example from attachment theory, which assumes that a person's religious search has its roots in experiences related to early attachment figures (see Richert & Granqvist, Chapter 8, this volume), one individual characteristic (here, childhood attachment representations) can work in different ways: An individual can search for a God image that matches his or her early attachment figure *(correspondence),* or do the opposite and search for a God image that compensates for the attachment qualities that the individual did not receive from his or her primary attachment figure *(compensation)* (Kirkpatrick, 1992, 2005). In the context of P-E fit theory, these two concepts are equivalent to the ideas of *supplementary fit* and *complementary fit* (Cable & Edwards, 2004), respectively. While the latter indicates that the needs of the individual and of the environment are fulfilled by the opposite resources of each other, the former describes how the characteristics of both sides are similar.

Moreover, with every additional variable that has to be taken into account, the

number of possible fit patterns increases exponentially, and other moderating factors like crises, close relationships, availability of alternatives, and chance have to be considered as well (cf. Namini, 2009). Because of this, there is little support for the idea that there is a one-to-one correspondence between various aspects of the individual and various aspects of religions. To the contrary, research findings, some of which were summarized previously, illustrate how complex the relationships are and that more investigation into the association between (subjective) fit and meaning is needed.

CONVERSION AND DECONVERSION

We now include a section on deconversion for two reasons. First, theoretically, we believe that both conversion and deconversion are, at least in part, subsets of the broader category of spiritual transformation and that the psychological processes that mediate conversion and deconversion overlap, even if they may not be identical. Second, multiple conversions (and, therefore, deconversions) are more likely in the multicultural and multireligious environments of our modern world. Multiple conversions, however, often involve deconversion(s).[3] Also, in cultures with many nonaffiliates, nontheists, atheists, and agnostics, the term "deconversion" seems big enough to include processes of disaffiliation *without* a replacement belief or reaffiliation (Streib & Klein, 2013). Therefore, although related to conversion, the processes of changing to disbelief and/or disaffiliation are not identical to it and may constitute an independent but overlapping field of study (Streib, 2013). The term "deconversion" may connote the depth and intensity of biographical change that can be associated with disbelief and/or disaffiliation. Theoretically, also, if a P-E fit model increases our understanding of the processes involved in religious conversion, then it would likely show the same benefit for our efforts to account for deconversion. Among the reasons for this are that both religious conversion and deconversion are (1) consequences of the interaction between multilevel individual and group processes and (2) manifestations of one or more changes among the components of the person's meaning system.

In this section we devote primary attention to presenting the recent and extensive research program of Streib et al. (2009), with some attention to others as well. Streib et al.'s study is foremost because of its comprehensiveness and multinationality, and because it is the first large-scale study of its kind to apply both the so-called qualitative and quantitative techniques to data from the same research participants. For researchers who wish to apply so-called qualitative methods to gain certain kinds of insights, this project is a fine example of how also to invoke quantitative techniques in order to test hypotheses with same data set. The combination of techniques helps to strengthen the validity of our psychological theorizing. Therefore, we believe it is sufficiently important, for these methodological reasons, to highlight this point here. We follow this section with a summary of other empirical studies published in recent years.

Conceptualizing Deconversion

In their initial exploration of the concept of deconversion, Streib and Keller (2004) examined Barbour's (1994) work, which presents an analysis of autobiographies of leading

theologians, philosophers, and other writers who were undergoing deconversion. Barbour interprets the rise of and interest in deconversion as due to increased individualism and religious pluralism present in modern society. He identified four criteria of deconversion that are present in most cases: (1) intellectual doubt or denial of the truth of a system of beliefs; (2) moral criticism, including the rejection of the entire way of life of a religious group; (3) emotional suffering that consists of grief, guilt, loneliness, and despair; and (4) disaffiliation from the religious community. However, evaluating Barbour's (1994) conceptualization of deconversion in light of Glock's (1962) five dimensions of religious commitment reveals that Barbour's list of criteria does not explicitly include Glock's experiential dimension. Nevertheless, it may be important to feel the loss of (sometimes very specific) religious experiences as part of a deconversion process. Because of this, Streib and Keller (2004) include the experiential dimension in their list of elements of deconversion. They are: (1) loss of specific religious experiences; (2) intellectual doubt, denial, or disagreement with specific beliefs; (3) moral criticism; (4) emotional suffering; and (5) disaffiliation from the community. Using these five characteristics prevents the reduction of deconversion to merely disaffiliation from the group.[4]

In addition to defining deconversion, we need to identify potential outcomes of the process. Although deconversion can be inferred when a person changes from one religious organization to another (but stays within the orbit of organized religions), it can also be manifest as an exit from the religious field altogether, which can itself be expressed in a number of ways. Streib et al. (2009) suggest the six possible deconversion trajectories summarized in Table 20.1. All of such trajectories can be viewed as migrations in the religious field, except "secularizing exit." Overall, deconversion is conceptualized as an intense biographical change that includes individual and social aspects: experiential, emotional, intellectual-ideological, social-environmental, moral, as well as changes or termination of group membership.

