Examining Boko Haram from Conversion Theory 2009-2015

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ABSTRACT

The world has witnessed a dramatic rise in the number of terrorist groups in the past 20 years. Some terrorist groups have grown large in size and stature, and have come to possess government-style leadership through militaristic force. These include the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations. Some smaller terrorist sects may form and remain small for the duration of their efforts, resulting in a localized area that they impact. Those smaller groups may not have the global influence they initially envisioned. However, few groups manage to grow so significantly, that they manage to reach across international borders, connecting with other terrorist organizations. Boko Haram is one of those groups that started small and remained relatively unknown for over 5 years. In 2009, they burst onto the political landscape and world stage in a major way after their founder was killed by the Nigerian military. The catalyst for the group's rapid rise involved a clash with police forces, and Boko Haram's refusal to wear crash helmets during a funeral procession of one of its members in mid-2009. Their efforts now have the potential to destabilize the entire northern region of Africa, let alone Nigeria. If left unaddressed, the Boko Haram political agenda could create chaos. Their agenda, like some other Islamic extremist sects, include implementation of Sharia law, while denouncing various aspects of Western culture. The transition of devout, traditional, and otherwise peaceful Islamic believers, to converts resorting to large-scale violent means, suggests some sort of influence during their conversion. Studying elements related to the religious conversion experience may give an understanding of how ideas about extremism develop, and are fostered by those respective groups.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The world has witnessed a dramatic rise in the number of terrorist groups in the past 20 years. Some terrorist groups have grown large in size and stature, and have come to possess government-style leadership through militaristic force. These include the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations. Some smaller terrorist sects may form and remain small for the duration of their efforts, resulting in a localized area that they impact. Those smaller groups may not have the global influence they initially envisioned. However, few groups manage to grow so significantly, that they manage to reach across international borders, connecting with other terrorist organizations. Boko Haram is one of those groups that started small and remained relatively unknown for over 5 years. It is unclear how many members they had in 2002 but by 2015, it is believed they had 15,000 troops (Amnesty, 2015). In 2009, they burst onto the political landscape and world stage in a major way after their founder was killed by the Nigerian military. The catalyst for the group's rapid rise involved a clash with police forces, and Boko Haram's refusal to wear crash helmets during a funeral procession of one of its members in mid-2009. Their efforts now have the potential to destabilize the entire northern region of Africa, let alone Nigeria. If left unaddressed, the Boko Haram political agenda could create chaos. Their agenda, like some other Islamic extremist sects, include implementation of Sharia law, while denouncing various aspects of Western culture. The transition of devout, traditional, and otherwise peaceful Islamic believers, to converts resorting to large-scale violent means,

suggests some sort of influence during their conversion. Studying elements related to the religious conversion experience may give an understanding of how ideas about extremism develop, and are fostered by those respective groups.

There are many studies that have been completed regarding the conversion experience from a Western culture worldview (Smith & Stewart, 2011; Granqvist, 2003; Rambo, 1999), but not so much from a Middle Eastern and Islamic standpoint. Scholarly studies about conversion mainly look at personality change, relationships between religion and one's childhood attachment, inter-denominational conversions within the same religion, and dynamics related to the process of conversion (Paloutzian et al., 1999; Halama, 2014; Loveland, 2003). Since an individual conversion experience focuses on personal attributes (such as personality) and circumstances (such as a person's past life experience), many studies have drawn conclusions based on groups of people having a similar experience. This framework has been used to understand conversion theories to present day.

Although it has been well-explored in the Westernized world, conversion dynamics have been less researched in context to other religions. In most religions there are sects that take religious teachings to levels that would include violence, and sects of Islam are no different. Some Islamic sects take a literal interpretation of the Quran, where acts of violence are acceptable. However, other Islamic sects take a figurative interpretation on various Quranic texts, and live peaceably. For those converts where a literal interpretation is reinforced in extremist individuals' lives, there may be new insights to glean about the conversion experience. Scholarly studies that look at personality changes and childhood attachment can be helpful to a point, but each still

looks at conversion from a Western socialization perspective. There are few scholarly studies, if any, that examine how, or whether a conversion experience can possibly lead someone toward extremist tendencies.

The purpose of this study is to discover whether there is a relationship between conversion theory and Islamic extremism through the Boko Haram terrorist group. This study will take a convergent parallel mixed methods approach for analysis, where qualitative and quantitative data are collected at the same time. The data will be analyzed separately in quantitative and qualitative measures, and then merged together to find similarities and differences that may support or refute the conversion theory. Data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data reports (ACLED) will be used to test conversion theory, which predicts whether elements of a seven-stage model of conversion positively influence the likelihood of someone adopting extremist views into the Boko Haram group. Media reports of Boko Haram's incidents will provide a qualitative context for examining whether particular steps in the conversion process stand out, which might lead to an easier acceptance of extremism. A more complete context for this study can be beneficial, since qualitative data (such as media reports) and quantitative data (data reports of incidences), have not been thoroughly studied together in the context of conversion theory and extremism.

This study can be useful to the scholarly field because there is little research examining the relationship between conversion and Islamic extremism. It should be noted the African Union (2014) defines, extremism and the terrorism associated with it, as "an act intended to cause death or serious injury to a civilian, or to any other person not taking an active part in the hostilities in a situation of armed conflict, when the

purpose of such act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or an international organization to do or abstain from any such act." This is a general definition to terrorism that is widely accepted among governments and scholars alike. Understanding the relationship between conversion theory and extremist Islamic culture may shed light on ways to alleviate tensions between Boko Haram and the local Nigerian governments and agencies. This study can also be useful to policymakers and government officials by providing insight on cultural factors that may not have been previously taken into account about Islamic members that believe resorting to violence is the main way in expressing their Islamic faith.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In order to justify the need for this study, there are various aspects related to Boko Haram, terrorism, and theories of conversion that must be assessed. These include a history of Nigeria, the impact of Westernization and colonization efforts, and political factors. Some studies (Hill, 2013; Slayton, 2015) suggest Middle Eastern terrorism and terroristic acts committed by African terrorist groups differ on fundamentally different levels. Factors also related to a religious conversion experience can be influenced by individual traits, as well as the institution and practice of religion.

Nigeria is part of a group of countries that stretch from West to East across the continent that has become susceptible to terrorist influences over the past century. There is a portion of each of the countries listed, which form a band known as the Sahel. Galito (2012) outlines the main portions of the Sahel, and include parts of the following countries: Senegal and Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Chad, Southern Sudan and Northern Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia. This strip of land shares common traits which makes it unstable and difficult for governments to control and govern. These features include "instability in political borders, significant increase in violence, and the fact that national governments seem unable to control…unorganized crime" (p. 141). The origins of the instability can be traced back to the re-drawing of each country's lines.

The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 did not consider the political and social landscapes existing at the time. Alesina (2006) explained that more powerful countries

like the United States, Great Britain, France and Italy divided the African nations and drew territorial lines for control over natural resources. The power nations did not take into account the significance of each country's respective culture, and divided the African countries in a way where local rivalries were fostered among different ethnic groups, so the likelihood of those countries uniting and establishing independence were less likely. However, since the end of World War II, the power nations could no longer hold their economic and military influence over the African nations. African nations then started to become independent entities, without ever re-drawing their borders. This led to conflicts between ethnic groups over key natural resources. Ethnic groups have lobbied for and fought against other groups in efforts to claim their rights to them. In Nigeria, the country is now divided into the north and the south, which partially explains the conflict present in their area (Galito, 2012). Recent influences from a terrorist group has contributed to the conflict has contributed to the possible rise of Boko Haram.

The Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is a terrorist group that started in Algeria, and are known throughout the Sahel region. They are involved with other groups across the region and have proven to be instrumental in helping other terrorist groups execute violent acts. The AQIM has managed to use social and political rivalries, and religious alliances to control illegal activities and facilitate their own agendas (Galito, 2012, pp. 145-147). Studies (Malysheva, 2015; Cohen, 2013; Agbiboa, 2013) suggest those groups have influenced Boko Haram in recent years. The southern part of Nigeria is occupied by Christians or animists, while the northern part is primarily occupied by Muslim ethnical groups "the Hausa-Fulani being especially influential…because of their international relations with Muslim brotherhoods from Africa and the Middle East"

(Galito, 2012, p. 148). Northern Nigeria has nowhere near the amount of resources the southern part has. The Niger Delta in the south is home to a rich amount of oil resources, which has led to the argument of income disparity between the northern and southern parts of the country. Terrorist organizations like AQIM and Boko Haram may be using economic hardships to strengthen their basis for what is known as "Sharia Law" across the region. Sharia law is a legal framework by which public and some private aspects of life are regulated for those living in legal systems based on Islam.

Agbiboa (2014) elaborated on Boko Haram's origins, ideology, demands/goals, how the state has responded to the group, and discussed what the government should do in response to the threat. The leader of the Maitatsine Muslim fanatic group was Muhammed Marwa, who believed "Islam had come under the corrupting influence of modernization" (p. 49). In the 1960s, the Maitatsine lived secluded from modernized areas, but later in the 1990s, started fighting in the name of religion after receiving radical Islamic literature (p. 50). Combined with relative poverty, social and financial inequality, lack of economic development, higher unemployment, lack of transparency and accountability by the government (p. 52), extremist groups began to look like the only alternative to a population whose basic needs had not been met by its leadership. These pretenses led to Boko Haram gaining members.

A senior member of Boko Haram stated though their name "gives the impression that we are opposed to formal education coming from the West…which is not true,…our belief in the supremacy of Islamic culture (not education), for culture is broader, it includes education but not determined by Western education" (Onuoha, 2012, p. 2). Members of the group include a vast array of social classes, and come from primarily the

Kanuri tribe, which are mainly Sunni Islamists (Agbiboa, 2014, p. 55). Boko Haram has been using "suicide bombing, gunmen on motorbikes, killing police, politicians, and anyone who criticizes it, including Muslim clerics who disclose information of their whereabouts to state security services" (p. 56). They have targeted "police stations, patrols, and individual policemen at home or in public who were off-duty or retired" as part of their modus operandi since 2011 (p. 56).

Political leaders have tried negotiations with Boko Haram, but have not yet been successful, with the government being accused of "insincerity in its call for dialogue" (Agbiboa, 2014, p. 59). At the same time, the government's state security forces have aggressively pursued and cracked down on members of Boko Haram. The military had a legacy characterized by "arbitrariness, ruthlessness, brutality, vandalism, incivility, [and] low accountability to the public and corruption" (Alemika, 1988), and civilians have become accustomed to this. In other words, the public does not trust the local military, and are ready to dismiss the military's assertion of present day wrong-doing. Agbiboa suggests the Nigerian government needs to "work toward winning the confidence of Boko Haram by implementing some of the demands the group members presented to the government," including the release of some group members, compensation to families (p. 62). The government needs to develop an "intelligence-led strategy to better confront Boko Haram's localized terrorist activities" and "a long-term strategy that will undercut the *jihadist* appeal in northern Nigeria [by addressing] the socioeconomic inequalities and human insecurity in the region" (p. 62), which are echoed in other literature reviews.

The leadership and politics in control of Nigeria have also been blamed for Boko Haram's rise in power and influence. Bamidele (2016) said that "corruption and

ultimately the lack of sustainable, responsible, and responsive leadership" have certainly not helped Nigeria's cause since the creation of new states in 1967 (p. 61). The author explains the colonization from the British led to a "wave of migration that resulted in the exchange of population" between the northern and southern regions (p. 62). This resulted in ethnic and religious groups, not being able to settle their differences by the use of sociopolitical and civil institutions and instead used violence (p. 62). There was a process of "Muslimization" over a number of years that changed the northern region's mores and made them "increasingly intolerant of other religious expressions or sectarian affiliations" (pp. 62-63). Bamidele declared "the forcing together of groups and nationalities that had almost nothing in common" (p. 63) was the catalyst for the tension in the country.

The argument about Nigeria's militaristic history cannot be ignored, and likely has an impact on the political landscape and the social turmoil the world is witnessing. Agbiboa (2013) states the military ruled over the country for 30 out of its 40 years after declaring independence, with the exception of a couple short periods of time (p. 432). Nigeria is considered to be the classic example of a militarized state, where "militarization consists of the use or threat of violence was used to settle political conflicts, the violation of human rights, extrajudicial killings, and gross repression of the people" (p. 432).

The emergence of Boko Haram, established in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf, officially calls itself "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teaching and Jihad" have set themselves against what they view as a "hopelessly corrupt and apostate ruling elite" (Agbiboa, 2013, p. 432), aiming to bring religious purity. Boko

Haram's name is derived from the terms "boko" meaning "book" and "haram" meaning "forbidden," and has been translated to "Western education is forbidden" (p. 433). After one of its members died in a car accident in 2009, members of Boko Haram attended the funeral procession, without adhering to newly established laws about motorcycles and crash helmets. The group and state security forces clashed, and an "anti-robbery task force comprised of military and police personnel" killed 17 Boko Haram members (p. 433). The Nigerian government did not investigate the use of force. The group and the government dealt attacks and acts of violence against each other from 2009 to 2011, culminating to the extrajudicial killing of Yusuf on July 30, 2011, and Boko Haram's survivors went into hiding, later resurfacing.

Nigerian officials were not able to trace Boko Haram's sources of funding, but members stated it "relied on donations from members, its links with AQIM opened it up to more funding from groups in Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom…[as well as] from robbing banks" (Agbiboa, 2013, p. 435). By the time group members resurfaced, they devised a more precise strategy. Their aim was to attack churches from December 2011 through July 2012 with the hope of starting "a large scale of sectarian conflict" to destabilize the country (p. 432). Agbiboa suggests the government needs to pursue a "non-killing tactic of negotiation and political dialogue in lieu of military crackdowns" (p. 436) since the threat of intimidation through military force is not as effective as it once was, and could make the situation worse.

Islam has become one of the dominating world religions (as cited in Bamidele, 2016, p. 64) where "Islamic education and scholarship, which confer considerable status, are often associated with time spent at centers of Islamic learning abroad, where informed

discussions take place about the political systems of most Islamic countries." Interactions such as those involving higher Islamic education and scholarship abroad might have acted as a catalyst for the rise of extremism in recent years. Bamidele (2016) mentions there has been a change in the types of weapons used in Boko Haram's attacks, as well as a lack of security enforcement along the Nigeria/Cameroon borders, resulting in increased influence for Boko Haram at that area, as well as a sense of lawlessness associated with the northeast portion of the country (p. 64).

