PERSUASION IN RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

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The Need for New Methodologies

in Persuasion Research

Philosophers have been studying persuasion since the time of Corax

and Tisias in the fifth century B.C. In the present century empirical

methods of investigation have been added in the quest for more exact

knowledge about persuasion. In 1967, however, Samuel Becker observed that

if the empirical research done in the previous three years in the field of

communication were to be wiped out, it would not make the slightest

difference.[1] David Smith recently claimed that Becker's statement "is as

true today as it was in 1967."[2] There are three basic problems with recent

persuasion research: the failure to study communication as process;

problems in experimental methodology; and the failure to study dialogue.

The Failure to Study Communication as Process

The theoretical model used in teaching the art of persuasion and the

research methodology used in empirical studies of persuasion have been

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[1] Samuel L. Becker, "Approaches to Inquiry in Communication," a paper
presented to the Speech Association of America convention, Los Angeles,
December 1967.

[2] David H. Smith, "Communication Research and the Idea of Process,"
Speech Monographs 39 (August 1972): 182.

inconsistent. As Brooks and Scheidel put it, "While most theoretical writings emphasize the dynamic nature of communication, in practice the bulk of research on influence through speech imposes a static view."[3]

In the nineteenth century conception of process--the Newtonian view--"events are expected to occur in a definite temporal sequence. Causality is deterministic; events move linearly. Knowledge of what comes before leads to knowledge of what will come after."[4] Experimental studies of persuasion have typically been built on the model of behavioristic psychology, which, in turn, was built on the view of process in Newtonian physics. As Smith observes,

> The irony of all this was, of course, that it was at precisely the same time that Watson was enlisting converts to his new scientific psychology that the science on which that psychology was modeled was rejecting the underlying principles of the model. Planck, Einstein, Bohr, Heisenberg, and others were constructing a physics which is indeterminate, which accepts apparently contradictory theories simultaneously, which sees probability as fundamental in the universe and not simply a theory of error, which regards all observations as only partial and as tainted by the act of observation hence not really objective, and which rejects even the old notion of matter.[5]

Smith argues that a research methodology consistent with a twentieth century view of process would not judge the quality of a finding on the basis of "rigor," defined as "objectivity," but rather on the basis of its richness of explanation. He further suggests that,

> The most important change that this kind of processual research would bring would be the acceptance of procedures now considered suspect. With the considerable weakening of the idea of cause that the rejection of determinism implies, correlational designs become desirable as a means of suggesting relationships. Factor analysis becomes particularly useful for the development of patterns and categories. Research without hypotheses becomes sensible. Simple descriptive studies which do not

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[3]Robert D. Brooks and Thomas M. Scheidel, "Speech as Process: A Case Study," Speech Monographs 35 (March 1968): 1.

[4]Smith, p. 176.

[5]Ibid., pp. 177-178.

attempt the manipulation of variables become useful. Our present methodological inclinations lead us to attend heavily to our manipulation of variables and measurement of subjects' subsequent response, but we virtually ignore the perceptions of subjects. We do so because we have felt that subject self reports of meaning do not embody sufficient objectivity. But if the criterion of objectivity is rejected we will then be free to consider such self reports more useful.[6]

The logical conclusion of Smith's line of argument is that students of persuasion "must be freed methodologically to conduct research which is consistent with the twentieth century notion of process."[7] The physical sciences have used experimental methodology to great advantage. Symbolic interactionists, however, argue that man, with language, enters into a new dimension in which deterministic linear causality simply is not a satisfactory explanation. Mind, self, and society, which, according to Mead, are linguistic products, cannot be totally explained using the experimental methodology appropriate for the physical sciences.[8] Persuasion is a phenomenon within the realm of this other, uniquely human dimension. Instead of seeking explanations of persuasion in terms of "cause," we need to look for explanations in terms of relationships involved in a complex on-going process.

Persuasion research has also suffered from the "tool illusion." This illusion comes from what Egon Guba calls "the law of the hammer": "If you give a child a hammer, things to be pounded immediately become the most important features of the environment."[9] Communication researchers have

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[6]Ibid., pp. 179-180.

[7]Ibid., p. 175.

[8]George Herbert Mead, _Mind, Self, and Society_, Charles W. Morris (ed.), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).

[9]R. A. Barker, "A Final Word from the Editor," in R. A. Barker (ed.), _Psychology in the Wry_ (New York: 1963), p. 164.

sometimes allowed the availability of a research tool or of some statistical methodology to dictate the choice of research topics and even the value of problems. We have students in beginning speech classes as readily available subjects. Graduate teaching assistants are available as the experimenters. The classroom is available as a laboratory. Paper and pencil tests are economical and easy to administer. The pre-test, manipulation, post-test design is convienent. The tendency, therefore, has been to assume that questions which can be answered by these methods are the only important questions. The symbolic interactionists have raised some questions about persuasion and related matters which are not easily answered by experimental methods. One of the major criticisms advanced against the symbolic interactionist approach is that it has not generated very much experimental research. It seems strange, however, to condemn the symbolic interactionist perspective because of the paucity of experimental studies which it has generated when the underlying assumptions of that perspective reject the idea of deterministic linear causality on which experimental methodology is based.

