



INTRODUCTION

Psychology has studied the motivations for participating in a pilgrimage while I draw on various other disciplines to look at a pilgrimage as a journey and experience that benefits not only the religious participants, but also the increasing non-religious population of participants.

- Anthropologists see a pilgrimage as a three-part rite of passage (Turner & Turner, 1978):
 - Separation from one’s cultural comforts
 - Crossing the boundary into ambiguous state of potentials
 - Aggregation of new knowledge and experiences upon returning home
- Sociologists have speculated that incorporation of changes and new knowledge may not be realized until reflecting on one’s experience once home (Wulff, 2009).
- Psychologists Clift and Clift (1996, p.42-62) interviewed pilgrims and came up with a list of motivations including: to get close to something sacred, ask for a miracle, give thanks, answer an inner calling and to admire something beautiful

THE CURRENT STUDY

- The current study is unique because pilgrims were interviewed while still on the pilgrimage and after they returned home to look at their reflections on integration back to home

THREE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Who was on the Camino de Santiago?
2. What were their motives and experiences for going?
3. How did they integrate their new knowledge and experiences with home life?



METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

- 14 pilgrims participated in an interview with me, the majority of whom were traveling alone on the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage

MATERIALS

- A 13 question interview was developed based on previous research to gain insight into new motives, feelings and thoughts during the pilgrimage and also identify religious affiliation of the participant

PROCEDURE

- I traveled the second half of the pilgrimage between Leon and Santiago de Compostela (see map), walking and staying in the “albergues” or hostels designated for pilgrims. I interviewed approximately one participant each afternoon once pilgrims had showered and were reading, writing or sitting quietly alone in the albergue and were easy to approach.



PSYCHOLOGICAL JOURNEY ON THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO PILGRIMAGE

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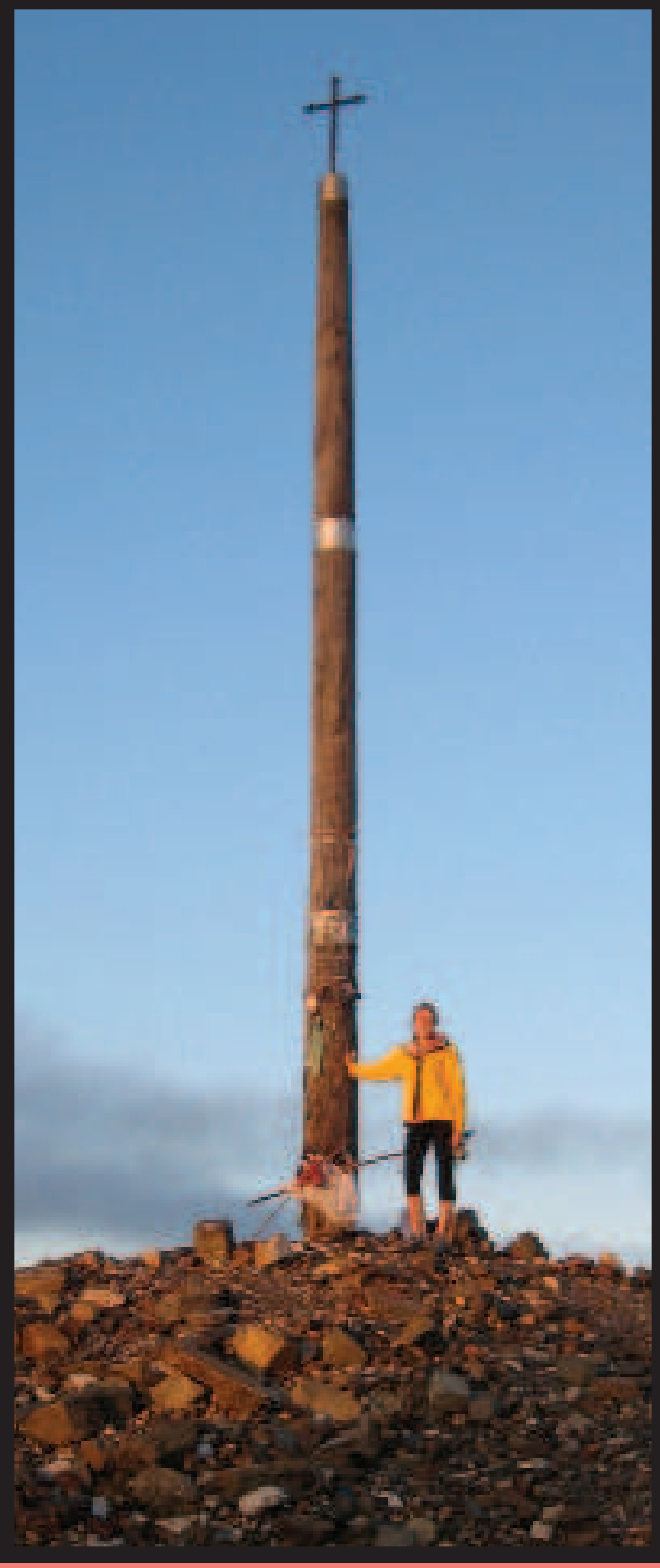