As Bamidele (2016) explains since Nigeria's independence, there has not been a considerable decrease in economic disparity, despite various developmental projects and poverty alleviation programs that have been put in place to remedy that exact problem (pp. 66-67). Each time Nigeria has had an economic "boom" period (between 1960-1966 and 1999-2014), the public policies made the rich richer and the poor poorer. This has been due to the "lack of equal opportunity in education, employment, health, ethnic, religious, regional and political differences" (p. 67). Similar government programs in other countries tend to alleviate some class disparity, but it has not in Nigeria. This has angered a part of the population that has been convinced the government is not doing enough to help them. Members of that population have turned to Boko Haram in an act of government resistance. President Goodluck Jonathan developed a committee that has not proven fruitful in the fight against Boko Haram (p. 69) and responses to the group have been "hesitant, tepid and ambiguous" (p. 75). With no clear solution in sight, the Nigerian economy suffers and may not prosper again until proper political action is taken (pp. 75-76).

There are specific demographic factors actively influencing and fostering the violence and upheaval in the northern region of Nigeria. Malysheva (2015) explained there is a large number of unemployed youth that are showing resistance against the government (p. 153). The northern region's younger generations are turning to extremism because of "social problems, unemployment, and poverty" and join "armed units based on common clan, ethnic or religious affiliation" (p. 156). Recent efforts of the local governments have tried to subdue sociopolitical and religious issues with brute force. However, the growing opposition in the northern territories and Boko Haram's influence has developed a "well-armed and well-organized opposition determined to seize power" (p. 153). The armed conflicts seen are the result of "unfair (either real or imaginary) distribution of state budgets" (p. 153). But "authorities deal with economic, [and] social and ecological problems of territories populated by compact ethnic groups" (p. 153) in different ways. However, Nigerian authorities have not successfully overcome the challenges. These conflicts are the result of an absence or failure of reforms, typically associated with a degree of political corruption, resulting in the person or group's impoverishment. Also, the lack of their political power among the same group leads to those people taking up arms, resulting in conflict (p. 153). The impending civil war could be avoided if political leadership "do away with persistent poverty, achieve an agreement on many issues (up to and including reforms in the educational system) with those of the local Muslims who reject Westernization and oppose reforms" (p. 158). With that being stated, the Nigerian leadership also has to deal with outside terrorist group influences.

Islamic jihad did not always include African groups or cultures. There are some "grey zones" (outside the reach of government and organization control) terrorist organizations use to train and brainwash their recruits with extremist ideas (Malysheva, 2015, p. 158). As mentioned before, the AQIM has been influential across the entire Sahel region, and their influence has been able to sway African nations in a few ways. The "practically transparent" state borders, the affiliation between political/religious extremism and organized crime, and the ability to create conflicts in countries with natural resources has begun to "develop into international conflicts with extensive coverage in Western Media" (p. 161). Nigeria has been dragged into the international scene, and terrorist acts seem to be slowly shifting more towards Africa than ever before.

Boko Haram's tactics and methods of attack have changed over the past few years. On April 14, 2014, the group abducted more than 240 female students at night from a Chibok school (Amnesty Int'l, 2014). Amnesty International also independently verified "Nigerian security forces had more than four hours of advance warning about the attack but did not do enough to stop it" (Amnesty Int'l, 2014). The assumption is the group still has some of those that were kidnapped, and there have been efforts to indoctrinate or brainwash them, and to use them as suicide bombers (Eke, 2015, p. 323). As a whole, the number of Western and foreign kidnappings by Boko Haram have increased since 2013 (Taylor, 2014, p. 5), and include the recent kidnapping of children at a school property. Their acts have also included the destruction of schools in the northern provinces, as well. They proclaim students have been "converted to Islam and would be sold as slaves or brides to Boko Haram fighters" (p. 7).

The Nigerian government has not had much success in dealing with human rights violations against Boko Haram, or violations committed against others by its own security forces (Taylor, 2014, p. 3). As it stands now, Boko Haram has violated human rights including "the right to life, liberty, and security of person…slavery and servitude…from torture and cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment" and "gender-based bias and discrimination, and forced conversion" (p. 8). Since Boko Haram has expressed "frustration with the political system and lack of social and economic development," the group has attributed fault to Western culture and influences, and seek a "return to traditional Islamic rule" (p. 4), which include Sharia law. The group's fighters, however, argue they rightfully obtained slaves as outlined by Sharia doctrine, but many rights organizations say students at a school should not fall under those guidelines.

The types of attacks Boko Haram carry out have various impacts. Taylor (2014) says they have targeted more schools, leading to a fear for students to receive an education, which is already detrimental to the northern region. The impacts of financial and social demands on the present generation can be felt because more government resources than expected are being used in the fight against Boko Haram. In turn, this has worn out Nigerian troops, leading to "lack adequate resources to defend against the…insurgency" (p. 14). Because Nigeria's security forces, joint task forces, and military have not been held accountable, in light of "harsh counter-terrorism policies and the military's severe treatment of Boko Haram prisoners" (p. 15), the international community has not readily come to Nigeria's aid. The U.S. had lent aid to Nigeria in the form of "military training on professionalism, peacekeeping support, border security, and justice sector programming to improve Nigerian prosecution of terrorist financing cases"

(p. 17). Taylor concludes by stating, "Protecting the vulnerable from exploitation [Chibok school students] should be an international priority…with an international effort to rescue the innocent victims" (p. 23).

There are fundamental differences between the terrorism experienced in the Middle East and Africa. Slayton (2015) says researchers and scholars cannot "superimpose the Middle East Islamist context over the Sub-Saharan African cultural landscape… [because it] can make it very difficult to separate the religious extremist influence from the social and political entanglers" if everything is viewed from a Middle East perspective (p. 123). Social and political factors experienced in the Middle East and North Africa have not had the same reaction in the Sub-Saharan region, so Slayton argues Sub-Saharan culture and Islamic identity cannot be generalized (p. 124). In most instances, the world's Muslims are unified on matters of faith, regardless of Arab, African or Asian descent but in Sub-Saharan Africa, "Islamic practices are influenced greatly by African traditions and Sufi thought" (p. 125).

Slayton (2015) cites an article by An-Na'im (1997) where Middle East Islam is viewed as "self-righteous, rigid, exclusive and doctrinaire," while Sub-Saharan African practices reflect "self critical, flexible, inclusive, and pragmatic" qualities. Elements of Islamic practices may be fundamentally different, based on the culture where the religion is practiced. Slayton points out that Sufism has a "mystical side" that has meshed well with traditionalism in Africa, which gives the Sufi religious practice a "diverse flavor" (p. 126). With Sufism being the traditional form of Islam in Africa, studies are showing high Sufi officials are "out of touch with the youth" and "traditional Qur'an teachers are losing influence to the more modern teaching methods used by Islamist-minded educators"

(Holtedahl & Djingui, 1997, p. 273. Groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS claim "corrupt" practices have made innocent Muslims into non-believers, leading those groups to justify the execution of innocent Muslims in a swift manner. However, most of the Muslim population does not endorse this method or viewpoint (Slayton, 2016, p. 125).

A mix of other African-specific factors has influenced the region's unbalance. Disenfranchisement, wars for independence, and the "colonial carve up of Africa…[which] in no way match the ethnolinguistic reality" (Slayton, 2015, pp. 127-128) all account for ways that primed the Sub-Saharan region for extremist roots. With those in place, it was possible for "violent Salafist movements to insert their teachings…during the process of de-colonization and post-colonial secular government formation" (p. 129). In Nigeria, knowing the Arabic language, where Arabic is not the primary language, "holds a religious function more than a social or political purpose," which serves to "gain religious credibility in recruitment videos and pamphlets" for groups like Boko Haram and other terrorist groups (p. 130).

Hill (2013) makes a comparison between Boko Haram and a Nigerian group from the 1920s called the Tijaniyaa. Hill draws parallels between the groups, noting the circumstances Nigeria faces may not be too dissimilar from a situation faced in the 1920s. First, he points out Boko Haram's structure is not as "unitary" and instead "seems far more likely that it is made up of relatively autonomous factions and cells each with their own leaders, fighters and goals," which creates difficulties in identifying, labeling, and "descriptive blurring…of fractured structures" like the Boko Haram and Tijaniyaa groups (p. 237). After the battle of Maiduguri, Boko Haram survivors sought AQIM agents, who helped train and supply them with weapons and money. Because of this

indebtedness, Boko Haram swore an oath and alliance with AQIM. This leads to the second parallel which is between "their links to groups elsewhere in the Islamic world from which they have benefited" (p. 240).

Hill (2013) explains the Sultan has tremendous religious authority in the Nigeria's Muslim community, while President Jonathan has no Islamic credibility. Efforts to persuade the Sultan and traditional leaders in the north to forge a relationship with President Jonathan are uneasy for fear of losing their reputations in the north (pp. 240-241). These religious leaders do not have a particular favoring toward Boko Haram, because they "deplore its use of violence and have condemned the death and suffering it has caused," but also have to be "mindful of doing anything that might antagonise the country's Christians" (p. 241). Viewed as an easier-to-understand "vision" of Islam, Salafist groups are regarded as more dynamic and exciting (like AQIM, Boko Haram, and al-Qaeda) and have successfully spread into Nigeria (p. 241). The traditional northern leaders' influence has diminished because of radicalized Islam penetrating the country and a Westernized, mostly Christianized southern region.

Boko Haram's rise is the result of the Nigerian government "wrongly perceiv[ing] the threat" posed by the group as less than a terrorist organization (Eke, 2015, p. 320). There are scathing criticisms the Nigerian Army "demonstrated gross incapacity to deal with insurgents…years of fiscal mismanagement within the army, the refusal to procure modern military equipment and the failure…to gather valuable intelligence" (p. 319), leading to inefficient military action against Boko Haram. However, Boko Haram has "employed innovation to sustain surprise in many of its attacks and seems to earn greater significance with each episode" (p. 320) and scaled up its operations. The author also

states Boko Haram's legitimacy as a terrorist organization should have been more evident to the Nigerian government by its link to other foreign terrorist organizations by its "enhanced lethality of its attack and bi-directional pledges…to other foreign terrorist organizations…[with] similarities in the modus operandi of BH and the likes of Al Shabaab, AQIM and more recently, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" (p. 321). In March 2015, Boko Haram received a pledge of loyalty by ISIL which declared, "We announce to you the good news of the expansion of the caliphate to West Africa. Our caliph has accepted the pledge of loyalty of our brothers of Boko Haram so we congratulate Muslims and our jihadi brothers in West Africa" (Akbar, 2015).

Eke (2015) continues to lay blame on the Nigerian government by pointing out "botched ceasefires, offered amnesty to BH militants and rolled out plans to improve the north socio-economically…Nigerians further lost confidence in the government due to the outcome of these efforts" (p. 324). In the midst of government follies, Boko Haram has strengthened and gained confidence, while the Nigerian military has faltered and struggled to effectively respond to the group's attacks.

Cohen (2013) states Al Qaeda insurgency has been a particular problem among three countries: Somalia, Mali, and Nigeria. With regard to Nigeria and other oil-producing countries, Cohen tells readers the country has "not utilized its oil wealth wisely over the years, and the general population has seen few benefits" (p. 67). Because there has been a consistent mismanagement of wealth, the country has not had many periods of peace; rather, uprisings and revolts have been the norm for years. Amidst kidnappings, ambushes against military and police, offshore pirating, and sabotage of oil pipelines, the government's attention has been drawn to the southern part of the country, allowing Boko

Haram to come to prominence (p. 68). There are indicators Boko Haram is adopting Algerian AQIM tactics, and have received bomb making and other special operations trainings in Mali. For example, Boko Haram members are mimicking AQIM by "moving into Christian villages in the dead of night and slitting the throats of every man, woman, and child" and are "allegedly going to northern Mali for training in bomb making and other special operations (p. 68). These actions better position Boko Haram to destabilize the country, which could open the gates for Al Qaeda operations in Nigeria (p. 68). He concludes the government corruption "opens the door to desperate, violent youth who are vulnerable to Al Qaeda infiltration and capture" (p. 69) due to the unequal distribution of oil wealth to the north compared to the south.

The adherence to religious practices is often driven by some form of conversion brought on by individual or institutional factors. Conversion is often the catalyst driving an individual to or away from a religion or set of beliefs. There are many theories on how the conversion process works. Each offers an explanation that can be used to understand the conversion phenomenon, and some of them are described below.

Halama (2015) looked at five types of conversion by examining a research sample of 179 participants who self-identified as religious converts. Scholars agree that the process of religious conversion is "a change in religious attitude, when a person adopts religious beliefs that were alien or marginal before the conversion" (p. 185). There are various psychological processes in a conversion experience, which include: positive emotions, relief, meaning-searching, and feelings of sin. There are also outside influences such as parents as positive influences, and religious education. More individual-specific factors include long-term conversion (gradual, as opposed to sudden

conversion), parental compensation, internal process, prior crisis, and negative emotions. Finally, sudden and mystical experiences, and no prior religiosity are other characteristics described by Halama (p. 189). It is important to note long-term/gradual conversion, sudden and mystical conversion, and parental compensation are all expanded on further in the literature review. All of these factors and psychological processes have helped to define five types of conversion: extended struggle to be religious, sudden personal faith intensification, compensatory conversion, no specific conversion experience, and socialized conversion (p. 189-191).

Compensatory conversion has a high level of parental compensation (a person seeking support from God to compensate for the lack of parental love), and insecure attachments (Halama, 2015, pp. 191-192). The author suggests these types of converts experience religious change brought on by stress and is "sudden and often accompanied by negative feelings, such as a sense of sin" (p. 192). The socialization-based conversion incorporates people with a secure attachment where there is "a gradual religious change following previous religious education…accompanied by more positive than negative feelings" (p. 192). The conversion factors are social influence, feelings of safety and trust in others, and the conversion is a result of "the creation of social and emotional bonds with close people and accepting their values" (p. 192).

