

The Conversion of Jesuits Through the Dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises

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Introduction

I am a Jesuit of the Australian Province who joined the Society in 1984 (aged 23). At that time I was perhaps less psychologically mature than my peers, but I had a strong friendship with God the Father of Jesus. I first experienced the Spiritual Exercises in the novitiate (with several other Jesuit novices, and novices of a few other congregations, too; in all we were about 25). I completed a Thirty Day retreat again in the early 2000s as a Tertian in India. Both these experiences helped to mature my relationship with myself and with Jesus whom I hold as my beloved. In my early 50s I experienced a noticeable psychological and social maturation which coincided with my entering a course of study to become a spiritual director in the Ignatian tradition. The Arrupe formation course took me back to my earlier experiences of the Exercises, and revealed to me its dynamics so that I could help others receive its fruits. I then was appointed Director of a Retreat Centre where I practised my new skills, taking diocesan seminarians through the Thirty Day Retreat, under supervision, and in the company of the other givers. Most recently I practice now as a supervisor for students of the Arrupe program (which trains up Ignatian spiritual directors and givers) who are guiding their first Exercitants through the Spiritual Exercises. During my life of work and study in the Society I have also gained experience and qualifications as a teacher and counsellor through which I am acquainted with various theories of human development and I have observed the stages of this development in my school students and adult clients.

Since the time of Pedro Arrupe greater attention has been given to the dynamic of the Exercises, and its fruits, and concurrently, a growing recognition of some failure of expected transformation in Jesuits. The Thirty Sixth General congregation asked point blank, why don't the Exercises transform all Jesuits as expected? Responses by some Jesuits have been valid, based on experiential evidence, but I had not come across an

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empirical study that involved direct engagement with Jesuits about their experience of the Exercises.

With this article I wish to share with those who give the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius what I discovered through my doctoral research about their transformative nature for Jesuits.¹ On the one hand, I researched the nature of religious/spiritual conversion mainly through the works of Kenneth Becker (Jungian psychology), William Meissner (depth-psychology), Bernard Lonergan (theologian and philosopher), as well as numerous other published scholars and givers. On the other hand, I analysed the dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises and presented a framework that described and explained how this dynamic might be working for Jesuits who experience the Spiritual Exercises in the noviciate.

Ignatius designed the Exercises to bring about a change of heart in the exercitant as a result of an experience of God's love which re-orientates his whole life around God's project for creation in the company of the Risen Jesus. This change or conversion can be identified as a change of a person's meaning system, that is, of their values, goals, identity and life purpose. I tested this heuristic framework with a survey of Jesuits, and interviews with eight of them, from all around the world. My findings indicate, first, that there is a gap between what scholars say about 'struggle and surrender' in the Exercises as a significant part of conversion and what the exercitants report of it. Secondly, of all the possible factors of influence on the outcome of the Exercises the most significant are the giver of the Exercises and life in the Jesuit community during the ongoing formation. Thirdly, while the exercitant is introduced to the Ignatian discernment of spirits in the Exercises, without a psychic conversion this skill remains undeveloped. This research also raises many other interesting related questions².

1. The Problem

It was under Pedro Arrupe, and with the renewal of the Second Vatican Council, that members of the Society of Jesus began to rediscover the spirit of Ignatius in the Exercises. Rather than preaching the Exercises to large groups of Jesuit novices and tertians, they began to return to the method by which the Spiritual Exercises used to be given, to a one-to-one model. It was in this context that a fresh evaluation of what effect the Exercises were expected to have on Jesuits began to emerge. While largely positive, at the same times concerns were expressed by Generals of the Society, by General Congregations and by some scholars and Jesuit givers of the Exercises about the lack of evident transformation.

¹ "The Transformative Nature of the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola for Jesuits", PhD dissertation, Sydney College of Divinity, 2022.

² I will be using the male pronoun to refer to the Exercitant since my subjects are Jesuits.

The most recent statement on the expectations of the Exercises, and the catalyst for this research and article, comes from Decree 1 of the 36th General Congregation, held in October 2016.

The question that confronts the Society today is why the Exercises do not change us as deeply as we would hope. What elements in our lives, works or lifestyles hinder our ability to let God's gracious mercy transform us? ... all the means that unite us directly with God should be more than ever prized and practised: the Spiritual Exercises, daily prayer, the Eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation, spiritual direction and the Examen. We need to appropriate ever more fully the gift of the Exercises that we share with so many ... and the Constitutions that animate our society ... through the Exercises we acquire the style of Jesus, his feelings, his choices.³

Pedro Arrupe expressed concern for Jesuits who speak of total dedication but who do not show it by their deeds.

Too often we speak of living in Christ, discerning his spirit, of humility, of poverty, and even of prayer, without such words corresponding to an experience, the exigencies of which we wish to live to the very end: they remain empty words. They represent theories unknown to or perhaps in contradiction with our personal experience. Any spiritual renewal ... should be grounded in ...[a] profound unity of personality interiorly transformed or transfigured by the presence of an active grace that we are willing to recognise and express.⁴

Arrupe speaks of the Exercises as the key to the Society's vitality and its graced response to the needs of the world.

There is no solution of (sic) our problems, the problems of the Society as also of the world, save by conversion, repentance and fresh beginning, whereby we turn to the Lord in altogether new fervour and zeal – the conversion of others who will take up the same work. In this respect we must never forget the Exercises of St. Ignatius, the most effective means of conversion for a Jesuit, and an instrument which can be used with astonishing efficacy to help towards the conversion of others. Only there we are able to appropriate some measure of the courage and zeal, of the confidence and trust, which animated our Father in his immense desire to serve God and men. In a sense this is our priority of priorities, and the font of a spirit which must animate all other work.⁵

The next General of the Society, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, expressed a similar concern in a letter he wrote to all the men of the Society on the topic of their spiritual life. There he referred to the common practice of daily Eucharist, the Exercises (annual and Thirty Days) and personal prayer.

³ *36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (Anand, Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2017) Decree 1, #18.

⁴ Pedro Arrupe, *Challenges to Religious Life Today* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1979), 43.

⁵ Pedro Arrupe, *Challenge to Religious Life Today, An Anthology of Letters and Addresses 1* (Anand, India: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1979), 138. Message at an English Scholastic Conference, 1974.

There is, though, a shadow around the edges of this bright picture. A number of men ask themselves, in their letters to the Curia, about a contrast which they find between the recognition of the Exercises as a ‘privileged place’ (General Congregation 32, #209) of our experience of Christ, and a fairly frequent lack of apostolic availability.⁶

And succeeding him in the role of Superior-General, Adolfo Nicolás spoke to his fellow Jesuits on the same topic again in Nairobi (2012):

We have a large number of excellent Jesuits, convinced of their vocation to follow Christ, committed to the work assigned to them and very generous in their service, while remaining available for new missions. I encounter such Jesuits all the time and never cease to thank God for them. However, there is also a group of Jesuits, smaller than the previous group, but more than we would like or expect to have, who fulfill their obligations reasonably well (at times they are very competent professionally), but, for some reason, lack the freedom and generosity our Ignatian *magis* demands, and so cannot be counted upon for any initiative of renewal, any creative work at the frontiers, any emergency that needs persons who love the Gospel more than themselves. And finally, there is a small group of Jesuits with serious problems that have to do with grave ‘unfreedoms.’ That we have such brothers is a source of deep pain and concern.⁷

What has happened to these Jesuits who are reported to be underperforming? Were they not set on fire by the Spiritual Exercises? What events followed their experience of the Exercises that may have diminished its power for them?

Some Responses

In the July 2017 edition of *Jivan*, a networking periodical of the Society of Jesus in India, the editor had invited some responses to the question of General Congregation 36: ‘Why are the Spiritual Exercises not as effective in bringing about as deep a change in us today as we would hope?’⁸ Four responses were published expressing a range of ideas.

Vernon D’Cunha, novice master, suggested that the novices were not receiving enough preparation beforehand, that men come to the Society with “serious and deep-rooted emotional and psychological blocks” which would interfere with the dynamic of the Exercises, that the Exercises are not entered into voluntarily (they are a compulsory part of the program), that some Givers are not well trained enough, and finally, that there is in the world today “a greater stress on self-actualisation/realisation, and not on renunciation.”⁹

Jeyaraj Rasiah, former Provincial, suggests that it is the “inability to surrender oneself to the Lord at the service of one’s brethren”, the failure of priests after formation to keep seeing a spiritual director, a greater need to address “emotional needs and arrested

⁶ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, ‘Jesuit Life in the Spirit’, 26 March 1989, <https://kolvenbach.jesuitgeneral.org/en/archive?view=archivo&id=16>.

⁷ Adolfo Nicolás, *Acta Romana*, vol. XXV (Nairobi, July 9-15), 526–45.

⁸ Vinayak Jadav, ‘Why the Exercises Do Not Change Us Deeply’, *Jivan*, July 2017, 10–14.

⁹ Vernon D’Cunha et al., ‘Why the Exercises Do Not Change Us Deeply’, *Jivan*, July 2017 at 10.

growth”, and the strong attachment Jesuits develop for their own ministry which precludes an openness to the discernment of spirits.¹⁰

Rex Pai, retreat director, identifies the loss of serious prayer practices among busy Jesuits and that Jesuits have a weak commitment to poverty (“where church leaders and religious congregations forget about being poor, the spirit is progressively weakened or even lost.”). He also points to a reluctance to “follow Jesus along his way of poverty, humiliations and humility...”¹¹

The fourth contributor was Francis Pudhicherry, professor of spirituality at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, a Pontifical seminary, names a lack of serious commitment to Ignatian prayer (citing Ignatius whose ‘apostolic involvement coincided with a life of deep devotion, almost continuous experience of the presence of God ...’), and he has a concern that some Jesuits substitute new methods of prayer for the Ignatian ones “without reflecting whether they finally lead to the end proposed by the Spiritual Exercises.”¹²

In summary, these Jesuits suggest that the failure to be transformed is not due to the Exercises themselves, but the preparation for them, the psychological woundedness of the Jesuit, an aversion to poverty, or a lack of continuing prayer in the Ignatian tradition.

From Europe, Janos Lukács endeavoured to respond to the question of G.C. 36 in a critical and expansive monograph of *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*.¹³ With some of the above authors, Lukács does not identify the key to the problem in the Exercises themselves but rather in the life that follows the Exercises, during formation and the life of active ministry after ordination. This is when the Jesuit’s focus moves away from keeping God before his eyes and he fails to sustain the graces that came to him in the Exercises. Lukács begins by reporting some of the reactions of his fellow Jesuits to the statement from G.C. 36 on the Exercises:

Jesuits in my community and elsewhere had varied reactions. Some expressed their joy that GC 36 had highlighted a concern that they shared. Others related to me, their voices thick with emotion, how deeply the Exercises had transformed both them and other companions, and they distanced themselves from GC 36’s statement. Many were unimpressed with the statement because they considered it impossible to quantify how deeply exercitants are changed. Others said that Jesuits should be satisfied with how they are doing, because they are still faring better than many other religious congregations. More than one companion suggested that taking the statement seriously would stir an unwarranted sense of guilt that would not be fruitful for Jesuits and for their ministries.¹⁴

¹⁰ D’Cunha et al., 11–12.

¹¹ D’Cunha et al., 12.

¹² D’Cunha et al., 13–14.

¹³ Janos Lukács, ‘To Be Changed as Deeply as We Would Hope: Revisiting the Novitiate’, *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 51, no. 3 (2019). Lukács has been Provincial of Hungary Province (2005 – 2010), novice director (2010 – 2016), and now director of the Manreza Spiritual Centre in Dobogoko (Hungary).

¹⁴ Lukács, ‘To Be Changed as Deeply’, 2.

Lukács suggests that the transformative power of the Exercises cannot be gauged without considering the changes in the exercitant in the months and years that follow. This is to be achieved in two ways. Firstly in the dimension of the Jesuit's relationship with God and secondly in his relationship with his fellow Jesuits.¹⁵ Lukács recognises the difficulties in assessing the change that may occur in a Jesuit during his formation, and during his entire life in the Society. While we can see that a Jesuit has gone through various spiritual exercises in the novitiate and tertianship, "examining what prevents God's gracious mercy from transforming us over the long run is much more difficult."¹⁶

From this small selection of sources we can begin to suggest some of the possible reasons for the Exercises not transforming a Jesuit as expected: not being well prepared for the Retreat; the exercitant's emotional disability and inability to surrender himself; the giver's lack of training; not having a spiritual director subsequent to the Exercises; failing in a regular practice of Ignatian prayer; over-attachment to ministry; a lack of experience of poverty or mortification; and a lack of attention to spiritual formation in the months and years that follow the Exercises. In my thesis I tested some of these suggested reasons for the failure of the Exercises to transform Jesuits as expected and from the findings I suggested those which seem to have the greater influence on the outcome of the Exercises.

2. The Nature of Conversion: Theories and Models

In the last century the topic of conversion, particularly but not exclusively of conversion to Christianity, has been widely written about in journals of psychology, sociology and theology. It is a remarkable phenomenon wherein persons discover a new sense of self, God and the world and change their behaviour. Hardened criminals are known who have become gentle disciples of Jesus. This event has proven to be very hard to define clearly and simply for all instances. Broadly in Christian circles there is a distinction made between moral, intellectual and religious conversion, and some scholars now include new dimension of conversion: socio-political and psychic. Most recently conversion of all kinds has been described as a change not of personality, but of a person's meaning system: his or her values, attitudes, goals and purpose. Conversion also is recognised to be a social event: it does not happen in a spiritual realm alone but with the influence of the person's desires to fit in with his or her peers, to find a beliefs supportive community.

2.1 .Types of Conversion

The term "conversion" has been gradually broadened to include a variety of changes, not only in religious practice and faith, but also in the non-religious environment.

¹⁵ Lukács, 'To Be Changed as Deeply', 5–6.

¹⁶ Lukács, 'To be Changed as Deeply', 7.

Today conversion is more widely seen as a significant (to the convert) change in worldview, and a correlative change in the convert's self-identity.¹⁷ It is usually, if not always, defined in terms of a "turning way from" or "towards" within a delimited period of time. However, many outcomes of conversion can also be achieved slowly as part of the person's normal maturation and response to life events.

Every researcher in the area of conversion has had to make clear what they mean by the term "conversion", and what its parameters are. A difficulty in this area of study is that different researchers have identified different levels and types of conversion, and different stages in conversion. Types of "religious conversion" refer to different experiences of change including changing from non-belief to belief, from an affiliation in one religious group to a new/different one, or moving into a deeper commitment within a religious group. Sometimes these are referred to as "primary" (a fundamental change of life's goal and destination) and "secondary" (the change in pathway to that sacred destination).¹⁸ More recent research has even proposed that when a person denies a place for God in their life, they are experiencing a conversion, expressed as a change of worldview.¹⁹

Sergio Rendina (1924 – 2003), a Jesuit scholar of the Spiritual Exercises, used the terms "first" and "second" conversion: with the first the convert seeks to live by God's law and tries to avoid sin but is still more ego-centred than open to God. The "second" conversion touches the person more deeply and affectively so that his deepest drives are oriented to God.²⁰ Benedict Groeschel uses similar terminology.²¹

Psychologists Annette Mahoney and Kenneth Pargament, exploring the phenomenological characteristics of conversion, distinguish between religious conversion (when a person changes denomination) and spiritual conversion in which the convert makes the sacred the ultimate source of significance, and which at the same time may involve shifts in relationships, habits, patterns of thought, emotional reactions, and, more generally, a new sense of guidance in the journey of life.²² This description addresses both

¹⁷ M. Darrol Bryant and Christopher Lamb, eds., *Religious Conversion: Contemporary Practices and Controversies* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1999), 15. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.divinity.idm.oclc.org/lib/undiv/detail.action?docID=436015>. These mention 'coming out' with regard to one's gender described as a type of conversion. Ralph Hood, Peter Hill, and Bernard Spilka, *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*, 5th ed. (NY: Guilford Press, 2018).

¹⁸ Kenneth Pargament, 'The Meaning of Spiritual Transformation' in (eds) Joan Koss-Chioino, Philip Hefner *Spiritual Transformation and Healing* (Oxford: Altamira Press, 2006), 20.

¹⁹ Heinz Streib and Ralph Hood, *Deconversion*, *Research in Contemporary Religion* 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2009), 113–37, 139–140. See also Max Heirich, 'Change of Heart: A Test of Some Widely Held Theories about Religious Conversion', *American Journal of Sociology* 83, no. 3 (1977): 653–80 at 654.

²⁰ Sergio Rendina, 'Lo Scopo Degli Esercizi Spirituali Di S. Ignazio Di Loyola', in *Appunti Di Spiritualità*, vol. 43 (Convengo Nazionale, Centro Ignaziano di Spiritualità, 1995), 7–22.

²¹ Groeschel uses the terms first and second 'awakening' in *Spiritual Passages* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 74.

²² Annette Mahoney and Kenneth I Pargament, 'Sacred Changes: Spiritual Conversion and Transformation', *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 60, no. 5 (2004): 481–92.

psychological (personal) and sociological (contextual) changes, both of which play a vital part in conversion.

Researchers struggle to hold together conversion as being either a process or an event, as the former tends to blur into the slower growth of normal human development, and the latter, which if disconnected from preceding conditions and ongoing unfolding, is without explanation or is purely “supernatural”. William James began the early trend of focusing study on the sudden event of conversion, simply because the accounts of such were both more interesting in their drama and most clearly identified as a change in relationship with God. In this tradition, Rambo described conversion as “a significant sudden transformation of a person’s loyalties, patterns of life, and focus of energy.”²³ Other studies rightly emphasise the preceding conditions for conversion which may start from a few days to a few years beforehand, even stretching back to childhood.

Conversion needs to be distinguished from development, though the distinction between these two is not hard and fast. Human development is a movement in a person from what is potential to actual, from ignorance to knowledge (of self, others and God), from what is partial to a wholeness, from a self-fulfilled self to a self-transcending self, and most particularly from a state of incomplete meaning towards a state of complete meaning. This process takes time and moves at a different pace for each person. It can involve struggle, frustration and even failure. “Normal” human development is a more or less foreseeable journey of growth, unremarkable as a person follows the path of generations of men and women before. Development involves change, but not all change is development. To qualify as development, change needs to involve increased complexity, new cognitive and emotional capacities that encompass and surpass previous stages, and to be permanent.²⁴

Conversion, on the other hand, marks a “stand out” change in a person’s life, be this psychological, social or cognitive. Spiritual (or religious) conversion commonly refers to a distinctive event in which a person re-orientes their life path towards what they believe to be a Sacred Other. A development in meaning and a conversion of meaning are movements that enable a person to make sense of their experiences and that orient the person to the world. Having meaning gives the person a sense of purpose and agency in their existence. Meaning is usually not acquired all at once, but increasingly grows as the person becomes more and more open to all that is. Sometimes an insight can open a new world of meaning all at once, at a time and place easily identified by the person, and is labelled a “conversion”.

Bernard Lonergan defined conversion both as a change in direction (for the better) of a person and as a transformation of the subject him/her self; he believed that usually this change occurs over a lifetime, but it may also be apparent in moments of intensity.

²³ Lewis Rambo, ‘Psychological Perspectives on Conversion’, *Pacific Theological Review*, 13, no 2, 1980: 22 – 36 at 22.

²⁴ Elizabeth Liebert, *Changing Life Patterns* (St Louis, MI: Chalice Press, 2000), 56.

He also recognised the social dimension of conversion, as a person begins to belong in a different way to a group, or move to a new group altogether.²⁵ In *Method in Theology* and other writings, he proposed that men and women can experience three kinds of conversion: intellectual, religious, and moral, and, less clearly developed, “affective” conversion.²⁶ Put briefly, intellectual conversion comes when a person discovers that reality is more than just what one can sense empirically. It is the adoption of a critical-realist stance; moral conversion consists of a movement from making decisions based on self-interest (“satisfactions”) to making choices according to objective values; and religious conversion is a conscious surrender to life, to love, to God, to a value or Being greater than the individual. Lonergan also asserts that this engagement with the world is not only a matter of intellect, but also of affectivity. Feelings shape the receptivity of the person to the world and to experiences – they may encourage him to be open to them, or they may cause him to avoid them.²⁷ “There are in consciousness feelings so deep and strong, especially when deliberately reinforced, that they channel attention, shape one’s horizon, direct one’s life.”²⁸

Later Robert Doran developed in greater detail what affective conversion was (he called it “psychic”) and how it related to the other three.²⁹ Psychic conversion occurs when a person discovers and attends habitually to his affective being manifested in sensations, symbols and dreams.³⁰ Other scholars have since proposed further conversions based on Lonergan’s intentional analysis (such as socio-political conversion proposed by Donald Gelpi.)³¹

²⁵ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 52, 107, 130, 269.

²⁶ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 3rd ed. (NY: Philosophical Library, 1970). and *Method in Theology*.

²⁷ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 32–33. Kathleen Williams, ‘Lonergan and the Transforming Immanence of the Transcendent: Towards a Theology of Grace as the Dynamic State of Being-in-Love’ (PhD, Melbourne, Melbourne College of Divinity, 1998), 93,99.

²⁸ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 32.