Problems in Experimental Methodology

The need for a new approach in persuasion research is not confined to the problem of the nineteenth century notion of process. There are other important criticisms of the typical experimental methodology used in typical persuasion studies. While a detailed discussion of the shortcomings of laboratory research in persuasion is tangential to the purpose here, critics increasingly seem to agree that the typical laboratory experiment: exerts an influence toward compliance; confronts the subject with an unnatural demand for an immediate decision; is unnatural in its demand for rational responses in place of other ways of responding; is unnaturally isolated from the groups which influence subjects outside the laboratory; calls for an unnaturally

sedentary role for the subject; and typically deals with issues which are not personally important or even real to the subjects.[10] Other major problems are: the uncritical use of college students as subjects;[11] the degree of prior manipulation affecting the phenomenon being studied; the unnatural restriction of possible responses; the unnatural association in the experiment of variables that are never experienced together by subjects in the world outside the laboratory; and the unnatural separation in the experiment of variables which are always experienced together by subjects in the world outside the laboratory.[12]

Even if one grants the applicability of experimental methodology in certain areas of persuasion research, one could still argue that at this stage in the development of empirical inquiry on this subject one of the more important needs is for exploratory study. As Shibutani puts it, "Those who are intent upon copying the physical sciences overlook the fact that physics can rely so heavily upon experimental designs today because of the foundations established by the patient, ground-breaking observations of past centuries."[13]

In trying to identify a research area that would usefully contribute to the exploratory study of non-laboratory persuasion, a number of criteria

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[10]Karl E. Weick, "Promise and Limitations of Laboratory Experiments in the Development of Attitude Change Theory," in Carolyn W. Sherif and Muzafar Sherif (eds.), Attitude, Ego Involvement and Change (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967), pp. 51-75.

[11]Roger E. Nebergall, "A Critique of Experimental Designs in Communication Research," Central States Speech Journal 16 (1965): 13-16.

[12]E. P. Willems, "Toward a Science of Eco-Behavior," in E. P. Willems and H. L. Raush (eds.), Naturalistic Viewpoints in Psychological Research (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), pp. 97-123.

[13]Tamotsu Shibutani, Society and Personality (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), p. 9.

seemed important. The kind of research which has been neglected and which seems to be needed is inquiry which focuses on persuasion in connection with a subject which is highly meaningful to a large number of people as it naturally occurs in the world outside the laboratory. In order to study the many relationships involved in this complex process, it is desirable to focus on a kind of persuasion in which it is possible to identify a large number of people who have been exposed to the persuasive effort, those who were persuaded, those who were exposed to the persuasive attempt without being persuaded, and those who were temporarily persuaded but who soon reverted to their original position. It is useful to gather as large a body of data as possible concerning personality and demographic characteristics of the persuaders and of the people exposed to the persuasive effort. It is also helpful to look at differences among the relationships of the persuaders' personal characteristics to the personal characteristics of the subjects—the people who were persuaded, the people who were exposed to the persuasive effort without being persuaded, and the people who were only temporarily persuaded. In addition it is useful to discover how the persuaders and the subjects perceived the experience. The influence of reference groups in the persuasive effort is another area in which additional information is needed. The above considerations, of course, are not given as criteria for evaluating all persuasion research. These are simply the criteria considered in selecting this particular area of research and they are listed here in order to make explicit some of the presuppositions which underly the present study. The notion of exploratory research in non-laboratory persuasion implies not only criteria for selecting an appropriate area of study but also certain methods of investigation. Accordingly, the present study employs a descriptive, correlational research strategy.

The Failure to Study Dialogue

In order to discuss the failure of previous persuasion research to study dialogue, it is necessary first to define some terms as they are used in the present study. The term "persuasion" is taken to mean the process by which one influences the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of others through discourse. Manipulative monologue and non-manipulative dialogue are viewed as forms of persuasion at opposite ends of a single continuum.

Attempting to persuade another to adopt your viewpoint is not inconsistent with the principle of dialogue. Johannesen notes,

> Some of those writing on dialogue, by equating monologue and persuasion, urge that all attempts at persuasion are unethical. Buber, however, contends that even in dialogue one may express disagreement with another, may seek to influence him, or may attempt to show him the wrongness of his ways. But always, according to Buber, the influence must be exerted in a noncoercive, nonmanipulative manner that respects the free choice and individuality of the listener.[14]

In much of the literature on dialogue, manipulation is not viewed as the only way of securing agreement. Communication is manipulative not because the speaker tries to persuade, but rather because the speaker uses the listener and thus relates to the listener as an object rather than as a subject.[15] The principle of dialogue does not rule out strong convictions held by the individual nor does it rule out an effort to share those convictions with others in the hope of influencing their thinking. It may be fairly said, in

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[14]Richard L. Johannesen, "The Emerging Concept of Communication as Dialogue," Quarterly Journal of Speech 57 (1971): 375.

[15]Johannesen, p. 380. See also: Martin Buber, I and Thou, trans. by Ronald Gregor Smith, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1958); Between Man and Man, trans. by Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); The Knowledge of Man, ed. by Maurice S. Friedman, trans. by Maurice S. Friedman and Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1963); Martin Buber The Life of Dialogue (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960); and Reuel L. Howe, The Miracle of Dialogue (New York: The Seabury Press, 1963).

fact, that dialogue demands conviction and an interest in the other person which would motivate an effort to share such conviction.

Virtually all persuasion research in the past has been confined to the study of manipulative monologue. These studies have typically involved a one-way message flow, not a two-way exchange of messages. The sender has been seen as active while the receiver has been conceived of as passive. The direction of influence has been unilateral rather than bilateral. Much of the persuasion that actually takes place in the world outside the communication laboratory, however, involves a non-manipulative dialogue. The message flow and the direction of influence are bilateral. The sender is also a receiver and the receiver is also a sender. Each seeks to share his perspective with the other and to share the perspective of the other in the belief that both will grow thereby. In many situations persuasion may best be viewed not as manipulation but as a part of the personal growth of emerging selfhood.

According to the symbolic interactionist perspective, selfhood is most directly the result of self-defining choices that we make, but it is only through the sharing process of dialogic encounter that we confront the alternatives which make such choices possible. Dialogic encounter, therefore, provides the necessary atmosphere in which self-defining choices can be made and without which no authentic selfhood could emerge.