Halama (2015) also describes is a sudden personal faith intensification and is characterized by an experience of "strong religious, or spiritual change towards a more committed and intensive religiosity, primarily stimulated by intellectual factors, rather than social factors (p. 192). There is also an "extended struggle to be religious," which is a conversion characterized by "high negative emotion during conversion…[and] may

represent a kind of 'sick soul' religiosity…but without the emotional benefits that religiosity could provide" (p. 192). Finally, "no specific conversion experience" can be characterized by individuals who might not be real converts, or where a small religious change may be counted as a "conversion" due to social pressure towards group standards (pp. 192-193). The author admits though, a major limitation to his research is it does not study Muslims, or other religious movements, or other specific types of religious people. Some of these types of conversion experiences could perhaps apply and identify factors in Islamic culture and religiosity.

According to Lofland and Stark (1965), there is a process for conversion where a person must experience enduring, acutely felt tensions, within a religious problem-solving perspective, which leads him to define himself as a religious seeker. There are "predisposing conditions" the person displays, which include a person's attributes prior to their contact with a cult or other religion, and individual background factors (p. 864). After this, "situational contingencies" of a person's interaction with another religion or cult further influence whether the recruit may embrace the religion. Most commonly, the person encounters the group at a turning point in life, forming an affective bond with other converts, absent of extra-cult attachments, where he becomes a deployable agent, exposed to intensive interaction (p. 870). Their theory is the earliest known process theory in modern culture. Rambo (1999) utilized pieces of this to construct his seven-part conversion theory.

Smith and Stewart (2011) explain Rambo's seven-part conversion in detail, but also add a theoretical expansion to the framework. Smith and Stewart (as cited Rambo 1993) says "stable, resilient environments will contain few members receptive to

conversion, whereas those in crisis will contain more; the duration and intensity of contextual change affects receptivity" (p. 807). Since Rambo's theory is a process as well, he suggests the act of conversion is a "lengthy process stimulated by crisis and distress, characterized by incremental change" (Smith & Stewart, 2011, p. 811). Rambo's seven stages include: context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment, and consequences.

The *context* is the "environment in which change occurs including macro factors such as the relationship between an institution and government as well as family and friends" (Smith & Stewart, 2011, p. 810). The authors suggest context may also act as a "kind of cognitive priming, increasing readiness by shaping receptivity…[where] priming took the form of discontent or dissatisfaction (p. 815). Next, *crisis* is defined as the "catalyst-either internal or external-stimulating an individual to seek change or become placed within a context of change" (p. 810), which include "despair, disaffection and marginalization transformed into alienation and withdrawal" (p. 815). If there is no tension to create the crisis, then one would likely not have a reason to seek conversion. The *quest* is the next stage Rambo explains, which is "the active pursuit of change by an individual already in the context of change" (p. 810). Because an individual is already experiencing crisis, a convert is seeking pleasure while simultaneously desiring to "enhance self-esteem, establish gratifying relationships, and attain a sense of power and transcendence" (p. 816). The fourth stage is *encounter* where the prospective convert and an advocate for the new beliefs meet for the first time. *Interaction* is the fifth stage, and includes "the new convert's interaction with their belief system or movement including participation in rituals, changed relationships, the use of specific rhetoric and jargon, and

the assumption of new roles or services within the group often demanding greater leadership" (pp. 810-811). At stage six, the process of *commitment* is assumed, where the convert's public pronouncement of transformation is made. The final stage is *consequences*, which are the "ramifications for the convert's lifestyle after the conversion process" (p. 811).

Smith and Stewart (2011) argue interaction and commitment are the most crucial points in the conversion process. Smith and Stewart interpret Rambo's cycle, which suggests "when the quest fails or the encounter proves unsatisfying, the process returns to the self-reinforcing cycle of context, catalyst, and quest" (p. 819). This means, if the quest fails, then the process starts again. So, when an encounter takes place, "a potential convert must make a minimal commitment before interaction can stimulate belief change" (p. 819). Smith and Stewart contest that interaction and commitment "comprises the 'engine' of conversion," which is a mechanism that drives conversion. Their "engine" includes "rituals, roles, rhetoric, and relationships…[that] produce a fuller commitment where beliefs transition" (pp. 819-820). The authors' evidence and testing suggests "interaction works in a tandem, pulsating form with commitment, amplifying converts' connection with, and ownership of, the belief set. Members needed to "make a commitment before escalating from the encounter's cognitive experience to interaction's more affective and behavioral features" (p. 820). In other words, they suggest interaction and commitment may be more interconnected. Their data show consistency with Rambo's claims, where conversion is a multifaceted, and dynamic process of cognitive transition mediated by structural and contextual forces (p. 830).

Rambo (1999) examines a number of theories on conversion. His definition of conversion described in his 1993 article entails a "turning from and to religious groups, ways of life, systems of belief and modes of relating to a deity or the nature of reality…[and] takes place in the dynamic field of persons, events, ideologies, institutions and experiences" (Rambo, 1999, p. 262). He gives an overview of prominent theories about conversion to Islam in Western Europe. Brief overviews of some of the theories are provided here. Because "various forms of mass communication" are available in the world, globalization theory suggests "the desires and yearnings of people who are displaced, dispossessed, and searching for spiritual renewal and transformation are contacted, cultivated and recruited to new religious options" (p. 262). This may also relate to other popular theories like rationalization and secularization. Post-colonial theory states conversion is "part of the 'colonization of the mind and spirits' of the dominated peoples" (p. 262).

Cross cultural theory was developed by Alan Roland, and involves five dimensions: individual self, family self, spiritual self, developing self, and private self. He argues each one of these exists within a given society, but the degree of each "self" represented varies from culture to culture (Rambo, 1999, p. 263). Religious/spiritual theory advanced by Renard (1996) states each religious/spiritual tradition has "models, guidelines, or theologies for a valid conversion" (Rambo, 1999, p. 264). Once someone has converted, they are expected to follow some standard, basic tenants under the new religion or its practices. These may include participating in required rituals, being assessed of their motives or expected beliefs, and following norms of the group that would produce actions desirable to the group. So, to some degree, the conversion

experience is shaped by "myths, rituals, and symbols of a particular tradition" (p. 264). Identity theory examines the relationship between converts and the pace of urbanization and modernization, in order to understand how the convert and the community's mores have changed over time. Identity theory takes into account "people's need for convictions and values that consolidate understandings of self, to structure relationships with other people, and to provide a sense of continuity and connection with a worldview that transcends the flux and fragmentation of the contemporary world" (p. 265). In other words, it focuses on a person's need for identity with others on a moral and religious level in a constantly changing secular world.

Archetypal theory emphasizes the idea a conversion takes place when "a powerful religious symbol or experience…meets profound needs within that person's psyche," and means religious symbol systems are "dramatic and compelling renditions of the human predicament eliciting deep-rooted yearnings" among various peoples (Rambo, 1999, p. 266). Islamization is also a theory where the conversion process is informed by "social, cultural, religious and political environments in which individuals, families, communities and societies flourish as Islamic" (p. 268). In short, Islamization conversion is influenced by all facets in an individual's life, provided that the context is rooted back to Islam. Among the last theories mentioned by Rambo is the process theory, which suggests "religious change takes place over time and consists of various elements," but Rambo himself suggested a process theory that includes seven stages: context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment, and consequences (p. 267), as mentioned earlier in the Smith and Stewart (2011) article. It is this process theory of conversion in Rambo's seven stage design where some answers may be found in the radicalization of individuals.

However, as mentioned before, there are elements throughout other theories that can provide some context for the conversion experience, despite which type of theory it is attached.

Granqvist (2003) explains there are a couple of widely accepted generalizations most theorists accept on conversion. The first assumption is, "religious conversions occur to a disproportionately large extent in early adolescence to early adulthood" (p. 173). He states this time frame for individuals is marked by a transition from parents as primary attachment figures, to their peers. Confusion during stressful events and seeking a sense of security during this transitional time may make accepting religion, as an answer, more viable to a younger person (p. 178). The second point the author makes is "there are different kinds of religious conversions, ranging from a gradual intensification of an already established faith…to sudden and intense religious metamorphosis" (p. 173). The degree of religious conversion may have an impact on an individual, based on the *type* of experience he/she had, and may be rooted in a form of attachment.

The attachment theory Granqvist (2003) suggests has also been used in understanding attachment in the area of "romantic love" where the need to "feel secure" can be related to an individual's need for a believer-God relationship through "seeking closeness to God in prayer and rituals, using God as a safe haven to regulate distress, and as a secure base for exploration of the environment" (p. 177). He states there are two hypotheses derived from the attachment theory: compensation hypothesis and correspondence hypothesis. The compensation hypothesis states "individuals who have experienced insecure…attachment relationships are in greater need to establish compensatory attachment relationships to obtain felt security" (Kirkpatrick, 1992).

Correspondence hypothesis states "individuals who have experienced secure…attachments have established the foundations upon which a corresponding relationship with God could be built and are successfully socialized to adopt part of the attachment figure's religious or non-religious standards" (p. 177). Granqvist develops two "relatively distinct profile of religious individuals among those who have experienced religious changes." The first type shows "an insecure history, where the religious changes are distress-driven, intense and sudden, and where religiosity is based on strategies for regulating distress" (p. 181). The second type shows a "secure history, where the religious changes, if at all present, are more gradual and occur in a context pointing to the importance of other close relationships, and where religiosity is based more on socialization process" (p. 181). Keeping these two types of individuals in mind may provide a context for understanding a key part in radicalization.

Granqvist and Hagekull (1999) tested some hypotheses surrounding their attachment theory described above, which resulted in "respondent who had experienced a sudden religious conversion had significantly lower values on maternal security, as well as higher values on maternal ambivalence than respondents who had experienced a gradual religious change" (p. 264). Similar results were found for paternal attachments, based on the same hypotheses. They stated "avoidance in the attachment relations to both parents was positively related to emotionally based religiosity, and particularly so at low parental religious activity" (pp. 265-266). Granqvist and Hagekull (1999) also reported converts as being "less securely and more ambivalently attached to both parents than were respondents for whom a more gradual religious change had occurred" (p. 266). Results suggested "sudden converts reported being more insecurely…and less securely

attached to both parents than those for whom no religious change had occurred," so their compensation predictions were supported for avoidance theory (p. 266). They suggest "the more sudden and intense a religious change is, the more it is associated with attachment security," which falls in line with theories about the "tendency to desperately seek care and easily fall in love" developed by Hazan and Shaver (1987, p. 523).

In regard to groups of people who had gradual religious changes, Granqvist and Hagekull stated "socialization of both parents' and friends' religious standards may be explained by security of the primary attachment relations in childhood as being predictive of high social competence" (p. 267). The authors conclude that "religiosity stems more from an emotion regulation strategy to obtain felt security (from 'within') in the case of perceived insecurity of attachment and more from socialization processes (from 'without') in the case of perceived security attachment" (p. 268). They report these results "can not be generalized…to traditions outside of Western monotheism" (p. 268), so it may be applicable to Islamic religious shifts as well.

Many studies about conversion experiences take place in the context of Western religion (primarily Christianity) and focus on experiences shared by those individuals who either may be new to the religion, or they have moved from one sect of Christianity to another. Many scholarly studies about conversion have not delved into Islam, Buddhism, or other religions, but there are truths and realities that can be pulled from the conversion experience, regardless of which religion one is examining. Mantsinen (2015) mentions people's "stories of strong experiences and emotions have a major function in making God more real. Therefore, the conversion stories are not so much about accounts of actual events, but reconstructions of a social story and a shared experience" (p. 48).

Also, "people's identities are constructed out of their experiences and the process is affected by both internal and external schemas," and if one's own schema is "at odds with the contextual social story and culture, the tension might be too great, forcing one to either change or make changes in one's social network – usually by switching from one group to another" (p. 48). In other words, if one's internal and external conceptualizations are very different from the surrounding environment, it can create an internal social discord that begs to be resolved.

In a study conducted by Loveland (2003), he addresses the issue of using a "modified rational choice framework to explain the development, maintenance, and change of religious preferences" (p. 147). He explains Sherkat and Wilson's theory that "parents' successful transmission of religious beliefs and practices plays a significant role in determining the likelihood of switching religions because those who hold weaker beliefs as youth have a tendency to break religious ties" (Sherkat & Wilson, 1995). Loveland also mentioned concepts of rational choice theory, where "human behavior results from individuals seeking to maximize benefits and avoid costs," which can help determine whether someone stays or leaves a religious environment (Loveland, 2003, p. 149). He tested to see whether childhood association produced lasting religious preferences, and concluded that it does not, "but are vulnerable to influence later in life" (p. 155). He explains "preferences are formed and sustained by the social relationships people maintain or discard" (p. 154). Also, if "religious bodies create preferences for unique religious goods, it will be difficult for individuals to find satisfactory religious products elsewhere" (p. 154). His study suggests childhood upbringing will not

necessarily dictate one's religious trajectory, but can be influenced by socialization factors later in life.

From an academic standpoint there are not many studies that can confirm a relationship between religious conversion and personality change. Paloutzian, Richardson, and Rambo (1999) conducted a study to test whether there is a correlation between personalities and conversion. They argue since people "have needs for meaning, belonging, identity and definition…one would be tempted to predict that it [religion] would affect all areas of the devout believer's life" (p. 1048). Rambo (1993) points out typologies in religious systems, which include: tradition transition (from one religion to another), institutional transition (change from one religious subgroup to another within a larger tradition), and intensification (become more devout, passionate and committed within the religious tradition in which he/she has some degree of involvement). Paloutzian et al. admit few studies have explained the conversion between Western religions, like Christianity, to Buddhism or Islam, and they cited Pargament (as cited in Paloutzian, 1997, p. 1053) where "the central psychological ingredient of a religious conversion may be characterized as a change in the self-system due to commitment to that which the person believes to be sacred."

Paloutzian et al. (1999) explain that "different religions expect different changes from new adherents," and suggest a manifested change in a convert depends on what the person is converting to (p. 1054). Many theories express the *outcomes* of religious conversion but do not refer to personality traits or temperaments (p. 1059). There are studies showing people who "had difficulties during childhood and adolescence…or suffer from feelings of personal inadequacy, are prone to conversion because they have

personal or behavioral needs that are not satisfactorily met" (p. 1060). Many participants are also looking for a way to change themselves in a way they see as positive (p. 1061) and look for a new approach to living that will serve them better than the one they have (p. 1062). Research from the OCEAN (Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism) perspective on the conversion experience "shows little evidence that basic personality structure or traits are altered because a person either joins a religious group or adopts a religious belief" (p. 1067). Paloutzian et al. (1999) suggest "certain types of personalities may be more prone to religious conversion than others, and the religious group may be for them a vehicle through which they express it" (p. 1073). The real issue may be answering "whether conversion produces personality change lies in clarifying the level of personality at issue; profound changes can occur at certain levels" (p. 1073). They suggest the solution is in "conducting prospective longitudinal studies that employ a selection of measures and timing of assessments that are most sensitive to individual constancy and change" (p. 1073), as opposed to cross-sectional, retrospective studies.