²⁹ Robert Michael Doran sj (died 2019) was a Canadian theologian and Emmett Doerr Chair in Catholic Systematic Theology at Marquette University. Doran, *Subject and Psyche*, 2nd ed., Marquette Studies in Theology 3 (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994), https://lonerganresource.com/media/pdf/books/16/Doran,_Robert_M_-_Subject_and_Psyche.pdf. Doran, ‘Two Ways of Being Conscious: The Notion of Psychic Conversion’, in *Essays in Systematic Theology*, vol. 43, 2010, 42–63. https://lonerganresource.com/media/pdf/lectures/2011-12-10_Doran_-_Two_Ways_of_Being_Conscious.pdf.

³⁰ Robert M Doran, ‘What Does Bernard Lonergan Mean by “Conversion”?’ *Lecture Presented at the University of St. Michael’s College, University of Toronto*, 2011, 20. Doran identifies a function of our pre-conscious psyche that selects the images which are allowed to emerge into consciousness. Psychic conversion, then, is the reorientation of the censor from a repressive role to a facilitative one in the search by conscious intentionality for meaning, truth, and goodness. For Doran’s critique and development of Jung’s concepts of self, see Doran, ‘The Theologian’s Psyche: Notes towards a Reconstruction of Depth Psychology’ Lonergan Workshop, 1 (1978) 93-142.

³¹ Donald Gelpi, ‘Religious Conversion: A New Way of Being’, in *The Human Experience of Conversion: Persons and Structures in Transformation* (Pennsylvania: Villanova University Press, 1987), 175–202.

While intellectual and moral conversion open one up to greater meaning within the created world, so that one changes one's attitude or behaviour, spiritual conversion, in response to the love of God, invites the person into the meaning-system of God, to be a being-in-love with God and with the world God created. The spiritually converted person allows God's meaning to shape and direct his or her own. God's meaning encapsulates who God is, why God created the world, what the purpose of existence is, how this purpose will be fulfilled, who the person is, and what role the person has to play in God's purpose. The person moves the centre of his concern from himself to God and to the world as a whole.³² The spiritually converted person begins to participate in the full realisation of the meaning and value of the universe.³³

In most research the term "religious" conversion refers to a change in institutional adherence, and "spiritual" conversion to a change within the person's beliefs, values and self-identity. In this article, apart from drawing on Lonergan's use of the term "religious", conversion through the Spiritual Exercises is "spiritual" rather than "religious". This is because the (Jesuit) convert remains situated strongly within a specific religious tradition (Catholic and Ignatian) and his interior or spiritual changes are in relation to this religious framework.

2.2. Doran *Psychic Conversion*

Emotions are affects associated with objects that are judged as desirable or undesirable, and hence contribute to the person's decision to act in response to those objects. To understand a person's response to God's call for friendship, a study of the cognitive elements alone is insufficient.³⁴ Some scholars speak of an "affective" conversion, but the occurrence of "conversion" needs to be distinguished from experiences of intense affectivity: the two are not necessarily the same though they do have similar characteristics. Both of these need again to be distinguished from Doran's "psychic conversion" though it shares much in common with them.

Robert Doran, a philosopher and theologian who has adopted the Jungian perspective on human nature, developed Jung's conception of the "psyche" in the light of the work of Bernard Lonergan's transcendental method.³⁵ The psyche, in his terms, is the affective dimension of a person that is the medium between data that comes from the unconscious (and from the environment) making its way to the conscious.³⁶

³² Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 105. Williams, 'Lonergan and the Transforming Immanence of the Transcendent', 211–14.

³³ Williams, 'Lonergan and the Transforming Immanence of the Transcendent', 219.

³⁴ Luigi M Rulla, *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*, vol. I (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1986). 89.

³⁵ Doran, *Subject and Psyche*, 15–17. Doran, 'The Theologian's Psyche: Notes towards a Reconstruction of Depth Psychology', *Lonergan Workshop* 1 (1978): 93–142 at 123.

³⁶ Doran, *Subject and Psyche*, 223–24. Doran, 'The Theologian's Psyche', 115.

The psyche is the sensitive stream of consciousness. It is the experience itself of the movement of life. It is the stream of our sensations, memories, images, emotions, conations, conscious bodily movements, associations, and spontaneous responses to persons, things, and situations. It is always with us, so much so that even as we sleep it achieves the organization of energetic compositions and distributions that are our dreams of life towards God and God's kingdom.³⁷

The content of the psyche is accessible through images (in dreams, prayer or therapy).³⁸ Particularly through the culture a person grows up in, but also from personal (psychological) wounding life events, he will repress discomforting feelings (and images) that the psyche presents. Since the psyche is that part of the human person most sensitive to the movement of life, being out of touch with all the psyche has to offer is to become misdirected in the movement of life. It is much harder for a person to form a conception of the meaning or direction of life, and to make good decisions when he or she is out of touch with their feelings.³⁹

A psychic conversion is a permanent change of perspective such that the person is constantly and readily in touch with those inner movements.⁴⁰ In this state of sensitivity, the person is enabled to act more freely and energetically in response to the movements of life, living out his chosen values, operating authentically as the person he was created to be. "Psychic conversion allows access to one's own symbolic system, and through that system to one's affective habits, one's spontaneous apprehension of possible values, so it makes of the psyche a medium of the embodiment of intentionality in the constitution of the human person."⁴¹

Doran describes the manner in which a psychic conversion might occur which fits into the painful reality discovered in the First Week when the exercitant is aware of being trapped in his own sinfulness. There comes a point, Doran explains, when a person is completely trapped in a psychic paralysis, he is aware of this block, and he understands that because of the block itself, he is unable to become free of it. The only way out of this situation, says Doran, is by the power of redemptive love: what is required of us only is to accept and rest in the unconditional love of God.⁴² This love, when accepted, frees the psyche from its paralysis. Doran calls this a "healing" and a "conversion", the "replacement of a heart of stone with a heart of flesh".⁴³ I note again that healing is the immediate experience while conversion is the permanent result of that experience of healing. In an on-going way from this point, the psyche is allowed to present its sensations in the forms of feelings and images from which insights about the

³⁷ Robert M Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (University of Toronto Press, 1990), 219.

³⁸ Doran, *Theology*, 252.

³⁹ Doran, *Theology*, 218.

⁴⁰ Doran, 51. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 35. Doran distinguishes his psychic conversion from Lonergan's 'affective' conversion, and also defines it in Freudian terms of 'censor'. Doran, 59-60.

⁴¹ Doran, 'Two Ways of Being Conscious: The Notion of Psychic Conversion', 62.

⁴² Doran, *Theology*, 238-40.

⁴³ Doran, *Theology*, 246.

self, God and the world can emerge. The person is newly aware of his feelings, understands their meaning, decides responsibly how to respond to them, and grasps the values these feelings apprehend.⁴⁴ Doran points out that this same healing love works conversion in the other domains of human consciousness, too.⁴⁵

Doran sees the activity of discernment of spirits as a sensitivity and responsiveness to the affects and images presented by the psyche to the spirit or consciousness. It is the practical fruit of a psychic conversion:

Discernment of how one is faring in the search for direction in the movement of life is in large part a matter of attending to one's sensitive experience of that movement itself and so to the psychic dimension of one's orientation. The changes in sensitive experience effected by the praxis of inquiry and discovery provide, in fact, the best indication of one's cumulative advance in the discovery of the direction that is to be found, but that also can be missed or lost, in the movement of life.⁴⁶

2.3. Conversion – Change of Meaning-system

My thesis proposed that the conversion or transformation experienced through the Exercises is identified as a change in the Jesuit exercitant's meaning system; a re-orientation of his values, goals, self-identity and life purpose.⁴⁷

In his book, *The Evolving Self*, Robert Kegan argues that humans are essentially meaning-makers, offering a 'constructive-developmental' framework, in which "the evolution of the activity of meaning is taken as the fundamental motion in personality."⁴⁸ He argues that the fundamental activity of being human is to make meaning.

Thus there is no feeling, no experience, no thought, no perception, independent of a meaning-making context in which it becomes a feeling, an experience, a thought, a perception, because we are the meaning-making context... human being is the composing of meaning, including, of course, the occasional inability to compose meaning...⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Doran, *Subject and Psyche*, 102–3. Doran, 'The Theologian's Psyche: Notes towards a Reconstruction of Depth Psychology'.

⁴⁵ With moral conversion it transforms values; and with intellectual conversion it frees one from bias/blindness.

⁴⁶ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 215.

⁴⁷ I use the masculine pronoun with reference to the Exercitant here as my subjects are Jesuits.

⁴⁸ Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), 15. Kegan is a licensed American developmental psychologist, author, and therapist. *The Evolving Self* attempted a theoretical integration of three different intellectual traditions in psychology. The first is the humanistic and existential-phenomenological tradition. The second is the neo-psychoanalytic tradition. The third is what Kegan calls the constructive-developmental tradition (which includes James Mark Baldwin, John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, William G. Perry, and Jane Loevinger).

⁴⁹ Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), 11.

Kegan sees this structuring of experience happening from birth and in all dimensions of a person's life.

Thus just as the object-grasping infant is doing something which, in another form, he will try to do all his life (grasp things), so the attention recruiting infant is doing something he will try to do all his life (recognise and be recognised) – and at bottom it is the same thing: the activity of meaning. Meaning is, in its origins, a physical activity (grasping, seeing), a social activity (it requires another), a survival activity (in doing it, we live). Meaning, understood in this way, is the primary human motion, irreducible.⁵⁰

To create meaning is to find one's place in relation to experience and phenomena; to determine what is of value to one. With meaning, a person can determine, as much as the environment and his or her own personality will allow, his or her choices and actions.⁵¹

Within the context of the perennial philosophical debate of the subject/object divide, Lonergan asserted that our human reality is constituted by meaning which is constructed by the human person in interaction with the milieu.⁵² Doran summarises Lonergan's argument:

Meaning as act then, consists not merely in experiencing but also in understanding and usually in judging and evaluating. The larger world mediated by meaning is thus constituted by human acts of understanding, affirming, or denying and evaluating. And it is this larger world, constituted by meaning, that is the real world in which we live out our lives. Moreover, not only is it a world known through our acts of meaning; it is also made and transformed by means of these same acts, and the transformation is not restricted to nature but extends to ourselves.⁵³

Men and women, then, make meaning by acts of cognition. This being the case, conversion may occur when new data (sensory or intellectual) is judged and evaluated by the person which is of such significance as to change the person's whole view of what the world is and his or her place in it, a "transformation of the subject and his world" (this could be a scientific conversion as much as a religious one).⁵⁴

Lonergan argued that meaning is constitutive of human life: "human reality, the very stuff of human living, is not merely meant but in large measure constituted through acts

⁵⁰ Kegan, *The Evolving Self*, 18–19. See also Gordon Preece in Zadok Paper (Autumn 2016, S212) on the philosophy of humans as meaning making beings.

⁵¹ See Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (New York: Pocket books, 1984): "To be sure, man's search for meaning may arouse inner tension rather than inner equilibrium. However, precisely such tension is an indispensable prerequisite of mental health. There is nothing in the world, I venture to say, that would so effectively help one to survive even the worst conditions as the knowledge that there is a meaning in one's life. There is much wisdom in the words of Nietzsche: 'He who has a 'why' to live for can bear almost any 'how'" (162).

⁵² 'Dimensions of Meaning' in Frederick Crowe and Robert M Doran, eds., *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 4 (Toronto: Lonergan Research Institute, 1967), 232–45.

⁵³ Doran, *Subject and Psyche*... Page needs finding.

⁵⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 130.

of meaning.”⁵⁵ Meaning is not invented by an individual, it is mediated by the persons’ cultural and social milieu.⁵⁶ Each person is given a world of meaning which, as they grows, they may verify, reject or augment. For many people the meaning of their world includes the figure of some Sacred Other, whether to incorporate it or to reject it. In constructing an anthropology of the human person, it is necessary to assume some philosophy of the human person which involves an implicit acceptance or rejection of the existence and role of God in human development.⁵⁷ To take an agnostic position is to fudge the differences between the theistic and atheistic assumptions, and would fail to come to any convincing conclusions.

Other research on the nature of spiritual transformation or religious conversion, which likewise proposes that conversion is a change in the person’s “meaning system”, has been conducted by Paloutzian and Park and their associates.⁵⁸ Their more extensive studies and conclusions provided arguments for my own understanding of religious conversion through the Exercises that is characterised by the concept of meaning, and the drive of the human person towards total meaning.

Paloutzian reviewed multiple studies on religious conversion within the perspective of a change in meaning system. These studies covered such elements as attitudes, beliefs, values, goals, purpose, self-definition and ultimate concern. The findings of these studies fit into the meaning system model of change that he put forward as an overarching framework for the nature of spiritual transformation.

Paloutzian clarifies the term “conversion”, which he describes as

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 ...⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Bernard Lonergan, ‘Dimensions of Meaning’, in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, 2nd ed., vol. 4 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1967), 232–45 at 232. See also ‘The analogy of meaning’ in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, 6, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

⁵⁶ Lonergan, 233–34. Robert Baird, ‘Meaning in Life: Discovered or Created?’, *Journal of Religion and Health* 24, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 119 – 123. Meaning is often provided by a story which has been composed by the experience and wisdom of a community. Jerome Bruner, ‘The Narrative Construction of Reality’, *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 1 (Autumn 1991): 3, 20. Julene Denne and Norman Thompson, ‘The Experience of Transition to Meaning and Purpose in Life’, *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 22, no. 2 (1991): 109-110.

⁵⁷ Peter Bertocci, ‘Psychological Interpretations of Religious Experience’, in *Research on Religious Development* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1971), 3–42. at 38. See Christian Brugger, ‘Psychology and Christian Anthropology’, *Edification* 3, no. 1 (2009): 5–18.

⁵⁸ Paloutzian and Park, *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 2005; Raymond Paloutzian and Crystal Park, eds., *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 2nd ed. (New York: Guilford, 2015).

⁵⁹ Raymond Paloutzian and Crystal Park, ‘Religious Conversion and Spiritual Transformation’, in *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 1st ed. (New York: Guilford, 2005), 331–47 at 331.

Paloutzian states that any claims that conversion consists of a change in personality is incorrect and unfounded. What his review of research shows is that what does change are mid-level personality functions, such as a person's values and goals, and global-level functions such as a person's self-identity, over-all life purpose and his/her life narrative. These aspects relate to meaning in life. A person's meaning system integrates cognitive, affective, motivational and behavioural elements. Because religion is about meaning, in religious transformation what undergoes transformation is a person's meaning system.⁶⁰ What is implied, though not spelt out by Paloutzian, is that such a significant change in a person's meaning system effects a change in the convert's self-identity with the result that he or she will speak of being "a new person", having a new orientation to life. Devenish, for example, found that his converts exhibited "a new vantage point, new values, a new identity, a new language, a new morality, a world inhabited by the converting -self, and a new mind which takes Christ as its lodestar and ground-zero."⁶¹

In the second edition of the *Handbook* (2015), Paloutzian, with Sebastian Murken, Heinz Streib, and Sussan Rößler-Namini, offers a further development of their ideas on religious conversion as a sub-set of spiritual transformation.

Religious conversion 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, we call it a religious conversion.⁶²

With other psychological researchers, Paloutzian and Park see that a key dynamic to any conversion or transformation is some doubt, pressure or other motivation to change; in context of faith this can include discovering some discrepancy between what a faith offers intellectually or as a moral ideal and a life event that challenges it, or some loss of an emotional connection with the believing community that no longer offers safety or nurturance. When sufficient emotional and/or cognitive stress is placed on a person (intra-psychically) changes in their meaning system can take a variety of directions. Reports from some empirical studies on changes in a person's meaning system as a result of stress range from taking better care of one's self, feeling closer to God, or having the courage to try new things to a complete reorientation of life.⁶³

⁶⁰ Paloutzian, 'Religious Conversion and Spiritual Transformation', 334.

⁶¹ Stuart Devenish, 'The Mind of Christ? A Phenomenological Explication of Personal Transformation and Cosmic Revision in Christian Converts in Western Australia' (PhD, Perth, Australia, Edith Cowan University, 2001), <http://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses/423>, 336.

⁶² Raymond Paloutzian et al., 'Conversion, Deconversion and Spiritual Transformation', in *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 2nd ed. (New York: Guilford, 2015), 399–421 at 401.

⁶³ Crystal Park, 'Religion and Meaning' in *Handbook* (2005) 295-314. See again Devenish, 'The Mind of Christ? A Phenomenological Explication of Personal Transformation and Cosmic Revision in Christian Converts in Western Australia', 225-7.

Paloutzian and Park also emphasised in more detail Rambo's presentation which 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.⁶⁴

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.⁶⁵

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.⁶⁶

Given that a person's meaning system as a whole exists as an interlocking set of elements which can be identified separately yet also interact dynamically with each other, and given that confrontations to the system can come through a number of channels, Paloutzian says that few spiritual transformations involve a total overhaul of the whole system of meaning, but most often are identified as some change in strength or type of one element or another.

In the conclusion of the 2005 essay, Paloutzian wrote:

Spiritual transformations, religious and otherwise, occur because people are confronted with discrepancies in life that require them to construct a new meaning system because the old one no longer works. Some changes in meaning system may be partial and may not result in objectively identifiable outcomes, since some changes in people are not expressed in overt behaviour. However, when spiritual transformations occur in their fullest form there will be measurable changes in self-perception and identity, life purpose, attitudes and values, goals, sensitivities, ultimate concerns and behaviour.⁶⁷

With Rambo, Paloutzian and Park highlight the complexity of conversion as a change in a person's meaning system, having many parts, and being influenced by many different factors, each with its own degree of "strength". While admitting it might be very difficult to make empirical studies of each of these factors and their interaction with other factors, they claim that one can study all the parts together as a whole 'meaning system'. In the conversion of the Spiritual Exercises, I subscribe to their theory that the exercitant's "meaning system" does change considerably.

Paloutzian and Park's model of conversion is largely based on a person changing from a non-religious position to a religious one, conversion can equally be a deepening of a person's adherence to a faith and its demands ("intensification") as exemplified by

⁶⁴ Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

⁶⁵ Paloutzian et al., 'Conversion, Deconversion and Spiritual Transformation', 401.

⁶⁶ Paloutzian et al., 'Conversion', 402-3.

⁶⁷ Paloutzian, 'Religious Conversion and Spiritual Transformation', 334.

Devenish's converts. Paul Robb, a Jesuit and giver of the Exercises, for example, speaks of a "new heart" by which a person finds greater freedom, self-integration and self-acceptance.⁶⁸ Joan Wolski and Walter Conn (theologians) explain the normal movement of a person towards greater psychological and spiritual maturity through a series of conversions (within the same faith).⁶⁹

Paloutzian and Park stated that a key dynamic to any conversion or transformation is some doubt, pressure or other emotional motivation to change; in a context of faith which could include discovering some discrepancy between what a faith offers intellectually or as a moral ideal, and a life event that challenges it. Indeed, this is what we find with the process of the Spiritual Exercises. The Jesuit enters into it with Christian faith and commitment, but all the prayer exercises challenge him to deepen his understanding of what this faith means, to shift the direction of his values (from ego-centred to other-centred), to meet God in Jesus more tangibly as a living person and a model of human living, to discover who he (the exercitant) is in God's eyes (a trapped beloved or a loved sinner), and to live out his new worldview in loving action for the good of the world.

Lefrank, Jesuit giver, suggests to the giver that in the first days of the Exercises the exercitant "express himself plainly and simply on the meaning of life ... [write] the vision of a goal that has developed out of a man's life experience" (for instance, by means of a real or fictitious letter to a close friend).⁷⁰ He explains that the purpose of this exercise is to confront the exercitant with his failure to live up to his ideals, especially with regard to his relationship with God.⁷¹ In the Second Week, he says, the exercitant develops a new meaning for his life in which Christ is not a simply "my Saviour", but he is the Saviour of the world and he is invited to collaborate with his work.⁷²

It is interesting here to note the overlap of Veltri's sense of healing of meaning with Paloutzian and Park's conversion as a change in one's meaning system. The healing of meaning, Veltri says in the context of the Exercises, is about finding one's rightful place in the bigger story of God's intention for creation, discovered through one's encounter with Jesus in the Gospels.⁷³ Paloutzian does not use the term "healing" but the change he describes, in very general terms, is evaluated positively as towards a greater sense of purpose in life and having more consistent and comprehensive ideas about the meaning of life in relationship to what is perceived as Sacred. This is what I perceive Veltri is saying.

⁶⁸ Paul Robb, 'Conversion as a Human Experience', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* XIV, no. 3 (May 1982): 1-50 at 35.

⁶⁹ Walter Conn and Joann Wolski Conn, 'Christian Spiritual Growth and Developmental Psychology', in *The Way Supplement*, 69 (Southampton, UK: Hobbs, 1990), 3-14.

⁷⁰ Alex Lefrank, *Freedom for Service: How to Use the Individually Guided Spiritual Exercises*, Supplement to *Progressio* 3 (Rome: CLC, 1974) 21-22.

⁷¹ Lefrank, 21-2, 26.

⁷² Lefrank, 59-60.

⁷³ John Veltri, *Orientalisms I and II* (Guelph, Ontario: Guelph Centre of Spirituality, 1998). IIB, 518-526.