TABLE 1

Demographics of Participants

Participant	Age	Country of Origin	Sex	Religious Affiliation
1036	36	Germany	F	Deist
1124	24	Germany	F	Deist
1244	44	Serbia	M	Deist
1341	41	Spain	M	Deist
1423	23	United States	F	Conservative Christian
1064	64	Germany	M	Deist
2054	54	Canada	M	Liberal Christian
3062	62	Germany	F	Deist
4066	66	Spain	M	Deist
5030	30	United Kingdom	M	Liberal Christian
6046	46	United Kingdom	M	Deist
7037	37	United Kingdom	M	Conservative Christian
8044	44	Spain	M	Liberal Christian
9045	45	Germany	F	Deist



TABLE 2

Outline of Theoretical Constructs, Themes, and Repeating Ideas

A. MOTIVES

1. Seeking a change in life
 - a. Seeking distance 57%
 - b. Searching for transformation 50%
 - c. Searching for a change 50%

“Not only for spiritual and religious, but also for cleaning purposes, a bit meditation, and get closer and back to nature and out of civilization”(1244).

2. Abstract and internal sense of a calling to the pilgrimage
 - a. An abstract sense of a calling 57%
 - b. A desire to be in touch with a spiritual or higher being 50%
 - c. Out of curiosity 36%

“Oh my god, I think every Spaniard, every one of us has that in the blood. To go to Santiago once. It is like you are Muslim and have to go to Mecca. You have to go to Santiago once”(8044).

3. Ability to participate
 - a. Quit work, unemployed or retired 57%

“Oh, I quit everything. I got the time. I quit my job, I left”(9045).

B. EXPERIENCE ON THE CAMINO

1. Being Present
 - a. Feeling emotions in the present moment 86%
 - b. Being silent and recognizing this as important 86%
 - c. Simplicity of walking the Camino for a month without attachments 57%
 - d. Feeling the Spiritual aspect 50%
 - e. Appreciating nature 50%

“I’d say most of the time I’ve been in silence. Most days I didn’t walk with anyone and I’ve kept my cell phone off. And I’ve not been tempted at all to go to an internet portal and check my email or anything. I loved being away. It’s been wonderful”(1423).

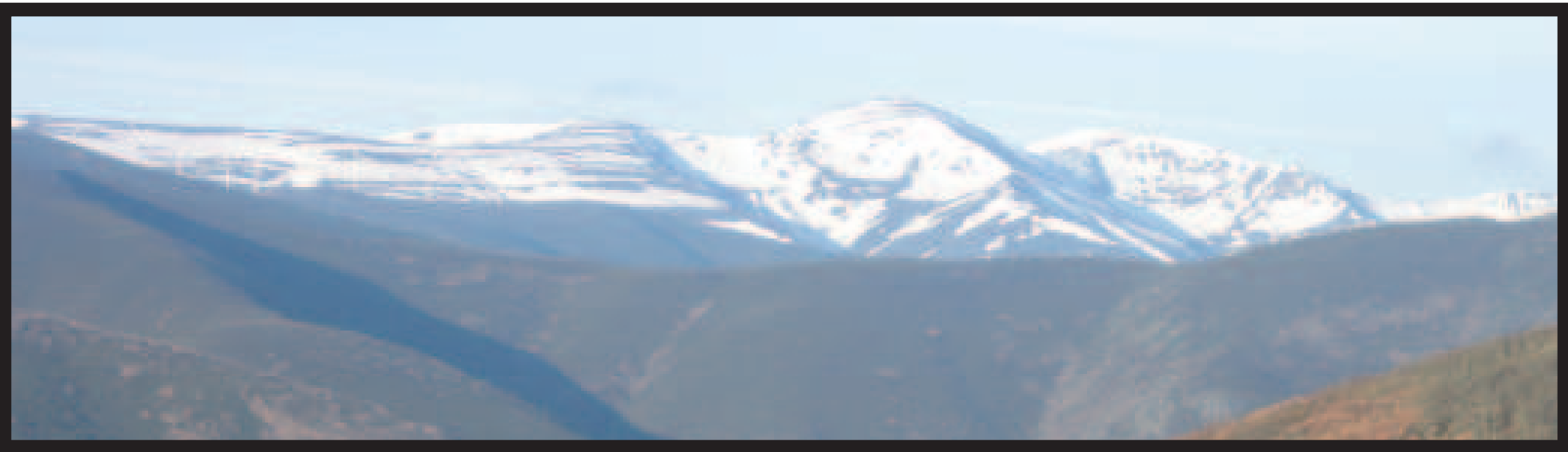
2. Being Changed
 - a. Experiencing an emotional or mental change on the way or not experiencing such change 79%
 - b. Experiencing healing on the Camino 64%
 - c. Sense of the Camino as a journey, some new and long, like life 57%
 - d. Feeling a confirmation of beliefs 43%