This characterization of deconversion can be easily mapped onto components of a meaning system, as summarized by Park (2005, 2010) or Paloutzian (2005, in press), and be interpreted in such terms. Intellectual doubt and moral criticism (two of the five criteria for deconversion) reflect beliefs, attitudes, and values—components of meaning systems. Disaffiliation and the final outcome of deconversion reflect new goals and purpose. The experiential and emotional aspects are implicit and inherent in meaning system change because the process involves stresses and pressures that may be experienced as various kinds of unease, affective depletion, lowering of resistance to change, feelings of dissatisfaction with the status quo for any number of reasons, and because much of the process of appraising incoming information occurs at an affective level. Finally, departing from a religion almost automatically involves a transformation, or at least a modification, of ultimate concern and worldview. Thus, it seems that the descriptive characteristics of deconversion summarized previously map reasonably well to the social-cognitive processes that comprise a shift in a meaning system, a change that constitutes some degree of spiritual transformation.

Empirical Studies on Deconversion

The history of research on deconversion shows that it is relatively recent and used to be done only occasionally and somewhat unsystematically (see Streib et al., 2009, Chapter

TABLE 20.1. The Six Possible Deconversion Trajectories According to Streib et al. (2009)

Type of trajectory	Characteristics
Secularizing exit	Termination of (concern with) religious belief and praxis and, eventually, disaffiliation from organized religion
Oppositional exit	Adopting a different system of beliefs and engaging in different ritual practices, while affiliating with a higher tension, more oppositional religious organization, which could mean, for example, conversion into a fundamentalist group
Religious switching	Migration to a religious organization with a similar system of beliefs and rituals and with no, or only marginal, difference in terms of integration in the surrounding culture
Integrating exit	Adopting a different system of beliefs and engaging in different ritual practices, while affiliating with an integrated or more accommodated religious organization
Privatizing exit	Disaffiliating from a religious organization, eventually including termination of membership, but continuation of private religious belief and private religious praxis
Heretical exit	Disaffiliating from a religious organization, eventually including termination of membership, and individual heretical appropriation of new belief system(s) or engagement in different religious praxis but without new organizational affiliation

2, for a review). Three developments contribute to its recent progress. First, discussion in the 1980s and 1990s about NRMs and public concern about "cults" triggered research, mostly interview studies, about apostates or defectors from the most controversial new religious groups (Jacobs, 1989; Levine, 1984; Skonovd, 1981; Streib 1999, 2000; Wright, 1987, in press). Second, studies of people who had left churches and secular apostates in Europe and the United States indicated a shift of research focus in the 1990s to mainstream religions and the religious landscape as a whole (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1997; Hunsberger, 2000; Jamieson, 2002; Richter & Francis, 1998). This research continues with a special interest in atheist and agnostic individuals or groups (Burris & Petrican, 2011; Burris & Redden, 2012), especially in the United States (Hunsberger & Altemeyer, 2006; Kosmin & Keysar, 2007). Third, large-scale surveys, such as the International Social Survey Programme (Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, 2010) and the General Social Survey (National Opinion Research Center, 2009), ask respondents to indicate their and their parent's religious affiliations and participation during the respondent's late childhood years. These data allow some inferences about deconversion, even though based on limited information (Streib, 2013).

Descriptive information such as that just described is useful, but psychology of religion must go beyond the descriptive level in order to understand the processes involved in various sorts of spiritual transformations. For example, questions about psychological processes include whether deconversion is related to personality, whether the well-being, growth, or development of deconverts differs from that of converts, whether deconversion is related to faith development, and how motivational, attitudinal, cognitive, and

similar factors might lead to or follow such a change. This would include learning about factors that lead to an optimal versus nonoptimal fit between what the person wants and needs and what the religion was and was not able to supply.

The results of the Bielefeld cross-cultural study of deconversion (Streib et al., 2009) begins to address some of these issues. The research was conducted between 2002 and 2005 and included a total of 129 deconverts in Germany and the United States. Narrative and faith development interviews were conducted with 99 of these deconverts. In addition, an extensive questionnaire was completed by all deconverts as well as by in-tradition religious members. The goal was to survey approximately 10 in-tradition members for each deconvert. Thus, the quantitative database includes questionnaire responses from 1,067 in-tradition members and 129 deconverts. The questionnaire assessed spiritual/religious self-identification, personality traits, psychological well-being and growth, religious fundamentalism, right-wing authoritarianism, and religious styles. Also, faith development interviews were conducted with 177 in-tradition members.

As is apparent, the research program not only was based on an innovative design that included both quantitative and qualitative data, but was also aimed at comparing deconverts to in-tradition members in two nations. The biographical interview information allowed the researchers to identify the deconversion trajectories of the 99 cases. Various types of trajectories were found: 29 secular exiters, 24 privatizing exiters, nine heretical exiters, 13 religious switchers, 16 integrating exiters, and eight oppositional exiters. On the basis of the quantitative data, the deconverts could be profiled and contrasted with in-tradition members. This allowed questions about personality, well-being, and faith development to be addressed.

Deconversion and Personality

Regarding the relation of Big Five personality dimensions to deconversion, overall, the trait *openness to experience* was a key identifier of a deconvert. However, there were also some cross-cultural differences between Germany and the United States. For example, in Germany, deconverts scored significantly higher in *openness to experience* than in-tradition members, but this effect was magnified in the United States such that deconverts had even higher scores on this trait. Also, in Germany, in contrast to the United States, all Big Five subscales showed significant differences between in-tradition members and deconverts, but all of the relationships except for *openness to experience* were inverse for the German participants. This pattern of results suggests that deconversion in Germany may be associated with some kind of (mild) crisis.