The invitation to these conversions can be inhibited or blocked by a disorder in the psyche. All the good will in the world is not enough to bring about a healing of the psyche; this is dependent on the presence of God's love. Being exposed to this love, and accepting it, is to be drawn into a new relationship with God, to see and understand God in a new, felt, way. With Lonergan's term of horizon, the Exercises are designed to take the exercitant out of his present worldview of meaning and move him into a new one. The Jesuit can hardly experience conversion in one domain without this being a catalyst for conversions in the other domains.

2.4. Conversion and Community - "Person-environment Fit"

I have already noted that a person's meaning-system is co-constructed within a complex of relationships. Some sociologists of religion have studied the phenomenon of conversion. Their models emphasise the role of the community around the person converting which provides push and pull factors – the convert is wanting to escape one (religious or spiritual) environment (e.g. family or local community) and is seeking a more nurturing and compatible one. Paloutzian, Murken, Streiss and Rossler-Namini point out that because the religious marketplace is so big, not only with different religions to join, but many sub-groups within them, those seeking new or deeper meaning in life have a wide range of options to choose from. Sociological models often note the factor of a personal connection through the person's social network as an influence on the person's choices.⁷⁴

Paloutzian, Park and associates, with their meaning-system model of conversion, have equally argued in favour of a sociological perspective with the "Person-Environment Fit" theory. This model explains conversion as an outcome of the search for "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."⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Examples of the sociological study of conversion include: James A Beckford, 'Accounting for Conversion', *British Journal of Sociology*, 1978, 249–62; Gooren, 'Reassessing Conventional Approaches to Conversion: Toward a New Synthesis'; Heirich, 'Change of Heart: A Test of Some Widely Held Theories about Religious Conversion'; Kling, 'Conversion to Christianity'; John Lofland and Rodney Stark, 'Becoming a World-Saver: A Theory of Conversion to a Deviant Perspective', *American Sociological Review* 30, no.6, (1965) 862–75; Michael J Stogre, 'Psycho-Social Theology of Conversion', *The Way: Supplement* 27 (1976), 88–99; Straus, 'Religious Conversion as a Personal and Collective Accomplishment'; Paul Wink, 'Religious and Spiritual Development in Adulthood', in *Handbook of Research on Adult Learning and Development* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 436–59. James Wuthnow, 'Spirituality and Spiritual Practice'. In R. K. Fenn (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001). Shults and Sandage, *Transforming Spirituality*, 185–86. Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). Sarbin and Adler, 'Self-Reconstitution Processes: A Preliminary Report', 610–11.

⁷⁵ Paloutzian et al., 'Conversion, Deconversion and Spiritual Transformation', 400.

Neil Ormerod raises a relevant and valid point about the contemporary search for meaning in religious (consecrated) life by an individual.⁷⁶ Whereas once, he says, the person sought to find his or her best place in a larger given metaphysical order (of which the ‘church militant’ was but a part), today the search is for personal authenticity. “In this particular age the question we ask is not ‘how do I fit in? What is my place?’ but ‘how does this particular social ordering meet my needs for self-expression and growth?’ Society is now ordered to meet the needs of the individual.”⁷⁷ Because Jesuits have as their identity that they are companions of the Lord, and that their community exists to serve God’s purposes, the foundation of their meaning-system is not “personal authenticity”, but, as the Principle and Foundation has it, that they are created to praise, reverence and serve the Creator. Authenticity then comes as a consequence of living out this self-transcending identity.

In the company of committed Jesuits, and heeding the call to religious life, those seeking to try out life in the Society can feel an invitation to a new meaning-system or to a deeper appreciation of the one they have: no matter how they may try to ignore the call to what seems like great losses (of intimacy with a committed partner, of personal control over their life and future, of the freedom to have and possess what gives them comfort and pleasure) they cannot shake off a sense that their present life is somehow not altogether on the right track towards fullest life and deep happiness.

Within this field of research of conversion (transformation), I placed my own research on the nature of the transformation effected by the Spiritual Exercises on Jesuits.

3. My Research: the Proposed Framework

Having noted what scholars of psychology hypothesised about conversion and how they created models to account for its functioning, and what givers of the Exercises wrote about what happens through the Exercises, and from my own experiences as giver and supervisor, I developed a framework of conversion through the Exercises for Jesuits (this is not to be applied uncritically to other Religious and lay people experiencing the 30 Day retreat). This takes into account that the conversion experience has many interacting parts, and that the Exercises is one part of a larger dynamic system. I was assisted in understanding how such a system works through the work on “common factors” in psychotherapy.

⁷⁶ Dr Neil Ormerod is Executive Officer (Research Analytics), Office of the Dean, at the Sydney College of Divinity, and a Fellow of the Catholic Theological Association (Australia).

⁷⁷ Ormerod, ‘The Struggles of Religious Life in our Present Context’. originally ‘Scarred by Struggle; Transformed by Hope’ (Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes, Australia, 2008). Dan P McAdams, ‘The Psychology of Life Stories’, *Review of General Psychology* 5, no. 2 (2001): 100–122 at 115. says “In modern life, constructing one’s own meaningful life story is a veritable cultural imperative.”

3.1. My Personal Involvement

While in scientific and quantitative research it has been considered best practice for the researcher to keep out of the way, so as not to “infect” the data and its implications, with the hermeneutical approach that I took, the researcher’s personal experiences and biases are understood to be an integral part of the data and the meaning that is produced. These should at least be declared, and may, in fact, be considered a positive contribution to understanding and interpreting the data.

My deep involvement with the Exercises has affected my approach and my expectations with regard to this research. My being a Jesuit, having undergone the Exercises, and my studies of the Exercises have given me an “insider’s” perspective through which I have been able to be aware of, and present, more nuanced details of my research. The danger of this personal connection with the material is having a bias about what “should” be the results of the Exercises. My understanding of conversion through the Exercises is based in part on the ideas of sociologists, philosophers and theologians, partly what has been written by Jesuit givers on conversion from within the Ignatian tradition, and partly on my own experiences in this field.

While attempting to be as objective as possible, there has been a personal challenge for me in this research which may have had a larger influence on the outcomes than desirable. I have needed to pose the question to myself: have I been transformed by the Exercises as deeply as expected by the Society? If I believe I have, does that not inform my own judgement as to what transformation through the Exercises is? And if, according to the criteria that emerge from my research, I judge that I have not been transformed, how does that inform my open and non-judgemental attitude toward my research participants?

3.2. Previous Empirical Research on the Spiritual Exercises

My approach was hermeneutical, which as Perrin and Schneiders explain, means that I did not approach the event of transformation through the Exercises through the lens of any one discipline, such as theology, but rather through the lenses of a number of disciplines all of which endeavour to describe and explain human experience from their own perspective.⁷⁸

There have been a limited number of empirical studies of conversion, and only two of these focus on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. Specifically related to the Spiritual Exercises, Howard Sacks conducted a study of 50 Jesuit novices and found that the experience of the Exercises had “a significant integrative effect on [their] self-systems.”⁷⁹

⁷⁸ David Perrin, ‘Hermeneutical Methodology in Christian Spirituality’, *Theoforum* 44 (2013): 317–37; Sandra Schneiders, ‘The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline’, *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* 6, no. 1 (1998): 38–57.

⁷⁹ Howard Sacks, ‘The Effect of Spiritual Exercises on the Integration of Self-System’, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 18, no. 1 (1979): 46–50.

Basing his experiment on Loevinger's concept of ego development (a progressive search for meaning and the integration of increasingly complex social expectations) Sacks found that the Thirty Day retreat did have a positive impact on the exercitant's self-system.

The Spiritual Exercises have an overall effect of raising the integrative capabilities of individuals, thereby increasing the individual's ability to assimilate various conflicting expectations within a more unified self-system, [but] the data do not permit the precise specification of the aspect (or aspects) of the experience primarily responsible for this change.⁸⁰

Sacks noted that a longer-term study is needed to assess the duration of this change given that soon after the Thirty Day retreat the Jesuit leaves the closely supportive environment of the novitiate.

Imoda's study of 42 novices undergoing the Exercises in the late 1980s (only some of whom were Jesuits) revealed that few were transformed as expected, that is, who grew into the ideal person they sought to be. Imoda had already been working with Luigi Rulla on a study of vocation of men to religious life.⁸¹ He used the framework of three dimensions to measure the way in which the Spiritual Exercises contribute to a change of personality. The first is the disposition to self-transcendence towards ideals that are theocentric. It is conscious and intentional. "This is the area in which freedom is largely exercised as commitment to the good, the call to meet the living God, or the more or less conscious refusal to respond openly and generously."⁸² The second dimension is also directed to self-transcendence but in this case to objects that are "natural or socio-philanthropic". For some this leads them to seek the good of the community (an "objective" good), for others it is limited to "the apparent or lesser good" (a "subjective" good). This disposition is directed by motives both conscious and unconscious. The third dimension is the least open to the transcendent. It is characterised by a need for the person to protect themselves, marked by a vulnerability that could be considered psychopathological.

These male religious were interviewed before and after their experience of the Spiritual Exercises and their degree of maturity was evaluated using existential criteria which revealed 162 variables in a person. These factors included interpersonal relationships and the commitment to duties in work and in spiritual life, and measured the awareness of the presence of difficulties in these areas. In terms of the three dimensions outlined above, Imoda found it possible to evaluate the greater or lesser maturity of each man (how they managed the tension between their ideal self and their real self, their tran-

⁸⁰ Sacks, 'The Effect of the Spiritual Exercises', 49.

⁸¹ Luigi Rulla, *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*, vol. I (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1986). Rulla (1922 – 2002) was Director of the Institute of Psychology at the Pontifical Gregorian University. He studied psychiatry at McGill University, Montreal.

⁸² Franco Imoda, *The Spiritual Exercises and Psychology*, Studies in Spirituality 1 (Nijmegen, Netherlands: Titus Brandsma Institute, 1991), 208. Imoda is a Jesuit priest who served as Rector of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome from 1998 to 2004. He obtained a doctorate in clinical psychology at the University of Chicago, and finished his training at the Illinois State Psychiatric Institute and the Psychosomatic and Psychiatric Institute of the Michael Reese Hospital at Chicago.

scended self and transcending self). Imoda was also looking for any modification in the expressed values of the person as a result of undergoing the Spiritual Exercises. In his summary, Imoda stated:

91% of immature subjects and 93% of all subjects do not improve in the 4 years of formation during which the Spiritual Exercises are made. This occurs when one evaluates maturity not only structurally but also existentially. It will be remembered that the existential criterion takes into consideration the capacity to live self-transcendent ideals, above all theocentric ideals, having internalized them.⁸³

Imoda's study was not focused on Jesuits, but it does demonstrate a study of the Exercises that tries to measure psychological change. It certainly seems to show that for non-Jesuit Exercitants without lengthy preparation beforehand and a program of consolidation of the graces received afterwards, the possible transformative effects of the Exercises are not sustained.

3.3. *The Spiritual Exercises as One Part of a Multidimensional System*

Psychological and sociological research into conversion tend to take a descriptive or phenomenological approach, while theological approaches tend to be more normative – evaluating the convert's claimed experience of conversion by its movement towards an ideal end, measured by its fruits, the changes in his or her values, behaviours and goals.⁸⁴ In my thesis with my own framework for conversion through the Exercises I attempted to hold both these approaches together to evaluate the validity of one against the other. This framework is based on the earlier studies of conversion, both theoretical and empirical, but it takes the Exercises as a unique process of conversion. The Spiritual Exercises are a tool or means to bring about a transformation of the meaning system of a person, under certain conditions.

Systems theory shows how the Spiritual Exercises is not an isolated Thirty Day process, but is connected to other contributing parts. A system (an assemblage of natural, artificial or conceptual objects united by some form of regular interaction or interdependence) is not composed of fragmented, independent parts, rather, each connecting part contributes to all the others, and creates a whole integrated, dynamism.⁸⁵ The Spiritual Exercises are one part of a larger transformative system. It is not one independent operant and cannot operate on its own to effect any change in the exercitant. Linked factors that influence its effectiveness include the attitude and capacity of the one entering the Exercises, the quality of accompaniment given by the one guiding the Exercises,

⁸³ Imoda, *The Spiritual Exercises and Psychology*, 217.

⁸⁴ See Donald Gelpi, 'Conversion: The Challenge of Contemporary Charismatic Piety', *Theological Studies* 43, no. 4 (1982): 606–28.

⁸⁵ Cristina Mele, Jacqueline Pels, and Francesco Polese, 'A Brief Review of Systems Theories and Their Managerial Applications', *Service Science* 2, no. 1–2 (2010): 126–35.

and the way of life taken up by the exercitant after the Exercises which may reinforce the changes brought about by the Exercises, or not. All of these contributing factors are identified in my framework.

3.4. Common Factors Research in Psychotherapy

If the transformation promised by the dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises worked for every Jesuit, the question ‘why don’t the Exercises transform a Jesuit as expected?’ would not have been raised. No one has claimed that the Exercises are an infallible means for converting and perfecting a man or woman as a creature of God. One might even claim that it is a marvel that any transformation can be achieved in a person’s life through the Exercises given the woundedness and sinfulness of human nature. The grace of God plays an essential part. But God’s grace usually works in tandem with a person’s psychological development and within a person’s limitations. When the Exercises do not produce the fruits we expect, some of the causes may lie in the exercitant’s state of being, others may lie outside, in the way that the Exercises are given or in the way of life that the person lives after receiving the Exercises.

Earlier I referred to some Jesuits who offered their suggestions as to why the Exercises are not as transformative as expected (from contributors to the journal *Jivan*), among which factors they mentioned psychological blocks in the exercitant, the giver not being well-trained, the exercitant’s inability to surrender himself in trust to the process and to God, the loss of Ignatian prayer practice and spiritual direction after the retreat, and a weak commitment to poverty. These factors have been identified by other experts in this field.⁸⁶

Studies of the success or failure of therapeutic interventions in the field of psychotherapy provide light on our study of the transformative nature of the Exercises. These studies were conducted to test how much of the success of the therapeutic intervention is due to the techniques the therapist applies, and how much to other ‘extraneous’ factors. “Common factors” identified include the client, the client’s expectations, and the relationship between therapist and client. The results of these studies indicate that these common factors have as much if not more influence on the outcome of therapy as the specific technique used by the therapist.⁸⁷ I believe the outcomes of the Spiritual Exercises rely on similar common factors extraneous to the dynamic of Ignatius’ exercises themselves.

⁸⁶ CIS, *The Ministry of the Exercises in the Society Today: Results of a Survey* (Rome: Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis, 1984); Joseph Tetlow, ed., ‘Giving Exercises Notes Three’, *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* XXXI, no. 2 (2000); CIS, *Exercises and General Congregation XXXII*, vol. 21 (Rome: Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis, 1976).

⁸⁷ Barry Duncan, Scott Miller, and Mark Hubble, eds., *The Heart and Soul of Change*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010). Iain Radvan, ‘Therapeutic Alliance and the Enemy’, *Presence*, 23/2 (June 2017), 16 – 26.

In a study by Michelle Thomas she presents clients' perceptions of these common factors, and what percentages they assign to each of the four. In her conclusion, Thomas shows that the participants in her study (client and therapist in a working relationship) come up with a different percentage of 'amount' for each of the four factors (she did not apply a statistical analysis).

The rank order for therapists in the common factors are (1) therapeutic relationship, (2) client's hope and expectations, (3) client's extra-therapeutic factors, and (4) model/techniques of therapist ... The rank order for the clients in the common factors are (1) client's hope and expectations of therapy, (2) therapeutic relationship, (3) model/techniques of therapist, and (4) client's extra-therapeutic factors.⁸⁸

Among some of the limitations Thomas points to in her study, one she highlights is that clients' and therapists' perceptions of therapy does not necessarily indicate what is actually taking place in the change process.

Given the close parallels in the dynamic of psychotherapy and spiritual direction, I believe that the same common factors are relevant for the outcomes of the experience of the Spiritual Exercises. In my research, common factors research indicated that the disposition of the exercitant, the relationship between the giver and exercitant, the support networks of the exercitant (relationships with family, fellow novices and other Jesuits) and his personal resources (personality, life history, community) are significant constituents of the experience the exercitant will have of the Exercises.

The fourth factor, the technique or therapeutic model that is used, if we make it equivalent to the process that Ignatius builds into the Exercises, is more significant than the above studies rate the type of therapy used in psychotherapy. Ignatius' process is very specific: while a therapist may select one therapy rather than another for his or her client (e.g., Gestalt, CBT, depth psychology, existential, focusing, narrative, etc) there is less room for adaptation when giving the Thirty Day Annotation.⁸⁹

The common factors that play a role in obtaining the fruit of the Exercises may be found in the situation before the retreat, in the exercitant himself and in the giver, and following it, again in the exercitant but also in his community, in the on-going spiritual direction he receives, and in his practice of obedience, poverty and mortification. In each of these may be found some aspect of potential failure.

Such is the theory: in my research I obtained data from a survey given to Jesuits about their lived experience of the Spiritual Exercises, and from interviews conducted with eight Jesuits on the same. Though a small sample, it is enough to give an indication of the validity of my framework.

⁸⁸ Michelle Thomas, 'The Contributing Factors of the Change in a Therapeutic Process', *Contemporary Family Therapy* 28 (2006): 201–10 at 207.

⁸⁹ P. Endean, 'How far can you go?', *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* XXIX (1998) 35-49; D. Fleming, 'The Danger of Faddism and the Thirty Day Retreat', *The Best of the Review I* (1983) 311-5; D. Asselin, 'Notes on Adapting the Exercises of St Ignatius', *The Best of the Review I* (1983) 291-301.

3.5. A Framework of Conversion Through the Spiritual Exercises (a Heuristic Tool)

The Spiritual Exercises are a unique program for enabling the radical conversion or transformation of the man of (Christian) faith who seeks greater meaning and purpose in consecrated life in the Society. This conversion is multifaceted – moral, affective and spiritual. This transformation is a significant moment along his life journey of self-transcendence. For one Jesuit it may be an unremarkable part of his general development in life towards spiritual maturity; for another it may be a radical change of understanding and feeling in his relationship with God and the world. Previously his meaning-system would have included a relationship with God and a desire to serve God in others, but Ignatius has taken this humble self-offering and invited the aspirant into a larger meaning-system charged with the energy of God's love and grace. This meaning-system comes to him both in ideas about God and himself, and with affect since it challenges his self-identity and life project and exposes him to God's healing love. His whole orientation and worldview are re-ordered around God. This change of orientation does not turn him into a sinless saint but it does open him up to be more in tune with God's Spirit at work in him, to be more compassionate to others' weaknesses, to be more aware of his own woundedness, and to be constantly grateful for God's goodness towards him.

In summary, as reported by givers of the Exercises, the experience of conversion from the point of view of the exercitant involves a crisis of meaning. Even more intensively than in the novitiate itself, it takes the person literally out of their familiar world of relationships, entertainment, work and other preoccupations. With silence and solitude, Ignatius' program of meditations over a whole month removes the exercitant from his accustomed world of experience and meaning. He is drawn deeper into the experience of God's love for him, seen both in his whole life up to this point, and in the very present. He is challenged to confront his shortcomings as a person committed to relationship with God and with his fellow humans. He has a new felt experience of his utter helplessness in the grip of sin and of God's desire and power to free him from that bondage.

Through the four Weeks of the retreat the exercitant discovers the poverty of his image of God, of his values, of his desires and of his very self. These have been the constituents of his being to this moment; good as they have been, now he is invited to let them go so as to be empty enough to enter into a new horizon, a new meaning-system. In imaginative prayer, he accompanies Jesus into Jesus' own surrender of life. This surrender does not come easily. It involves a struggle for self-preservation. It is characterised by fear, anxiety, uncertainty and confusion.

If the exercitant has a strong ego, musters enough trust in God, and has a spiritual director who can help him through this crucible, he will move through the stage of struggle and with his surrender, achieve a resolution of the crisis. This resolution is multi-faceted and has been described in various ways: a falling in love with Jesus by which Jesus and Jesus' values and goals become the exercitant's own; a sense of deep peace as the exercitant finds what he has been looking for – an identity and purpose in life that brings great satisfaction; new energy and a drive outwards as the exercitant grasps the call of God to serve him alongside Jesus who opens people's eyes to the

reality of God's love found on earth; and a new sensitivity regarding his inner world of feelings which puts him habitually in touch with the movement of God's spirit. The exercitant has been drawn into the "horizon" of Christ: everything he perceives, evaluates and responds to is now, even if only dimly at this beginning stage, done through the eyes and heart of Christ. Having entered the meta-narrative of the story of salvation by joining his life story of Christ's, the exercitant lives more fully in a new world of meaning. This does not mean he will never struggle with meaninglessness that the events of the world will continue to throw at him – the absurdity of sin is not eliminated – but he may remain grounded in the certainty of meaning he found in Christ in the Exercises.

What I concluded from all the literature is that a transformed Jesuit is a man who is in touch with his affectivity, able to discern the inner movement of the spirits, is in love with Jesus and desirous of serving with him, who is available (through obedience) for mission and open to experiences of poverty. While trying to grow into this new life in all its ramifications in the Society, the candidate is required to have a disposition of openness and reflexivity, and his spiritual director needs to have qualities of empathy, some flexibility, some knowledge of psychodynamics, and of his own experience of transformation.