The conversion experience can be better understood through qualitative studies of those claiming a conversion experience. Shahmoradi and Hosseini (2015) conducted interviews on Latina women who converted to Islam. The respondents shared pre-conversion, conversion, and post-conversion experiences to explore what unique aspects are shared among the women (p. 19). The authors state there are twelve common cultural ideals, which include: intimacy, personal honor, faith in friends/family, respect, development of trust, kindness/gentleness, endearment in verbal/nonverbal communication, pride, loyalty to family, collectivism, service to others, and education as

a means of development (p. 21). The authors state the respondents converted to "complete their journey in life," and they found Islam as the realization of those goals (p. 21). The authors loosely based their methodology on Rambo's seven stage model of conversion, where Rambo takes "a middle view and maintains that a crisis need not involve bitter or dramatic experiences but may simply involve a desire to transcend the mundane experiences of work and family life" (Rambo, 1993, p. 50). The authors concluded that the pre-conversion need involved "psychological as well as religious factors [leading] the informants to experience crises and question their conditions" (p. 26). Several of the respondents were brought up to as devout Catholics, who routinely attended services. However, in their adolescent years and later, they became "disenchanted with their religion," because questions about doctrines and concepts like trinity, confession, and original sin were never answered (p. 25). They said they never got satisfying answers about those questions from church officials, which led to them looking elsewhere for answers, which they found in Islam.

Next, Shahmoradi and Hosseini (2015) described aspects of the conversion, and they indicated the respondents were "drawn towards the behavior of their Muslim friends [who were] then engaging in intellectual discussions with them, and [read] the Qur'an and investigat[ed] the religion individually" (p. 26). The respondents indicated various factors that appealed to them, including: monotheism, simplicity advocated by Islam, its stance on justice, value of humanity, sense of belonging, behavior of converts' Muslim friends, views of women in Islam, and belief in Islam as a way of life (p. 26). In post-conversion, the authors cite Rambo, who mentions "gaining a united sense of self as one characteristic of conversion, including a revolutionary change in the way they see

themselves and society as well as their perspective of the cosmos" (Rambo, 1993, p. 148), and their conduct was changed. All the participants acknowledged they were practicing Islam in a "comprehensive" manner, rather than focusing on a few practices encouraged by Catholicism. In the authors' conclusion, the conversion process allowed the respondents to "knowingly or unknowingly reconstruct their cultural identities to strike a balance between being Latina and being Muslim" (p. 33). Each respondent stated they had positive and optimistic outlooks on life, and felt the conversion to Islam changed their lives for the better (p. 33).

Bourjolly, Sands, and Roer-Strier (2013) also conducted a qualitative analysis of conversion experiences from Christianity to Islam. Their study focused on African American women, as opposed to Latina women examined earlier. They looked at predisposing conditions, the challenges experienced, various social ties, and positive influences during the conversion process. The authors were interested in examining this group of converts because "Christianity and Christian churches have been mainstays for African Americans as they struggled to maintain faith in the face of oppression" (p. 15).

Some African Americans are now "converting to Islam…as a way to reconnect to their Islamic African heritage which was stripped from them during the slave trade and a means to economic stability and community cohesion" (Dannin, 2002), and now identify with Sunni Islam. The authors cite studies about Islam, where it is appealing across all ethnicities because of attraction to its teachings, and seems to be logical and superior to other religions, and marriage to a Muslim spouse (Pew Research Center, 2007). McCloud (1995) interviewed African American women and their reasons for conversion, which include negative view of Christianity, Islam providing a different way to connect

with God, nature and the universe, and becoming part of a community. Bourjolly et al. (2013) used a constructivist inquiry format, which involves "forming a relationship with participants so that they are open to shares their experiences" (p. 18). It used an open-ended format on an interview guide, divided into sections asking about religious change, family's reaction, current relationships, and benefits and difficulties (p. 20). In their findings, all participants expressed that they were exposed to two of the following: religious diversity, early religious experiences, and religious discomfort and unanswered questions (p. 22). They found their core beliefs "were more aligned with Islam" and many of the participants said Islam appealed to them since it was logical and understandable (p. 23).

Significant life events like death of a loved one, parental divorce, and parent remarriage served as milestones, paving the way for some of the women to embrace a spiritual search (Bourjolly et al., 2013, p. 23). Social ties and relationships with male partners and female friends were significant influences on many women because they got to see the Islamic lifestyle lived out in a more meaningful way than with their previous religion. Participants also recognized how women were respected, have reported calmer and more respectful behaviors, feel less sexualized in their day-to-day interactions, and also report feelings of openness in ethnic and racial diversity at their local mosques. One of the women reported "as a Christian woman, I wasn't sure of what my role was…In Islam, you're given a specific role. Then you're given the consequence of other roles if you choose them." To the women, they saw those defined as "empowering" because it allowed them to make "knowledgeable choices," as opposed to feeling restrictive (p. 26).

Most participants felt Christianity did not offer the answers they sought, and significant life events caused them to look to other religions for answers. This led women to seek answers outside of Christianity, leading to a "crisis and quest" of sorts, where Islam adherents exposed them to Islamic teaching. This teaching "aligned with their sense of logic and reasoning about religion," so they found the Qur'an's teachings to be empowering by teaching how to conduct one's life and make knowledgeable choices (Bourjolly et al., 2013, p. 29).

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Boko Haram has evolved from a relatively unknown and isolated group, to one of the most infamous and well-organized terrorist organizations in Africa. It is unusual to find a group that went from near-annihilation after its founder's death, to an organization with a multi-layered hierarchy that receives the backing and blessings of other terrorist organizations, capable of resisting the Nigerian military. Examining aspects related to the conversion experience under Rambo's seven-point conversion theory may provide insight into how Boko Haram has become influential and pivotal in recent years.

A "conversion" experience as described by Rambo (1993) is a "dynamic interaction that place in a dynamic field of people, events, ideologies, institutions, expectations, and orientations" (p. 5). Rambo's seven steps in the process of conversion are context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment, and consequences. There is a likely possibility Boko Haram members have experienced individual or multiple steps of this conversion process. A unique aspect to consider is that the conversion theory under Rambo has had little testing on religions outside of the Western world, which includes religions like Islam and Buddhism. The research question suggests there are elements of Rambo's conversion theory that apply to Islam. There may be individual steps of the conversion process, or there may be a combination of steps that may be more influential than others. The current study will attempt to investigate which step(s) are more influential and common in the conversion process of Islamic extremism. It is possible converts to Boko Haram are influenced as a result of Nigeria's social context or

cultural circumstances. However, it is possible the converts' influence may also be the result of direct encounters and interactions with the group.

A few methods will be used to answer the research question. The World Bank's Databank is a source of information that measures various indicators on developing nations. This can be used because it contains collections of time series data on various financial and demographic indicators like unemployment, GINI index, and GDP per capita. Indicators like these can be used to help establish and define Nigeria's cultural context, when compared to other surrounding countries. The World Bank information can provide information that can establish the "context" and some portions of the "crisis," which are steps 1 and 2 of Rambo's conversion theory.

Another source that will be used is the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project (ACLED), which gathers data on both violent and non-violent incidences of political violence and protest in developing states, and Nigeria is included as a developing state. It provides data from 1997 to as recently as 2014, and can be used to examine violent and non-violent incidences in Nigeria to surrounding countries, as well as other countries experiencing terrorism. It will be beneficial to study the group's reemergence after connecting with other terrorist groups because a significant amount of the violence has occurred since Mohammed Yusuf's murder in 2009. The ACLED dataset will also give information on the types of violence (civil war, violence against civilians, militia interactions, communal conflict, and rioting) which will show evolving trends for Nigeria. The researcher will look at conflict trends for Nigeria from 2002-2014 in order to establish what types of conflict have been commonplace to Nigeria. The researcher will then focus on conflicts from 2009-2014, since that time frame is when

Boko Haram became active as a violent group. ACLED will provide some quantitative context aiding in answering the research question, but cannot provide a qualitative context for examining Boko Haram. The ACLED data will be able to assess steps 5 and 6 of Rambo's conversion process, which are the "interaction" and "commitment" aspects.

Media reports and articles will be examined, and they can provide a quantitative and possibly a qualitative lens to the study. News reports from eyewitness accounts of Boko Haram's attacks are numerous, and come from various media outlets. The researcher will gather 200 or more reported incidences by eyewitnesses, as this can help support findings from ACLED from a quantitative standpoint. This will show the evolution of Boko Haram's tactics from 2009 to present day, and may support the "interaction," "commitment," and consequence" aspects (steps 5, 6, and 7) of the conversion process.

From a qualitative perspective, the researcher expects to find some media-conducted interviews with members of Boko Haram, previous members of the group, relatives of group members, or people otherwise associated with the group. Examining these articles may provide information that can answer and provide context to some of the questions about the conversion process. LexisNexis® Academic will be used to obtain the news articles. Articles will be found by using keyword searches that include eyewitness and interview accounts associated with Boko Haram. The criteria explaining what may qualify under each "step" of the conversion process will be explained in the analysis and discussion section. Using these types of interviews may be used to measure the "crisis," "quest," and "encounter" (steps 2, 3, and 4) of Rambo's conversion process.

The researcher will look at the African region using the World Bank Databank to provide a cultural context for Nigeria, compared to its surrounding countries. Exploring Nigeria's evolving trends through ACLED analysis may indicate whether Nigeria has a propensity for violence as a culture, and may show which groups have tendencies toward violence. Afterwards, exploring eyewitness accounts of attacks, Boko Haram members' interviews and personal accounts obtained by LexisNexis® Academic at the individual level, will give a clearer focus to which steps of conversion may be prominent.

Since conversion has not been well-studied in relation to Islam, hypotheses cannot be made regarding what may be found from this study. There may be relationships between the seven-step conversion process and Boko Haram, and it may result in it being similar to Western religions and conversion. Because religion is deeply ingrained in many African and Middle Eastern countries by their respective cultures, there may be difficulties in identifying and isolating each step of the conversion process. There may also be unforeseen cultural factors that can impact the ability to adequately study this problem. The researcher expects there to be adequate information about the group from media reports, and can draw inferences about which step or steps of the conversion process may support Rambo's conversion theory.

Chapter IV

DATA COLLECTION/ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The World Bank's Databank was used to find info on the following: unemployment, population, GINI index, GDP per capita, and rural poverty. Each one was measured from 2000-2015, with data being gathered at various points in that time frame. Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria were the countries selected to be examined for each of the indicators. The population for each country is in Table 1.

Table 1: Total Population From 2006-2015

	Nigeria	Niger	Mali	Cameroon	Central African Republic	Chad	Burkina Faso	Benin
2006	143,318,011	13,995,530	13,309,942	18,597,109	4,127,112	10,423,616	13,834,195	8,443,717
2007	147,152,502	14,527,631	13,759,226	19,078,100	4,202,104	10,779,504	14,264,002	8,707,637
2008	151,115,683	15,085,130	14,223,403	19,570,418	4,280,405	11,139,740	14,709,011	8,973,525
2009	155,207,145	15,672,194	14,694,565	20,074,522	4,361,492	11,510,535	15,165,856	9,240,982
2010	159,424,742	16,291,990	15,167,286	20,590,666	4,444,973	11,896,380	15,632,066	9,509,798
2011	163,770,669	16,946,485	15,639,115	21,119,065	4,530,903	12,298,512	16,106,851	9,779,391
2012	168,240,403	17,635,782	16,112,333	21,659,488	4,619,500	12,715,465	16,590,813	10,049,792
2013	172,816,517	18,358,863	16,592,097	22,211,166	4,710,678	13,145,788	17,084,554	10,322,232
2014	177,475,986	19,113,728	17,086,022	22,773,014	4,804,316	13,587,053	17,589,198	10,598,482
2015	182,201,962	19,899,120	17,599,694	23,344,179	4,900,274	14,037,472	18,105,570	10,879,829

Created from: World Development Indicators
Series : Population, total

Table 1 shows Nigeria is the most heavily populated out of this group of countries. It is also the most populous country on the African continent. With the exception of Cameroon and Niger, Nigeria is 10 times more populated than other developing nations surrounding it.

Table 2: GDP Per Capita 2000-2015

	Central African Republic	Mali	Benin	Burkina Faso	Niger	Nigeria	Chad	Cameroon
2000	245.4	267.4	369.7	226.8	160.2	377.5	166.0	583.1
2001	245.6	304.6	373.6	235.5	167.1	350.3	197.3	589.2
2002	256.9	331.8	412.0	260.8	179.7	457.4	220.8	648.4
2003	290.5	389.1	509.5	332.4	218.0	510.3	292.6	791.1
2004	318.5	436.4	570.7	371.4	234.9	645.8	454.7	892.9
2005	332.9	484.8	587.1	407.0	252.5	804.0	660.2	915.1
2006	353.9	518.4	609.0	422.5	260.6	1,014.7	712.0	965.4
2007	404.1	592.0	685.6	474.7	295.4	1,131.1	801.4	1,071.0
2008	463.8	685.5	794.9	569.0	358.2	1,376.9	929.3	1,191.7
2009	454.4	692.8	768.0	551.8	344.4	1,092.0	803.9	1,164.7
2010	446.8	704.1	733.0	574.5	351.0	2,315.0	895.9	1,147.2
2011	488.4	829.8	799.0	665.8	378.2	2,514.1	988.4	1,258.9
2012	472.8	772.2	807.7	673.0	393.6	2,739.9	972.7	1,222.2
2013	317.2	798.3	882.6	709.1	417.7	2,979.8	985.1	1,331.2
2014	352.0	842.1	903.5	713.5	431.4	3,203.2	1,024.7	1,407.4
2015	306.8	744.3	779.1	613.0	359.0	2,640.3	775.7	1,250.8

Created from: World Development Indicators
Series : GDP per capita (current US$)

Nigeria has a strong GDP per capita ratio, compared to its surrounding countries, as listed in Table 2. This table shows from 2000-2004 Nigeria's per capita was relatively low, and similar to its surrounding countries, with Cameroon having the largest per capita of $892.90. From 2005-2009, there was a significant increase in Nigeria's per capita

income from $804 to $1092, with Cameroon having a similar increase over the same time frame. The other countries showed some increase in per capita, but not as significant as Cameroon and Nigeria. From 2010-2015, Nigeria saw its per capita income double, starting at $2315 in 2010, cresting to $3203.20 in 2014, and settling down to $2640.30 in 2015. The country with the second largest per capita income was Cameroon, having $1147.20 in 2010, with it increasing to $1407.40 in 2014, and it dropping to $1250.80 in 2015. Every other country in the list (with the exception of Chad in 2014) does not break the $1000 mark for per capita income from 2000-2015. This indicates significant financial growth for Nigeria from around 2005-2015. This would not appear to indicate a financial inequality strictly based on GDP per capita income, but unemployment may indicate otherwise.