In the total experience of human communication, there are many situations in which one person may seek to influence the behavior of another, but in which manipulation is ruled out because of concern for a higher goal. Family communication, the interpersonal communication of conversation between friends, educational communication, and religious communication in evangelism are examples of situations in which manipulation as a method of influence should be ruled out because of being inconsistent with the higher goal of

creating and sustaining authentic selfhood. In these situations, if behavior is to be changed at all, it must be changed through a non-manipulative dialogue. Since these situations are important in the total human experience and since the study of persuasion in these situations has been largely neglected, it is this specific area that has been selected as the focus for the present study. The primary focus of this study was not on the dialogic nature of communication and some of the cases studied seem to have been examples of manipulative monologue, but many of the cases appear to have been examples of non-manipulative dialogue. Persuasion research in the past has neglected the study of cases of persuasion involving non-manipulative dialogue. The present study differs from previous persuasion research in that the cases investigated at least had the potential for the occurance of non-manipulative dialogue.

Evangelism as an Area of Investigation

in Persuasion Research

Politics, advertising, and salesmanship are areas in which persuasion attempts have been studied extensively. Social scientists, however, have largely ignored another important area: persuasion in religious conversion. Over twenty-five million Americans belong to one of the conservative, evangelical churches. These religious groups are, by definition, committed to a major involvement in a persuasive effort. They regard evangelism as one of the major missions, if not the sole mission of the Church. Furthermore, many of these groups see evangelism as a major responsibility of each individual Christian. This means that there are millions of people who are engaged in a systematic persuasive effort. Evangelism is a socially important and as yet largely uninvestigated area in which persuasion is taking place in the world outside the communication laboratory. It is,

therefore, a phenomenon worthy of investigation on its own merits.

When evangelism has been studied by speech scholars in the past, the studies have typically involved rhetorical criticisms of sermons by well-known preachers. Most of the evangelical churches, however, do not see sermons or other mass evangelistic efforts as being the place where religious persuasion takes place. In most of these groups, the stress is on person-to-person evangelism and the "evangelist" is most often an interested member of the Church, but not a clergyman. Generalizations from persuasion in sermons to persuasion in other situations may not be valid. It seems likely, however, that persuasion in the person-to-person kind of evangelism is more similar to persuasion as it naturally occurs in other situations. The study of persuasion in person-to-person evangelism is, therefore, more likely to yield useful insights into the nature of persuasion in general than would be the case with rhetorical criticisms of sermons.

A major advantage of studying persuasion in religious conversion--particularly in the context of person-to-person evangelism--is that this is an area in which many of the factors of interest to students of persuasion are present. The role of reference groups, the effects of persuasion through various media, the relation of personality and demographic characteristics of subjects and persuaders in the eventual success or failure of the effort--all these are present and can be studied in the case of persuasion in religious conversion. The study of conversions, according to Shibutani, is especially useful "for they throw light upon the manner in which behavior patterns, self-conceptions, reference groups, and significant others are related."[16]

Theologians typically see conversion as involving a man-God relationship. No theologian would likely accept empirical methodology as a

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[16]Shibutani, p. 523.

way of studying this man-God relationship. That relationship could be studied only by philosophical elucidation—particularly by reasoning on the basis of truths which one accepts as being revelations from God. In their view of evangelism, however, theologians typically see a man-man relationship as being an essential part of the conversion process. Evangelical theologians, who place great stress on the Church, also see conversion as involving a man-group relationship. These theologians see affiliation with the Church as being an integral part of the man-God relationship of conversion. Both the man-group and the man-man relationships are subject to empirical investigation.

An Identification Model of Persuasion
in Religious Conversion

Religious conversion involves a transformation of personal identity. It is under the heading of "Transformation of Personal Identity" that Shibutani offers his most extensive and useful discussion of religious conversion.[17] Such a view of religious conversion, however, is not new. Christian literature for almost two thousand years has reflected the Biblical concept of a "new birth" and of Christians being "new creatures." Personal identity, or self-image, is changed when a person becomes a Christian. There is also a change of self-image, although to a lesser degree, when a person is converted from one Christian religious group to another. It would seem, therefore, to be most useful to study persuasion in religious conversion in terms of such a change of self-image.

Self-image is largely a product of identification with others.[18]

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[17]Shibutani, p. 523ff.

[18]Charles Horton Cooley, "Primary Group and Human Nature," in Symbolic Interaction: A Reader in Social Psychology, 2nd ed., Jerome G. Manis and Bernard N. Meltzer (eds.) (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1972), pp. 159-160. See also: Shibutani, pp. 239-247.

The other person with whom one identifies has been called an alter ego, reference other, reference person, reference individual, role model, direct other, or significant other.[19] It is only when a person begins to see himself from the perspective of another person that he becomes aware of his own selfhood. Only then does his self-image begin to emerge. In this process, the individual defines himself in terms of his relationship to others. He identifies with others and incorporates them as a part of himself.

It is not just isolated individuals who are involved. A person sees himself from the perspective of various groups. He may belong to a particular group in some formal sense of official membership. If this group is especially important to him, he identifies with the group, incorporates the group as a part of himself, and thus forms a part of his self-image through his identification with this membership group. A person's self-image, however, may be influenced by groups in which he does not hold any official membership. A person may be so strongly opposed to some particular group that he comes to define himself partially in terms of his opposition to this negative reference group. A person may aspire to membership in some group, come to see himself from the perspective of this group, identify with this group, and incorporate this group as a part of himself--even without achieving actual membership in this positive reference group. In all of these cases, however, it is the individual's identification with others that is crucial in forming his own self-image. When one identifies with a group rather than just one individual, that group is called a reference group. Some writers distinguish among primary groups, membership groups, negative reference groups, and positive reference groups. Primary groups involve face-to-face

[19]Raymond L. Schmitt, The Reference Other Orientation (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), pp. 41-44.

interaction such as in the family or among close personal friends. Such relationships are called "primary" because of the major role that they play in creating and sustaining personal identity.[20]

Identification is not always with an actual living person. One may identify with a historical or even a fictional character.[21] Conversion to Christianity may be thought of as an identification with Jesus Christ as "Significant Other." Identification, however, usually involves people with whom one interacts in a face-to-face encounter. Conversion to Christianity generally involves some direct personal interaction with various individual Christians as reference persons, with a congregation as a membership-type reference group, and with the entire Church as a positive reference group.