The experience of the Exercises may not be as intense or dramatic for all Jesuits as I have described it here; it may not involve the radical re-orientation of his meaning-system. For some Jesuits the Spiritual Exercises may be powerful in a different way, as a step along their psychological and spiritual development into their Christian identity. This development may be more subtle, more hidden, than may be easily observed, and yet still a significant experience of growth into human maturation. In such an instance, it may be that even the Jesuit himself is not aware of how significant this experience is. It may be like a seed that is planted and may take some years before its growth and fruits are apparent. Only years later may the Jesuit look back and see how the dynamic of the Exercises became a template that operated unseen in his subsequent life of prayer and service.

This is the framework of conversion through the Exercises for Jesuits that I perceived from the literature which provided data both evidence-based and theoretical. It is merely one way of trying to describe and understand what is happening in the Exercises.

For a man of the right disposition, through a process of struggle and surrender in the Exercises, the conversion he may experience is

- a) a new-felt-experience
- b) of the love of God for him (in Jesus) which
- c) brings about a radical change in his worldview ('horizon'),
- d) a re-ordering of his values, goals and his perception of his self-identity, and
- e) an increased appropriation of his role in the Christian story and community,
- f) resulting in greater humility, availability, obedience, detachment and altruism, and this conversion is subsequently sustained by various aspects of life in the Society.

For a man of the right disposition: not every man is suitable for life in the Society, nor even to undergo the full Spiritual Exercises. He needs to have not only faith in the salvation offered by God through Jesus who brings God's forgiveness of sin, but a generosity of spirit to entrust himself to his formators and to the process of the Exercises. He also needs to have psychological and social maturity to as to be able to continue to grow as an individual and as a member of a community.

through a process of struggle and surrender: all the studies reviewed indicate that a radical conversion cannot be achieved with some pain. Whether in terms of de-centering the ego, or of confronting one's shadow or woundedness, or of facing the Void, or of recognising the inadequacy of one's former/present world of meaning, of acknowledging his alienation (and that of all humanity) from God, the exercitant has to come to terms with his finitude: his created, human, sinful (damaging) relationship with God, self and others. He feels both his own helplessness, and at the same time the wonderful love of God for him. Resistance to the process can have its roots in the unconscious. Scholars of conversion and givers of the Exercises all give witness to the pain involved in authentic conversion.⁹⁰ Eventually the exercitant surrenders to the dual truth of his sin and God's love. He lets go of rationalisations, excuses and distractions. He dies to his former self, or to parts of himself, that are incompatible with the truth he finds in the Exercises.

the conversion he may experience in the Exercises is:

a) *a new-felt-experience:* Ignatius encourages the use of one's senses (inner and outer) and to be attuned to one's feelings ("sentir": knowing interiorly). The impulses of affectivity direct a person's responses and decisions. A new perception and understanding of what the Good News of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus means for the exercitant is accompanied by feelings of humility, wonder and gratitude. He is moved with a desire to stay in the company of Jesus. This felt-experience is 'new' even while it is not totally novel, as the exercitant is familiar with the teachings of the church, and has already a relationship with God, but it is experienced in a fresh way, perhaps more deeply. The exercitant may experience an integration of the parts of himself he may have deemed obstructions to his search for meaning and love since they have now fallen under the compassionate gaze of God. The exercise of "healing of memories" can help bring the love of Jesus for him into his past childhood hurts, and life-giving meaning to experiences and relationships that seemed to have had no meaning. He may also experience a psychic conversion in which he is grounded in the affective life of his inner self, through images, symbols and dreams.

b) *of the love of God for him (in Jesus):* the conversion of the Exercises centres on the (re)discovery that God has loved the exercitant even before he responded to that love,

⁹⁰ A particularly vivid account is provided by Jerome Miller in *The Way of Suffering: A Geography of Crisis*. Georgetown: Georgetown University Press, 1988.

and continues to love him even though his response is feeble or partial; and this love is so great that God in Jesus suffered and died for this exercitant personally – not just for all humanity as an indistinguishable mass. The exercitant learns (“knows interiorly”, with affect) that God has been ceaselessly at work in Creation since the beginning of time to bring about the fullness of life revealed in Jesus Christ, and that he, the exercitant, is invited to work with God for this goal. Being invited into companionship with God in Jesus can be experienced as a “falling in love”, a total self-surrender that informs and motivates all the exercitant’s subsequent values and actions. When he is in love with God he lives the total self-transcendence he was created with a capacity for. God is the ultimate fulfilment of all human questing for knowledge and love.

c) *which brings about a change in his worldview (“horizon”)*: there is for the convert a sense of break from the past and entry into a new reality: his basic personality is no different but he eschews that of his previous life (intellectual, social or moral) that no longer fits in with his new sense of identity and purpose. When he offered himself to the Society of Jesus, he is choosing (without knowing all its ramifications) a new way of life that is more than not discontinuous with his old – he begins a life of voluntary poverty, of radical obedience and of strict celibacy. Through the Exercises he begins to see the world and its history and its future from God’s point of view. God’s dream to bring all creation into God’s embrace is the vision by which the exercitant interprets all life’s events. This is not a totally unfamiliar world to him, but he has a decidedly stronger engagement with it. His old ways of praying, doing ritual, exercising charity towards others, already not completely satisfying, now are transformed. His former horizon is discontinuous with the new one.

d) *and a re-ordering of his values, goals and his perception of his self-identity*. This man discovers himself to be a beloved son of God, a brother to Jesus and to every other human on the planet. He no longer operates to protect his own interests or to secure his place in the world, but more and more to contribute to the Reign of God, to God’s project for the world (a change from seeking personal ‘satisfaction’ to ‘values’ that are good for others as well as himself). He values his friendship with Jesus above all else.

e) *and an increased appropriation of his role in the Christian story and community*: the exercitant accepts his role as a participant in the continuing action of God in the world to bring love to every human person, and he does this as a member of the Christian community (specifically Roman Catholic), subject to its wisdom, its ministries and its structures of authority. The exercitant hears and accepts from God a specific role in God’s plan for Creation by becoming a member of the Society of Jesus as a brother or priest. This role includes ministries of teaching, preaching, leading liturgies, administering the sacraments, giving pastoral care and contributing to research in various academic fields. As a Jesuit he commits himself to live vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. He is called to live with Christ poor in touch with the poor. His choice of work, where

he lives and whom he lives with are not a matter between him and God alone, but are determined in consultation with his superiors. In these ways the 'Person-Environment fit' is tested: his character, values and desires need to be compatible with those of his new found peers. He is prepared to walk with Christ through his own suffering and death (physical, social or spiritual), out of love for others and for their sake, trusting in the promise of God for resurrection. His life is guided not only by the structures and goals of the Society, but also by the discernment of spirits. He learns how to respond to those affective movements so as to keep in touch with the desire of God for him.

f) *resulting in greater humility, availability, obedience, detachment and altruism*: Previous to his conversion this man may well have been generous and altruistic, but these characteristics are now enhanced by a Christlike love that reaches out to more people and becomes the prime focus of his energy and time. This service is not directed by him, but usually by his local Province of the Society, to which he makes himself freely available. The values of service, humility, poverty and obedience (perhaps alien or repelling to him earlier in life) are now prized as personal virtues. He manifests peace, joy and gratitude that is the fruit of his confidence in God's love form which nothing can separate him. He lives a humility based on his knowledge that he is a sinner, but loved by God, recognising this status is no different to that of all men and women he lives and works with.

and this conversion is subsequently sustained by various aspects of life in the Society

The Jesuit's conversion is sustained in the Society especially by its Constitutions: life in community, prayer both personal and shared, having a spiritual director, going on an annual retreat. He grows into a union of heart and mind with his fellow Jesuits.⁹⁰ Life in community keeps him grounded in the day to day responsibilities and tensions, as well as joys, of living with others, and reminds him that his mission is not a solitary one but shared with fellow disciples. These peers can encourage him in his vowed life of prayer and ministry. A spiritual director trained in the Ignatian tradition helps the Jesuit to keep in touch with the movement of the spirits in him, and to be faithful in prayer when it seems fruitless. The brief periods of solitude and seclusion of the annual retreat may renew the joy of being in love with Jesus that the Jesuit experience in the Exercises; it can help him deal again with any inner tensions or losses that arise out of his life commitment.

4. Methodology and Method

Given that phenomenological research requires firsthand accounts of human experience, and that there is very little first-hand data on the experience of the Exercises (Thirty Days) as experienced by Jesuits (what accounts exist in printed form are few and usually only a small part of a larger auto-biographical work) I decided I needed to

⁹¹ General Congregation 31 (1966), Decree 19, #314.

obtain such data through both a survey and interviews conducted by myself. I would then analyse the data from these sources using a phenomenological qualitative method, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. My aim was to hear the story of the Jesuit who had experienced the Exercises (in a one-on-one mode with his giver) and to listen for data that related to changes in their self-identity, relationship with God/Jesus, values, attitudes, goals and purpose. I also sought information on their faith background, and their subsequent formation as a Jesuit to discover what other factors might have an effect on the transformation experience of the Exercises.

4.1. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

The empirical part of my research was qualitative, and drew on similar works of phenomenological research. Arising out of the philosophy of phenomenology, IPA is one of several methods that have been developed for qualitative research into human experience. Jonathan Smith is the originator of this method.

The aim of IPA is to explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world, and the main currency for an IPA study is the meanings that particular experiences, events, or states hold for participants. The approach is phenomenological in that it involves detailed examination of the participant's lifeworld; it attempts to explore personal experience and is concerned with an individual's personal perception or account of an object or event.⁹²

Similarly, Churchill and Wetz tell us: "The phenomenological approach brings the researcher into direct personal contact with the psychological event being studied. Only when such personal access has been facilitated can the researcher begin to acquaint himself or herself with the essence of the event."⁹³

IPA involves hermeneutics and idiography. Hermeneutics is a method of interpretation and meaning based on an understanding of truth or reality being created by human thinking rather than being some external entity to be discovered.⁹⁴ Smith and Osborn have characterised IPA as involving a double hermeneutic in which the researcher makes sense of the participant making sense of his or her experience.⁹⁵ Researchers share with and draw on the interpretative practices of being a human. However, the sense-making

⁹² Jonathon Smith and Mike Osborn, 'Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis', in *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2008), 53–80 at 53.

⁹³ Frederick Wertz, 'An Introduction to Phenomenological Research', in *Handbook of Humanistic Psychology*, 2nd ed. (ebook, Sage, 2015), no pages, https://www.academia.edu/3753087/_An_Introduction_to_Phenomenological_Research_in_Psychology_Historical_Conceptual_and_Methodological_Foundations_co_author_Frederick_J_Wertz_SAGE_Handbook_of_Humanistic_Psychology_Second_Revised_Edition_2015_Pre_Publication_Draft.

⁹⁴ Carla Willig, 'Phenomenological Methods', in *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 2nd ed. (Berkshire, UK: Open University Press, 2008), 52–73 at 70.

⁹⁵ Jonathon Smith and Mike Osborn, 'Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis', 53.

of the researcher is always second order, dependent on the sense-making of the participant which is made available to him or her. Idiographic experience focuses on the individual more than on the experience of the general population (nomothetic). Spiers and Smith inform us that

IPA is idiographic in its concern with conducting a detailed analysis of each case and first attempting a global understanding of that individual's life experience. Only after carrying out the same detailed examination of each case separately does IPA then involve looking at the patterning of experience across cases. The aim of this analysis is to look for divergence as well as convergence in the corpus and for the individual accounts of experience to be retrievable in the group write-up. This idiographic lens is one of IPA's distinctive hallmarks, it being an unusual stance to adopt in human and social science inquiry.⁹⁶

IPA can both generate a theory of experience or test a given theory of an experience (inductive and deductive). "The 'semi-structured depth interview' normally involves the interviewer in a process of both model-building and model-testing, both theory-construction and theory-verification, within the same session or series of sessions."⁹⁷ It explores the nature of specific human phenomena by engagement with a small and homogenous sample of persons. Through survey or interview the IPA researcher obtains description of the phenomenon, identifies "units of meaning", and draws out a significant structure or meaning of the phenomenon which uses that meaning for that sample, and perhaps for similar groups of people but not for a whole population. The researcher moves dialectically or iteratively from part to whole, and then back again to individual parts from a sense of the whole, in an effort to discern and comprehend those relationships in which one finds the psychological significance that speaks to the researcher's questions in a relevant way. The turn from facts to meanings is a turning from naive description to a psychological reflection in which co-constituted meanings are brought to light.

Unlike quantitative researchers, as a phenomenological researcher I allowed for the inevitable influence of my ideas and experience on the research. Qualitative researchers can admit they have personally related experiences and they understand and show how this contributes to the interpretation and findings.⁹⁸ The advantage of personal involvement is that I could communicate with and understand my participants more easily than someone who is not familiar with the field.⁹⁹

My experience of the Spiritual Exercises in the Society of Jesus is as a receiver and a giver, a teacher and supervisor of Givers of the Exercises. This means I have experienced the dynamic and the effects of the Exercises from three different perspectives.

⁹⁶ Johanna Spiers and Jonathon Smith, 'Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis', Sage Research Methods, 2021, <http://dx.doi.org/9781529746945>. 3.

⁹⁷ Tom Wengraf, *Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2001) 4. John Johnson, 'In-Depth Interviewing', in *Handbook of Interview Research* (ebook, Sage, 2011), 13.

⁹⁸ Carla Willig, 'Phenomenological Methods', 52–73.

⁹⁹ Spiers and Smith, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*, 16.

This has given me a great deal of background knowledge which I was aware could have brought bias into my interpretation of the data of my qualitative findings.¹⁰⁰ I was aware that I had to take care not to let my own experience of the Spiritual Exercises determine what I expected to find in the experience of other Jesuits. I needed to be open to the data that they provide me.¹⁰¹ In phenomenology this is known as *bracketing*.¹⁰²

4.2. The Survey

I issued a survey to English-speaking Jesuits who had experienced the Exercises between 1975 and 2010. It was around 1975 that Jesuit novices in most countries were receiving the Exercises one-to-one, in the manner first intended by Ignatius. My aim with this survey was to a) to find respondents who were willing to be interviewed, b) to identify factors that could influence the effectiveness of the Spiritual Exercises, and c) to obtain a preliminary sense of the fruits of the Spiritual Exercises for Jesuits.

I constructed my survey in the way described by Vera Toepoel.¹⁰³ With the survey I wanted to identify both what was happening in the Exercises and what external factors could influence the dynamic of the Exercises. I asked general questions that addressed some of the factors indicated as significant by authorities on the Exercises, such as the relationship between the spiritual director and the exercitant (Q. 32. 'positive', 'awkward', 'unremarkable', 'can't recall'), and the previous exposure of the exercitant to Ignatian spirituality, this type of which were closed questions; and open-ended questions such as 'Apart from the Spiritual Exercises, the annual retreat, and seeing your director regularly, can you mention any other aspects of Jesuit life that have contributed to your formation as a Jesuit?' (Q. 39)

I sent the link to this online survey (of 49 questions, some multiple choice, some short answer) to 29 Provincials who could have sent them onto the Jesuits of the Province, numbering up to 4,000. I was hoping to obtain at least 100 responses – I received 72. These responses would indicate to me whether some of the factors I considered in the theory of transformation were significant to the Exercitants or not. They also gave me the means to contact the Jesuits who expressed a willingness to be interviewed about their experience of the Exercises. These numbered about half of all the survey respond-

¹⁰⁰ Monty Williams reminds us that my interpretation of the Exercises themselves (what the transformation of an Exercitant means) depends on my own theology, in an email provided by him, July 7, 2007: *Subject: theological difficulties in giving the Exercises: gift 2 from Monty*.

¹⁰¹ See Denise Polit and Bernadette Hungler, *Nursing Research: Principles and Methods*, 6th ed. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1999), 247.

¹⁰² Polit and Hungler, *Nursing Research: Principles and Methods*, 246–47. See Barbro Giorgi and Amadeo Giorgi, 'A Phenomenological Analysis of the Experience of Pivotal Moments in Therapy as Defined by Clients', *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 42, no. 1 (2011): 61–106 at 70.

¹⁰³ Vera Toepoel, *Doing Surveys Online* (55 City Road, London, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473967243>.

ents. Each survey respondent is identified not by name, but by the date and time they did the online survey so as to protect their privacy.

The factors I had thought to measure included the Jesuit's age, his main area of ministry, what his relationship with Jesus was before the Exercises, his experience of community living and of poverty before the Exercises, his familiarity with the Exercises (in theory), brief descriptions of his experience of the Exercises, his relationship with his spiritual director, post-retreat experiences of spiritual direction, other experiences that have contributed to the graces he was given through the Exercises, and the Jesuit's own opinion on how the Spiritual Exercises may have contributed to his ongoing formation and growth as a Jesuit. I did not ask the Jesuit directly if he believed he had been transformed by the experience of the Exercises. Such a self-evaluation emerged in his survey answers.

The sample of the population of Jesuits was homogenous.¹⁰⁴ They were all male, English speaking, and tertiary educated. I recognise the limitations of the survey. I did not have a control group. Out of 4,000 Jesuits targeted who have received the Exercises, there is no way of finding and selecting any for whom someone could say "these have not changed me as expected". Those who responded to my survey presumably chose to do so because they found it a positive experience that contributed to their sense of identity as a Jesuit. Equally I can say that many who didn't respond also had a positive experience. What data these men provided on the Exercises may well indicate more what does work and is effective in bringing about change, than what is not. Having chosen to include most of the English-speaking (first language or equal first) Jesuits of the world, intending to get a universal picture, I was not able to get an equal number of Jesuits from the different countries. Some Provinces were better represented than others (i.e., the Philippines 14 Jesuits, others only one). Eleven countries were represented (including UK, USA, Philippines, and India). I deliberately excluded Australian Jesuits as participants as these are too well known to me (more like family) and perhaps would have found it hard to be as open as virtual strangers can feel able. It needs to be noted that this survey did not reach those who had a transformative experience of the Exercises and because of that, chose to leave the Society. Finally, the survey was issued as a link to a google form.

4.2.1. *Method of Analysis of the Survey Responses*

Within the general field of IPA, for the survey, I chose the method of Thematic Analysis (TA) to analyse and interpret the data of the open-ended questions.¹⁰⁵ TA is generally applied across several data sets, rather than for the in-depth exploration of

¹⁰⁴ Johanna Spiers and Jonathon Smith, 'Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis', 4. Willig, 'Phenomenological Methods', 52–73. Smith and Osborn, 'Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis', 56.

¹⁰⁵ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, 'Thematic Analysis', in *APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology*, vol. 2 (American Psychological Association, 2012), 57–71.

one (as is more common with purely phenomenological analysis). It is not bound to any one philosophical or theoretical framework.¹⁰⁶ According to Braun and Clarke, “Thematic Analysis is a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set. Through focusing on meaning across a data set, TA allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences.”¹⁰⁷ There can be any number of meanings revealed in a given text, but the researcher is looking only for those that are relevant to his or her particular topic. Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis proceeds in six stages.¹⁰⁸

TA allows for both inductive and deductive approaches to analysis, and a combination of both.¹⁰⁹ My approach was a combination of both, meaning that the codes and themes were derived both from the content of the data themselves, and from my theoretical framework (based on various theories of conversion, and from accounts of the Spiritual Exercises). While I was happy to see correlation between the theories and the experiences described by the respondents, I was particularly interested in emerging themes that had not been seen as significant in previous research.

Since the open-ended survey questions did not allow room for much rich description, I did not intend to analyse them phenomenologically, in great detail for each respondent. Rather, my search was for common themes, both across the variety of questions, and across the questions of the 72 respondents. Using Braun and Clarke’s model of TA, I read each respondent’s answers first, then I read all the responses to each question. From these I noted frequently occurring “meaning units” (“codes”) which I then assembled into themes. I then counted them to determine their frequency in each question. I enumerated these themes: community, apostolate/ministry, friendship, superiors/formators, study/reading, prayer/mass/Eucharist, God’s nature, God’s call, relationship (of love) with Jesus/God, sense of self-identity (sinner/broken/loved/accepted), remarks of affectivity (healing/joy/tears), mission to the poor, whole life, giving the Exercises/retreats/spiritual direction, transformation/strong change.

4.2.2. Survey responses¹¹⁰

I intended the first two questions of the survey to limit the homogeneity of the sample: did you enter the Society after 1975? And, was your experience of the Exercises given in

¹⁰⁶ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, ‘Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology’, *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (January 2006): 77–101.

¹⁰⁷ Braun and Clarke, ‘Thematic Analysis’, 57.

¹⁰⁸ Richard Boyatzis, *Transforming Qualitative Information* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications Ltd, 1998), 150. Yardley also argues that a second coder is not necessarily or helpful in interpretative analysis of interviews: Lucy Yardley, ‘Demonstrating Validity in Qualitative Research’, in *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2009), 235–50 at 249.

¹⁰⁹ Braun and Clarke, 58. Braun and Clarke, ‘Using TA in Psychology’, ResearchGate 12.

¹¹⁰ For all the Survey questions, see Appendix F.

a one-to-one mode? Despite my starting with these two questions, so that a ‘no’ answer should preclude them from the survey, 17% and 21% of respondents, respectively, continued to complete the whole survey. I can only guess, given the overall positive tone of the responses to the topic, that even though these men did not receive the Exercises one-to-one (which only became common world-wide after c. 1975), they had positive memories of the Exercises such that they wished to contribute to a thesis on its transformative nature. I decided to keep them in the analysis to provide some contrasts. As it turned out, there were not many significant differences in the responses given by this cohort to those that experienced the Exercises after 1975, in the one-to-one mode. The one exception was in regard to their relationship with the spiritual director – they didn’t have much of one because the custom was to see a director only every two to three days, for as little as 10 mins time. As one respondent wrote: “I am amazed that despite the lack of one-on-one direction in the Novitiate, the Exercises still had its effect on us” (11/14/2020 13:02:42).¹¹¹

Pre-conditions

Before entering the Society I would say that I had a strong prayer life and Christian community was very important to me (11/11/2020 9:07:16). Everything was at a surface level. Did not know nor made an effort to understand all those aspects of life (11/12/2020 15:55:45).