Table 3: Unemployment Rates from 2000-2014

	Central African	Mali	Benin	Burkina Faso	Niger	Nigeria	Chad	Cameroon
2000	7.0	8.3	0.8	3.0	5.0	7.6	7.1	6.4
2001	7.0	8.3	0.7	2.3	5.0	7.6	6.9	7.5
2002	7.0	8.4	0.7	3.0	5.0	7.7	7.0	5.9
2003	7.1	8.6	0.9	2.8	5.0	7.6	6.9	6.0
2004	7.0	8.8	1.3	2.8	5.0	7.7	6.7	5.1
2005	7.0	8.5	1.3	2.7	5.1	7.6	7.0	4.4
2006	6.9	8.3	1.1	2.3	5.1	7.6	7.1	4.1
2007	6.9	8.5	1.1	3.3	5.1	7.6	7.1	4.1
2008	7.0	8.4	1.1	3.3	5.1	7.6	7.1	4.2
2009	6.9	8.5	1.2	3.3	5.1	7.6	7.0	4.5
2010	6.9	8.1	1.0	3.3	5.1	7.6	6.9	4.1
2011	6.9	8.1	1.0	3.3	5.1	7.6	7.1	4.1
2012	6.9	8.1	1.0	3.3	5.1	7.5	7.0	4.1
2013	7.4	8.1	1.0	3.3	5.1	7.5	7.1	4.1
2014	7.4	8.1	1.0	3.1	5.1	7.5	7.0	4.3

Created from: World Development Indicators
Series : Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate)

The unemployment rates in Table 3 have interesting implications. Every country from 2000-2014, with the exception of Cameroon, have unemployment rates that did not change by one whole percentage point during that time span. Strictly looking at 2000 and 2014, all the countries (except Cameroon) did not exceed .4% increase in unemployment. Cameroon had a decrease from 6.4% in 2000, to 4.3% by 2014. In 2003, Cameroon's GDP per capita began to increase, and Table 3 indicates a steady drop in unemployment rates until 2014. Burkina Faso, Benin, Chad, Niger, Central African Republic, and Mali

did not have significant increases in per capita income (compared to Cameroon and Nigeria), but each country's unemployment rates remained relatively the same.

Nigeria's unemployment rate in 2000 was 7.6%, and has remained within one-tenth of a percentage point (7.5%) until 2014. The GDP per capita income was $377.50 in 2000, and saw a 7-fold increase to $2640.30 in 2015. However, the unemployment rate has remained unchanged, despite such a significant increase in per capita income.

The implications for Tables 2 and 3 are important because it may explain, to some extent, the distribution of wealth. Table 2 shows Cameroon and Nigeria had similar per capita until 2010, which is when Nigeria's per capita doubled. Each person's income, when the total GDP was distributed by population rates, suggest each person should have an income of $2640 as of 2015. Cameroon saw a decrease in unemployment as its GDP per capita increased from 2000-2010, but no decrease in unemployment is found for Nigeria as its GDP per capita increased. This may support the unequal distribution of wealth, as extensively documented by other scholars. The southern portion of the country is oil-rich in resources and job opportunities, leading to a wealthier southern region in the Niger Delta. The northern region remains rural, underdeveloped, and unable to benefit from the lucrative oil trade. This could explain the unchanged unemployment rate, but increase in GDP per capita. This has created financial disparity between the north and south, in addition to the country already being largely Christian in the south, and predominantly Muslim in the north.

The rural poverty rates (Table 4) might also provide some useful info because it could suggest which countries have rural populations more at risk for greater financial

inequality, compared to the standard poverty lines. If there is greater rural poverty, more of a population may wish to pursue better financial circumstances through other means.

Table 4: Rural Poverty 2000-2015

	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	Nigeria	Benin	Central African	Cameroon	Chad
2000	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2001	..	25.6	..	..	..	..	17.3	..
2002	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	23.1
2003	25.4	..	..	22.0	..	..	..	..
2004	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2005	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2006	..	20.4	..	..	..	..	..	..
2007	..	..	..	..	10.1	..	17.5	..
2008	..	..	..	..	..	35.0	..	..
2009	17.5	15.6	..	20.1	11.6	..	..	..
2010	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2011	..	..	15.3	..	10.5	..	..	22.6
2012	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2013	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2014	11.6	..	..	..	..	..	22.9	..
2015	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

Created from: Poverty and Equity Database
Series : Rural poverty gap at national poverty lines (%)

Table 4 shows two countries (Niger and Central African Republic) only had one instance of reporting on rural poverty from 2000-2015, so it is not possible to show a trend for those countries based on one data point. Burkina Faso and Mali had significant decreases in rural poverty over time, while Benin and Chad's rural poverty remained relatively unchanged. Cameroon had a significant increase in rural poverty from 2007

(17.5%) to 2014 (22.9%). This is peculiar, given Cameroon's per capita income, and decrease in unemployment, but the researcher argues the increase in rural poverty may be due to Boko Haram influence. The area of operations for Boko Haram is believed to be the Sambisa forest which borders and crosses into Cameroon, so it is possible the increase in rural poverty is due to the group's operations. Nigeria's rural poverty was 22% in 2003, and it showed a decrease to 20.1% in 2009.

Table 5: GINI Index from 2000-2013

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Cameroon	..	42.1	..	..	..	..	..	42.8	..	..	..	..	..	..
Chad	..	..	..	39.8	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	43.3	..	..
Nigeria	..	..	..	40.1	..	..	..	..	..	43.0	..	..	..	..
Niger	..	..	..	..	..	44.4	..	37.3	..	..	..	31.5	..	..
Burkina Faso	..	..	..	43.3	..	..	..	..	..	39.8	..	..	..	..
Benin	..	..	..	38.6	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	43.4	..	..
Mali	..	39.9	..	..	..	..	38.9	..	..	33.0	..	..	..	..
Central African Republic	..	..	..	43.6	..	..	..	..	56.2	..	..	..	..	..

Created from: World Development Indicators
Series : GINI index (World Bank estimate)

The GINI index measures inequality among the income distribution of a given nation's residents. According to Table 5, there have not been any measures of the GINI index more recent than 2011. From 2007-2011, each country has one measurement on the GINI index (except for Niger, where measurements were given for 2007 and 2011). The Central African Republic has the highest with 56.2, indicating a greater inequality, while Niger has the lowest with 31.5, suggesting the most equality among the group. The researcher notes every country that borders Nigeria (except for Niger) has a similar GINI

index. Benin, Chad, and Cameroon's rates are very close to Nigeria, and they range from 42.8-43.3; Nigeria's rate is 43.0.

The GINI index indicates no greater income inequality for Nigeria than its neighboring countries, but the most recent reporting of the GINI and rural poverty for Nigeria was in 2009. Those reports were prior to the GDP per capita doubling in 2010 from $1092 to $2315. It is possible greater rural poverty and GINI disparity have increased since 2009.

The information gathered through the World Bank Databank gives insight into Nigeria's social context, which is the first step of Rambo's conversion theory. The unchanged unemployment rate, despite a significant increase in GDP per capita, suggests social inequality exists. This would establish "context" and inner "crisis" criteria necessary for conversion. The northern part of the country has been ruled by conservative Muslim imams with Hausa-Fulani as the dominant denomination. An increasingly frustrated younger generation in the northern region is dissatisfied with "traditional" leadership of the area, complaining the current leaders are out-of-touch with the developing world. Unchanged unemployment and poorer lifestyles to the younger generation, compared to the prosperous, and Westernized southern region could cause individuals to feel change is necessary, in order to feel more relevant in a developing country. Unfortunately, the GINI index and rural poverty measurements have not been collected since 2009 for Nigeria, so it is not possible to tell whether those have increased. If the measures have increased, it could support the social injustice claims.

The researcher used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) statistics program to analyze data obtained through the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data

(ACLED) project to measure both violent and non-violent data. The data from this source report the following of each incident: location, date, group names, interaction type, event type, reported fatalities and notes regarding each incident. It also classifies whether each group involved is a political agent (including governments, militia, or political party) or some other type of categorized group (such as rioters, protesters or civilians). The "Actor 1" is the perpetrator or aggressor in a given incident, while "Actor 2" is the recipient or victim(s) of an attack by "Actor 1." The most important information the ACLED collects is the *type* of events. These are verified by government, military and police sources. There are nine types of events, which are:

- Battle-No change of territory
- Battle-Non-state actor overtakes territory
- Battle-Government regains territory
- Headquarters or base established
- Non-violent activity by a conflict actor
- Riots/Protests
- Violence against civilians
- Non-violent transfer of territory
- Remote violence

A "battle" is defined as "a violent interaction between two politically organized armed groups at a particular time and location." Boko Haram has not been formally classified as a "political" organization, but the acts of the group are political in nature. Since Sharia law is an Islamic way of governing and ruling over its citizens, the group may be seen as politically organized, as opposed to being classified as a group of rioters. The ACLED

has classified them as political in nature, so confrontations with them are seen as "battles" to accurately categorize their interactions with other groups.

In order to establish a baseline for interpreting the SPSS data, one must find whether Nigerian culture is inherently violent when it comes to conflicts. Data from SPSS will focus from 2002 to 2014 because 2002 is the year that Boko Haram was founded. The researcher will briefly explore 2002-2009 in order to find what the most common types of violence and the rates of incidences are for that time frame. If the Nigerian culture is inherently violent with conflicts, it can impact the interpretation and findings of the study. Table 6 below shows the total number of incidences for Nigeria from 2002-2014 in order to show there has been an increase in various conflicts over time that needs to be addressed.

Table 6: Frequency of Incidences in Nigeria from 2002-2014

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2002	153	2.6	2.6	2.6
	2003	202	3.4	3.4	5.9
	2004	271	4.5	4.5	10.5
	2005	202	3.4	3.4	13.8
	2006	114	1.9	1.9	15.7
	2007	188	3.1	3.1	18.9
	2008	207	3.5	3.5	22.3
	2009	232	3.9	3.9	26.2
	2010	504	8.4	8.4	34.6
	2011	349	5.8	5.8	40.5
	2012	991	16.6	16.6	57.0
	2013	1043	17.4	17.4	74.5
	2014	1528	25.5	25.5	100.0
	Total	5984	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 shows a significant increase in attacks from 2010-2014. The increase in 2010 could be attributed to the start of conflicts between Boko Haram and government authorities, while the decrease seen in 2011 may be attributed to Boko Haram's "going underground" and receiving military and terrorist training from other terrorist cells, as discussed in the literature review. Since 2012, a significant increase of attacks and conflicts have occurred, but it is important to examine what types of conflict have been representative for Nigeria prior to, and since Boko Haram's emergence.

Table 7: Frequency of Incidences by Event Type in Nigeria from 2002-2009

		YEAR								
		2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
EVENT_TYPE	Battle-Government regains territory	0	0	0	1	1	3	2	0	7
	Battle-No change of territory	66	89	98	47	49	55	100	88	592
	Battle-Non-state actor overtakes territory	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	3
	Non-violent activity by a conflict actor	0	3	0	1	0	3	8	22	37
	Non-violent transfer of territory	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Remote violence	2	3	1	0	5	4	2	9	26
	Riots/Protests	21	17	71	93	13	6	10	41	272
	Violence against civilians	64	90	101	58	45	117	84	72	631
Total		153	202	271	202	114	188	207	232	1569

Table 8: Frequency of Incidences by Event Type in Nigeria from 2010-2014

		YEAR					
		2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
EVENT_TYPE	Battle-Government regains territory	1	0	0	2	12	15
	Battle-No change of territory	162	67	247	299	279	1054
	Battle-Non-state actor overtakes territory	0	0	0	0	17	17
	Headquarters or base established	0	0	2	0	1	3
	Non-violent activity by a conflict actor	6	12	95	18	38	169
	Non-violent transfer of territory	1	0	0	0	5	6
	Remote violence	17	79	105	32	54	287
	Riots/Protests	143	65	193	303	567	1271
	Violence against civilians	174	126	349	389	555	1593
Total		504	349	991	1043	1528	4415

Table 7 shows a total of 1569 incidences from 2002 to 2009, and comes to an average of 196 incidences per year. On Table 8, Nigeria has seen a significant increase to 4415 reported incidences from 2010-2014, averaging 883 per year. Battles with no change in territory totaled 23.8% of incidences, compared to 37% from 2002-2009. Also, 36% of incidences were violence committed against civilians, compared to 40.2% from 2002-2009. Riots and protests constituted 28.7% of the incidences compared to the 17.3% from 2002-2009. Based on Tables 7 and 8 it appears violence against civilians and battles with no territory change have decreased over time, but riots and protests increased. On the surface, it appears violence has decreased over time, despite Boko Haram emergence, but there is an unexplained factor that may have an impact, which are incidences classified as "unidentified armed groups."

The data revealed that 533 incidences from 2002-2009 (before Boko Haram's emergence) where there were "unidentified armed groups" listed for general attacks. Of those 533 incidences, 321 were unidentified armed groups responsible for attacks against civilians. This research found that the category "unidentified armed group" encompasses a vast array of attacks which are not attributed to specific groups, gangs or any other organizations. The ACLED dataset gives brief notes about each incident, detailing who the actor was, if that information is available. If no information is available on the actor, it is classified as "unidentified armed group." The perpetrators classified under "unidentified armed group" include a wide range of criminal acts and include the following unidentified people: burglars or robbers, attacks carried out by armed people who may not have any military or political affiliation, individual armed gunmen carrying out various lone attacks, attacks perpetrated by unknown cult members, armed kidnappers, and attacks from members of gangs or territorial factions. The types of people that fall under the umbrella of "unidentified armed group" (UAG) committing attacks against civilians are too numerous to count. The UAG category is a concern to address because that group is responsible for a substantial portion of attacks seen in the data. The tables reported later will include 2010-2014 incidences, which include UAG.