Any change of reference groups involves alienation from the original reference group identification and from the self-image which resulted from that identification.[22] Following alienation, the remaining steps in the process are: contact with other individuals and other groups; identification with other individuals and groups; a displacement of the original reference group; and a resulting transformation of personal identity.[23]

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[20] Shibutani, pp. 404-431.

[21] Bernard Berelson and Gary A. Steiner, Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964), p. 558. See also: Schmitt, The Reference Other Orientation, p. 18.

[22] Muzafar Sherif and Carolyn W. Sherif, Social Psychology (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), pp. 419-421. See also: Berelson and Steiner, p. 329, and Shibutani, p. 528.

[23] Alfred R. Lindesmith and Anslem L. Strauss, Social Psychology (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), pp. 579-607. See also: Raymond L. Schmitt, "Major Role Change and Self Change," Sociological Quarterly 7 (1966): 311-322, and Shibutani, pp. 523-533.

According to Lindesmith and Strauss, "Alienation consists of the absence of profound and satisfactory group commitments and loyalties.[24] Before a person converts from one religious group to another within Christendom, it is likely that he will experience some alienation from the denomination which was his original religious reference group. Any factor which contributes to alienation should make it more likely that an individual will eventually become a convert.

Conversion to a particular religious group involves contact with representatives of that group. The greater the probability of contact the greater the probability of conversion.[25] Conversion to a particular religious group involves the identification of the individual with representatives of that group as significant others and identification with the group as a new reference group.[26] This identification process is facilitated when the new group differs from the original group on those matters which led to the individual's alienation from that group and when the new group is similar to the original group on other matters. Identification is facilitated when there are areas of similarity and thus of partial identification between the individual and the representatives of the particular group with which he comes into contact. The process is also facilitated when there is some similarity between the individual's theological position and the theological position of the religious group with

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[24]Lindesmith and Strauss, p. 362.

[25]Jay M. Jackson, "Reference Group Process in a Formal Organization," Sociometry 22 (1959): 307-327.

[26]Shibutani, pp. 527-528.

which he comes into contact.[27] Since similarity is important in this process,
a congregation which is similar in many demographic characteristics to the
majority of the people in the community in which the congregation is located
would be in the best position to attract new converts. Anything that helps an
individual feel that he is really wanted and needed in a congregation should
help attract that individual to that congregation and should help to keep him
in the congregation once he is converted.

Identification with reference groups is a crucial part of establishing
and maintaining an individual's selfhood or sense of personal identity. Some
forms of communication, however, are basically destructive in this process.
Gibb has described a climate of communication which is defensive and another
which is supportive.[28] This supportive climate closely parallels what Rogers
calls a "helping relationship."[29] Both of these are similar in many ways to
the "creative interchange" discussed by Wieman.[30] Under many different
labels, writers from many different fields have concluded that some forms of
communication are useful in creating and sustaining authentic selfhood while
other forms of communication hinder this process. The process of identifying
with a representative of a particular religious group as a significant other
and with that religious group as a new reference group is hindered by
manipulative monologue, but is facilitated by non-manipulative dialogue.

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[27]John Aldous and Leone Kell, "A Partial Test of Some Theories of
Identification," Marriage and Family Living 23 (1961): 15-19. See also:
Schmitt, The Reference Other Orientation, p. 116.

[28]Jack R. Gibb, "Defensive Communication," Journal of Communication
11 (September 1961): 141-148.

[29]Carl R. Rogers, On Becoming a Person (Boston: Houghton Mifflin,
1961), pp. 39-58.

[30]Henry Nelson Wieman, "Speech in the Existential Situation,"
Quarterly Journal of Speech 47 (1961): 150.

The above discussion outlined what might be called an identification model of persuasion in religious conversion. It should be understood that this model does not have the status of a theory. In the particular approach of the present study this model is not used as theory in the traditional sense of providing explicit hypotheses to be tested experimentally. Instead, this model is used only to suggest useful areas of investigation and to provide an explanatory framework for the analysis of obtained data in a descriptive and correlational study of persuasion in religious conversion. This model suggests four major areas of study: characteristics of the subject; similarities between the subject and the persuader in the role of significant other; similarities between the subject and the congregation in the role of a new reference group; and characteristics of the communication.

A Method for the Study of Persuasion

in Religious Conversion

The particular religious group used in this study was the Church of Christ--a religious fellowship with no central denominational organization, but with around 2,500,000 members in 17,000 local congregations throughout the United States.[31] A practical reason for selecting the Church of Christ is that I have served this group as a minister for over twenty years and had a number of contacts upon whom to draw in order to conduct the study. There were, however, other reasons for selecting this particular group. The Church of Christ is one of the most evangelistic of all American churches. Within this group, person-to-person evangelism has been stressed perhaps more than in any other religious group. Furthermore, this religious fellowship has had a remarkable record of success in religious persuasion. While most American

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[31]Yearbook of Churches, 1972 (Nashville: Southern Press, 1972).

churches have been losing members in recent years, the Church of Christ has been growing rapidly. In the past twenty-five years, this group has grown faster than any other religious group in America and the growth has come largely from the converts made in person-to-person evangelism.[32]

This study involves two major bases of comparison: differences among congregations of the Church of Christ found to be high, medium, or low in their adult conversion rate, and differences among groups of subjects classified as converts, drop-outs, and non-converts. For purposes of this study, conversion is operationally defined as affiliation with a local congregation of the Church of Christ by a person who was previously a member of some other religious group or by a person who previously had no religious affiliation. The drop-outs of this study are people who were persuaded to become members of the Church of Christ but who dropped out of the church soon after their conversion. The non-converts of this study are people who were exposed to some identifiable attempt to persuade them to become members of the Church of Christ but who decided not to become members.