I asked the respondents about their **practice of faith** before they joined the Society (Q 7). I wondered if any faith practices before an experience of the Spiritual Exercises would make a strong base from which to have a stronger experience of transformation in the Exercises. The data provided did not give me evidence of this. When I correlated this question to questions 22 (‘informed?’), 25 (‘challenged?’) and 34 (‘re-enforced?’) I did not find enough differences in the responses of those who described an active faith to those who had had only a superficial faith to draw any significant conclusion. Both groups equally expressed positive changes in their relationship with Jesus. Three respondents noted their fear of a punishing God before the novitiate; two thirds remarked on how they encountered a different and loving God in the Exercises.

The experience of God as Love in a charismatic retreat before the SpEx was anchored in the all the weeks of the SpEx. (11/17/2020 14:43:56).

In seeking to know what experience of God or what self-discovery may have occurred before the Exercises, and revisited in the Exercises, I asked the question, ‘Are you aware now of any *spiritual discovery or growth in you that anticipated the Exercises* (that you had already experienced before you came across it again in the Exercises)? Yes/No’, and then ‘If you answered ‘yes’ to question 27 above, please describe this briefly.’ (Questions 27-8). The majority marked ‘yes’ and gave a great variety of experi-

¹¹¹ The date-and-time stamp is unique to each respondent. It identifies when they submitted their responses.

ences. These included knowing God's loving closeness and forgiveness, experiencing the gift of serving the poor and learning to appreciate the value of one's feelings. It seems that most of these respondents had had a positive experience of God or had learnt something of their relationship to others as disciples of Jesus that was repeated or re-enforce during the Exercises. On the other hand, a large number could not identify any related pre-Exercises experience (29/72), and of these, most expressed practical difficulties with prayer in the Retreat, or a difficulty with the novice master (Q 21). Does this correlation allow me to suggest that those who hadn't had a pre-Exercises experience of God's love take longer to settle into the process or program of prayer exercises which in turn might impede being open to receive the graces? However when I correlated this question (27-8) with question 26 ('The graces or fruits I recall is/are ...') we find that there is no significant difference in the range of responses: the graces or fruits named are similar across both categories.

I was interested to know if a degree of *familiarity with Ignatian spirituality*, before entering the Society, was a common factor among the respondents; I discovered that most of them had not had much exposure to it beforehand. With items about imaginative contemplation, the Examen, the Ignatian concept of 'desires', and discernment of spirits, on a scale of 1 – 4, where 1 is the least familiar, the majority weighting of responses was at the 1 and 2 end. It was, then, only in the 6 months before their experience of the Exercises, during the noviciate program, that most became acquainted with these Ignatian practices. I would have thought that those with some familiarity with Ignatian prayer prior to joining the Society would have had some advantage over those who did not, in experiencing the graces of the Exercises, but this survey indicates that it does not. It seems that the preparation for the retreat given through the noviciate program (usually 3 months) is enough to enable the men to experience the Exercises fully.

I had wondered if a prior experience of *community* might have contributed to the transformative nature of the Exercises (Q 5). Community is an environment that can challenge a person to see things from another point of view and make demands on him or her to attend to the needs of others. Was a man who had already been exposed to the challenges of living with more than parents and a couple of siblings better prepared to receive the graces of the Exercises as he lived in a Jesuit community then and subsequently? The survey responses showed that whether from small families or having lived in university hostels, the Jesuit equally received the graces of the Retreat, and valued the experience of community to keep the fruits of the Exercises alive (Q 34, 39).

I felt close to Jesus, like I got to know him better. I also felt enthusiastic to follow him (11/7/2020 3:07:10).

A significant experience in the Exercises for most Exercitants is meeting *Jesus as a living friend* through contemplative imagination. Did those who *already* called Jesus their friend before the Exercises have some advantage for experiencing transformation over those who did not? Q 4 showed that half the respondents called Jesus their friend before entering the Society. Of those who said they did not, in Q 20, twice as many as

the other category named their experience of discovering or deepening their relationship with Jesus, and to feeling the love of God. For those who had a pre-existing close relationship to Jesus, more significant was feeling confirmed in their vocation and experiencing some healing. It makes sense that of those who are meeting God in *Jesus* for the first time (in the Exercises), the discoveries made and subsequent changes of orientation wrought are more memorable than for those who are already familiar with God's loving presence. However, knowing Jesus as a friend before the Exercises does not seem to make any less the overall significance of the Exercises for those respondents.

Process of the Exercises

My spiritual director was significant in bringing Jesus Christ into my prayer. He was fervently listening to my experiences in prayer. My director instrumental in bringing me from desolation to consolation (11/15/2020 16:48:30).

The factor that almost all the respondents (82%) identified in their experience of the Exercises was a positive *relationship with his spiritual director*. Among their many comments that praised the spiritual director, the most frequent characterisation was that the giver "listened" (listener/listens x 59, patient x 13, understanding x 12, encouraging x 11, helpful x 9, man of prayer/prayerful x 8, kind x 6, loving x 6, empathic x 4). The literature on the professional relationship between a therapist and his or her client, which has been paralleled with the relationship between a spiritual direction and his or her directee, has highlighted the significance of this relationship for the success of the therapy (see "Common Factors" above). If the giver can create a space in which the exercitant can feel safe and gently encouraged, the exercitant is far more likely to open himself both to the directions of the giver for the Exercises and to the movements of the Spirit of God within himself. This openness is argued to be key to the success of the Exercises in bringing about the changes Ignatius intended. 59/72 labelled the relationship 'positive'. At the same time we can't ignore the data from those men (15) who did not have a strong relationship with their spiritual director (not one-to-one) many of whom (9) who still expressed some form of transformation in their relationship to God through the Exercises. A positive relationship with the giver contributes greatly to the transformation experience of the Exercises, but it is not absolutely essential.

Questions 17 asked if the Jesuit had found any *experience of nature* significant during the Spiritual Exercises. This is not a factor that other Jesuits or researchers have considered. I asked this question because I am aware from my own experience as a spiritual director that many people during the Exercises and on other retreats report a significant spiritual experience through nature. 87% of my respondents indicated that nature was a significant factor in their experience of the Exercises. This was a simple 'yes' or 'no' question from which I gained no further information.

Are the Exercises enhanced by extra-curricula activities such as *music, art or poetry*? All but 16 respondents made 'helpful use' of artwork (46%) and/or poetry (35%) and/or music (71%) and/or dreamwork (27%) in the retreat. Of those 16 who did not, the

majority had done the Exercises before 1975 (in which case, not seeing a director one to one, they would not have had guidance about such an individual taste/activity). There is little difference to be seen between the two categories in the long-term effects experienced (Q 23), in the graces received (Q 26), in significant contribution to identity (Q 44-5). Where respondents were invited to add further comments on their experience of the Exercises, is it significant that almost all those who did not use music, et al, did not have anything further to say (while in the music, et al, group half had nothing further to say)? Since music, art and poetry engage a person's affectivity, did these help the experience to be more alive or longer lasting? The participants indicated that those exercises engaging affectivity were helpful but more questions need to be asked to be sure of any such connection.

I do remember logging my movements in my journal but don't remember too much about rules for discernment of spirits in any particularly focussed way (11/9/2020 5:56:51).

One of the outcomes of the Spiritual Exercises that scholars have identified is that the exercitant learns to *discern the movement of spirits*, that is, the man learns to become more aware of his thoughts and feelings and trace their origin (from God, from the enemy of God and from his cultural environment). This in turn gives him greater freedom to choose what his deepest, God inspired, desire is. The responses to Q 24 on discernment of spirits indicated that the respondents didn't learn about discernment in great depth (half said they didn't learn about it, many others simply referred to an Ignatian rule they had learnt rather than what they experienced). Only a few referred to their experience of being aware of their feelings and thoughts and what was behind them.

I could not entirely trust my imagination. I kept wondering if I was doing things right (11/30/2020 7:06:31). Accepting God's love for me (11/16/2020 1:07:51).

One question that did not yield the responses I had hoped for was Q 21 'Can you recall *any particular difficulty* during the Exercises? Did you struggle with anything in particular?' In this question I had thought to get remarks on a sense of dying to self, of surrendering to God, or experiences in prayer with the Jesuit's (sinful/wounded) self. There were a few such remarks (a number on the difficulty with Ignatius' meditations on sin and hell; suffering with Christ in the Third Week; memories of past trauma; struggle with accepting God's love) but other remarks were about the novice master (intimidating), distractions and fatigue. Nineteen (37%) responses indicated they recalled no difficulties.

Changes Expected

Without the experience of the Spiritual Exercises I wouldn't have been able to build a strong foundation for my religious life. I would like to think that the SpEx is our DNA as a Jesuit. :) (11/24/2020 17:20:48). Fall in love with Jesus all over again. Healing of memories. Better self-knowledge. Plenty of consolations and reenergised to serve the Lord and

others. (10/16/2020 6:41:12). *Healing, reframing of memories in the light of God's love, among others* (11/16/2020 11:17:16). *Freedom from inordinate attachments; desire for priesthood became clear; loved and forgiven by God; deep memories of the Ignatian Contemplation; better understanding of self and dynamics of loving; better understanding of my family, history, and woundedness; healing* (11/16/2020 17:44:53) 1. I volunteer for difficult tasks in the Province when others are reluctant 2. take up new challenges 3. available for any work in the Province 4. practice poverty. (11/14/2020 1:07:45).

The responses to the key questions on the *experience of the Exercises itself* (Q 20: What positive experience(s) or impression(s) from your first experience of the Exercises can you still recall to mind easily today? Q 26: The grace(s) or fruit(s) I recall is/are ..., Q 29: What you like to add any further comments on your first experience of the Exercises? and Q 46: Please make a brief comment about [whether] the experience of the spiritual Exercises in the noviciate has contributed significantly to your identity as a Jesuit) I consider together. It is in these responses that I saw data most clearly related to my framework for conversion. Many responses touched on affectivity (“joy”, “healing”, “cathartic”, “tears” = a new felt-experience); the love of God (Jesus) for him (“friendship”, “loved”, “intimacy”); a significant change in their worldview (“new orientation”, “new direction”, “foundational”, “change”); a re-ordering of his values, goals and perception of self-identity (“confirmed” in vocation, being a “sinner” but “accepted/loved”). The part described as ‘resulting in a more active orientation to others’ emerged in Q 26 with expressions such as giving “service”, “spreading the values” and having a “mission to the poor” (7/61). This part of the conversion framework is also shown in the responses to Q 22/3. The ‘increased appropriation of his role in the Christian story and community’ was addressed with Questions 23, 26, 34, 35 and 46. Respondents expressed a strong identification with the mission of the Society, as companions of Jesus, available for any work given them, sometimes mentioning “the poor”. A few comments revealed some tension they had experienced with the institution of the Society and/or a superior.

The actual terms “struggle” (3) and “surrender” (3) were not used frequently (nor mentions of detachment (1), availability (2), freedom (9), humble/humility (3) and being obedient (1)), though these could be implied in other words used (e.g. “awareness of the sin in my life”), and in the import of the responses given.

In relation to the comments about ‘*grace received*’ (Q 27), what stands out is that the confirmation of vocation, of being the beloved of God, of experiencing healing, and of recognising one’s sinful nature, are expressed more often by the ‘did not know Jesus before’ group. For ‘Any further comment on the Exercises?’ (Q 29) 14 of the 36 who had not known Jesus as a friend before remarked again on the impact of the Exercises as noted above; the other group of respondents did not repeat themselves, but some mentioned being changed, or the *foundational nature* of the experience (5). In the whole survey almost the same number for each group declared that the Exercises had changed their lives in a significant way and/or were foundational for their Jesuit life and mission (14 and 11).

I believe that I was able to respond to the call/vocation because I was called, And this was somehow affirmed in the Call of the King, reflection of the 3 classes of men and the Suscipe. (11/15/2020 21:43:19)

Among the survey respondents many made reference to their strong *sense of call* to be a priest or brother, in the Society, before they joined, which they felt was confirmed during the retreat. (Questions 20, 26, 29).

Aftermath

My monthly recollections and annual retreat are the regular times that the fruits of SpEx are re-enforced. More than that meeting inspiring Jesuits, lay people, Spiritual reading, music and sometimes just out of the blue some thoughts move me to recall the graces and put them into action (11/17/2020 14:43:56).

What significant moments or events in the Jesuit's life after the Exercises re-enforced its fruit? I asked with Q 34. Out of the 72 respondents only 40 gave specific (and related) answers, more or less evenly distributed: these included giving retreats and spiritual direction, engaging in ministry to the poor, meeting everyday life challenges, and being on retreat. More specifically, individuals mentioned ordination day, taking vows, going camping, practicing discernment and dialogue with superiors. It seems that just about anything in the life of a Jesuit can re-enforce the fruit of the Exercises – given a mindfulness of the Exercises – being largely activities that are people- or service-oriented.

Q 35 asked, 'Can you identify and share briefly any *significant moments* in your (Jesuit) life since the Spiritual Exercises that you think have *challenged the fruit of the Exercises?*' by which I meant, was there anything that has undermined or diminished the effects of the Exercises. There were some specific moments of challenge to the fruit of the Exercises for many Jesuits, but also some more every day or on-going situations. 16 respondents named themselves as the main problem, either with situations that challenged their vows, or in their perceived weakness of character. There was a scattering of other challenges such as the death of a loved one or the (negative) institutional nature of the church. Since 28/72 respondents said "none" or left the question blank, I can only conclude that the greatest challenge to the ongoing fruitfulness of the Exercises lies in the Jesuit's degree of faithful response to God which would seem to be a lifelong struggle, perhaps supported by spiritual direction and community.

I had thought that *regular spiritual direction* would be a significant factor in the ongoing transformation of the Jesuit begun in the Spiritual Exercises (Q 37), especially for ongoing formation in the discernment of spirits. Indeed, the majority of respondents saw a spiritual director at least five times each year (once every two months). I did not ask if this director was a Jesuit or not. I have not determined how age and years in ministry effect the frequency of a Jesuit visiting a spiritual director: early in ministry a Jesuit may well work off the energy provided by his formation and his engagement in ministry and so not feel the need for further individual guidance at this time. 37% of respondents saw their director more than 9 times each year on average; 41% between 5 and 8 times;

the remainder less than 5 times a year. This latter group, while not seeing a spiritual director often, still remember and can express the fruits of the Exercises in them.

I am still living the exercises, especially apparent with each 8-day retreat, but also in daily life (11/12/2020 1:28:00).

A supposition I had before conducting this research was that the *annual eight days retreat* (which all Jesuits are expected to have) would be a significant factor in maintaining the transformation of the Spiritual Exercises; that the extended period of silence and prayer would deepen or renew their relationship with God and their identity, values and goals. Survey Q 36 indicated that over 90% of respondents found their annual retreat significant for their formation as a Jesuits. Given the context of the survey question, I take this to mean that the retreats amplify or extend to the experience of transformation given by the Exercises. I cannot say from these responses that they are significant for all Jesuits, only for these who found the Exercises transformative. I suggest that without the annual retreat the impression and graces of the Spiritual Exercises may be diminished or lost over time, and that this practice is important for the ongoing fruitfulness of the Exercises.

Community life has greatly affected my Jesuit life. Jesuit community life has nurtured my vocation in the Society of Jesus. I am privileged to have edifying rectors and superiors during formation years (11/15/2020 16:48:30).

With Q 39 I asked: ‘Apart from the Spiritual Exercises, the annual retreat, and seeing your spiritual director regularly, can you mention any other aspects of Jesuit life that have contributed to your formation as a Jesuit?’ The most numerous responses centred on relationships with other Jesuits, naming “community” (22), “friends” (in the Society) (11), “a Jesuit” (relationship) (12), and “companion(ship)” (not identified specifically as Jesuit) (5). In the literature community is often identified as significant for the ongoing formation of a Jesuit, and this response validates that factor. Other factors that were mentioned, and are not discussed much in the literature, include ministry (17), study (18) and (daily) prayer (13).

I have genuinely found the studies over the years helpful (11/7/2020 4:45:31).

With regard to ‘study’, Q 43 asked specifically whether any respondent had undertaken formal or informal study of the Exercises – most had (half of them under the category of ‘other’(non-academic) which I took to be an apprenticeship or mentor model [this was verified in the interviews]). Despite this, in Q 39, very few (6) mentioned study as an event that helped re-enforce their estimation of their experience of the Exercises. This raises the question for me, what was the nature of the training that seems not to engage the respondents affectively with their experience of the Exercises originally and since then?

Many experiences of living alongside and working with people that some label the poor and marginalised. Their faith and their commitment to get through all of life's challenges have strengthened my desire to stand beneath the Standard of the Risen Lord (11/7/2020 4:45:31).

One or two scholars who have written about the Exercises suggest that some *experience of poverty* is significant for their fruitfulness (e.g. Cabarrus and Rex Pai).¹¹² In the survey I asked if the respondents had had any experience of poverty either before the Exercises or since then (Q 40). 28 of the 72 (40%) indicated they had (with a brief description), and 42 indicated they had not (60%). Checking all the 'yeses' and all the 'nos' against some of the other questions I did not notice any significant distinction between them. The experience of poverty does not seem to make a difference in the transformative experience of the Exercises for these respondents. However, the factor of poverty was not entirely absent from the experience and outcome of the Exercises. In their responses to the question 'what are any experiences that have reinforced the fruit of the Exercises?' (Q 34) and 'what grace do you recall from the Exercises?' (Q 26), references to working with the poor or desiring to work with them were not infrequent (9 and 7 respectively). While the experience of poverty, so significant for Ignatius and in the Constitutions of the Society, might be thought to contribute significantly to the ongoing fruit of the Exercises, from the survey results it appears not to be so for all these Jesuits.

Ignatius emphasised the value of mortification in the spiritual life of a Jesuit (and any Christian). To deny oneself is to practice 'detachment' so as to be more available to respond to the call of God (through a superior). Do the Jesuits who practice *penance* (a small scale, voluntary act of mortification) perhaps show a greater likelihood of transformation through the Exercises? I did not define 'penance' in the survey. 70% indicated they did practise some acts of penance. None referred to it as a way of contributing to their formation as a Jesuit (Q 39). There were no consistent responses that indicated that practising penance contributes to the Jesuits' life of faith and ministry (correlating with Questions 22, 23, 34 and 35).

Tertiarity and giving the Exercises and being a spiritual director myself have been as or more important [as receiving the Exercises] (11/9/2020 5:56:51).

Around two thirds of the respondents had *given the Exercises* to someone else (either 20th Annotation, 19th or both). Did giving the Exercises increase their appreciation for their own experience of the Exercises? Did it draw forth more of the fruit of the Exercises in their own lives than those who had not given the Exercises? It seems not: those who had not given the Exercises responded with similar expressions as those who had given them for the key questions of 'impressions' (Q20), 'graces' (Q26) and 'in-

¹¹² Carlos Cabarrus, 'Por que no nos cambian los Ejercicios Espirituales?', in *Psicología y ejercicios ignacianos*, vol. I, 2 vols (Bilbao - Santander: Sal Terrae, 1991), 277-84. D'Cunha et al., *Jivan*, 12.

formed prayer life' (Q 23), including the Exercises being 'transformational'. Nonetheless, one respondent stated, "Popular Spiritual Books that incorporate the dynamics of SpEx had influenced me initially... Now giving Spiritual Exercise transforms me" (11/14/2020 3:41:09). The survey shows that being a giver of the Exercises does not make one more aware of, or live out more, the fruits of the Exercises.

Another factor that one could consider has an influence on the ongoing nature of the transformation of the Exercises is that of the *ministry* the Jesuit works in after ordination. Perhaps working in the area of spirituality, or social services, might correlate with a Jesuit living out to a greater degree his experience of the Exercises? Most respondents indicated they had worked in one, two or three areas of ministry (42/71), the remainder had worked in 4 or more different areas. The ministries of education and spirituality were the most represented. One surprise for me was finding that many Jesuits who claim transformation through the Exercises continue to live them out even in the area of administration. Indeed, I ought not to be surprised: all ministry conducted in faith is fundamentally about inducing transformation whether a personal or social. What we find here is that the transformative experience of the Exercises can be sustained across many ministries.

Other interesting responses

A few remarks indicated that the respondents had found the Constitutions of the Society, and the ongoing formation directives in them, as important in their development as Jesuits, as the Exercises themselves.