Table 9: All Major Groups from 2010-2014, All Event Types

		ACTOR1					
		Boko Haram	Fulani Ethnic Militia (Nigeria)	Military/ Police Forces	Protesters/Rioters	Unidentified Armed Group (Nigeria)	Total
EVENT_TYPE	Battle-No change of territory	144	73	165	0	119	501
	Headquarters or base established	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Non-violent activity by a conflict actor	33	3	58	0	29	123
	Non-violent transfer of territory	4	0	0	0	1	5
	Remote violence	129	1	20	0	97	247
	Riots/Protests	0	0	11	1294	1	1306
	Violence against civilians	508	222	64	39	570	1403
Total		819	299	318	1333	817	3586

From 2010-2014, there were a total of 4416 incidences reported on ACLED. Out of those 4416, a total of 3586 (81.2%) were attributed to the following groups: Fulani ethnic militia, military/police forces, protesters and rioters, Boko Haram, and UAG. The other 830 incidences (18.8%) were attributed to various identified groups through ACLED. Table 9 shows 22.8% of all incidents were committed by Boko Haram, 22.7% were committed by UAG, and protesters/rioters constituted 37.1%. Boko Haram was responsible for 36.2% of violence against civilians, 15.8% was committed by Fulani ethnic militia, and 40.6% were committed by unidentified armed groups. The researcher

found 2 media reports (Haruna & Emmanuel, 2014; 150 Killed, 2014) where the Fulani militia had direct ties to Boko Haram violence and attaining of goods/resources. This can be potentially significant because some of the Fulani's violence against civilians can be traced back to Boko Haram, but there is no way to tell how many of the 222 Fulani attacks against civilians (Table 9) may be linked to Boko Haram.

As mentioned earlier, UAG encompass a wide range of criminal activity that cannot be attributed to a specific group. On Table 9, 570 attacks against civilians were attributed to UAG from 2010-2014 by the major groups, which is significant. Because the researcher has found many articles about Boko Haram through LexisNexis (discussed later in the analysis and discussion), the researcher knows which areas of Nigeria are associated with Boko Haram activity. Those locations include Kaduna, Adamawa, Borno, Gombe, Yobe, Plateau, and Bauchi, which are all in northern Nigeria. Of the 570 attacks by UAG and violence against civilians, 197 of those attacks are in the northern locations listed. The researcher examined various notes supplied by the ACLED dataset, and a substantial number of the notes mention possible Boko Haram links, or indicate a modus operandi that closely follow Boko Haram's tactics. It is not possible to tell how many of the 197 is attributable to Boko Haram because that would be unwarranted speculation. The significance of it is this: some of the UAG incidences can, in fact, be attributed to Boko Haram, which can help explain some of the attacks against citizens, which Boko Haram is well-known for committing.

It is also important to note from 2002-2009, a cursory search of the ACLED notes on UAG attacks show a substantial number of attacks are somehow related to operations in the oil production and processing business. Some of those UAG acts detail pirating,

and violent acts meant to disrupt Nigeria's oil production. Given this information about UAG attacks from 2002-2009 and 2010-2014, the researcher must address whether Nigeria is an inherently violent culture, which would affect the outlook on Boko Haram's acts. Based on the info the researcher has observed through ACLED, it does not appear Nigeria is a particularly violent country. Given the size, population, and current development status of Nigeria, it is not uncommon to see some trends for violence, in light of the vast oil wealth and resources currently being tapped. Coupled with the fact UAG encompass any and all random acts of violence unattributed to specific groups, it does not seem Nigeria is prone to being an inherently violent culture. Boko Haram's emergence has definitely had an impact on the how much violence Nigeria has recently seen.

The tables below show where Boko Haram has been the aggressor (Actor 1) from 2009-2014, based on frequency, types of attacks, and their interactions with other groups. The researcher is starting at 2009 (as opposed to 2010) because their official emergence was in 2009. However, only one incident was recorded in 2009.

Table 10: Frequency of Attacks-Boko Haram as Aggressor 2009-2014

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2009	1	.1	.1	.1
	2010	35	4.3	4.3	4.4
	2011	122	14.9	14.9	19.3
	2012	303	37.0	37.0	56.3
	2013	121	14.8	14.8	71.1
	2014	237	28.9	28.9	100.0
	Total	819	100.0	100.0	

Table 8 shows there was a steady increase in frequency of attacks in Nigeria from 2011-2014. Table 10 shows the total number of attacks attributed to Boko Haram as the aggressor is 819 from 2009-2014. The frequency of attacks by Boko Haram shows what appears to be a significant decrease for those years. However, the researcher assumes those numbers should be higher because of the UAG dilemma previously discussed, so an accurate number of incidences where Boko Haram was the aggressor will never be known. It is also important to note Tables 10-13 all depict Boko Haram as the ones instigating the attacks. Those tables do not take into account where military, civilian, police, or joint task forces were the attackers against Boko Haram, and so the number of total incidences involving Boko Haram as the recipient of attacks would be much greater. To determine whether steps of the conversion process apply to Boko Haram, it makes most sense to look into acts where they are the aggressors. Their mission is the implementation of Sharia law through jihad and violent conflict against anyone (military, political, civilian or foreign) that is not in line with their beliefs.

Table 11: Types of Event Attacks-Boko Haram as Aggressor 2009-2014

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Battle-No change of territory	144	17.6	17.6	17.6
	Headquarters or base established	1	.1	.1	17.7
	Non-violent activity by a conflict actor	33	4.0	4.0	21.7
	Non-violent transfer of territory	4	.5	.5	22.2
	Remote violence	129	15.8	15.8	38.0
	Violence against civilians	508	62.0	62.0	100.0
	Total	819	100.0	100.0	

The information listed on Table 11 shows the number of attacks Boko Haram carried out against civilians (62.0%) is much higher than any formal battles (17.6%), which are defined by ACLED criteria. This suggests Boko Haram's mission has been focused on civilian populations. Because the goal of the group is to bring Sharia Law to Nigeria, the violence against civilians would be expected.

Table 12: Total Boko Haram Fatalities Reported by ACLED by Year

Total Boko Haram Fatalities Reported by ACLED Notes by Year							
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	
Total Fatalities	0	68	568	1352	1184	3878	7050
Total Incidences	1	35	122	303	121	237	819

Table 12 shows the number of fatalities reported by ACLED from 2009-2014 based on the 819 incidences recorded. Table 12 shows as the years have progressed the frequency and the number of fatalities have increased as well. This suggests Boko Haram's efforts in its mission have increased as the years have progressed.

The researcher also explored the types of interactions between Boko Haram and other groups where Boko Haram was the aggressor (Actor 1). Boko Haram is still the sole aggressor for each of those 819 incidences, and those incidences are not attributed/committed by any another group. The ACLED Codebook coded interactions between groups with a numerical value. The researcher recoded them as string variables in SPSS instead of leaving them as a numerical value because it was easier to code them in readily applicable terms, rather than referencing a complex code provided by ACLED. The reason they are recoded is because ACLED has categorized Boko Haram as a type of "political militia," regardless of whether they have been formally recognized as a political militia by a government entity. The recoding was completed as follows:

- Military v. Political Militia→Military v. Boko Haram
- Sole Political Militia Action→Sole Boko Haram Action
- Political Militia v. Political Militia→Boko Haram v. Boko Haram (Internal Conflicts)
- Political Militia v. Communal Militia→Boko Haram v. Civilian Military
- Political Militia v. Civilians→Boko Haram v. Civilians
- Political Militia v. Others→Boko Haram v. Others

Table 13: Types of Interactions with Boko Haram as Aggressor 2009-2014 by Frequency

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Boko Haram v. Boko Haram (Internal Conflicts)	3	.4	.4	.4
	Boko Haram v. Civilian Military	4	.5	.5	.9
	Boko Haram v. Civilians	607	74.1	74.1	75.0
	Boko Haram v. Others	2	.2	.2	75.2
	Military v. Boko Haram	181	22.1	22.1	97.3
	Sole Boko Haram Action	22	2.7	2.7	100.0
	Total	819	100.0	100.0	

Table 14: Types of Interactions with Boko Haram as Aggressor 2009-2014 by Year

		YEAR						
		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
INTERACTION2 Interaction definitions	Boko Haram v. Boko Haram (Internal Conflicts)	0	0	0	2	0	1	3
	Boko Haram v. Civilian Military	0	0	0	1	2	1	4
	Boko Haram v. Civilians	0	21	61	180	116	229	607
	Boko Haram v. Others	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
	Military v. Boko Haram	1	13	54	110	3	0	181
	Sole Boko Haram Action	0	0	6	10	0	6	22
Total		1	35	122	303	121	237	819

Table 13 shows Boko Haram's encounters as aggressors have mainly been with civilians (74.1%), which is three times greater than their encounters with the military (22.1%). The remaining 3.8% of interactions have been spread across the other four categories. Table 14 shows there were a similar number of Boko Haram-initiated attacks against civilians in 2010 (21) and 2011 (61) and military in 2010 (13) and 2011 (54). From 2012 to 2014, there was a significant increase in attacks against civilians, and a significant decrease in attacks against the military from 2013-2014. This suggests a shift in Boko Haram's tactics. As mentioned by the literature review, Boko Haram's earlier

attacks were more focused on police and military forces as retaliation for the 2009 killing of its founder, and for the initial incident that caused Boko Haram to lash out with violence.

The ACLED data suggests Nigerian culture is not particularly prone to being a culture of violence. Because of the booming oil industry, there have been multiple attacks on places and people associated with the oil business. It explains why there are increases in violence, to some degree. However many of the other incidents not oil-related or Boko Haram, (according to notes recorded in ACLED) suggest random acts of violence, which do not represent the day-to-day life of the culture. The ACLED data shows Boko Haram has evolved in several ways from 2009 to 2014. The attacks have become more numerous over time, and have transitioned from police, military and political attacks, to civilian attacks. Fatalities of the attacks have also increased, based on the initial assessment of the ACLED data. It suggests Boko Haram's implementation of its mission objectives has become more radical. News articles and eyewitness reports will show how the group's tactics have changed, which may support some aspects of conversion theory.

The researcher gathered articles from LexisNexis® Academic to examine the qualitative context of the conversion theory. For the searching criteria, key phrases included: "Boko Haram membership," "Boko Haram eyewitness," "Boko Haram converts," "joining Boko Haram," "Boko Haram conversion experience," and "Boko Haram member interviews." For each of these search phrases, 'Duplicate Options' were set to 'High Similarity,' and then sorted by relevance. Each resulting list was then narrowed down by 'Newspapers' in the 'Sources by Category.' No particular newspaper

publication was favored while reviewing news articles. However, a significant amount of the articles come from Vanguard, The Sun, This Day, Leadership, and Daily Trust, which are all major newspaper and media outlets for Nigeria.

Gathering data through the media articles was approached in two ways. First, the key word searches like "Boko Haram eyewitness" and similar searches yielded results from eyewitness reports of attacks committed by Boko Haram as the attackers. No articles where civilians or the military acting as the attackers were considered, which is the same approach used to look at the ACLED data through SPSS. By searching for eyewitness accounts of attacks by Boko Haram, the researcher was able to measure some types of conversion steps.

The second approach involved finding articles using "joining Boko Haram" "interviews" and similar search terms. This generated a number of articles where interviews were conducted with Boko Haram members (current or previous members who renounced membership) or interviews with relatives/close friends of Boko Haram members that had detailed knowledge of the person that joined the group. Examining these types of articles yielded results that may support other parts of the conversion process.

The definitions of the conversion process according to Rambo are as follows:

- Context - The environment in which change occurs including macro factors such as the relationship between an institution and government, as well as family and friends.
- Crisis - The catalyst-internal or external-stimulating an individual to seek change or become placed within a context of change.

- Quest - The active pursuit of change by an individual already in the context of change.
- Encounter - The meeting of the potential convert and an advocate for the new beliefs or movement.
- Interaction - The new convert's interaction with their belief system or movement including participation in rituals, changed relationships, the use of specific rhetoric and jargon, and the assumption of new roles or services within the group often demanding greater leadership.
- Commitment - The convert's public pronouncement of his/her transformation
- Consequences - The ramifications for the convert's lifestyle after the conversion process.

Due to the nature of this study, some of these definitions had to be modified to reflect the Boko Haram group as a whole. The "context" was not changed or modified because the information from World Bank Databank and ACLED/SPSS statistics sufficiently reflects this step of the conversion process. Some portions of the same statistics can also support some of the "catalysts" included in the definition under the "crisis" step of conversion, but some newspaper articles were found that mention crisis components. These include:

- The struggle to get money for starting up local business endeavors
- Social and economic frustrations by youths

The "quest" definition was not modified because this step was rarely seen in any news articles, regardless of keyword searches. The definition of "quest" involves finding

a person in the middle of a crisis *prior* to them having an encounter with Boko Haram. There were a few instances found but came from friends or family detailing the member's pursuit of change.

The "encounter" definition had to be modified. The standard definition of an "encounter" involves a potential convert *willing* to engage in a *favorable* encounter with the advocate for the group. Since Boko Haram's nature involves violent expressions of behavior to achieve jihad, very few reports of willful encounters exist. The researcher had to create a "forced encounter" category, which involves people being forced or coerced into Boko Haram membership by threat of death or detriment to themselves or the convert's family.

Most of the articles found involve the "interaction" step of the conversion process. Under Boko Haram rule, each attack or incident carried out by the group is a form of interaction with the group's belief system regardless of whether or not genuine belief exists among all the group's members. Since the group's objective is to achieve Sharia law by violent means, every attack committed by Boko Haram should be considered an interaction with their belief system. Various forms of "interaction" include:

- Shooting/gun violence
- Bombing/use of explosives
- Arson
- Assassination of specific individuals
- Kidnapping
- Suicide bombing

The "commitment" aspect of the conversion process involves a public pronouncement of faith. Some instances of individual commitment were found reviewing news articles, but Boko Haram has ways of expressing commitment as a cohesive unit, as well. Exploring this through news reports and interviews came in several forms. They are:

- Religious chants- Phrases, such as "Allahu Akbar" (God is great), are a trademark to terrorist organizations when carrying out violent expressions of jihad.
- Flag/banner raising- The hoisting of flags or banners for Boko Haram are considered a commitment to their goal of achieving Sharia law, once a town or territory is conquered.
- Mission proclamation- Individual and group statements proclaiming the group's goals and core tenants of their belief. These include forcefully replacing secular government with religious government, working for the cause of Allah, and belief in abiding by Sharia law, and appointing of their own leaders to establish an Islamic caliphate.