Psychological Well-Being

The importance of this characteristic in German deconverts is apparent upon a close look at the results of Ryff's *psychological well-being* assessment (Ryff & Singer, 1996, 1998). There are cross-cultural differences. In the United States, deconverts increase in *autonomy* and *personal growth* and show no significant differences in the rest of the subscales. However, the opposite is the case in Germany. In Germany, *environmental*

mastery, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and *self-acceptance* are all signifi-cantly lower for deconverts compared with in-tradition members. These results suggest that United States deconverts tend to associate personal gains with their transformation, whereas German deconverts are more likely to report losses and perhaps a (mild) crisis.

Deconversion and Spirituality

Overall, deconverts had an extraordinary increase in self-identification as "spiritual." In the United States, the proportion who self-identified as "more spiritual than religious" was almost twice as high as for in-tradition members. In both U.S. and German cultures, deconversion was associated with a reluctance to identify with "religion" and instead to identify with "spirituality." This is consistent with the notion that deconversion is an instance of the larger category of spiritual transformation of a meaning system, which leads to considerably higher self-identification with "spirituality" than represented in the general population (Streib, 2008).

Deconversion and Religious Schemas and Styles

Deconversion is also associated with changes in religious styles—whether we assess these using the faith development interview or the Religious Schema Scale (RSS; Streib, Hood, & Klein, 2010). Results of faith development interviews showed that between 70% (Ger-many) and 80% (United States) of in-tradition members scored at Stage 3,[5] while the majority of deconverts in both countries scored at Stage 4 (Germany: 53.1%; United States: 49%) and less at Stage 3 (Germany: 42.9%; United States: 45.1%). Cognitive developmentally, this suggests that people may be more likely to operate at an individu-ative–reflective religious style when they deconvert. However, when religious style was assessed by the RSS, deconverts in both countries showed a significant decrease in scores on the RSS Truth of Texts and Teachings subscale. This suggests that deconverts are reluctant to insist on the truth of their own religion and that they are open to the possible truths of other religions and to interreligious dialog. In sum, deconverts have a greater amount of individuative–reflective faith style than synthetic–conventional style. They also have higher scores on the RSS Fairness, Tolerance and Rational Choice, and Inter-religious Dialog subscales and lower scores on the Truth of Text and Teachings subscale. This combination of interview and questionnaire data suggests that higher levels of faith development, religious styles, and religious schemata are characteristic features of the deconversion process.

A Typology of Deconversion Narratives

The analysis of narrative and faith development interviews triangulated[6] with the ques-tionnaire data led to a typology of four kinds of deconversion narratives: pursuit of autonomy, debarred from paradise, finding a new frame of reference, lifelong quests—late revisions.

The *pursuit of autonomy* is a long-term gradual process of stepping out of the pre-viously taken-for-granted religious environment that one was born into or raised in. It

involves a search for individuation and the development of a critical new perspective, which most often leads to a secular or heretical exit. This type is generally associated with the individuative–reflective religious faith style (i.e., Stage 4) and with low scores on the RSS Truth of Text and Teachings subscale. There is a cross-cultural difference for deconverts of this type such that scores on psychological well-being tend to be high for those in the United States but moderate or low for those in Germany. In general, deconverts of this type are persons who either were born into a faith tradition or were brought by their parents into a community at a very young age, which they leave during adolescence or early adulthood, orient toward an open and sometimes insecure future, and insist on their personal independence and on making their own choices.

The *debarred from paradise* deconversion is characterized by an emotionally deep attachment to a religious tradition that is supposed to heal early trauma and protect from personal loss, a rather deep affiliation that does not normally develop before adolescence or early adulthood. Thus, many of these cases are midlife converts with all the expectation and affection of a once-for-a-lifetime decision. The deconversion process for such persons tends to include disappointment as a result of unfulfilled high expectations, abandonment of hopes, and withdrawal of affection by religious leaders, along with a wish to give testimony of these traumatic experiences. Deconverts of this type may become secular, adopt a private religious practice, or continue to search, but they seldom affiliate with another religious organization. In Streib et al.'s (2009) study, they almost always leave organized religions. This is the most intense and dramatic type of deconversion, and, with rare exceptions, is associated with very low scores on the religious fundamentalism scale combined with high scores in faith development, including individuative–reflective and conjunctive styles (i.e., Stages 4 and 5). This combination suggests strong rejection of the former belief system coupled with a more open, questioning, or exploring mind.

The third type of deconversion, *finding a new frame of reference*, is characterized by searching for and finding more intensity, guidance, and structure in religious life. This category includes many people who left the mainline churches in which they grew up. These deconversions are, therefore, mostly oppositional exits; they tend to include a change to a higher tension group. They involve a conversion experience that can be seen as reconversion. In the German cases in particular, an intense personal experience (e.g., feeling a deep personal relation with Jesus) often leads to a new kind of personal religiosity. Before the (re-)conversion, there may have been a hesitancy or moratorium toward religiousness that would involve orientations such as atheism, interest in other world religions, depression, or perhaps taking drugs. Thus, the new religiosity is manifest as a complete change of life and morality.