I think the dominant vision of Jesuit spirituality in the 21st century is that our spirituality is limited to the Spiritual Exercises, which are important, but not identical to the vision/directives of the Constitutions. (11/7/2020 3:34:05)

It is foundational, but not the only element. I am a bit surprised there is no mention of the importance of the Constitutions in this questionnaire so far, since they govern how the Society is run and how our formation is directed. (11/7/2020 3:34:05)

The retreat seemed to me the same experience as the novitiate, itself, only more so. Evaluating it as a distinct contributor to my formation is like evaluating the serving of beef as a contributor to my nutrition when the beef is one part of a big dinner. So, I can't say more than it contributed significantly to my formation, the way the beef would to the nutrition of a big dinner. (11/11/2020 4:00:01)

As I have pointed out in earlier chapters, there are many Jesuits who recognise the transformative significance of Jesuit life and ministry that they experience after the Exercises. The Spiritual Exercises do not stand alone, but in this thesis, it is the main focus of inquiry.

4.2.3. Overall Findings

What emerged from the survey responses is a general portrait of a Jesuit claiming to be transformed, or at least affirming that the Spiritual Exercises is foundational to his identity and ministry as a Jesuit. Such a Jesuit is characterised by most of these items (no one Jesuit displayed all of them): before the noviciate he felt definitely called and this was confirmed in the retreat; he was not familiar with Ignatian spirituality before he entered the Society (Questions 8-15); his experience of the retreat giver (identified with novice master) was positive (questions 32 and 33); he may have or may not have had some experience of poverty or living with the poor (Q 6); he has arranged for regular spiritual direction since then (Q 37); he values his annual retreat (Q36); he is appreciative of Nature (Q 27); he finds life and inspiration in his Jesuit community (Q 39), and in his ministry (Q 39); he has experienced God's love in a strong way (healing/love/friendship with Jesus) (Qq 20 and 26); and he is a giver of the Exercises (66%: either 19th Annotation or 20th and also both [Q 44]).

These survey responses indicated to me that the respondents largely experienced the Spiritual Exercises as transformational along the lines of my concept of conversion through the Exercises, being a radical change of meaning-system. My framework seems to hold their experiences together, though some parts of it are not as strongly represented as others. Being "of the right disposition", as measured by external factors here, includes a wide range of experiences, and by no means necessarily Ignatian. The process of struggle and surrender was least represented if not altogether absent. While most of the respondents referred to an experience of God's love, only a smaller number of these expressed some strong "felt-experience" of this love. Some of them indicated their sense of belonging to the Society and its mission of service; within which they mentioned obedience and availability. The qualities of humility and detachment were not identified well by the questions of this survey. The discernment of spirits, which is meant to be one of the more important skills learnt during the Exercises so as to keep the man faithful to God subsequently, was shown up more in its absence than its presence. Overall, the respondents did indicate that the Exercises brought about a radical change in their meaning-system as almost all expressed a change in their worldview and self-identity.

The survey shows that of all the factors identified that could contribute to or enhance this transformation, only three carry a significant weight (the giver of the Exercises, the annual retreat and life in community). The presence or absence of the other factors did not seem to make a great difference. The influence of Nature and the arts was not sufficiently measured; these probably do not contribute significantly to the process of transformation through the Exercises since no comment was made on them (i.e. in Questions 20 and 29).

The survey responses shed some light on those factors identified in my framework that influence, in varying degrees, the experience of a radical change of meaning-system through the Spiritual Exercises.

4.3. Interviews

I conducted online interviews with eight Jesuits from around the world and analysed their stories using Thematic Analysis as I had for the survey responses. With the interview I was trying to do three things: one was to find out any significant moment for the Jesuits in the Weeks of the Exercises, and to give as much detail as possible about it; another was to find out what other life events (before or after the noviciate Exercises) there were that might have had an impact on the dynamic of the Exercises, and thirdly to uncover any overall changes in their relationship with God and with the Society as a result. I identified common Meaning Units between the survey and the interviews. I then applied the narrative of the Experience of transformation through the Exercises to my heuristic framework. I present the detailed narrative of one Jesuit as viewed through the framework, followed by summaries of the seven others.

4.3.1. Rationale and Methodology

My qualitative research approach to the interviews was the same as that for the survey. I was looking for a rich, thick description of the Jesuit's experience that would inform me of any change in the exercitant's meaning-system. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis works better for interviews and other extended texts than it does for a survey with its short answers. I had no wish to impose my framework onto the Jesuits' experience, rather, I wished to "hear" what their own experience was and to see if there were any similarities. The emergence of a completely different model of the process of transformation through the Exercises was possible.

Types of Interview

Interviewing in qualitative research "is a kind of guided conversation in which the researcher carefully listens 'so as to hear the meaning' of what is being conveyed ... the purpose of interviewing is to make 'cultural inferences', thick descriptions of a given social world analysed for cultural patterns and themes."¹¹³ The kind of interview I conducted was "in-depth" and close in nature to a personal narrative or "life story" interview. In an "in-depth" interview, the participant not only gives his account of the phenomenon but is questioned for more details both of the event and of his responses, so as to achieve as "thick" a description as possible.¹¹⁴

Atkinson tells us that "The life story interview provides a practical and holistic methodological approach for the sensitive collection of personal narratives that reveal how a

¹¹³ Carol Warren, 'Qualitative Interviewing', in *Handbook of Interview Research* (ebook, Sage, 2011), 84, <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412973588>.

¹¹⁴ John Johnson and Timothy Rowlands, 'The Interpersonal Dynamics of In-Depth Interviewing', in *The Sage Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*, 2nd ed. (Sage, 2012), 103-119. Pages need checking.

specific human life is constructed and reconstructed in representing that life as a story.”¹¹⁵ The life story interview allows the person to speak at length, and digress, so as to be free to speak of his or her life, and its impact and meaning for him or her, as much as he or she wants. She or he is in more control of how the event is told than would be the case in other kinds of interviews.¹¹⁶

I chose these types of interviews to inform my own approach so as to receive the phenomena of the Spiritual Exercises and their impact on the Jesuit as a story, a narrative with the protagonist’s sense of identity, purpose and direction showing through it. Since the phenomena under examination are in the nature of a conversion, I wanted to allow the converted person the freedom to tell the tale of his personal change of meaning-system. Such stories have the convention of showing how the person changed, in what way, and with what results.

At the same time, while allowing the story to unfold, I did intervene to draw out more detail, and to uncover data that would support my tentative conversion framework. Holstein & Gubrium tell us that the interviewer constitutes an integral part of the story that is told, “To “activate narrative production”, an active interviewer facilitates the interview interaction to “direct and harness the respondent’s constructive storytelling to the research task at hand.”¹¹⁷

The Sample

Through the interviews for my research, I selected eight participants. In phenomenological qualitative research one can explore a personal experience in depth with one participant, or with several. For my purpose, eight was sufficient to gain a sense of the nature of the transformation experienced by these Jesuits.

... enough interviews must be conducted so that the interviewer feels he or she has learned all there is to be learned from the interviews and has checked out those understandings by reinterviewing the most trusted and most knowledgeable informants.¹¹⁸

I did not intend to generalise my findings for the whole population of Jesuits. These eight I selected from the 72 survey respondents as they showed themselves to be the most articulate in the short answer questions and willing and able to show their emotive responses.¹¹⁹

Most phenomenological researchers prefer their subject to be naïve about what is being researched.¹²⁰ After the initial interviews I became aware that my interviewees

¹¹⁵ Robert Atkinson, ‘The Life Story Interview as a Mutually Equitable Relationship’, in *The Sage Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*, 2nd ed. (Sage, 2012), 116.

¹¹⁶ see also Svend Brinkman and Steinar Kvale, *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2015), 180. and Riessman (2012).

¹¹⁷ James Holstein and Faber Gubrium. *The Active Interview*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), 39.

¹¹⁸ Johnson, ‘In-Depth Interviewing’, 108.

¹¹⁹ Adrian van Kaam, *Existential Foundations of Psychology* (Garden City, NY: Image, 1969) at 328.

¹²⁰ Amadeo Giorgi, *The Descriptive Phenomenological Method in Psychology* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne,

were not naïve in this way. They knew the topic of the research (it was given them on their consent form); they had all already reflected on the meaning of the Exercises for them in the course of their formation as Jesuits; and all had given the Exercises to others and were interested in the effectiveness of Giving the Exercises that my thesis was addressing. I abandoned all pretence at naivety and instead, with the first question of my interview, invited them to ‘declare’ their perspective and their interest in this research. This allowed me to take into account, to some degree, their assumptions and biases. Some were interested in any research done to enhance the experience of the Exercises, others simply were willing to assist a fellow Jesuit as needed. Only one expressed a bias openly (regarding the relative weight of influence of the Exercises to the Constitutions) but this did not cause him to downplay his own formative experience of the Exercises. Overall, I don’t believe any agenda on the part of the participants skewed the data I was seeking in a significant way.

What I hear from the respondents was real for them, and I could only take their information as factual data. Phenomenology does not question if the experience exists in itself (verifiable by others); what is important is that the event is real (has an impact) for the person.¹²¹ I was more interested in their memories of, and to a lesser extent, on their interpretation of, the events in their lives than what may have actually happened back at that time. It is precisely who the Jesuit sees himself today as compared to before they experienced the Exercises that was my interest.

I put to the participants the same eight questions, though not always in the same order, depending on the flow of the conversation.

- *What prompted you to assist me with the survey and interviews?*
- *What drew you to the Society of Jesus? What were you looking for?*
- *Can you recall any (specific) moment(s) of significant impact or insight in your experience of Spiritual Exercises? What was the impact of the First Week on you?*
- *Are there other significant life events that had an impact on your life as a Jesuit?*
- *(I assume fruitful and happy Jesuit ...) What has helped you maintain your first consolations, continues to keep you in God’s life?*
- *When did you learn from experience of discernment, and what role has the practice of discernment of spirits taken in your life?*
- *Has studying/giving the Exercises added to your appreciation of what the Exercises did for you?*

2009), 99. Naivety is a position from which the participant will speak of their experiences without reference to any theory or explanation. The respondent is asked to speak about their experience simply as it was without being concerned as to what it means or what is significant about it for the researcher. The researcher seeks from the participant only the remembered sensations and immediate impressions of the event from at the time it occurred. This is meant to prevent the participant ‘contaminating’ the data with what she or he thinks the researcher wants to hear. “A general rule is that you will have contaminated your interview if you find that you have told your interviewee what your CRQ (Central Research Question) and your TQs (Theory Questions) are.” Wengraf, *Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 156.

- *In what way has the first experience of the Exercises subsequent shaped your relationship to God, and your sense of identity and purpose? (Seeds nascent that have grown, now developed)*
- *Any other comments?*

Because this type of interview was largely open ended, I refrained from asking about every factor in my framework. I reasoned that if something was significant for the participant in the Exercises, in a general discussion, it would come up. This meant that some of the factors were not spoken about (e.g., poverty or the giver or prayer). Finally, there were questions I omitted to ask that were generated by the survey responses, such as the significance of music, poetry and art. I could have followed these up in the interviews but didn't. These factors don't appear to have been very significant, but it still would have been interesting to discover more about their role in the experience of the Exercises.

Reflexivity

Because of my intention to verify (or disprove) a theoretical position in regard to the phenomenon of transformation, I was aware that in each interview I might only hear what I wanted to hear; and additionally, that my own life experience and cultural environment, not being that of my interviewee, could preclude me from really understanding the meaning he wished to convey.¹²² Johnson highlights the value of having some reciprocal relationship with the interviewee by which, with the interviewer sharing similar experiences or opinions, trust and co-operation is built.¹²³

I judged that missing what the participant wanted to convey would be unlikely since the participant and I share the same culture though our membership of the Society of Jesus. At the same time, such familiarity could have disabled my capacity to hear the unique content or meaning of the interviewer, as I possess some life hardened assumptions.¹²⁴ Being conscious of these, I tried to manage them (with phenomenological bracketing/*epoche*) in each interview as professionally as possible.

Being a trained spiritual direction and supervisor, I have learned the skill and art of active listening which is a vital part of these ministries.¹²⁵ The interventions I make as a spiritual director and in these interviews are aimed at helping the person formulate

¹²¹ Giorgi, *The Descriptive Phenomenological Method in Psychology*, 9–10, 67–68.

¹²² Johnson, 'In-Depth Interviewing', 101.

¹²³ Johnson, 'In-Depth Interviewing', 104. Andrea Fontana and James Frey, 'The Interview', in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed. (London: Sage, 2005).

¹²⁴ Johnson, 'In-Depth Interviewing', 101–2.

¹²⁵ Some texts on active listening in spiritual direction include Culligan, K. *Spiritual Direction: Contemporary Readings*. (Locust Valley, NY : Living Flame Press, 1983) 105-110. Edwards, T. *Spiritual Director, Spiritual Companion* (N.Y.: Paulist, 2001) 106-114. Pickering, S. *Spiritual direction: a practical introduction*. (London: Canterbury, 2008). Guenther, M. *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction*. (Cambridge, Mass: Cowley Publications, 1992 ebook) 22-39.

more meaning, to help them get in touch with the sensory nature of the experience and to show them that I am alongside them empathically.

4.3.2. Analysis

My analysis of the transcripts developed in three stages. After each interview, having obtained the transcription, I corrected the text (for errors in the transcription) and added remarks that noted how I was feeling at a particular moment, or why I intervened in a particular way, and how a particular response or story was interesting or relevant for my theory.

When I was drawing out the Meaning Units from the interview transcripts, I identified those that were the same as for the survey responses. These included such items as 'struggle', 'love of God', 'consolation', 'ministry', 'the giver', 'prayer', 'mortification' and 'Person-Environment fit'. These became the constituents of my framework. In my second reading of the transcripts, using Thematic Analysis, I identified these Meaning Units (underlining them) and marked them with a code that corresponded with parts of my framework. For example, 'pre-conditions (personal, vocational, first conversion/journey)' I labelled as 'A', 'surrender (values, image of God, old self, self-will)' as B3, 'giving Spiritual Exercises' as D7 and 'practice of discernment of spirits' as PDS, etc.

In the third stage of the analysis, for each interviewee, I clustered together those MUs that corresponded with one code and created a summary of the essence of his experiences in that area (of pre-conditions and surrender and giving the Exercises etc, and what meaning it held for him). Not all the data presented in the interview was relevant to my framework: I did select those MUs that best fitted my categories.¹²⁶ I then composed a summary of the whole range of data (stories) relating to the framework. Still, at this stage, I did not refer to or recall the meanings of surrender or change of worldview that I had set out in the earlier stages of my research – I bracketed these scholarly understandings and read the interview simply for what the Jesuit spoke of himself. Finally, I listened once more to the audio file of the interview to check that my summary and conclusion was consistent with the how the interview presented himself and his story in response to my interview questions. I did this for each of the eight Jesuits interviewed.

Having collated the relevant data (quotes) from each Jesuit into each part of the framework (and not all parts were addressed by the interviewee), I then composed a summary of what the quotes revealed for each part, and finally created an overall summary that presented the whole journey of transformation of that Jesuit in terms of the framework, in so far as the data provided for that.

¹²⁶ A similar method is applied by Devenish, 'An Applied Method for Undertaking Phenomenological Explication of Interview Transcripts'. though where he moves from the idiographic stage into a 'discovered' nomothetic stage in his analysis, I am largely comparing the idiographic data with my pre-conceived Framework.

4.3.3. Findings: Fr D

Here I present a single interview, that of Fr D whose responses fitted my framework more than the others'. Then I will give a summary report of the other seven cases with remarks about the way that that Jesuit exemplifies (or not) my proposed framework for conversion through the Exercises. The numbers in parenthesis refer to that section of the interview; the words in square brackets identify the relevant Meaning Unit in the framework.

Fr D, in his mid 40's, is from a poorer part of a country in South East Asia. He attended a Jesuit school as a student, and afterwards taught for three years. Now ordained, he did the Spiritual Exercises in the Society aged 23, but he has not yet done tertianship (the final program of formation which includes a second experience of the Exercises). He has worked in a foreign mission. He is now a school administrator.

In his journey of transformation begun with the Exercises, Fr D could identify clearly the change in his image of God from a judging and condemning God to a forgiving and loving God.

My idea of God was different than when I joined the Jesuits. I was also surprised because I said, what kind of God is they talking about? Why can he so be forgiving? And, uh, because before I joined the Jesuits, God was like, judge. There's always a judgment. There's always the big eyes following me. And then I cannot do this, I cannot do that or else I'll go to hell. (12)
 I always remember the fundament, that fundamental experience of being loved by God. (4)

This was paralleled in his experience of the noviciate as whole as he felt accepted by the other Jesuits despite being from a less well-regarded region of the country [love of God].

INT 5: So are you saying they were kind of two experiences of love? One from the, from your first experience in the noviciate, from your fellow Jesuits, and [louder] then from God in the Spiritual Exercises.

FR D 5: Yes, yes. In the Spiritual Exercises, especially during the First Week, uh, the experience. (5)

With his background of social and economic poverty Fr D suffered from some insecurities – he did not feel worthy to be a priest [pre-conditions and struggle].

With my background, I had so many insecurities. (4)

I was even worried whether the Jesuits will accept me and people might even make fun of me because I come from the village and here comes [me] joining. (4)

During the noviciate and through the Exercises his Novice Master showed him love (i.e. using Fr D's maternal language to help him express himself better) and taught him to understand that St Ignatius is not looking for 'holy people' to join the Society (4, 12, 13). The Novice master encouraged the novices to get in touch with and express their feelings, which Fr D was able to do.

We were really prepared, uh, uh, to enter into the Spiritual Exercises, uh, about how to interpret our dreams and, uh, all those, uh, listening to our feelings and our emotions. (6)

The director knew me in a way already. So it was easy for me to talk about what really, like, uh, I am, like, afraid or sad or sorry in my life. (13)

Feeling God's love in the Retreat he wanted to remain connected to the men who helped him experience this reality [P-E fit, new felt-experience, giver].

I was really surprised, so I said, okay, if they're just, if this, if God is like this and the Jesuits are telling me that, I better stay here, and this is what I'm looking for. [laughing] (12)

He was invited to let go of his poor self-image and his negative image of God [surrender].

Having received the experience of God's love so strongly, it has become the core of his identity and mission [identity, love of God].

I'm always reminded that, uh, those things were made possible because of God's, God's grace. Because before, when I uttered that in prayer, in sharing, uh, I want to become a Jesuit, in the vows. 'It's only your love and your grace is enough for me'; now with my experiences that is more real. And, uh, it's not just a lip, lip service or, like, a word. So it's getting more concrete. So the question is how much, I think ... it's ... the centre .. it's the core of ... [*words fail him*] (33)

One immediate fruit of the experience of the Exercises was to begin a journey of reconciliation with his father (that continued for some years after) (11). This came about as he identified himself with God's people saved in the Exodus – like the Hebrew people who had to leave their home (in Egypt) and cross the Red Sea, so too, as a child Fr D had to leave his home and cross the country (7, 9). Only in the Exercises did he realise how God was guiding him and caring for him through that time of trauma. The image of an Exodus person continues to influence how he regards God and himself [new worldview].

There's an identification of, uh, like the people of Israel and, uh, uh, the different, uh, uh, what characters in, in the salvation history, Moses, Abraham, all those things. So at some point I would say that I can relate, and I also have my own Exodus experience. (6)

In his story of life since the Exercises Fr D demonstrated some of the changes expected in spiritual transformation: he has grown obedient, available, humble and detached. He found the key occasions of this growth 'purifying' (painful) [changes, surrender].

I had to deal with a parochial school, a small school in the village. So I said, 'What is this? This is a joke'. I studied so hard because I wanted to have a big school and a big influence. And here comes God asking me, 'Go back to your roots in another place'. And then that was a purifying experience also, so that I said, 'No, no, no matter what a big school, a small school, the important [thing] here is the people that I'm called to serve.' No, so it was, it was a, again, a purifying experience. (28)

Fr D expected he would end up as a classroom teacher – this was part of what attracted him to the Society (2, 4) – but he had to come to terms with being directed to be a missionary priest (16). He spoke of failures in his efforts, and of other people's judging him poorly, but he found strength in identifying himself with Christ who suffered failure, but whom God did not abandon (Resurrection).

There are those times when I really complained and had difficulties, [laughs] but now looking back, those are very, I know very, very, uh, life-changing experiences. (16)

When I have difficulty in my mission, I said, when you are following Jesus, and Jesus didn't promise a bed of roses or whatever, and if he himself was considered a failure, uh, but the memory and the effect and the life that will be possible because of the sacrifice that, that what you are offering ... there is that hope of the resurrection (16)

Likewise, he is ready to change roles when asked, like Jesus who moved from town to town [new values/goals/identity, P-E fit, appropriation].

I'm still like, uh, letting go of the experience of [country] because I was, I became so attached and ready, but then I said, no, I have to move. [INT: oh (empathically)] Uh, Jesus himself also has to go to other towns. (19)

Fr D spoke about how he has changed his orientation from ego-satisfaction to serving the good of others (learning that working in a small parochial school is just as important to God as in a big city school) (25, 28) [orientation to others]. He has remained in touch with the graces of the Exercises since his first experience: they are a touchstone that he returns to when he is disillusioned or tired, reinvigorating his original positive response to Jesus' call. The Exercises have become for real for him over the years, more meaningful, and more practicable, as he works in ministry [aftermath].