“The fourth day of the Camino, thanks to the Camino, the tumor popped out of my back and opened: a cancer I had in my back, thanks to the Camino, came out. Then the doctors operated, took it out, and I healed...For me, yes [the Camino was an alternative medicine]. Psychologically and physically. The kilometers I walked on the Camino helped me a lot psychologically and physically. The Camino provides free healing.... I return to the Camino to recover three things: physical health, physiological health, and spiritual health that the each of us, you need to see in your own mind. So, yes, for me my power was in my mind, physiologically to help my body be healthier”(4066).

C. PREPARING FOR CLOSURE AS THE PILGRIMAGE COMES TO AN END

1. Holding onto the present
 - a. Not thinking about going home 43%
 - b. Wishing to hold onto the present, in nature 29%

“I don’t know. I just don’t know. Anything I’d say about that would just be mental chatter. Actually I feel that. I just don’t know [how it will be returning home]. I’m glad to say”(6046).



RESULTS

TABLE 3

Follow-up Interview Results

- A. Incorporating Knowledge and Growth into Home Life
- a. Home was strange 50%

“The most difficult thing for me right from the beginning was to accept the fact that I was no longer alone for myself, being able to decide whatever I wanted to do by myself ... I was free, free in the real meaning of the word. All and everything was my own decision, but from the moment I was back with my wife and the family and my dog I just had to queue up again in rank and file. I had a few days to come back to the fact that from then on I was no longer really free... Take lunchtime for simple example. Normally it’s between 12 noon and 01:00 p.m. But in Spain on the Camino that was not the time for eating and so I did not feel hungry at that time here... So I had to pull back my freedom and go back into rank and file and such happened with about everything”(1064).

- b. Incorporate and reflect on new knowledge and change 36%

“It is not integrating myself back into a life I have had before, but it is to integrate the Camino into everyday life... I felt that the Camino was so wise and it has taught me so many little useful things about faith and love and life... After having read my letter again I clearly can say: yes, I have changed, and for that, my life, too”(1036).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. Who was on the pilgrimage?” 64% were Deists, 21% were Liberal Christians and 14% were Conservative Christians, as seen in Table 1
2. What motivations and experiences do pilgrims discuss? Table 2 shows the narrations in an outline of Theoretical Constructs, Themes and Repeating Ideas.
3. The third question looked at how individuals incorporated their experience into their home life based on responses to follow-up interviews in Table 3



DISCUSSION

1. The population was mostly Western European Deists, thus no cultural distinctions could be made because there were no individuals from Eastern countries with whom to compare
 2. New and updated motivations and experiences were found, but no no insights emerged about differing experiences and motives between individuals of different religious backgrounds, sex or other demographic backgrounds
 - Most important motives: to get distance and answer an abstract sense of calling
 - Most important experiences: feeling in the present moment, silence and experiencing a mental or emotional change
 3. The most common reports upon returning home indicated:
 - Home was strange because of the contrasting lifestyles
 - Pilgrims came back with new knowledge and perspectives that pilgrims consciously tried to keep in mind, although it was often very challenging
- OVERALL: Pilgrims reported positive changes, sometimes even transformative changes after completing the pilgrimage due to new perspectives gained during journeying alone alongside pilgrims from all over the world

References

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