

PREDICTORS AND OUTCOMES OF NON-ORDINARY AND TRANSCENDENT RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

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A non-ordinary and transcendent religious experience (NOTRE) is an event that a religious believer reports about an unusual encounter with the divine, and which does not occur on a day-to-day basis. NOTREs are distinguishable from general feelings of closeness with God, of beauty of life and the world, and of joy and comfort attributed to the divine. Often highly emotionally charged, they are events which the believers themselves consider extraordinary, miraculous, and overwhelming. In this research, we focused on NOTREs that are related to physical healing from serious illness, speaking in tongues, and prayers and meditation. Two questions formed the focus of the present longitudinal study: First, who are more likely to report NOTREs? We expected that some NOTREs would be predicted by faith-related variables (faith maturity and religiosity) measured at an earlier time. Second, what are the effects of such alleged experiences on the person's subsequent spiritual and psychological state? We expected that some NOTREs would predict faith maturity, religiosity, and religious behaviors measured at a later time. Furthermore, some NOTREs would predict an absence of negative moods (depressive moods, anxiety, and stress), and better sleep quality. Figure 1 shows the conceptual model of the predictors and consequences of NOTREs. Data collection was done as part of a larger longitudinal project. In this study, 909 Christian believers completed two waves of online surveys. Eight months later, 532 responded to a follow-up survey (Wave 3). Big-Five personality traits and socio-demographic characteristics, baptismal status, the length of conversion were measured at Wave 1. At Wave 2, seven NOTREs items were measured, including: own miraculous healing from a serious illness, friend's/relative's miraculous healing from a serious illness, speaking in tongues, witnessing others spoke in tongues, unusual joy and peace during meditation or prayer, prayer answered, and prayer unanswered. Faith maturity (vertical and horizontal dimensions), religiosity, and three subscales of religious practices (personal religious behaviors, communal religious behaviors, and missionary involvement) were measured at both Wave 1 and 3. Sleep quality, depressive moods, anxiety, and stress were measured at Wave 3.