The *lifelong quests—late revisions* type of deconversion is characterized by leaving a religious environment once or many times because it fails to meet one's needs and expectations (i.e., a nonoptimal person–religion fit). In this type, the seeker's religious quest typically emerged in adolescence or young adulthood and led to conversion, typically into a religious group with higher tension. This type of deconvert has parallels with the second type who is "debarred from paradise." However, deconverts of this fourth type are not "debarred." They instead typically leave on their own in order to look for something better. There may even be a subsequent series of deconversions, usually as an

integrating exit but occasionally as a private or heretical exit. Some cases of this type can be characterized as being on a lifelong journey in pursuit of an individual project, such as coming to terms with a traumatized childhood, finding the "fitting" mystical,or spiritual environment, or finding inner peace.

Summary Picture

This pattern of findings suggests that deconversion may be a step toward freedom, autonomy, and personal growth. The pursuit of autonomy and the lifelong quests— late revision types illustrate this. However, if we reconsider the predefined criteria for deconversion, a new picture may be emerging that is based upon combined data from psychometric scales and analyses of biographical material. Briefly, the deconversion criteria reflect some kind of crisis; they focus on the individual's negations inherent in the deconversion process. However, if we add to this the positive accent apparent in the quantitative data in the Bielefeld study, we can begin to see how a crisis can be a turning point to something better.

This can be demonstrated by examining the deconversion criteria one by one. Loss of religious experience corresponds to *openness to experience* (a Big Five element), which emerged from the quantitative analyses as a key characteristic of deconversion. The crisis of deconversion could lead to a new cognitive structure, with a new interpretation of heaven and earth and a preference for a different religious schema. Moral criticism could function as the advent of the sense of *autonomy*, which also is shown in the quantitative data to be a key characteristic of·deconversion. Emotional suffering can be exchanged for a sense of *personal growth*, especially for the deconvert who feels "debarred from paradise." In some cases the biographical interviews show evidence of posttraumatic growth. Finally, leaving a religious community constitutes a loss, and deconverts may struggle to compensate for this loss. Indeed, positive relations with others after deconversion seem to decline for those in Germany and remain about the same for those in the United States. However, there are also gains in a sense of connectedness for the lucky ones who immediately find a new community and a new identity with a self-identification as "spiritual person," also a key characteristic of deconversion.

Exceptions notwithstanding, the portrait of deconversion that emerges from these analyses, which combine questionnaire "quantitative" data and biographical interview "qualitative" data, is that of an active deconvert resembling the active convert described by Richardson (1978, 1985a, 1985b, 1995), a landmark turning point in conversion research. This active deconvert seems to have higher openness to experience, a preference for individuative–reflective faith style, lower religious fundamentalism, and a higher preference for a spiritual self-identification. Also, one's culture makes a difference. For example, the prior analyses reveal a higher sense of autonomy and personal growth in U.S. deconverts compared with those in Germany, whereas in Germany a deconvert, although experiencing some gains, also feels losses such as a lower sense of environmental mastery, lower positive relations with others, lower purpose in life, and lower self-acceptance. Such findings reveal examples of a nonoptimal fit between the needs and wants of the individual and his or her current religion. Moreover, almost all of the prior analyses can be understood in the framework of religion as meaning system, which, in turn, supports the structural parallel between conversion and deconversion.

ADDITIONAL RECENT STUDIES

Let us round out this presentation of recent research in order to provide the most up-to-date and useful summary possible. In addition to the two half-decade-long research programs summarized previously, there have been a number of individual studies of conversion. Space constraints allow only brief mention of each; yet an overview of this material opens many questions and can lead to rich resources for future research. Importantly and to the field's benefit, the religious and national contexts in which conversion has been studied have expanded well beyond its relatively narrow origins in Protestant Christianity in the United States (Paloutzian, in press). As a start, data from the International Social Survey Program and the World Values Survey have been used to examine broad trends in religious conversion in 40 countries (Barro, Hwang, & McCleary, 2010). Fortunately, there are psychological studies on certain samples.

For example, several studies examined conversion to Islam. Lakhdar, Vinsonneau, Apter, and Mullet (2007) explored the motivations for adults and adolescents in France converting to Islam. Köse and Loewenthal (2000) focused on similar factors among British converts to Islam, and Maslim and Bjorck (2009) did the same for women in the United States. An examination of these three studies offers a picture of cross-cultural similarities and differences that may be explored in future research.

Studies of conversion to variations of Judaism have likewise appeared. Bockian, Glenwick, and Bernstein (2005) examined the degree to which conversion to Judaism followed a specific stages of change model, with some evidence for it. This model could be extrapolated and explored in the context of conversion to other standard religions and/or NRMs. Beit-Hallahmi and Nevo (1987) focused on Israeli Jews who converted to Orthodox Judaism; interestingly, they used the term "born again" (a term typically used among Evangelical Christians) as a way of capturing the change in identity of these persons. More recently, attachment insecurity has been examined in relation to conversion among Orthodox Jews (Pirutinsky, 2009).