The final step of "consequences" had to be modified in its definition as well. According to Rambo's theory an individual's conversion would include "ramifications," which are usually implied to be positive benefits that can be associated with the conversion. For Boko Haram, those positive benefits could include:

- Monetary gain
- Support (financial, technical, logistical) from similar terrorist groups (ISIS, AQIM, etc.)

- Vehicles
- Looting of property and acquisition of consumable goods
- Asserting the right to kill people who do not agree with the Boko Haram ideology
- Women being treated as slaves or given unwillingly to the marriage of Boko Haram members

However, since the definition of "consequences" includes "ramifications for the convert's lifestyle," it suggests there can be "negative" consequences as well. Types of negative consequences include:

- Being ostracized and labeled by local communities and government as a fugitive
- Individual perceptions that the believer was deceived/disillusioned into joining, leading to their renouncing of Boko Haram membership
- Members being "fed up" with violent campaigns by Boko Haram
- Threat of harm to Boko Haram member or family members if he tries to leave the group

The tables listed below (Tables 15 and 16) are the results of lengthy and in-depth reading of articles found throughout LexisNexis® Academic that fit one or more criteria of the conversion theory. Table 15 shows a total of 233 separate incidences where Boko Haram was listed as the aggressor. The ACLED dataset reports all incidences, regardless of whether or not there are fatalities involved. The researcher gathered articles in the same manner, regardless whether or not there were fatalities. Some attacks did not have fatalities involved, but may have resulted in injuries or destruction of buildings or property. Some articles reported fatalities, but did not give an exact fatality count. When the researcher came across these, attempts to find the same incident through other media

outlets was attempted in order to find the exact number of fatalities. When no fatality count could be obtained, the researcher left the incident devoid of a fatality count. As such, the fatality count should be higher than what is reported.

The researcher emphasizes the following about the media reports gathered: the incidences reported on Tables 15 and 16 are all accepted and attributed to Boko Haram. This is significantly based on the modus operandi matching the group's typical execution of attacks, or by verified statements from eyewitness accounts. Some terrorist groups regularly claim responsibility for attacks, but Boko Haram typically does not. Rather, eyewitnesses and government authorities have established how Boko Haram has carried out attacks, so any attacks occurring within the northern territories matching their modus operandi have usually been attributed to Boko Haram without a claim of responsibility.

It is important to note that each incident in this table is listed as an "interaction" because each incident is a form of expressing and participating in Boko Haram's beliefs system (as a group). During each incident, there is the possibility that other steps of the conversion process are addressed. For example, in 2012 there were 39 incidences (interactions) observed. Out of those 39, each one contained at least one or more of the types of interactions listed. Shootings and bombings could have occurred during the same incident, or any combination of the interaction types is possible. The other steps found in the conversion process are indicated and mentioned in their appropriate categories. The "context" step is not listed because the World Bank and ACLED helped to define the contextual setting of Nigeria. Individual incidences of reported attacks do not set the context in the same way the World Bank and ACLED info has, so "context" was not considered as a step in Tables 15 and 16. In Table 15, crisis, quest, and

encounter were almost non-existent from eyewitness standpoints (with the exception of two incidents), therefore have been excluded from Table 15.

Table 15: Steps of Conversion from Eyewitness and Attack Reports 2010-2016

Step of Conversion			Total Number of Incidences: 233	Year					
			2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
	Interaction		9	30	39	27	64	60	4
	Type of Interaction*	Shooting	5	21	25	24	46	32	1
		Bombing	1	16	9	6	16	11	-
		Arson	2	1	7	7	18	11	-
		Assassination	3	-	7	1	-	-	-
		Kidnapping	-	-	-	2	3	4	-
		Suicide Bombing	-	4	2	-	9	19	2
	Commitment		1	4	4	2	10	5	1
	Type of Commitment*	Religious Chant	-	1	4	2	2	3	-
		Flag/Banner Raising	-	-	-	-	3	1	-
		Mission Proclamation	1	3	-	-	5	2	-
	Consequences		-	3	5	1	5	2	1
Fatalities			21	321	285	401	2240	1348	57

*One or more types could be present in a single incident

Table 15 shows different steps of the conversion process Boko Haram has expressed since 2010 based on the newspaper eyewitness accounts reported to media outlets. Many incidences occurred within a close time frame to one another, so the researcher ensured none of the incidences were duplicates, based on the places of attacks and the dates reported. By reading the articles and eyewitness accounts, the researcher

has noted the following trends and patterns with Boko Haram. The following pages detail those findings and trends, which provide greater insight into the group's acts.

In 2009 when Mohammed Yusuf was killed, the group primarily fought with military and police forces. When they reemerged after "going underground" and receiving military training and funding, they began to target political and military leaders and their relatives, and even influential Islamic scholars that did not agree with the group's mission. Many shootings that took place from 2010-2012 were attacks against police forces, military forces, police stations, military outposts and against jails that housed some of the group's members. They were successful in releasing and retrieving many Boko Haram members from jails, enabling them to carry out more attacks.

Shootings and bombings have been staples to Boko Haram's initiatives and acts from 2009 to current day. In the world's current landscape, makeshift explosive devices and guns are to be expected in any major forms of protest, violence, or acts of war. What the researcher's findings demonstrate, though, is more of Boko Haram's attacks from 2010-2013 were more focused on principles related to achieving their ideological goals by killing and destroying things related to Western culture. More recent attacks appear to have been a strategic move to obtain territory and accumulate various resources to fund, support and satisfy its members. Many bombings reported by eyewitness accounts, especially in urban and well-populated areas do not describe whether bombings were suicide or conventional bombings. The articles found and categorized as "bombing" in Table 16 do not include suicide bombings.

Suicide bombings have been a regular occurrence for Boko Haram since 2011. The researcher found some of the earlier suicide bombings from 2011 and 2012 were

completed by members of the group. Those individuals either strapped explosives to their bodies or detonated explosives in their vehicles as they engaged in conflict with military or police forces. Since 2014, suicide bombings have involved brainwashed or unwilling females and children to carry out attacks. This is discussed more in depth after Table 16.

The group began with targeted assassinations of individuals from 2010-2013 to achieve their goals. The researcher categorized "assassinations" on Table 15 as anyone holding a political office that was specifically targeted by Boko Haram. Between 2010 and 2013, many of the shootings were targeted against police or military personnel holding an official title, but not a "political" title. Those targeted killings did not appear to meet the conventionally accepted definition of what is deemed as "political assassination." The attacks against police and military personnel were therefore counted as "shootings."

Arson committed by the group started in 2010 as the burning of primary schools and colleges, which reflects Boko Haram's vision of forbidding and renouncing formal Western education. Eyewitness accounts from 2012-2013 show multiple acts of arson were committed on churches and public schools, but the campaign to burn these types of institutions continued through 2015. News articles indicate attacks on homes and villages began to be burned and razed since 2014, which Boko Haram has taken credit for. This suggests Boko Haram's ideological focus of arson as a form of forbidding Western education has shifted to burning as a form of consequence after their raids on individuals and villages. The researcher notes articles mentioning fires started as the result of bomb explosions were not counted in the "arson" tally on Table 15.

Kidnapping has been a somewhat evolving trend for Boko Haram. The researcher only looked for eyewitness reports where kidnapping was expressly named, and did not consider the "forced encounters" as a true "kidnapping." The researcher felt "forced encounters" did not fit the strict definition of kidnapping since conscripted members were compensated in some way for their services, although forced members were reluctant to receive the compensation. The eyewitness reports from 2013 show a religious official and an elder statesman for a government agency were kidnapped. Officials cited Boko Haram's tactics were changing from robbery to kidnapping, as "kidnapping is more lucrative, less dangerous and requires short time to plan and execute" (Marama, 2013, p. 2). Kidnappings from 2014 to 2015 began to resort to the taking of girls and youths. (Olugbode, 2014; Haruna, 2014; Sani, 2015a; Sani, 2015b). Girls are treated as forms of property by Boko Haram, and are typically to be given away as brides. During these particular kidnappings, shootings, arson, and bombings on the villages became commonplace. One instance described where Boko Haram members gathered up the women, girls, and small children, "parked" around 450 of them into 4 separate houses, and abducted the ones they deemed most beneficial to the group (Nossiter, 2015).

The attacks by Boko Haram from 2010-2012 suggest many of its members were willful and true adherents to the group's ideology. It is likely some of the members were part of the group that clashed with military and police forces in 2009. The group's attacks on jails and prisons were specifically to release as many of its members as possible, as well as releasing influential, higher ranking members. The "interaction" phase of conversion was clearly manifest by devout members of Boko Haram for this time frame, but they began to change tactics. This has created a mess, with regard to

group membership. Figuring out which incidences from 2013 to 2016 may have been performed by devout members, and which ones were performed by unwilling participants is impossible to tell. The increases in number of incidences and the variety of attacks by the group have also changed, which can suggest an increase in commitment by the group as a whole. It can also indicate the strength of Boko Haram's leaders to use the threat of force in accomplishing their means.

The researcher notes Boko Haram's earlier attacks were retaliatory in nature and mostly did not target civilians. According to eyewitness reports, the group's members declared their intentions were not to hurt civilians, and were targeting specific people. The bombings from 2010-2012 were largely targeted toward military and police outposts, barracks and vehicles, while few appear to have been targeted at civilians. The group began bombing various schools and churches and began acts of arson against those same places as well. The shootings that occurred at churches and schools indicated the beginning of Boko Haram's violence against civilians. Some early suicide bombings occurred, but eyewitness reports could not detail if the attacks were against civilians or against military/government personnel.

Table 15 also includes the reported fatalities found for each year and were compiled by the news reports. The number of fatalities was reported by eyewitnesses, government and police officials, and local leaders. The fatality rate found by the researcher from 2013-2015 have significantly increased from the 2010-2012 rates. Some of this is likely attributed to the suicide attacks in crowded marketplaces and the increase in shootings over time.

Elements of the "commitment" aspect are scattered through the news reports found. Interviews of Boko Haram members have repeatedly reported to media outlets of their intent to bring Sharia law, and other mission proclamation statements related to their ideology, but urged people to be "mindful of their movement since they did not want civilian casualties" (Maduabuchi, 2011, p. 1). At the same time, the commitment to the goal of Sharia law and the obliteration of Christianity has resulted in civilian loss of life as they gain territories, despite their warning to civilians.

It has become common to hear religious chants like "Allahu Akbar" to be used as Boko Haram enters or begins an assault on a town or village, along with flag and raising banners to declare a conquered territory. The researcher notes 27 out of the 233 incidences reported some sort of "commitment" factor. However, it is likely many more incidences where Boko Haram has aggressed contain more of the commitment factor, but are unreported. Given that jihadist terrorist organizations around the world invoke "Allahu Akbar" at the beginning of many attacks, eyewitness accounts may not report these to the media, since it may be already implied. With the conquering of villages and strategic locations, there have also been leaders appointed by Boko Haram and immediate implementation of Sharia law after towns or villages are conquered. This suggests swift and forceful enforcement backed up by the group's commitment to the cause.

The "consequence" factor in the conversion process was present in 17 of the 233 articles reviewed on Table 15. Those articles mention money, arms/ammunition, vehicles and girls as forms of rewards associated with their attacks. The consequence aspect is discussed in greater detail following Table 16, based on the views of Boko Haram members or relatives. As a byproduct of attacks on military/police forces, benefits have

included military outfits, arms/ammunition, and military/police vehicles which have been obtained and used which have furthered their efforts. Attacks on civilians also yield resources like food, money, vehicles, taking of women as wives and looting of valuables for Boko Haram members. Historically, acts of war and terrorism include these types of spoils, and incidences for the group from 2012 to present day have inevitably resulted in the same forms of compensation.

The researcher notes Boko Haram has begun implementing attacks in countries surrounding Nigeria, indicating their efforts to expand their campaign. Cameroon reported two attacks, and Chad reported three attacks all in 2015. It is unclear whether Boko Haram's attacks in other countries is a result of frustrated efforts or loss of territory in Nigeria, or the group trying to establish territory in more countries as the result of its current successes in Nigeria. There is not enough information to substantiate either view.

Table 16: Steps of Conversion from Boko Haram Members/Relatives 2011-2016

	Total Number of Reports: 34	Year					
		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Steps of Conversion	Crisis	1	-	-	2	2	1
	Quest	-	-	-	-	1	2
	Encounter	-	1	-	-	2	-
	Forced Encounter	-	-	2	3	2	3
	Interaction	-	1	1	-	2	-
	Commitment	1	3	2	-	2	-
	Consequences	1	1	2	1	5	2
	Negative Consequences	-	-	-	-	3	2

The researcher found a total of 34 articles that referenced member and relative interviews with Boko Haram members or relatives with credible knowledge of the member. Those 34 articles are separate from the 233 incidences described in Table 15. This is a very low number when looking at the size of the study. Because the number of qualitative articles obtained is so low, the researcher cannot effectively use them to confirm or deny pieces of the conversion process. Rather, the articles can serve as an initial assessment of limited interviews. Information gathered from the articles contains rich and detailed information that can be useful in understanding Boko Haram.

Each report found also potentially mentioned one or more steps of the conversion process. A key difference is that "interaction" on Table 16 is not inclusive of every report gathered by Boko Haram members or relatives. Instead, "interaction" on Table 16 indicates literal mentioning of a member's interaction and participation with the belief system. These instances were rare to find, but Table 16 indicates a few notable trends. There are an increasing number of "crisis" and "quests" reported by members of the group from 2014-2016. What is also notable are the numbers of "forced encounters" from 2013-2016 and "negative consequences" being reported from 2015-2016. Thorough reading of the articles shows Boko Haram's tactics for gathering and retaining members of the group have evolved over time.