Selection of Congregations for Study

Early in 1973, a large (N=2,000) mail survey of local congregations of the Church of Christ throughout the nation was conducted.[33] A table of random numbers was used to select the 2,000 congregations from the most complete available mailing list.[34] The number of questionnaires returned in usable form was 1,009. In the interview phase of the study, there was a

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[32]Ibid.

[33]See Appendix A.

[34]Where the Saints Meet (Austin, Texas: Firm Foundation Publishing Company, 1972).

follow-up on congregations included in the mail survey which did not reply.[35]
This follow-up study indicated that there was a slight bias in the results of
the mail survey in that congregations which returned the mailed questionnaire
tended to be slightly larger than average and also tended to have a higher
than average conversion rate. However, it was not the purpose of the mail
survey to provide totally random results from which generalizations applying
to all congregations of the Church of Christ could be made. The purpose was
simply to identify congregations whose adult conversion rate was high, medium,
or low, so that these could be included in the next phase of the study.
Congregations selected for in-depth study came from the 1,009 responding to
the mail questionnaire. Since there was a bias in the results of that mail
survey, there is also a bias in the subsequent in-depth study. Congregations
selected for the in-depth study were somewhat larger than average and were
somewhat higher than average in their adult conversion rate.

In the selection of congregations for in-depth study, there was an
effort to achieve representativeness in such matters as geographic area,
congregational size, size of the community in which the congregation was
located, and the like. However, there was no effort to achieve statistical
randomness in the selection. Congregations were selected on the basis of
their adult conversion rate. Using the 1,009 congregations responding in the
mail survey as a basis, congregations were selected for in-depth study in the
following manner: one third were in the top 20% in regard to adult conversion
rate; one third came from the middle 20%; and one third came from the bottom
20%. Beyond this, congregations were selected largely on the basis of
availability. Congregations were selected where it was possible to secure
the cooperation of local members and where it was possible for the author to

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[35]See Appendix A.

go in person or to recruit and train volunteer survey workers. The manner of selecting congregations for this part of the study makes it impossible to claim that the results obtained are typical of the Church of Christ throughout the nation. It is claimed, however, that the obtained results reflect significant differences among congregations which are high, medium, or low in their adult conversion rate and that these differences would be typical of the Church of Christ throughout the nation.

Conversion rate is not the same thing as growth rate. There are several sources of congregational growth other than conversions: the transfer of members from other congregations of the Church of Christ; the restoration of members who had become inactive; and the addition to the church rolls of children whose parents are already members of the Church of Christ. The Church of Christ does not count people as being members until they are baptized, but does not practice infant baptism. The typical age at which young people are baptized in the Church of Christ is somewhere between ten and fifteen. In a theological sense, these would be regarded as cases of conversion, but these are not cases of conversion as the term is used in this study. These children enter the church through socialization rather than through persuasion as defined by the present study. This study, thus, concerns only the adult convert. The youngest of all the converts in this study was eighteen years old and most were older. All of the converts were previously affiliated with some other religious group or else were not affiliated with any religious group. The conversion rate was obtained by taking the total number of adults who had been converted in the preceeding twelve month period and dividing that number by 100. Thus the conversion rate is the number of adult converts per year, per 100 members. That figure ranges in the obtained data from a low of 0.0 to a high of 9.9.

The In-Depth Study of Congregations

In the spring of 1973, a pilot study was conducted for the purpose of developing the survey forms, interview schedules, questionnaires, and tests to be used in the in-depth study of selected congregations.[36] In February, 1973, approximately 100 volunteer survey workers were recruited at the largest and most representative meeting of members of the Church of Christ in the United States: the annual Bible Lectureship at Abilene Christian College in Abilene, Texas. Half of these volunteer survey workers were eventually used in the study.

Sixty representative local congregations were selected for the in-depth study. In twelve cases the volunteer survey workers were unable to complete the study. Complete in-depth studies were conducted in forty-eight congregations--sixteen in each of the relevant categories. The mean conversion rate in the high group was 9.1, in the medium group the mean conversion rate was 6.9, and in the low group the mean conversion rate was 2.8.

Half of the in-depth studies were conducted entirely by the author. The rest were conducted by one or more volunteers. The interviewer variable did not produce any significant differences. All interviewers were male, between the ages of 25 and 65, and all were ministers of the Church of Christ. The interviewers, however, did not conduct surveys in their own congregations.

On being assigned a congregation in which to conduct an in-depth study, the first task of the survey workers was to gather information duplicating that of the mail survey on five other congregations of the Church of Christ in the same area--with a special effort to collect data

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[36]See Appendix B.

on any congregations in that area which had been included in the mail survey and which had not responded. Much of the data gathered in the mail survey and in this survey of congregations in the same area as a congregation included in the in-depth study were collected for purposes other than the present study. One purpose, however, was relevant to the present study: the collection of data needed to check on the bias in the mail survey. The total project gathered various kinds of data on 1,514 of the 17,000 congregations of the Church of Christ in the United States, or 8.9% of the congregations. For purposes of the present study, however, all of this work was preliminary to the in-depth studies which were done in forty-eight local congregations. The data reported in the following chapters were collected in these in-depth congregational studies.

Each in-depth congregational study involved the following methods of data collection:

1) Collection of congregational data from church records or from interviews with church leaders;

2) Interviews with the ministers (in those cases in which a congregation had more than one minister, the pulpit minister was interviewed);

3) Interviews with five recent converts (in no case were people included who had become members of the Church of Christ more than five years before the date of the interview and in most cases the subjects had converted less than eighteen months before the interview);

4) Interviews with five drop-outs (persons who had converted within the previous five years and had dropped out of the congregation within less than one year after their conversion);

5) Interviews with five non-converts (persons who had been exposed to some identifiable attempt to persuade them to become members of the

Church of Christ within the past three years but decided not to
convert);

6) Interviews with the member of the congregation identified as being
most responsible for persuading or trying to persuade each of the
above fifteen people to become a member of the Church of Christ.