Jindra (2008) studied converts to JW and Unitarian Universalists in order to document their stages of religious development; her study is a good example of the combined use of so-called qualitative and quantitative methods. Hunsberger and Altemeyer (2006) did pioneering research on why people who were raised in a religion might depart altogether and adopt atheism. Less extreme but related "departure" phenomena have recently been explored by Diener, Tay, and Myers (2011), who ask plainly, "If religion makes people happy, why are so many dropping out?" (p. 1278). In contrast, to understand the draw that a religion can have, Hogg, Adelman, and Blagg (2010) propose an uncertainty-identity theory to account for the attraction that a religion can have to pull certain people in and to especially transform them into zealots. A different perspective on how a religion might have a hold on someone is found in Granqvist and Kirkpatrick's (2004) comprehensive meta-analysis of their research program on attachment and conversion. In the Netherlands, the transmission of religion as a function of authoritative parenting style has been supported by a panel study (Vermeer, Janssen, & Scheepers, 2012). Also internationally, in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic, Halama and Lacna (2011) reexamined the question of conversion and personality change in the wake of the review by Paloutzian et al. (1999), and found that converts' retrospective self-perceptions of change and similar perceptions by close others suggest a retrospective bias. Finally, Brandt and

Fournier (2009) published the results of an international conference on conversion with presentations from Russia, France, Switzerland, and the United States.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

We arrive at a set of conclusions that can be summarized as follows. First, we know now that in order to understand spiritual transformation of any sort, focusing only on the individual is incomplete. Second, we know that transformations happen both to and from a religion; thus, understanding the processes involved in deconversion is of equal importance to understanding those that mediate conversion. Third, people involved in spiritual transformations do not necessarily prefer the terms of traditional religions to express their developments and changes. A strong preference for the semantics of "spirituality" can be observed in conversion and deconversion, even though the research summarized here has clearly used the conceptual framework of religious conversion and deconversion. Fourth, efforts to learn about conversion and deconversion at a descriptive or categorical level and those that aim for explanations at the level of psychological processes, such as a social-cognitive meaning system approach, are complementary and each needs the other. This again argues for a multilevel interdisciplinary approach. Fifth, psychological research and theory about conversion, as a fundamental category of human change generally, have come a long way since its spotty trajectory began slightly over 100 years ago. Now seems like the most interesting questions may be on the edges of the discipline, where psychological ideas and methods bump up against and are combined with the ideas and methods of companion disciplines. We predict that the most intellectually rich research in the future will occur at those boundaries.

NOTES

1. As made clear in Oman (Chapter 2, this volume), there are myriad definitions of "religion," which implies an equal or greater list of would-be defintions of "religious conversion," some of which invoke the God concept and some of which do not. In this chapter, in order to connect our psychological ideas about the processes involved in conversion and deconversion with the larger category called "spiritual transformation," it is most useful to adopt the characterization of conversion used in Paloutzian (2005): "Conversion is a more distinct process by which a person goes from believing, adhering to, and/or practicing one set of religious teachings or spiritual values to believing, adhering to, and/or practicing a different set. The transformative process in conversion may take variable amounts of time, ranging from a few moments to several years, but it is the distinctiveness of the change that is its central identifying element. . . . In contrast to someone arriving at a point of belief through the process of socialization and other developmental mechanisms, the convert can identify a time before which the religion was not accepted and after which it was accepted" (p. 331).
2. The concept of spiritual transformation, which at its core is a change in a person's meaning system, goes far beyond the particular type called religious conversion. However, space limitations preclude us from discussing all variations. As illustrations, however, transformation may be manifest as change or growth in the context of life stress, grief and berevement, various identity or worldview life confrontations, and so forth, and may appear in both religious and nonreligious forms. Our analyses of the psychological processes that mediate religious conversions can be extrapolated to apply to other forms of transformation, and future research can

document where the changes in these variations of spiritual transformations map well onto each other and where they do not.

3. The concept of deconversion may not apply to every instance of adopting a new belief system, however. There is, for example, the phenomenon of what Streib (1999, 2000) calls the "accumulative heretic." Examples for a simultaneous accumulative heretic are the woman who is both a practicing Methodist minister and a practicing Johrei minister or the person who claims to simultaneously be Buddhist and Roman Catholic. Although rare, it is apparently possible to affiliate with and adopt a different religion while not deconverting from the previous one. There is little research on this kind of blending of meaning systems.

4. Conversely, even disaffiliation from a community does not necessarily mean termination of membership. For example, it can instead consist of total withdrawal from participation without formal termination of membership. This is especially important in the context of a religion that does not include formal membership as one of its key elements, such as Islam.

5. The faith development interview technique (Fowler, Streib, & Keller, 2004) yields a "stage" score from 1–6; the RSS allows the identification of "styles" that correspond to Fowler's stages. The results reported here are based on the evaluation of the faith development interviews.

6. "Triangulation" is the term for procedures of relating quantitative and qualitative data about one and the same research object (see, e.g., Denzin, 1989; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), In the construction of case studies in the Bielefeld Deconversion Study, triangulation involved relating the scores of the single case to the mean differences between deconverts and in-tradition members on various scales in the quantitative data set.

REFERENCES

Altemeyer, B., & Hunsberger, B. (1997). *Amazing conversions: Why some turn to faith and others abandon religion*. New York: Prometheus.

Barbour, J. D. (1994). *Versions of deconversion: Autobiography and the loss of faith*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.