From Table 16, the "crisis" aspect can be seen developing as early as 2011. The researcher found a reference to crisis by a Boko Haram member in a newspaper interview, which include declarations that "our struggle is not driven by the urge to get money or to protect northern Nigeria…our plight is strictly meant to liberate our religion"

(Idris, 2011). Boko Haram has been able to capitalize on individuals in the middle of crisis. Several articles found from 2014-2016 referenced different types of internal crises people experience, which caused them to seek change (Omona & Ekong, 2014; York, 2015; Iroegbu, 2016). People report aspirations of establishing and growing their own businesses, as well as youths who have no future prospects being susceptible to promises of prosperity by Boko Haram's ideology. An instance of wealthy, well-to-do citizens with specific skill sets has joined the group through rigorous media propaganda influence (Wakili, 2015). This propaganda has also been a significant contributor in getting people to seek change. Other well-established terrorist organizations like AQIM and al Qaeda have taught Boko Haram how to influence public opinion.

The researcher found a couple instances where a mentioning of the quest is applicable. No media reports for "quest" were found until 2015, and one such report was made by family members of a Boko Haram member that joined in 2006. They reported their relative was "going to the mosque more often and he had befriended a man from a northeastern city where Islamist extremism was growing" (York, 2015). Another article mentioned recruited boys were joining the group because they complained of discrimination against Muslims in the mixed Christian-Muslim country. In other words, some members felt Christianity was the "preferred" religion, and the discrimination they felt likely refers to the difficulty in finding employment opportunities in their local areas.

The "quest" is likely a part of the conversion experience as outlined by Rambo, but sufficient evidence for it cannot be found by this study. Finding evidence to support the "quest" can likely be found by interviewing previous Boko Haram members that were able to renounce membership and leave the group with no repercussions. Such

interviews would be the focus of a qualitative study where those members would need to remain anonymous. Those types of interviews would not be found by standard newspaper circulation and is not in the purview of this study.

There are different types of encounters, and some types occur between a convert and his/her religious friends over the course of time. Favorable encounters that could win over the convert's loyalty are established, and best suited by a qualitative study with a small group of converts. In this study, there are a couple of newspaper articles with close relatives of members and former Boko Haram members that provides a clearer picture of a true encounter.

The York (2015) article mentioned above referenced how a current Boko Haram member befriended someone at a local mosque and began attending more religious services. The rest of the article details how the family encountered their radicalized relative when Boko Haram attacked their town. The family detailed how Boko Haram gathered the youth of the town together in efforts to persuade them to join the group. Sometimes the youth joined by threat of force by the group and other times financial gain was enough to get them to join. Most of the time, ideological persuasion was sufficient enough to get youth to join. By gathering the youth together as a group and presenting them with a unique ideology of Sharia law, they are able to get willful volunteers in greater numbers each time Boko Haram goes to a village or town.

An encounter with a former Boko Haram member outlined his encounters with the religious advocate (Okolie, 2015). He was urged and encouraged through teachings that took place after his normal prayers with an advocate. He was told if he could not join or financially support the group, then at least prayers for the group waging the war

was sufficient enough. The advocate emphasized the idea that Western education is sin, and encouraged people to denounce or destroy higher education degrees they may have obtained. According to the convert, many people with higher education destroyed their certificates as an act of rejecting their Westernization and joined Boko Haram. It explains why there are well-to-do and financially well-off people affiliated with the group; not just poor and unemployed youths. This formal renouncing of their education shows how powerful an ideology with a clear goal can be to both the educated and the uneducated. What sets them apart from being a religious organization, and becoming classified as a terrorist organization is how they have recruited members through "forced encounters."

Member and close relative reports from Table 16 illustrate parts of the "encounter" phase. The forced encounter usually starts with some form of coercion and can come from friends, family or group members. In one article, a Boko Haram member injured in a gunfight explained how he suspected his brother had ties to the group. Prior to joining, he stumbled upon his brother's AK47 in the home, so he confronted his brother about it. He was told that senior members of Boko Haram would kill him if they found out about the gun "unless I joined him as Boko Haram and work for the cause of Allah" (Haruna, 2013, p. 1). He stated there was no preaching of Islam to him or low-ranking members. An interrogation of another captured Boko Haram member (Idris & Bashir, 2013) reported to officials he was a shop worker prior to joining. A couple members came to him at his shop, handed him a gun, and was asked if he would hold it for them. He was told if he did not hold it for them, they would kill him. Feeling threatened and compelled to, he took the weapon, was taken to a road, and they shot and

killed someone. He was given some money and returned home. The next day, the same members showed up and told him he had to join or he would be killed, at which point he had no choice but to go with the members.

Other forced encounters show similar tactics where able-bodied young men are forced to join, or they and their family members would be killed, or homes and family businesses would be destroyed. Instances of blackmail and coercion are also common across instances of forced encounters. Interviews completed by terrorism experts show many conscripted members could not find any other way out of the situation so they reluctantly joined. Some victims reported leaders were preaching religious messages, but resorted to giving monetary loans, in exchange for service to the group. A victim reported, "Immediately I knew I had to accept the loans because they would kill me if I refused it, having heard what they do to people who refuse" (Abrak, 2016, p. 1). The accepting of these loans is part of the "consequence" phase of the conversion theory.

Another example of a forced encounter includes kidnapping school-aged girls by the group, being used for a couple different purposes. Articles show Boko Haram began resorting to kidnapping individuals around 2013, but began kidnapping young girls in 2014, which has continued to present day. News reports (LaFranchi, 2014; Ukpebor, 2014) show Christian girls were forced to renounce their faith and convert to Islam to avoid being killed. One of a couple things is happening to these girls. They are either being married off to Boko Haram soldiers as rewards or prizes, being brainwashed by the group and willfully dying as suicide bombers to their cause, or they are sent off *unknowingly* with backpacks to various places, and remotely detonated as suicide bombers by other individuals. Some indoctrinated children knowingly setting off

explosives are so young they are incapable of making informed and rational decisions. There are indications some girls are disillusioned to die for Boko Haram's cause by their respective families. Some families with many children have reportedly convinced the children suicide is a worthy self-sacrifice, and the family gets a monetary reward for the child from Boko Haram (Choji, 2015).

Suicide bombings mentioned through eyewitness accounts are difficult to interpret because of Boko Haram's shifting tactics. The two accounts of suicide bombings found for 2011-2012 expressly describe incidents where members of the group sacrificed themselves, believing in their group's cause. However, from 2013-2015, multiple eyewitness accounts report young females being the types of people to carry out suicide bombings. There are several factors involved in this. First, Nigeria had never previously faced incidents of suicide bombings where females were the aggressors, but its surrounding countries had experienced it, to some degree. There is an array of factors to consider from the suicide bombings.

Some of the girls used in the attacks may have been brainwashed and indoctrinated to carry out acts of jihad on civilian populations, but news reports are finding some survivors of unsuccessful suicide bombings were not indoctrinated. After months or years of captivity, some girls became so desperate to get away from Boko Haram they volunteered to be suicide bombers in the hopes they could find police or military authorities to remove the explosive devices. After being malnourished, repeatedly raped, and moved from place to place for so long, some of the girls successfully recovered by authorities reported entire groups of girls begging to be sent as suicide bombers (Swails & McKenzie, 2016). Some of the bombs attached to the girls

were triggered by Boko Haram members, possibly using cell phones as remote detonators. Regardless, some incidences of suicide bomb attacks were authentic, willfully detonated by indoctrinated believers, while other incidences were desperate attempts to get back to civilization, despite the risk and cost. The number of suicide bombings listed on Table 16 only reflects attacks that were successfully carried out. Because of these complex issues, exploring the conversion theory regarding suicide bombers is difficult to figure out.

One positive consequence viewed by members of Boko Haram is their authority and ability to kill others without a justifiable cause. Interviews with former members reveal Boko Haram has devolved into little more than an outlet for criminals to carry out acts like murder, robbery, and other criminal acts (Curtis, 2014). Members that joined the group were frequently disillusioned, believing the jihadist life included feelings of self-importance, a sense of purpose, and clear ideology. Some of the radicalized converts embraced the reality of jihadist life, including brutality and depravity associated with terrorist groups, but many began seeing negative consequences which made it difficult for them to leave.

Some negative consequences experienced by members include being ostracized from families and communities as criminals, disillusionment and blackmail, threats of harm to self or family members, and simply being fed up with violent campaigns. Interviews with former members report "none of the suspected Boko Haram elements that spoke with the CCC (Centre of Crisis Communication) asked for any form of monetary inducement…as a pre-condition for laying down their arms…many of them said that they were simply tired of fighting and being fugitives in a war they were

deceived into joining" (Mutum, 2015, p. 1). Other articles echo the same sentiments, and an increasing number of members able to escape the group (female suicide bombers and former group members) are voluntarily entering de-radicalization programs to reintegrate them into society (Umar & Agba, 2015). From the data collected, the onset of these negative consequences is as recent as 2015, and there are increasing numbers of them being reported. As Boko Haram's tactics for recruiting members have evolved to blackmail and coercion, the number of members able to leave and give more detailed accounts of the group's operations and methods has also increased. This may suggest Boko Haram is getting desperate in recruiting and retaining a dedicated following, but may remain well-funded by support from other terrorist groups. As described in the analysis section, negative consequences would not be found by eyewitnesses reporting attacks. Boko Haram would only promote the benefits and perks of joining them, as opposed to anything that would harm their image.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

The original question to this study sought to find which steps of Rambo's conversion typology, if any, may be more prevalent when applied to Boko Haram. Those steps Rambo outlines for conversion are context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment, and consequences. The researcher had to modify some of the operational definitions to fit Boko Haram as a group, and sought to apply them to individual members. Due to Boko Haram being a terrorist group, and not just an extremist sect, the researcher had to modify the *encounter* step with *forced encounters*, and had to add *negative consequences* to the definition of *consequences*.

Based on the findings, it appears the "context" and "crisis" steps are significant parts of the conversion experience. Those steps though, may be heavily influenced by a person's socioeconomic and cultural environment. In the case of northern Nigerians, failed government programs to promote equality, military and political corruption, and financial inequality have set a negative context for citizens. The crises people described include feelings of discrimination, and severe poverty. When Boko Haram started offering solutions leading to better lives, the group initially garnered a large following. Traditional Islamic and religious authorities in northern Nigeria also need to reconnect with its large Islamic following and collaborate with governmental authorities on how to best approach the disparity of its people. If context and crisis can be addressed at the political levels, then terrorist organizations would have less opportunity to influence discontented members of society. With regard to Boko Haram, the other steps of the

conversion process appear to flow from context and crisis. Based on the researcher's findings, interactions, commitments and consequences all were found to be parts of the Boko Haram conversion experience. However, due to the complexity and evolving nature of Boko Haram, it is not possible to quantify how many devout believers went through an authentic conversion experience based on religious motivations, and how many were "converted" due to other reasons.

There are limitations to this study the researcher is obligated to address. Boko Haram was formed as a group in 2002, but unheard of until news articles were found reporting on them in 2010. This limited the time frame the researcher could study about the group and the conversion experience, which was from 2010-2016. The searches for news articles and SPSS data interpretation from ACLED databases were only limited to acts where Boko Haram was listed as the aggressor. This limited the study because there were countless reports where military and police were listed as aggressors against Boko Haram. The researcher felt this would make the study too broad and dilute the essence of what was initially being studied. The essence was to examine elements of the conversion experience based on the attacks committed by the group, and members self-reporting experiences of their conversion. As the study began to evolve and the operational definitions of each step for conversion began to change, it may have nullified or changed Rambo's purpose behind each of his well-defined steps. However, due to the nature of Boko Haram and conversion, the researcher felt modifying them was necessary, which may be a limitation to the core of the conversion experience.

The nature of this study focused on a quantitative aspect of the conversion experience, as opposed to a qualitative aspect. News reports rarely mentioned in-depth

articles of Boko Haram member experiences. The "encounter" and "quest" aspects were rarely found and the articles that mentioned those steps of conversion may not be entirely accurate and representative of the entire conversion experience. An independent study involving in-depth interviews with previous members from a qualitative framework would be better suited to answer those parts of the conversion process. Although this study found 34 articles with interviews detailing parts of the conversion, the number of articles is too low for it to have any meaningful impact. Those articles serve as an initial assessment of limited interviews and suggest a basic underpinning of the encounters and quests rural Nigerians may be facing.

Other limitations include the news articles and reports. As mentioned before, incidences began to slowly be attributed to Boko Haram if the methods of attacks were similar or matched the modus operandi of the group. It is possible groups of people unaffiliated with Boko Haram may have carried out attacks and media may have attributed those to the group. It is also possible people unrelated to Boko Haram committed violent acts in the group's name.

A limitation mentioned in the analysis is the number of "unidentified armed group" attacks, when compared to the total number of attacks. There were numerous attacks that could be attributed to the disruption and exploitation of the growing oil industry, and also ACLED records many lone incidents of violence involving unidentified groups. It is difficult separating UAG incidents where Boko Haram is believed to be the aggressor, as opposed to other groups that may have committed the act. Frequently, UAG incidences had notes from eyewitnesses alleging the attackers, but no authorities were able to verify them. Other recently emerging trends showed where the

Fulani tribe had incidents and were shown to have Boko Haram connections, which makes attributing the number of attacks to Boko Haram even more difficult. Given the size of Nigeria, its population, and the number of UAG attacks (outside of possible Boko Haram and oil-related attacks), the country does not seem to have a violent culture. If it were found to be more violent, it may have skewed the implications of the study and the understanding of the conversion experience. The ACLED data and increase in incidences and fatalities suggest Boko Haram has become more aggressive in its efforts to achieve Sharia law and fear among the northern portion of the country.

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APPENDIX:

Institutional Review Board Exemption

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
for the Protection of Human Research Participants

PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 03328-2016 **INVESTIGATOR:** Kyle Dozier

PROJECT TITLE: Examining Boko Haram from a Religious Conversion Lens from 2002-2015

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is **exempt** from Institutional Review Board oversight under Exemption Category(ies) 2. You may begin your study immediately. If the nature of the research project changes such that exemption criteria may no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS:

Although not a requirement for exemption, the following suggestions are offered by the IRB Administrator to enhance the protection of participants and/or strengthen the research proposal:

N/A

☐ If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at irb@valdosta.edu to ensure an updated record of your exemption.

Elizabeth W. Olphie 2/24/16

Elizabeth W. Olphie, IRB Administrator Date

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.
Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-259-5045.

Revised. 12.13.12