More and more the experience of the Spiritual Exercises, more concrete in my, in my work and in my experience. And, uh, sometimes I said, 'Am I spiritualising, or am I trying to justify, or am I just trying to give meaning to my experience? Am I just fooling myself?', but even today I said, 'What else, what else will you use if that very important experience in the Spiritual Exercises, uh, that, uh, enable you to say yes and enable you to listen to the invitation?' And that invitation is not really you just insisting because if only you, without the grace and the love that the Lord is offering... I think it's difficult to, to sustain. (16)

Uh, I think the way I am today ... it is very much rooted really in that, uh, the Spiritual Exercises, because, uh, um, as I said earlier, my spirituality before my [entry? *unclear*], the image of God before was really different. Uh, uh, now, um, uh, in my end [? *unclear*], so I would say very big part of my, my, my, the way I am today ... it is very much rooted really in that, uh, the Spiritual Exercises. (31)

The prayer of Examen is significant for Fr D in keeping the transformation he was invited to in the Exercises alive from day to day.

So, uh, I, I find ways, you know, conversation, talking to people if they, if I have the chance. And I think that helped me because after the conversation, I reflect in my prayer, in my examen, and I said, 'What did I say? Oh my God, I have to live'. There's the invitation, invitation, challenge or push that a little bit. (22)

Other life events that do this include conversations with people (both Jesuit and non-Jesuit), both face to face and on social media (22). The meaning and power of the Exercises has become more evident to him both through his study of them, but more so in his giving them to others. This ministry takes him back to his roots and reconnects him to God's call which is especially important when he is feeling blocked. He recognis-

es more how God works through the Exercises to do surprising (unexpected – more than humanly possible) things for the Exercitants. Giving the Exercises gives Fr D consolation in the form of joy [study, giving the Exercises].

When I accompanied people, I draw, uh, the strength and the inspiration from, from that basic experience of being, uh, called, uh, even though, uh, there are a lot of, uh, roadblocks, a lot of, uh, limitations. (4)

before I would always wonder why these Jesuits are always referring to the Spiritual Exercises, the [unclear] and all that. Why are they always referring to that when they talk to me? And when it was my time, I said, Oh, I realize when you are in difficult situation, you have nowhere to, like, take your, what strength, but to go back to that, that, that experience. (16)

I would always love to give retreats because in the giving of Spiritual Exercises, I have more time to pray and I'm reminded of my roots and it's really life-giving. (17)

[his Exercitants move through the process of the Exercises] without me telling them and articulating of what Ignatius wanted and what I wanted to hear. So I said, 'Oh, really the Holy Spirit is working.' I prepare, but I have, I have to be ready to do whatever it will be revealed. And there's so much joy. And if the retreatants are in consolation, I am in double consolation [laughing]. (29)

Learning how to discern the spirits was something Fr D learnt academically early in the Society, but he did not fully understand it or put it into practice until he had responsibilities in ministry which required him to make serious decisions (25). Discernment involves attending to one's emotions and to all the data available in the context [discernment of spirits].

And, uh, for me, uh, in the end, uh, uh, to know God's will, is not a clear cut. Uh, we really have to listen to your emotions and you have to listen to what's happening around you and what are the things unfolding before you. And so I think later when I had to face difficult decisions that more and more, uh, the discernment, uh ..., was more concrete, was more real for me. And it helps you have all of this, uh, methodology and step-by-step procedure and all that. But it seems like at some point you just have that moment, uh, that you, you, you decide and you have you're enlightened, but it takes time. (25)

Fr D experienced rejection when he was sent into a mission area where he was not wanted – the locals wanted to run their own ministries (18, 22) [mortification].

Fr D spoke little or not at all about spiritual direction, annual retreat, poverty and community.

Framework

From the story Fr D told of his own journey through the Exercises and into Jesuit life, he has given data/information that corresponds in large part to the elements of transformation in my framework. From having a cultural belief in God who was fearful, and from his own poor self-image, Fr D emerged from the retreat with a positive relationship with God and a new confidence in himself. He had a significant experience of healing from a sense of abandonment by God when he was able to see his past through God's eyes. After the Exercises this transformation was sustained by his current work

with the Exercises which helps keep his sense of God's love real and effective for him. He learnt to appreciate the value of his feelings but it was only later, during ministry, that he developed a habitual attentiveness to his affectivity. His surrender to God in the Exercises was of his self-image; during his subsequent ministry he submitted to another surrender of his ego, when faced with some conflict. He has taken on a new identity, not just as a member of the Society but as a missionary. He shows evidence of having grown in humility and obedience. Initially, despite identifying with the teaching mission of the Society, it seemed that he would not be a good "fit" since he was not from the same geographical or socio-economic group as most of the other Jesuits which made him feel insecure, but he did find acceptance in the noviciate. His new orientation in life, with its sense of purpose, value and ultimate concern, reflects a radical change in his meaning-system. Fr D attributes this change to the Spiritual Exercises.

The SpEx became a foundational experience for me. Everything that followed was always rooted back to that experience. (survey Q 23)

What was not discussed in this interview was much information about the relevance to his transformation of his annual retreat, spiritual direction, poverty and community life.

4.3.4. Findings: Other Interviewees

In this section are the summaries of the other Jesuit interviewees' experience of the Exercises and life in the Society as each relates to my framework of conversion.

The interview with *Fr A* did not provide any evidence for the stages of transformation outlined in the framework (struggle, new-felt experience, surrender, the love of God), but the process of the Exercises did bring about a change in his worldview, his self-identity and values. His encounter with Jesus in the Exercises continues to be the source of his passion in his ministry with the poor. His friendship with Jesus continues to give him energy and passion. His appropriation of his role as a member of the Society is conflictual: he is dedicated to serving for the poor through the Society, but in this he is not always available to the directives of his superiors.

For *Fr B*, the invitation to be transformed began well before he joined the Jesuits, and continued as he was invited to build up one role and identity upon the last. What the Spiritual Exercises have given him is an understanding of what this transformative journey is about, as a companion of Jesus. The Annotations in particular are the tool *Fr B* uses daily, along with discernment, to keep him abiding in the friendship of God. When confronted with difficulties or conflicting demands, *Fr B* returns to his primary experiences of God's love for him. The struggle and surrender that is an integral part of transformation is not as dramatic or painful, it seems, for *Fr B* as for other Jesuits: it seems to have been part of his nature to be willing to be led by, and to use his talents for, his God. Poverty and mortification, that can play a part in the transformation of a Jesuit, may be seen in his allowing God to lead him out of his own country to immerse himself in a new culture. His journey into this mission country began with a prayer exercise from the Spiritual Exercises, though it occurred following them. From the interview I

gained the impression of a person very much in touch with God, willing to be led by God, gentle but not passive.

The Spiritual Exercises were transformative for *Fr C* in changing his perspective on himself and on God. He can identify specific moments of contemplation in which he encountered Jesus in a “sens-ible” way. He names this experience as “healing”. His time spent with the ecumenical Christian community before noviciate he sees as perhaps equally transformative. These events have enabled him to be present to others going through the Exercises, helping them encounter their loving Lord. The fruits of the Exercises are clearly seen in his freedoms: from the burden and depression following his brother’s death, and from his repression of his sexuality. His demeanour as we spoke was both humble and grateful.

Fr D: see above.

Fr E found the experience of the Spiritual Exercises transformative even though not all the elements identified in my framework are evident. He does not speak clearly of any encounter with Jesus, and yet his experience of freedom from his traumatic past can certainly be called an encounter with God’s love. He does not refer to any specific felt-experience of this love, yet it has been powerful enough to give him the lifelong desire to give other people a similar experience. Neither survey nor interview spell out the expected changes for *Fr E* (such as humility, detachment and availability), yet his passion and his orientation towards others can be seen in his story. He certainly speaks of a struggle in the Exercises, a surrender and the new worldview that emerged from his encounter with God in his past. His giver seems to have been particularly significant in this breakthrough. Giving Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, and the study he has had to enable him to do this well, have given *Fr E* greater appreciation of the Full Exercises and have kept his original experience of the Exercises “alive” in him, drawing him into prayer and helping him to stay in touch with God’s love for him. “The SE was just a gate opening for me a new horizon to experience how God has been at work in my life” (survey Q 46).

The most focused attention of *Fr F* is fixed on the smiling Jesus who reassures him that he is loved and all is ok in God. This powerful, new-felt experience came first to him in the course of the Spiritual Exercises and has shaped his identity and response to life’s demands ever since. He is humble about what his role is with those he serves; he is willing to submit his ministry desires to that of the Provincial. His repeated smiles and laughter show a peace and satisfaction with his life and work in the Society.

For *Fr G* the Spiritual Exercises were more of a waypoint along his journey of transformation, rather than a starting point, but it was in the Exercises that he first encountered Jesus as a real friend. He did not demonstrate a major struggle in the Exercises that is characteristic for some, but did indicate movements of affectivity. Experiences both before and following the Exercises constituted other building blocks of his identity and worldview expressed as a beloved child of God and brother of Jesus. Overall, while *Fr G*’s story of transformation touches on many of the points of the structure of my framework, it could be described as diffuse and extended rather than sudden and intensive.

Fr H said that the First Week “transformed” him. While not explicit about a new felt experience, it is clear he did experience the love of God in a powerful way. This changed

his negative self-image and empowered him to serve others with consolation. The Exercises remain alive for *Fr H* in his memory, and he refers back (inwardly) to his experiences of the retreat when engaged in ministry. Since the experience of the Exercises *Fr H* has felt Jesus “alive and in me”. He spoke openly of his successful struggle with obedience and availability. In the interview, *Fr H* came across as a humble, obedient, gentle, loving man, very much in love with God/Jesus.

In their interviews all of these men demonstrated a change in their meaning-system. For each, a different element of this change was more or less significant and each with greater or lesser intensity. Their perception and appreciation of God and of themselves had changed, and subsequently they found a new energy to serve others. Each could identify some aspect of life in the Society that helped sustain and further development this conversion.

5. Applying the Data to the Framework

The accounts of the Spiritual Exercises that these participants shared, in both survey and interviews, demonstrated the validity of my framework of conversion as a way of identifying the radical change in meaning-system they had experienced. I now draw together the data from the survey and the interviews and apply them together within my framework of transformation to test the model. Again my emphasis is on this conversion being a radical change of meaning-system.

5.1. For a Man of the Right Disposition...

Survey: What experiences or situations before the man enters the Society might contribute positively towards a change of meaning-system through the Exercises? There did not appear to be a significant difference between those who engaged in some practices of the (Catholic) faith before and those who did not. Many had had some experience of a loving God, and had learnt the value of affectivity before making the Spiritual Exercises, but this did not appear to give them any advantage over those who had not. While the majority of the respondents had had little to no exposure to Ignatian methods of prayer, this did not seem to disadvantage them compared to those fewer who were introduced to Ignatius prayer well before they received the Exercises. Likewise, whether the man had some experience of community life or not before joining the Society, his experience of community life in the noviciate was equally beneficial and appreciated. Those who did not know Jesus as a friend before the Exercises did encounter him in a striking way as a living loving person and this strengthened their commitment to him. For those who had known Jesus as a living friend before, the experience was slightly different, in which they experienced some healing through him, and/or a confirmation of a call to labour with Jesus that they had heard before. Members of both these two groups found and/or deepened their relationship to Jesus through the Exercises. Whether

they knew Jesus well before or not, the Exercises brought them into a new relationship with him (which in turn brought about changes in their worldview). Of all these pre-condition factors that I have looked at, none could be said to give the exercitant a greater likelihood of transformation through the Exercises than the others.

Interviews: all the respondents came from practicing Catholic families, though with varying degrees of personal commitment, so their meaning-system was constructed on Catholic beliefs. A few knew God only as judgemental and punitive. Five did not know Jesus as a friend before joining the Society. All had completed high school and the majority had attended university. Some had been exposed to the Jesuits and Ignatian spirituality at school or during young adulthood. There was a range of psychological maturity, from those who had had a sheltered life to those who had had responsibilities of professional work and had made major life decisions. Two had suffered serious trauma in their youth. Two had backgrounds of poverty.

We can see the wide variety in the kinds of men who entered the noviciate: differing cultures, education, levels of faith, life experiences and psychological maturity. All felt called to try this new life and were willing to give up what they already had. All were considered mature enough by the formators of their Province to be given a chance to prove themselves capable of the rigours of life in the Society. From their reported transformative experience of the Spiritual Exercises, it is evident that they did enter the Exercises with the right disposition.

This part of the framework puts before us the variety of life experiences and levels of faith and maturity of each exercitant. It has helped to show how the only stand-out necessary factor for the man seeking to join the Society to experience the transformation of the Exercises is that he has the desire to do God's will, has some maturity or the potential to grow in maturity, and he is generous and trusting of his mentors.

5.2. ... Through a Process of Struggle and Surrender in the Exercises...

Survey: The experience of struggle and surrender were rarely mentioned in the survey responses, even given Question 21: 'Can you recall having any particular difficulty during the Exercises? Did you struggle with anything in particular?' In the large range of difficulties enumerated by most of the respondents, a few related to particular meditations, painful memories of the past or a struggle to accept God's love, others to practical difficulties. I can only guess that such painful memories perhaps have been suppressed over time. While intense self-awareness and painful memories could well become a block and prevent the exercitant experiencing the full beneficial effects of the Exercises, it seems that they did not.

Interviews: This part of the framework is not highlighted strongly by most interviewees though it is present both in their experience of the Exercises and in their life and ministry subsequently. Some struggled to come to terms with a new image of God (more loving, less judgemental), some with their sense of self as unworthy or inadequate

for God, and some with what sin really is (i.e. not just a breaking of law, but an attitude of defiance or mistrust towards God). Surrender was about letting a new truth be real for them. Struggle and surrender were represented most strongly by three of the men. Two spoke of their experiences of “healing of memories”: trauma earlier in life had to be revisited with Jesus and re-cast, no longer as abandonment or punishment by God, but as an experience where God was hidden yet was present with love. This revisiting the past in prayer was painful but extremely rewarding. The third described his earlier change of spirituality from charismatic to contemplative as a “struggle”, an invitation from God that was a radical shift of expression of faith which took him some time to accept.

This part of the framework has drawn attention to a noticeable gap between what those giving the Exercises say needs to happen and can happen, and what these Exercitants report. For the scholars and Givers, struggle and surrender are the keypoints of radical change; for most of my participants this did not emerge as a singular memorable phase of the Exercises. Is what the scholars and givers report as the “peak” of struggle and surrender, actually experienced only by very few? Is a less intense experience just as valid for conversion? This is what this data seems to indicate. This apparent discrepancy needs more detailed study with Exercitants closer to the time of their retreat.

5.3. ... the Conversion He May Experience Is

(a) a new felt-experience

Survey: Only some respondents expressed an appreciation for their feelings in the Exercises, using such words as “joy”, “cathartic” and “tears”. A few mentioned specifically a “felt-knowledge” or a “deep felt experience” of God. The apparent lack of self-awareness did not seem to diminish the overall outcome of the Exercises. Most of the Exercitants had employed some practice of music, art, poetry or dreamwork and found this helpful. These activities engage a person’s affectivity, but the survey did not provide any further information to enable me to draw any further meaningful inferences.

Interviews: The felt-experience among these men was addressed in terms of an increase in freedom from doubts and fears; an increase in the capacity to express a range of his own feelings; being overwhelmed with feelings of joy, happiness and gratitude; and feeling vulnerable and powerless (i.e. in the Nativity and in the Third Week). For several Jesuits a lively, ‘sensible’ engagement with Jesus in contemplative imaginative prayer was where they had a felt-experience of God.

The framework emphasises the importance of affectivity in the process of transformation. The Exercises engaged the affectivity of these Exercitants, which they were able to express more in the interviews than in the survey. I have not measured the difference between their awareness of affectivity before the retreat and after it. Given the strong memories they had, and the energy I sensed in their responses, I would say that some emotional experiences in the Exercises were strong. There is also a strong indication that these Jesuits continue to be aware of their feelings in their relationship with God and others.

(b) of the love of God for him (in Jesus)

Survey: when asked what was the grace they received from the Exercises (Q 26), the positive responses included feeling God's love, guidance and accompaniment, peace, freedom, healing, feeling close to Jesus, confirmation of the call, greater awareness of personal sinfulness.

Interviews: Even though some interviewees did not speak of a particular moment or experience of the love of God for them during the retreat, they did speak of their subsequent relationship with God and others in such a way as to give a strong impression that these were founded on a conviction of the love of God for them uncovered during the Exercises. They spoke in terms of the love of God having become more real than theoretical, of Jesus living in the Jesuit, of how this love was received in an experience of inner healing, how it is felt with passion (as in the Song of Songs) and how it makes one Jesuit smile every time he speaks of his core retreat experience.

This part of the framework touches on the heart of the experience of the Exercises. No religious conversion can occur without an experience of the love of God. None of these Jesuits spoke of "falling in love" with God or "being in love" with God (when I put this to one of them, he didn't engage with that expression), nor of a moment of especial bliss with God during the retreat of a kind that frequently occurs between two people in love. And yet, my impression of most of the survey respondents and all the interviewees, is that they are "in love" with God and had felt, or continued to feel, that kind of love from God for them. Certainly, their expressed dedication to Jesus and to a life of service spoke clearly of God being their highest value and the focus of their emotional energy.

(c) which brings about a radical change in his worldview (horizon)

(d) a re-ordering of his values, goals and his perception of his self-identity

I place these two elements together as they are two sides of the same coin: (d) is the manifestation of (c). In the survey and interviews these were frequently elided.

Survey: Almost every respondent had something of a positive change or new beginning to report on their experience of the Exercises in their relationship with God and themselves, and on their worldview, values and goals. The responses show that the Spiritual Exercises are definitely transformational for the Jesuits who participated in the survey. Questions 20, 23, 26 and 29 focused on the experience of the month of the Spiritual Exercises itself. 30% (23/72) of the respondents stated clearly that the experience for them was "foundational" to their lives as a Jesuit or had "changed" their outlook on life significantly. Two respondents used the word "transformational" to describe their experience. Asked if they agreed that 'the experience of the Spiritual Exercises in the noviciate contributed significantly to your identity as a Jesuit', 43 of the 72 'agreed strongly', 24 'agreed', one 'disagreed', and 4 'didn't know'. 25/72 stated that the experience of the Exercises had changed their life in a significant way and a few said that the Exercises were still somehow alive and active in them today.

Interviews: These two elements of the framework were the most strongly represented in the responses. A sense of receiving a new identity, or being appreciative of who they already were, was strongly expressed (“a son of God” or “companion of Jesus” or accepting his own sexuality and bodiliness) which in turn led them to take on Jesus’ goals and values (to accompany and serve the poor, to have a hope-filled attitude towards suffering and failure).

This part of my Frameworks focuses on conversion as a change in the exercitant’s meaning-system most clearly. These Jesuits expressed a radical change in their self-image, values, goals, behaviours and purpose in life which are the constituent parts of a person’s meaning-system.

(e) And an increased appropriation of his role in the Christian story and community (Person-Environment fit)

Survey: most replies showed that these Jesuits identified with the mission of the Society and with being a companion of Jesus in the Society. They were willing to do the work given them (obedience), including among or for the poor. A few revealed some disagreement or tension with their superior(s) or some aspect of the institutional dimension of the Society. The life of chastity was not the subject of any question.

Interviews: Most of the interviewees demonstrated “an increased appropriation of his role in the Christian story and community” as a member of the Society in terms of willing obedience to God and to his superior (only one showed ambivalence about this). They all identified as a companion of Jesus, participating in his work of bringing love into the world through their ministry in the Society. Most expressed some acceptance of the significance of poverty both for themselves as companions of Jesus and as a focus of mission for the Society; some embraced it. Strongly represented is the “Person-environment fit”. Most of the Jesuits interviewed gave some indication that they were seeking, and did find in the Society a place of belonging with similar minded and hearted men. One indicated an ambivalence in his relationship with the Society. This “fit” would contribute to their pleasure in being a member of the Society. (Some Jesuits, I suggest, may not wish to leave but may not find their “fit” as comfortable as these.)

This part of the framework links the transformation a man may experience in the Exercises directly to his desire to live it out through the Society. Part of the new meaning-system that Jesuits adopt through the Spiritual Exercises includes the role and status of being a religious (priest or brother) which entails living in community and dedicating themselves to a program of ministry in the Catholic Church that may not be completely their own personal choice. These Jesuits have appropriated this new identity willingly if not completely without tension. To stay attuned to God’s will both for a large scale project and in daily life requires habitual attention and insight to one’s affective life: this aspect of appropriating a Christ-like role in the church was the least strongly evident.

(f) resulting in greater humility, availability, obedience, detachment, openness to poverty and altruism

Survey: These fruits of the Exercises were not directly addressed by the survey, nor mentioned in these specific terms. Many respondents did refer to their sense of being called to priesthood, which they believed was to be lived out in the Society of Jesus, and they were well aware that such a life is ideally given to the service to others, and directed by their superiors. In offering themselves to the Society they were showing a desire to be freely available. Some of them, in mentioning a new awareness of their sinfulness, revealed humility.

Interviews: These are not qualities that (humble) Jesuits were going to claim for themselves, but they were evident in the stories they told of their experience in the Society. Most of them demonstrated these virtues without hiding the cost involved to their own will and desires, expressing their greater desire to do God's will (who had called them into the Society to do God's work). All these Jesuits described their work which was clearly other oriented. I was looking for some indication of "increase" due to their experience of God in the Exercises. Since they were all fully committed workers, this cause was difficult to distinguish from others (i.e. being given more work by their superiors or living without partner or children which gave them more time to work for others).