Barker, E. (1989). *New religious movements: A practical introduction*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Barro, R., Hwang, J., & McCleary, R. (2010). Religious conversion in 40 countries. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 49*(1), 15–36.

Beckford, J. A., & Levasseur, M. (1986). New religious movements in western Europe. In J. A. Beckford (Ed.), *New religious movements and rapid social change* (pp. 29–54). London: Sage.

BeitHallahmi, B., & Nevo, B. (1987). 'Born again' Jews in Israel: The dynamics of an identity change." *International Journal of Psychology, 22*, 75–81.

Bockian, M. J., Glenwick, D. S., & Bernstein, D. P. (2005). The applicability of the stages of change model to Jewish conversion. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 15*, 35–50.

Brandt, P.-Y., & Fournier, C.-A. (Eds.). (2009). *La conversion religieuse: Analyses psychologiques, anthropologiques et sociologiques* [The religious conversion: Psychological, anthropological, and sociological analyses]. Geneva: Labor et Fides.

Burris, C. T., & Petrican, R. (2011). Hearts strangely warmed (and cooled): Emotional experience in religious and atheistic individuals. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 21*(3), 183–197.

Burris, C. T., & Redden, E. K. (2012). No other gods before Mario?: Game preferences among atheistic and religious individuals. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 22*(4), 243–251.

Buxant, C., Saroglou, V., Casalfiore, S., & Christians, L.-L. (2007). Cognitive and emotional

characteristics of New Religious Movements members: New questions and data on the mental health issue. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture, 10*, 219–238.

Cable, D. M., & Edwards, J. R. (2004). Complementary and supplementary fit: A theoretical and empirical integration. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 89*, 822–834.

Caplan, R. D. (1983). Person-environment fit: Past, present, and future. In C. L. Gooper (Ed.), *Stress research: Issues for the eighties* (pp. 35–78). Chichester, UK: Wiley.

Cowan, D. E. (in press). Beyond brainwashing: Conversion to new religious movements. In. L. Rambo & C. Farhadian (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of religious conversion*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Denzin, N. K. (1989). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Diener, E., Tay, L., & Myers, D. G. (2011). The religion paradox: If religion makes people happy, why are so many dropping out? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 101*, 1278–1290.

Edwards, J. R., & Rothbard, N. P. (1999). Work and family stress and well-being: An examination of person-environment fit in the work and family domains. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Process, 77*, 85–129.

Emmons, R. A., & Paloutzian, R. F. (2003). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Fowler, J. W., Streib, H., & Keller, B. (2004). *Manual for faith development research* (3rd ed.) Atlanta: Center for Research in Faith and Moral Development, Emory University.

Glock, C. Y. (1962). On the study of religious commitment. In J. Matthes (Ed.), *Kirche und Gesellschaft. Einführung in die Religionssoziologie* (pp. 98–110). Reinbek, Germany: Rowohlt, 1969.

Goldstein, E. B. (2011). *Cognitive psychology: Connecting mind, research and everyday experience* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Gooren, H. (2006). The religious market model and conversion: Towards a new approach. *Exchange, 35*, 39–60.

Granqvist, P., & Kirkpatrick, L. A. (2004). Religious conversion and perceived childhood attachment: A meta-analysis. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 14*, 223–250.

Halama, P., & Lacna, M. (2011). Personality change following religious conversion: Perceptions of converts and their close acquaintances. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture, 14*, 757–768.

Hogg, M. A., Adelman, J. R., & Blagg, R. D. (2010). Religion in the face of uncertainty: An uncertainty-identity theory account of religiousness. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 14*(1), 72–83.

Hunsberger, B. (2000). Swimming against the current: Exceptional cases of apostates and converts. In L. J. Francis & Y. J. Katz (Eds.), *Joining and leaving religion: Research perspectives* (pp. 233–248). Leominster, UK: Gracewing.

Hunsberger, B., & Altemeyer, B. (2006). *Atheists: A groundbreaking study of America's nonbelievers*. Amherst, MA: Prometheus Books.

Hunt, S. J. (2003). *Alternative religions: A sociological introduction*. Hamshire, UK: Ashgate.

Jacobs, J. L. (1989). *Divine disenchantment. Deconverting from new religions*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Jamieson, A. (2002). *A churchless faith. Faith journeys beyond the churches*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

Jindra, I. W. (2008). Religious stage development among converts to different religious groups. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 18*, 195–215.

Kirkpatrick, L. A. (1992). 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.

Kirkpatrick, L. A. (2005). *Attachment, evolution, and the psychology of religion*. New York: Guilford Press.

Klosinski, G. (1983). *Psychologische und psychodynamische Aspekte religiöser Konversion zu neureligiösen Bewegungen am Beispiel der Neo-Sannyas-Bewegung: Eine Vergleichsstudie bei der Neo-Sannyas-Bewegung und der Gesellschaft für Transzendentale Meditation mittels biographischer Interviews.* Tübingen, Germany: Nichtveröffentlichte Habilitationsschrift, Eberhardt-Karls-Universität Tübingen.

Klosinski, G. (1985). *Warum Bhagwan?: Auf der Suche nach Heimat, Geborgenheit und Liebe.* München, Germany: Kösel.

Klosinski, G. (1996). *Psychokulte: Was Sekten für Jugendliche so attraktiv macht.* München, Germany: Beck.