Since the same kinds of data were gathered in forty-eight congregations, the
total data base for the present study includes:

1) Information concerning forty-eight congregations--sixteen each in the
high, medium, and low conversion rate groups;

2) Interviews with forty-eight ministers;

3) Interviews with 510 members of the Church of Christ who were
identified as being the ones responsible for the persuasive efforts
investigated in the present study;

4) Interviews with 240 recent converts;

5) Interviews with 240 drop-outs; and,

6) Interviews with 240 non-converts.

The collection of this kind of information makes it possible to do
two major types of comparisons. This information can be used to identify
significant differences among congregations which have a high, medium, or low
conversion rate. This information can also be used to identify significant
differences among converts, drop-outs, and non-converts. In a descriptive
field study such as this the collection of such data should provide useful
insight to the student of persuasion who seeks a better understanding of the
process of persuasion in religious conversion.

Goals of the Present Study

It is not the purpose of the present study to provide experimental
validation of explicit hypotheses. The basic purpose is simply to observe

and report important factors which appear to be involved in the process of persuasion in religious conversion. In this study the identification model is used to provide a frame of reference for analysis of obtained data, not to provide explicit hypotheses to be tested experimentally. The selection of research questions, however, was influenced by certain assumptions about factors which might be relevant. These assumptions led to research questions focusing on:

1) Characteristics of the subject which might make him more receptive to evangelistic persuasion;

2) Characteristics of the congregation which might make it more attractive to prospective converts in general;

3) Features of the subject-persuader and the subject-congregation similarities which might contribute to the process of persuasion in religious conversion; and,

4) Properties of the communication involved which might contribute to the conversion process.

Several related theoretical perspectives contributed to the formulation of research questions and to the frame of reference used in the analysis of obtained data. The most important of these approaches is the symbolic interactionist perspective in general and Shibutani's discussion of the transformation of personal identity in particular. Closely related to the symbolic interactionst perspective is the body of literature known generally as reference group theory. Additionally, Kelly's theory of personal constructs[37] and the writings of existentialist philosophers interested in religious persuasion, dialogue, and authentic selfhood are also important sources relied upon in the conceptualization of this study. These are

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[37]George A. Kelly, A Theory of Personality: The Psychology of Personal Constructs (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1963).

diverse sources from which to draw. Elements of these diverse approaches,
however, can be drawn together in offering a common explanation of persuasion
in religious conversion. According to this common explanation, persuasion in
religious conversion is not just a matter of getting an individual to change
his beliefs, attitudes, and overt behavior. Persuasion in religious
conversion also involves a special kind of interpersonal relationship with
significant others who help the individual form a new reference group
identification. Through participation in this process, the individual changes
his perspective, his self-concept, and his overt behavior.

Persuasion in religious conversion cannot be fully understood when
viewed as a one-way process of manipulation. Evangelism is best conceived of
as dialogue, not monologue. In order to understand persuasion in religious
conversion, there are many complex factors and relationships which must be
considered. Chapter Two focuses on characteristics of the individual which
make him more receptive to evangelistic persuasion. Chapther Three discusses
the characteristics of the congregation which might make it more attractive
to prospective converts in general. Chapter Four takes up the matter of the
similarities between the subject and the group or its representatives--
similarities which are conducive to the conversion process. Chapter Five is
concerned with message and media variables. Chapter Six summarizes the study.

Descriptive and correlational data are used throughout the study in
an effort to provide useful insights into various parts of the complex process
of persuasion in religious conversion. Explicit theoretical hypotheses are
not tested experimentally. There was no manipulation or control of variables
in this study. The role of theory in this study was simply to help formulate
the research questions and provide a frame of reference for analysis of the
obtained data. The reader is urged to judge this work on the basis of
whatever richness of explanation it may offer.

CHAPTER TWO

INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH

PERSUASION IN RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

Success in evangelistic persuasion cannot be defined totally in terms
of changes in beliefs and attitudes. No church counts a person as a convert
simply because he has come to share their particular beliefs and attitudes.
In all churches, success in evangelistic persuasion is operationally defined
in terms of group affiliation. A person is not counted as a convert and
evangelistic persuasion is not regarded as successful unless and until the
person actually affiliates with the group.

In Chapter One, religious conversion was discussed in terms of the
process and function of group affiliation. Religious conversion was
represented as being a process in which a person establishes a self-defining
identification with a congregation as a reference group and with certain
members of the congregation as "significant others." This process was
considered as a type of transformation of personal identity. For purposes of
simplicity, this explanatory schema will be referred to as the
"identification model."

While religious conversion may generally involve changes in beliefs
and attitudes, it always involves changes in group affiliation. A study of
the functions of such group affiliation should help to clarify the nature of
the process involved. In such a study, there are several factors that must
be considered. Later chapters are devoted to the consideration of

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characteristics of the group, subject-group and subject-persuader

similarities, and characteristics of the message and the media used in

evangelistic persuasion. The present chapter focuses on another category of

variables: characteristics of the individual. Schmitt suggests that

attributes of the individual are among the most important factors influencing

the process of identification.[1]

<div align="center">

Individual Characteristics:

Categories of Comparison

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In that part of the present study which focuses on differences among

converts, drop-outs, and non-converts, there are several comparison

categories--some of which are discussed in later chapters. Data on eight

individual characteristics were collected in the survey. There were no

significant differences among converts, drop-outs, and non-converts on four

of the individual characteristic variables: age, educational level, socio-

economic status, and cognitive style.[2] The relationships between the

subject's position on these variables and the position of the persuader on the

same variables were significant and these relationships are discussed in a

later chapter. The focus of this chapter is on the four individual

characteristic variables on which significant differences were found among

the converts, drop-outs, and non-converts:

1) the relative homogeneity-heterogeneity of religious influence in the

   subject's primary reference groups;

2) the degree of change in the subject's life situation

3) the subject's pattern of dissatisfaction in the time before the

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[1]Raymond L. Schmitt, _The Reference Other Orientation_ (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), p. 92.