This part of the framework draws attention to the behaviours and values of the men since their experience of the Exercises as evidence of a religious transformation. These Jesuits manifested humility, obedience, availability, an openness to poverty and a strong willingness to serve others which they attributed to their encounter with God in Jesus through the Exercises. The conversion effected by the Exercises did produce the hoped for qualities and behaviours in the Jesuit.

and this conversion is subsequently sustained by various aspects of life in the Society (community, regular prayer, discernment of spirits, annual retreat)

Survey: There was no one stand-out event or activity that seemed to support in an on-going way the transformation produced by the Exercises: for these respondents community life, annual retreats, spiritual direction, and ministry all helped. Studying the Exercises, or giving them, could be thought to enhance the changes induced by the Exercises for these Jesuits, but this was not found to be the case. Only a few seemed to learn and understand how the spirits moved in them.

Interviews: The importance of community life and the discernment of spirits were referred to by only half of the interviewees. Community life, without being idealised, was identified as a positive asset, giving companionship, supporting vowed life, providing for emotional needs, even being "delightful". It might have been thought that being available, detached and obedient would infer a strong practice of discernment of spirits, but I did not find this. I had expected all these Jesuits to speak of how they were personally, physically, attuned to the movement of the spirits within them, but only three men

spoke in this way. The experience of discerning, even if introduced in the Exercises, was not fully developed until later with the demands of ministry. The Examen prayer was mentioned a few times as the regular occasion when the men reflected back over the day that had been.

When I asked these participants about what helped keep the consolations of the Exercises alive for them, the annual retreat and any experience of poverty were not referred to much. What was named was being active in ministry, such as when preaching, and prayer (intentionally praying over the notes from the Spiritual Exercises again in the years following, or revisiting that experience when struggling with fidelity to the Lord).

I had thought that as these Jesuits accompanied others on a similar journey through the Exercises, it would have helped them understand and appreciate more their own experience of what happened for them in the Exercises. While some found that this ministry helped them to keep in touch with God in the present, it was not evident that it helped them to revisit their own experience with greater insight. Rather, they spoke more of how they wanted to be present to the exercitant so that that person would experience God's love as they had.

My framework identifies a variety of post-Exercises factors that could sustain the radical change in meaning-system, but none of them showed up as distinctly irreplaceable. Community life was identified by many of the respondents as important in which they lived with like-minded and like-hearted companions, sharing the same values, goals and sense of purpose.

5.4. Other Factors

There are two other factors in the process of transformation through the Exercises that are not named in the framework but are relevant and significant. The quality and role of the giver is widely recognised to be vital to the process of the transformation. The practice of mortification is considered by some to be significant.

5.4.1. The Giver

Scholars of the Exercises rate this factor in the experience of the Exercises very highly. As much as the method or exercises of Ignatius that the giver presents, it is his or her relationship with the exercitant that enables transformation to occur. While being faithful to the spirit of the process of the Exercises, the giver needs to be able to make adaptations to suit the individual exercitant, and always to show genuine respect and care. The giver who listens with love is highly influential.

Survey: Of all the factors identified as significant in some way for the process of the Exercises, the most clearly described is the giver whose loving attention helped the exercitant to "keep the course" and overcome obstacles (in self or in the program of prayer) so that the exercitant could receive the promised benefits of the Exercises. Most

of the respondents found their giver to be most helpful and encouraging, less for their knowledge of the Exercises or their instruction and more in their attentive and caring presence. And yet, even when the giver is not particularly helpful, a few of the Exercitants still found the Exercises transformative.

Interviews: The role of the giver in the experience of the Spiritual Exercises was significant for six of the eight who all mentioned him with specific positive memories. The qualities of the giver I picked up included being non-judgemental, sensitive, giving the time needed, affirming, and supportive of honesty and openness. Even more specifically, one used the exercitant's mother tongue, another was clear and explicit about how the Spirit would guide the exercitant, another encouraged him to be sensitive to his feelings.

While the method of giving the Exercises is largely determined by the text of St Ignatius, the conversion that can be effected is much less likely to occur without a good guide. The text is written for the giver, not for the exercitant. The majority of these respondents affirmed that their giver was significant in their experience of conversion.

5.4.2. *Mortification*

Ignatius valued this practice of self-denial and self-control highly. It is a way of training the will in obedience.

Survey: The practice of penance (mortification) before and after the Exercises was not revealed as significant.

Interviews: Some form of mortification was present in five of the eight, but in almost every one of these cases by way of subjecting their wills to that of the superior; another experience was through experiences of misunderstanding and criticism by other Jesuits. None made mention of any particular practice of penance (e.g. fasting).

Overall, despite all that St Ignatius wrote about the value mortification in the life of a Jesuit, its significance as a particular practice has declined in the Society. Nonetheless its inconspicuousness did not seem to diminish the experience of transformation through the Exercises (as far as these respondents show). On the other hand, this does not prove that a greater emphasis on mortification in the Exercises would not effect a stronger transformation.

6. Overall Findings and Conclusion

This framework has proved to be a useful tool by which to describe and analyse the conversion process of the Exercises as a radical change in meaning-system. It offers not only a phenomenological description of the process but also suggests its normativity. The heart of a change in meaning-system involves the exercitant moving out of one

worldview or horizon into another, re-orienting himself to a new identity with new behaviours, values, goals and purpose. The exercitant becomes Christ-centred and Christ-hearted. It is as much, if not more, of an affective change as a cognitive one and may involve some degree of psychological struggle and a surrender of the old self. Functioning as a system rather than as a stand-alone event, this transformation is effected by the kind of person who enters the Exercises, the quality of the guide who takes him through the Exercises, and the kinds of support the exercitant receives from the Society to sustain it afterwards.

This framework is a proposal and an experiment. Its validity needs to be tested in other similar contexts as it is constructed out of the data of relatively few, self-selected participants. In this thesis there is no representation from African or Afro-American Jesuits. It does not distinguish clearly between the different age groups of the respondents. It does not include non-English speaking Jesuits. It may not hold up against the experience of women in Ignatian religious congregations who experience the Exercises over 30 days. Its focus is on the experience of the first Thirty Day retreat and does not take into account other significant life experiences that may induce a religious conversion for a Jesuit. It is broad in scope such that it might be argued that it fits all sizes and is not precise enough to be helpful.

Despite these limitations, it is with such a framework that I believe we can approach an answer to the question put by the General Congregation, “why don’t the Exercises change a Jesuit as deeply as we would hope?” We can offer an answer to this question using the heuristic tool this thesis presents, which sets out the process of transformation for a Jesuit and addresses some extraneous factors. For a man of the right disposition, through a process of struggle and surrender in the Exercises, the conversion he may experience is *a*) a new-felt-experience *b*) of the love of God for him (in Jesus) which *c*) brings about a radical change in his worldview (horizon), *d*) a re-ordering of his values, goals and his perception of his self-identity, and *e*) an increased appropriation of his role in the Christian story and community, *f*) resulting in greater humility, availability, obedience, detachment, openness to poverty and altruism, and this conversion is subsequently sustained by various aspects of life in the Society of Jesus.

This framework indicates that the reasons for a failure of transformation might lie in the man’s own pre-dispositions, in his experience of the Exercises itself, in the giver he had, or in the life of the community he shared during formation. He may not have had a felt-experience of the love of God for him which fundamentally changed his meaning-system, or if he did, it was not subsequently sustained and developed by his formators and spiritual directors.

The Spiritual Exercises have been confirmed over the centuries as a process that results in a transformation or conversion of the exercitant. Even though it shares characteristics with other kinds of conversion, this type of conversion is not the same as other religious or spiritual conversions described by those converted into faith or into a new faith community. As a process it stands on its own. Much of our knowledge of the Exercises is anecdotal. Some scholars of the Exercises have spoken about the transfor-

mation it can and does produce but very few have drawn together detailed studies of the psychological and faith changes with the larger context of the person's life before and after experiencing the Exercises. My conceptual framework attempts to do this with the understanding that what is changed is the person's meaning-system. This framework is a lens by which we can methodologically evaluate the transformational nature of the Spiritual Exercises. With this framework I have confirmed that the transformation or conversion experienced by Jesuits is specifically a change of their worldview and concomitantly of their self-identity which is achieved through their personal discovery and experience of the relationship of love offered by God. This study also demonstrates that this transformation, while begun with the process provided by St Ignatius, and the loving companionship of the giver, is sustained (or diminished) largely by the nature of the Jesuit community the exercitant lives in afterwards.

Some Jesuits would not single out the Spiritual Exercises as the transformative event of their faith lives, and yet live out all the qualities of a man changed through a process of conversion. It may be that these men have changed slowly throughout their lives, from before they experienced the Exercises, achieving psychological and spiritual transformation as a process of development more than a radical change. Other Jesuits may point to an entirely different life event that brought about a radical change of horizon, perhaps like a car accident, a debilitating illness or a failure to keep a vow. The Spiritual Exercises are not the only way for a Jesuit to experience a religious or psychic conversion.

Finally, my findings are intended to contribute to an enhanced effectiveness of the Spiritual Exercises as an instrument of conversion or transformation for Jesuits and others. From the limited scope of English-speaking Jesuits and the Thirty Day retreat, its method could be applied to other experiences of the Spiritual Exercises by lay people, and in the Thirty Week alternative method of giving them.

7. Further Questions Raised

Besides the major findings, the data I uncovered with my analysis raised other questions to follow up:

To continue to live within the new horizon of faith requires that one remain in constant touch with movement of Spirits, to build on consolation or to escape from desolation. It seems to be taken for granted that the Spiritual Exercises are a significant course of training for Jesuits to learn how to discern the movement of spirits, but this research shows that this is not the case. Most of the participants learnt how to be more in touch with their feelings, and to stay in regular touch with them through the daily practice of Examen, but few gave evidence of a newly discovered relationship with his psyche which is that dimension of the self most sensitive to the flow of life that is the Spirit. Even those who took up a course of studies or apprenticeship on the Exercises did not demonstrate a particular sensitivity to the spirits.

I have noted the apparent lack of insight that these Jesuits had into their own psyche, into how God attempts to communicate with them through the movement of the Spirit. In my own formation this happened for me only when I was taken through an extended reflection on my own experience of the Exercises. Is this aspect of personal familiarity with the Exercises missing in formation programs, or in programs of study to give the Exercises? Could a difference be identified between Jesuits who experience such a reflective exercise and those who miss out?

The Spiritual Exercises are considered to be a means by which a man may discern the call of God for his life – to be single, married, a priest or religious. According to Ignatius and later scholars of the Exercises, the exercitant is meant to be drawn into a space of freedom and indifference in which he will be open to hearing God’s desire for him. Instead, these participants almost all expressed that they already had felt a strong call to be a Jesuit (priest) prior to the Spiritual Exercises, and the function of the Exercises was to give them confirmation of this call. This suggests a different way of leading the novices through the Election process.

And thirdly, I observed that while that these men exhibited a “religious conversion”, which Lonergan and others put in terms of being in love with God, they did not use those words. Is this a cultural inhibition or a theological one? Does this imply yet one more stage of conversion to experience?

There are many questions that this research raised that I was not able to address satisfactorily and which could be the bases for further study. Anecdotally, many people, religious or not, report on the value of contact with nature or of immersing themselves in art for their well-being, and for insight into themselves and their world. These media open up the right side of the brain to data that arises from the unconscious. How much does the role of nature, art, music and poetry play in stimulating affectivity and supporting a psychic conversion in the Exercises?

Almost all the research on conversion, whether in philosophy, psychotherapy, psychoanalysis or spiritual direction, emphasises some phase of struggle and surrender in which the person is challenged to let go of long held assumptions about God and himself before he can be receptive to a new worldview. Why was this purportedly vital part of religious conversion not highlighted by these participants? Was it too traumatic to be recalled? Has it been downplayed in importance measured next to the overall changes experienced by the exercitant? This needs closer examination, perhaps as soon as possible after the time of retreat itself.

I indicated that for Jesuit novices, their giver is their Master of Novices. The role of the former is to be a non-judgemental companion, that of the latter to make an evaluation of the suitability of the man for life in the Society. Surely these roles in part are conflicted. How significant is the dual relationship of the novice master as giver? How much does it influence the exercitant’s freedom to really hear what God seeks?

It would be interesting and valuable to research the relationship between a Jesuit in formation and the kind of spiritual director he has. The spiritual director can have a great deal of influence on how the Jesuit in formation grows in his new identity, how he

prays, how in touch he becomes with his feelings, how he advances his skills in the discernment of spirits. What is the expectation or custom for this in different countries? How much weight does that relationship, especially with a non-Ignatian director, have on the continuing transformation begun in the Exercises?

Lastly, when the Jesuit enters the Tertianship program and has a second (if not third) experience of the Exercises, he is expected to be more spiritually and psychologically mature than he was when he first entered the Society. How does the transformative experience of the Exercises in tertianship differ from that of the noviciate? Does the tertianship experience of transformation require a different framework to best describe and understand it?

At the start of this article I posed the question to myself: according to the framework I devise, have I been transformed by the Exercises as hoped for? I believe I have, but, as with each participant, in a way that is uniquely my own. The experience of the Thirty Day retreat did not change me noticeably in the noviciate, though I certainly avowed an intimate loving experience of God through them. I was blessed in my formators who must have seen my hidden potential, for my development as a Christ-centred person took many years, even following the Long Retreat of tertianship. I believe the experience of the Spiritual Exercises planted seeds that took a long time to germinate and grow. They flowered when I went through the three-year Arrupe program for forming givers of the Exercises. In that intimate “hot house” of spiritual nurturing, in a community of students and mentors who loved and challenged me, at a time when I was maturing through middle age, it seemed that the full fruits of the transformation of the Spiritual Exercises finally emerged. My life was the same and yet it took on new meaning and greater energy.

Some Jesuits can claim a transformation as a result of their first experience of the Spiritual Exercises; others (while living good Christian lives of service happily in the Society) may experience some radical change in meaning-system only years afterwards, as the result, perhaps, of some other particular transformative life event.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Having established significant factors for the transformation of a Jesuit through the Spiritual Exercises, and hence identified where failures to experience transformation as expected by the Society lie, I propose some recommendations for the practice of giving the Exercises that aim at diminishing the influence of these points of weakness.

A. To help achieve to a greater degree the transformative experience hoped for Jesuits through the Spiritual Exercises, based on the research of this thesis:

I suggest that only those Givers who are known to be in touch with their affectivity, and are proven able to assist their exercitants to grow in the same sensitivity, guide the young Jesuit through the Exercises.

I suggest that the superiors and formators of Jesuits in formation find spiritual directors for the Jesuits in formation who are known to understand and practice the discernment of spirits, so that they can continue to guide their directees in their own appropriation of this skill.

I suggest that during formation, Jesuits be given a more formal opportunity to explore and understand the dynamic of the Exercises for themselves so as to gain greater insight into their own experience of conversion. This course or workshop would be led by a trained teacher of the Exercises either in an intensive week, or once a day over a number of weeks.

B. To help achieve to a greater degree the transformative experience hoped for other priests, religious and lay persons through the Spiritual Exercises, based on the research of this thesis:

I suggest that research be undertaken, perhaps with a modified version of this heuristic framework, to examine what factors and dynamics influence the quality of transformation expected for diocesan seminarians who undertake the Exercises but whose spiritual formation is distinctly different to that of Jesuits.

I suggest that similar research be undertaken to examine what factors and dynamics influence the quality of transformation expected for people doing the 19th Annotation (over 35 weeks or so).

The Transformative Nature of the Spiritual Exercises

Thank you for sharing your time for this review of your first experience of the Spiritual Exercises as part of a doctoral research through the Sydney College of Divinity. You may skip any question you choose not to answer. It should take between 20 - 30 minutes. Your responses will be kept confidential. Completion and return of the questionnaire will indicate your willingness to participate in this study. Please submit your responses before DECEMBER 12, 2020.

Did you enter the Society after January 1975?

This questionnaire is only valid for those who entered the Society after 1975.

Yes

No

Was your first experience of the Spiritual Exercises given in a one-to-one mode?

This research only concerns those who first experienced the Exercises in a one-to-one relationship with the Giver.

Yes

No

Please identify what experiences of the Spiritual Exercises have you had (novitiate, tertianship, other) and the age you were at the time.

Prior to your first experience

Did you relate to Jesus as a friend before your first experience of the Spiritual Exercises (in your childhood/youth, or, equally, later in young adulthood)?

Yes

No

What experience did you have of living in community before you joined the novitiate of the Society? (e.g. size of family or sharing accommodation with other adults)

Had you any experience of material or social poverty (either personally, or as a companion of deprived persons for a time)? (Brief description)

Before your first experience of the Spiritual Exercises, how did you live out your faith (prayer, at work, with voluntary activities, in relationships)?

How familiar in practice were you with the Ignatian Examen?

	1	2	3	4	
none	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	very well

How familiar in practice were you with Ignatian Discernment of Spirits?

	1	2	3	4	
none	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	very well

How familiar in practice were you with Ignatian imaginative contemplation?

	1	2	3	4	
none	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	very well

How familiar in practice were you with the Ignatian concept of desires/graces?

	1	2	3	4	
none	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	very well

Did you have any kind of informal learning about the Exercises? (Workshop, lectures/talks, reading)

Yes

No

Did you have any academic learning about the Exercises?

	none	one week (intensive)	one semester	certificate	diploma	degree
Yes/No	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Did you have any kind of informal learning about the Discernment of Spirits? (Workshop, lectures/talks, reading)

Yes

No

Did you have any academic learning about the Discernment of Spirits?

	none	one week (intensive)	one semester	certificate	diploma	degree
Yes/No	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Row 2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The experience of the Exercises in the Novitiate

During the retreat, were you able to make helpful use of such activities as

- music (listen, play or compose)
- poetry (read or compose)
- art (create)
- dreamwork

Did any experience of Nature play a significant role?

- Yes
- No

Did you keep a journal?

- Yes
- No

Do you still have that journal?

- Yes
- No

What positive experience(s) or impression(s) from your first experience of the Exercises can you still recall to mind easily today? (regarding the spiritual direction, relationship with God, consolations, etc)

Can you recall having any particular difficulty during the Exercises? Did you struggle with anything in particular?

Do you think that the experience of the Spiritual Exercises informed your prayer life, retreats and ministry during formation?

Yes

No

If you answered 'yes' to the previous question, please explain in what way.

What can you remember of your experience of the movement of the Spirits, and your understanding of the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits?

Can you identify any specific grace or fruit of the Exercises you were aware of at the time?

Yes

No

The grace(s) or fruit(s) I recall is/are ...

Are you aware now of any spiritual discovery or growth in you that anticipated the Exercises (that you had already experienced before you came across it again in the Exercises)?

Yes

No

If you answered 'yes' to the previous question, please describe this briefly.

Would you like to add any further comment on your first experience of the Exercises?

Spiritual direction

Was your spiritual director a Jesuit or not?

- Jesuit
- not a Jesuit

If a non-Jesuit, was your spiritual director male or female?

- Male
- Female

What was your relationship like with your director?

- positive
- unremarkable
- awkward
- can't recall
- Altro: _____

What qualities do you remember of him/her?

Post-Exercises

Can you identify and share briefly any significant moments in your (Jesuit) life since the Spiritual Exercises that you think have re-enforced the fruit of the Exercises?

Can you identify and share briefly any significant moments in your (Jesuit) life since the Spiritual Exercises that you think have challenged the fruit of the Exercises?

How significant, overall, have your experiences of your annual retreat been in regard to their contribution to your formation a Jesuit ?

	1	2	3	4	
uncertain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	very significant

How often, on average, have you seen a spiritual director, annually, since the Novitiate?

- 0-4 times
- 5-8 times
- 9 times or more

Regarding all your spiritual directors, what have been his/her qualities most helpful to your formation as a Jesuit?

Apart from the Spiritual Exercises, the annual retreat, and seeing your director regularly, can you mention any other aspects of Jesuit life that have contributed to your formation as a Jesuit?

Since your first experience of the Spiritual Exercises, have you had any experience of material or social poverty (either personally or as a companion of deprived persons for a time)?

- Yes
- No

As part of your on-going spiritual development, have you included any practice of penance at any time?

- Yes
- No

Have you engaged in any study of the Exercises since the novitiate?

	one week (intensive)	one semester	certificate	diploma	degree	other
Yes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
No	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Have you given the full Exercises to one or more persons?

- No
- 19th Annotation (in daily life)
- 20th Annotation (30 Days retreat)

Would you agree with this statement, that the experience of the Spiritual Exercises in the Novitiate has contributed significantly to your identity as a Jesuit?

- don't know
- disagree
- agree
- agree strongly

Please make a brief comment about your answer for the previous question.

The Province in which you first experienced the Spiritual Exercises was ...

What area(s) of ministry have you mostly been engaged in in your time in the Society? (tick any that apply)

Education (primary/secondary)

Parish

Social

Administration

Spirituality

Formation

Academic/Tertiary

Migrants

Altro:

Would you like to add any comment on this experience of reflecting on your experience of the Exercises through this survey?

Thank you for helping me with this research. If you would like to be informed about the results of this survey please contact the researcher (iain.radvan@sjasl.org.au). If you would like to assist the researcher further by participating in an interview (60-90 minutes online), please provide your email address and first name. (These details will not be shared by me with anyone. I will de-identify you in any responses I put in my thesis. I will share with you the transcript of our interview before including it in the thesis).