Köse, A., & Loewenthal, K. M. (2000). Conversion motifs among British converts to Islam. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 10,* 101–110.

Kosmin, B. A., & Keysar, A. (Eds.). (2007). *Secularism & secularity: Contemporary international perspectives.* Hartford, CT: ISSSC.

Kuner, W. (1983). *Soziogenese der Mitgliedschaft in drei Neuen Religiösen Bewegungen.* Frankfurt, Germany: Lang.

Lakhdar, M., Vinsonneau, G., Apter, M. J., & Mullet, E. (2007). Conversion to Islam among French adolescents and adults: A systematic inventory of motives. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 17*(1), 1–15.

Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences. (2010). *International Social Survey Programme 2008: Religion III* Retrieved from *http://zacat.gesis.org/webview/index.jsp?object=http://zacat. gesis.org/obj/study/ZA4950.*

Levine, S. V. (1984). *Radical departures: Desperate detours to growing up.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Lewin, K. (1936). *Principles of topological psychology.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Maslim, A. A., & Bjorck, J. P. (2009). Reasons for conversion to Islam among women in the United States. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, 1,* 97–111.

Murken, S. (2009). *Neue religiöse Bewegungen aus religionspsychologischer Sicht.* Marburg, Germany: Diagonal.

Murken, S., & Namini, S. (2007). Childhood familial experiences as antecedents of adult membership in new religious movements: A literature review. *Nova Religio, 10,* 17–37.

Namini, S. (2009). *Selbst gewählte Mitgliedschaft in neuen religiösen Bewegungen—eine Frage der Passung?: Empirische Befunde und kritische Überlegungen.* Marburg, Germany: Tectum.

Namini, S., Appel, C., Jürgensen, R., & Murken, S. (2010). How is well-being related to membership in new religious movements?: An application of person–environment fit theory. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 59,* 181–201.

Namini, S., & Murken, S. (2008). Familial antecedents and the choice of a new religious movement. Which person in which religious group? *Nova Religio, 11,* 83–103.

National Opinion Research Center. (2009). *General Social Survey 1972–2008.* Chicago: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

Paloutzian, R. F. (2005). Religious conversion and spiritual transformation: A meaning-system analysis. In R. F. Paloutzian & C. L. Park (Eds.), *Handbook of the psychology of religion and spirituality* (pp. 331–347). New York: Guilford Press.

Paloutzian, R. F. (in press). Psychology of religious conversion and spiritual transformation. In L. Rambo & C. Farhadian (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of religious conversion.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Paloutzian, R. F., & Lowe, D. A. (2012). Spiritual transformation and engagement in workplace culture. In P. C. Hill & B. Dik (Eds.), *Psychology of religion and workplace spirituality* (pp. 179–199). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

Paloutzian, R. F., & Park, C. L. (2005). Integrative themes in the current science of the psychology of religion. In R. F. Paloutzian & C. L. Park (Eds.), *Handbook of the psychology of religion and spirituality* (pp. 3–20). New York: Guilford Press.

Paloutzian, R. F., Richardson, J. T., & Rambo, L. R. (1999). Religious conversion and personality change. *Journal of Personality, 67,* 1047–1079.

Pargament, K. I., Johnson, S. M., Echemendia, R. J., & Silverman, W. H. (1985). The limits of fit: Examining the implications of person–environment congruence within different religious settings. *Journal of Community Psychology, 13,* 20–30.

Pargament, K. I., Tyler, F. B., & Steele, R. E. (1979). Is fit it?: The relationship between church/synagogue member fit and the psychosocial competence of the member. *Journal of Community Psychology, 7,* 243–252.

Park, C. L. (2005). Religion and meaning. In R. F. Paloutzian & C. L. Park (Eds.), *Handbook of the psychology of religion and spirituality* (pp. 295–314). New York: Guilford Press.

Park, C. L. (2010). Making sense of the meaning literature: An integrative review of meaning making and its effects on adjustment to stressful life events. *Psychological Bulletin, 136,* 257–301.

Pirutinsky, S. (2009). Conversion and attachment insecurity among Orthodox Jews. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 19,* 200–206.

Poling, T. H., & Kenney, J. F. (1986). *The Hare Krishna character type: A study of the sensate personality.* Lewiston, NY: Mellen.

Rambo, L. R. (1993). *Understanding religious conversion.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Rambo, L., & Farhadian, C. (Eds.). (in press). *Oxford handbook of religious conversion.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Richardson, J. T. (Ed.). (1978). *Conversion careers: In and out of the new religions.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Richardson, J. T. (1985a). Psychological and psychiatric studies of new religions. In L. B. Brown (Ed.), *Advances in the psychology of religion* (pp. 209–223). Oxford, UK: Pergamon Press.

Richardson, J. T. (1985b). The active vs. passive convert: Paradigm conflict in conversion/recruitment research. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 24,* 163–179.

Richardson, J. T. (1995). Clinical and personality assessment of participants in new religions. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 5,* 145–170.

Richardson, J. T., & Stewart, M. (1977). Conversion process models and the Jesus movement. *American Behavioral Scientist, 20,* 819–838.