[2]See Appendix C.

attempt was made to persuade him to become a member of the Church of Christ; and,

4) the subject's original theological position on a conservative-liberal continuum in relation to that of the Church of Christ.

Based on the identification model, there are certain predictions which logically follow in regard to these four individual characteristic variables. These predictions are listed below.

1) Subjects who have a heterogeneous pattern of religious influence in their original primary reference groups should be more likely to convert since their original reference group identification does not give them any clear self-definition in regard to religion. Those who have a homogeneous pattern of religious influence in their original primary reference groups should be less likely to convert and more likely to drop out if they do convert.

2) Subjects who have experienced a high degree of change in their life situation and who have thus lost some of their self-defining group affiliations should be more likely to convert and thus establish a new self-defining group affiliation. Those who have experienced less change in their life situation should be less likely to convert and more likely to drop out if they do convert.

3) Subjects who have a pattern of dissatisfaction in which affiliation with a congregation of the Church of Christ would be an appropriate way of resolving the dissatisfaction should be more likely to convert. Those who have no dissatisfaction and those whose dissatisfaction would not likely be resolved by affiliation with a congregation of the Church of Christ should be less likely to convert and more likely to drop out if they do convert.

4) Subjects whose original theological position on a conservative-literal

continuum is close to that of the Church of Christ should be more
likely to convert since they are already at least partially
identified with the group that is seeking their affiliation.
Subjects whose original theological position is much more conservative
or much more liberal than that of the Church of Christ should be less
likely to convert and more likely to drop out if they do convert.

In the study of these four individual characteristic variables, the
purpose is to sketch a profile of the individual characteristics of the
typical convert, drop-out, and non-convert. It is possible on the basis of
the obtained data to note some major differences in regard to the four
individual characteristics which distinguish between the convert on the one
hand and the non-convert and the drop-out on the other hand. There were,
however, no significant differences on any individual characteristic variables
distinguishing between the non-convert and the drop-out. That distinction can
be made only on the basis of the combined influence of the four variables
discussed in this chapter and on the basis of factors discussed in later
chapters. The convert category, however, is the only category of the present
study which represents successful evangelistic persuasion. The drop-out and
non-convert categories represent two kinds of failure in evangelistic
persuasion. Since no significant differences were found between drop-outs and
non-converts on the individual characteristic variables, for simplification
these two categories are combined in a number of the comparisons reported in
this chapter. However, the data on the four main comparisons of this chapter
are presented without this simplification. The methods employed in the
operationalization of these four individual characteristic variables are
outlined below.

Homogeneity of Religious Influence

Subjects were asked to provide information concerning their own previous religious affiliation and that of their father, mother, brothers, sisters, spouse, children, and three closest friends. Subjects also indicated how close they felt to each of these people and how often religion was discussed with each of these people. In addition, converts were asked how these people reacted when these converts decided to become members of the Church of Christ; non-converts were asked whether or not these people influenced their decision not to become members of the Church of Christ; and drop-outs were asked whether or not these people influenced their decision to drop out of the Church of Christ.

This information was treated numerically by assigning two points to each member of the subject's immediate family and to each of his three closest friends. One point was assigned to each relative listed who was no longer a member of the subject's immediate family. One point was added to each person's score if the subject reported that he discussed religion with that person. Another point was added to each person's score if the subject reported that his decision was somehow influenced by that person. A final point was added to each person's score if the subject reported that he was very close to that person. Each reference group member listed thus had a score somewhere between 1 and 5. Reference group members with the same religious affiliation were grouped and their scores totaled. The group with the highest total was considered to be dominant. The scores of all those not in the dominant group were totaled and subtracted from the total score of the dominant group. In a few cases there were two dominant groups with equal scores. Since it made no difference in the final results, one of these groups was arbitrarily selected as dominant and the total score of all those not in that group was then subtracted from the total score of the group

designated as dominant. The result, of course, was that in those situations

in which a subject had a relatively heterogeneous pattern of religious

influence in his primary reference groups, the final score on this item

would be negative. Thus a large negative score indicated a high degree of

heterogeneity and a large positive score indicated a high degree of

homogeneity.

Subjects were arrayed according to their relative standing on this

measure and assigned a decile score (0=the most homogeneous 10%; 9=the most

heterogeneous 10%). Due to ties in ranks, the groups were not of equal size.

The smallest group had only 6.9% of the subjects and the largest group had

15.69% of the subjects.

Change in Life Situation

The degree of change in the subject's life situation was measured by

Holmes Change of Life Scale.[3] In Holmes' procedure a numerical value is

assigned to each change that the subject reports. The specific numerical

value assigned to each reported change is as follows:

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Death of spouse . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 100
Divorce . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 73
Marital separation . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 65
Death of close family member . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 63
Marriage . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 50
Marital reconciliation . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 45
Retirement . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 45
Gain of new family member . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 39
Change in financial status . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 38
Change in work responsibility . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 29
Son or daughter leaving home . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 29
Wife beginning or stopping work . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 26
Beginning or end of school . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 26
Change in residence . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 20
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[3]Thomas H. Holmes, "Measurement of Stress," Clinical Psychology
Colloquium, University of Houston, 1969 (mimeographed). For an easily
located source on the Change of Life Scale, see: "How Much Change Can
You Take?" Reader's Digest (January 1974), p. 119.

Subjects were arrayed according to the reported degree of change in their life situation and assigned decile scores (0=the lowest 10%; 9=the highest 10%). Once again, because of ties in ranks, the number of subjects in the groups were not equal. The smallest group had 8.056% of the subjects and the largest group had 11.38% of the subjects.

Patterns of Dissatisfaction

Subjects in this survey were asked whether or not they were dissatisfied with their church or with their non-religious life style before anyone from the Church of Christ attempted to influence them. If they said that they were dissatisfied, they were asked to explain why they were dissatisfied. In addition, dissatisfied subjects were asked what things worried them, what things troubled them, and what things they were looking for in life at the time before anyone from the Church of Christ tried to influence them.