Richardson, J. T., Stewart, M. W., & Simmonds, R. B. (1979). *Organized miracles: A study of a contemporary, youth, communal, fundamentalist organization.* New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Richter, P., & Francis, L. J. (1998). *Gone but not forgotten: Church leaving and returning.* London: Darton, Longman, Todd.

Ryff, C. D., & Singer, B. H. (1996). Psychological well-being: Meaning, measurement, and implications for psychotherapy research. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics, 65,* 14–23.

Ryff, C. D., & Singer, B. H. (1998). The role of purpose in life and growth in positive human health. In P. T. P. Wong & P. S. Fry (Eds.), *The human quest for meaning: Handbook of psychological research and clinical applications* (pp. 213–235). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Silberman, I. (2005). Religion as a meaning-system: Implications for the new millennium. *Journal of Social Issues, 61,* 641–664.

Skonovd, L. N. (1981). *Apostasy: The process of defection from religious totalism.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Davis.

Streib, H. (1999). Sub-project on 'Biographies in Christian Fundamentalist Milieus and Organizations.' In Deutscher Bundestag, Referat Öffentlichkeitsarbeit (Ed.), *Final Report of the Enquête Commission on 'So-called Sects and Psychogroups. New religious and ideological communities and psychogroups in the Federal Republic of Germany* (pp. 402–414). Bonn, Germany: Deutscher Bundestag. Retrieved from *http://repositories.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/biprints/volltexte/2009/3220/pdf/Streib1999Enquete_Final_Report.pdf.*

Streib, H. (2000). *Biographies in Christian fundamentalist milieus and organizations: Report to the Enquete Commission of the 13th German Parliament on "So-called sects and*

psychogroups" (CIRRuS Research Reports, No. 1). Bielefeld, Germany: University of Bielefeld. Retrieved from *http://repositories.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/biprints/volltexte/2009/2134*.

Streib, H. (2008). More spiritual than religious: Changes in the religious field require new approaches. In H. Streib, A. Dinter, & K. Söderblom (Eds.), *Lived religion—Conceptual, empirical and practical-theological approaches* (pp. 53–67). Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill.

Streib, H. (in press). Deconversion. In. L. Rambo & C. Farhadian (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of religious conversion*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Streib, H., Hood, R. W., Keller, B., Csöff, R.-M., & Silver, C. (2009). *Deconversion: Qualitative and quantitative results from cross-cultural research in Germany and the United States of America* (Research in Contemporary Religion 5). Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Streib, H., Hood, R. W., & Klein, C. (2010). The Religious Schema Scale: Construction and initial validation of a quantitative measure for religious styles. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 20*(1), 151–172.

Streib, H., & Keller, B. (2004). The variety of deconversion experiences: Contours of a concept in respect to empirical research. *Archive for the Psychology of Religion, 26*(1), 181–200.

Streib, H., & Klein, C. (2013). Atheists, agnostics, and apostates. In K. I. Pargament, J. J. Exline & J. W. Jones (Eds), *APA handbook of psychology, religion and spirituality (Vol 1): Context, theory, and research*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2003). The past and future of mixed methods research: From data triangulation to mixed model designs. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook on mixed methods in the behavioral and social sciences* (pp. 671–701). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

van der Lans, J., & Derks, F. (1986). Premies versus sannyasins. *Update: A Quarterly Journal on New Religious Movements, 10*, 19–27.

Van Harrison, R. (1978). Person-environment fit and job stress. In C. L. Cooper & R. Payne (Eds.), *Stress at work* (pp. 175–205). Chichester, UK: Wiley.

Vermeer, P., Janssen, J., & Scheepers, P. (2012). Authoritative parenting and the transmission of religion in the Netherlands: A panel study. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 22*, 42–59.

Wright, S. A. (1987). *Leaving cults: The dynamics of defection*. Washington, DC: Society for the Scientific Study of Religion.

Wright, S. A. (in press). Disengagement and apostasy in new religious movements. In. L. Rambo & C. Farhadian (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of religious conversion*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Yang, F., & Abel, A. (in press). Sociology of conversion. In L. Rambo & C. Farhadian (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of religious conversion*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Handbook of
THE PSYCHOLOGY
OF RELIGION
AND SPIRITUALITY

SECOND EDITION

Edited by
RAYMOND F. PALOUTZIAN
CRYSTAL L. PARK

THE GUILFORD PRESS
New York   London

Printed in the United States of America

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Last digit is print number: 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

About the Editors

Raymond F. Paloutzian, PhD, is Professor Emeritus of Experimental and Social Psychology at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California. He taught at Scripps College of The Claremont Colleges and has been a visiting professor at Stanford University and a guest professor and continuing visiting scholar at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium. Dr. Paloutzian is Editor of *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*. A Fellow of the American Psychological Association (APA), the Association for Psychological Science, and the Western Psychological Association, he is a past president of APA Division 36 (Psychology of Religion and Spirituality).

Crystal L. Park, PhD, is Professor of Psychology at the University of Connecticut. She is Associate Editor of *Psychology and Health,* the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, Psychology of Religion and Spirituality,* and *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion.* Dr. Park is a past president and the current awards chair of APA Division 36, and the recipient of the Division's 2014 William James Award. Her research interests include the roles of religious beliefs and religious coping in response to stressful life events, the phenomenon of stress-related growth, and people's attempts to find meaning in or create meaning out of negative life events.