The system used in assigning scores to these responses took into consideration the strength of the expressed dissatisfaction and the degree to which the expressed dissatisfaction related to religious conversion. Subjects who reported no dissatisfaction were assigned a score of 5 as a neutral point on a 1-9 scale. Those who reported dissatisfactions and concerns over moral or religious matters where affiliation with the Church of Christ would be an appropriate way of resolving the dissatisfactions were assigned scores between 6 and 9. Impersonal concerns—such as concern over the nation's high divorce rate—were scored lower, personal concerns—such as concern over a threatened divorce in the subject's own family—were scored higher. The greater the intensity of the expressed concern, the higher the score. With some subjects, the responses indicated concerns irrelevant to or even inconsistent with the attempt to persuade them to become members of the

Church of Christ. When the pattern of responses was judged to be inappropriate or irrelevant, the subject was assigned a score on this item somewhere between 1 and 4, with 1 representing very personal and very intense concerns of an inappropriate nature and 4 representing inappropriate impersonal concerns of low intensity. The judgment was made on the basis of the over-all pattern of expressed concerns.

All judgments used in this part of the study were those of the author. However, reliability of the coding was checked by having four other coders make the same judgments. The average correlation of inter-judge agreement was .84 and in no case did any of the judges differ by more than two scale points on the categorization of any subject. In all cases the judges agreed on the placement of the subjects either in the 1-4 or in the 6-9 group. The only differences among the judges was thus in specific placement within the 1-4 or the 6-9 categories.

Original Theological Position

The 720 subjects interviewed in this survey indicated their religious affiliation at the time before anyone from the Church of Christ attempted to influence them to become members of the Church of Christ. No effort was made in this study to determine past or present beliefs of subjects. Thus the theological position referred to is not necessarily that of the subject personally, but that of the group with which the subject was previously identified. Subjects differed, of course, in the degree to which they were identified with a religious group--as shown below:

1) 21% were active members formally affiliated with some denomination;

2) 43% were inactive members, but still formally affiliated with a particular denomination;

3) 29% had no formal church affiliation, but did express a church preference;

4) 7% had no church affiliation or preference--thus 93% of the subjects had
a definite religious group with which they were at least partially
identified. The "group" with which the remaining 7% "identified"
was simply a position or an idea.

For purposes of this comparison, the theology of various religious
groups was represented as points along a single 9-point conservative-liberal
continuum. On this continuum, 1=much more conservative than the Church of
Christ, 9=much more liberal than the Church of Christ. The conservative-
liberal continuum is defined theologically in terms of the attitude of a
particular group toward the interpretation and the authority of the Bible.
Fundamentalists believe that the Bible must be interpreted and obeyed
literally. The moderate position--and this is the position held by members
of the Church of Christ--is that the Bible should be interpreted using the
same rules of hermeneutics that are applied to any other written document:
the text should be interpreted literally unless there is something within the
text itself to indicate that a figurative meaning was intended. The liberal
position--which is accepted by the majority of modern Protestant
denominations--is that the text should be interpreted figuratively if a
literal interpretation would conflict with reason. On this basis, the most
liberal Protestant theologians regard all references to miracles, the super-
natural, heaven, or hell as being figurative. The Catholic position is much
more conservative than that of most modern Protestant groups, but the
Catholics do insist that the Bible be understood figuratively whenever a
literal interpretation would conflict with church tradition, statements by
church councils, or statements by the Popes. On this scale, therefore, the
Catholic position was given a score of 6. Extreme fundamentalist groups were
assigned a score of 1. Extreme liberal groups were assigned a score of 9.
For purposes of this comparison, those with no church affiliation or

preference were assigned to the most liberal category and given a score of 9. An anti-religious or non-religious position would likely minimize Biblical authority and argue for figurative interpretation even more than the most liberal Protestant denominations.

Representing theological positions along a single continuum, of course, involves a major over-simplification. There is, however, some justification for using the single conservative-liberal continuum for purposes of this comparison. In the results of the Religious Construct Test--which is discussed in detail in a later chapter--except for an over-all evaluative judgment, more subjects used the conservative-liberal continuum for discriminating among churches than any other single construct. Forty-four percent of all subjects tested used the evaluative construct while 40% used the conservative-liberal construct. Among those subjects who are classified as cognitively complex--that is, those using five or more constructs--92% used the conservative-liberal continuum as one of their constructs. The second most frequently used construct was employed by only 31% of the subjects in the cognitively complex group. Those subjects who used the conservative-liberal construct used it more than all other constructs combined. Furthermore, 83% of all subjects who reported that they were dissatisfied with the church they belonged to listed its position along the conservative-liberal continuum as one of the reasons for their dissatisfaction. The conservative-liberal continuum, therefore, probably represents the single most important construct in regard to churches for the people in the present study.

There were 57 denominations represented in this survey. Of these, 45 appeared only once. Judgment as to where a denomination should be placed on the 1-9 conservative-liberal continuum was made by the author. In a check on reliability, four other ministers of the Church of Christ were asked to make the same judgments. The average correlation of inter-judge agreement was .93

and in no case did any of the judges differ by more than one scale position from the judgment of the author. In the judgments of the 12 demoninations which appeared most often in the survey, the average correlation of inter-judge agreement was .97 and in no case did any of the judges differ by more than one scale position from any of the other judges. These judgments, of course, reflect a view peculiar to the Church of Christ. People at either end of this continuum would not likely make the same judgments as those used in this study. These judgments, however, represent a kind of social reality within the group being investigated and thus provide a meaningful way of comparing individuals within the present study.

Statistical Methodology

Before discussing the results obtained in the survey, an explanation is needed concerning the chi square test used in the comparisons reported in this and later chapters. The chi square statistic is directly proportional to the size of the sample. In a survey as large as this, statistical significance can be obtained with very weak relationships. The contingency tables show the direction of any relationship in the obtained results. The chi square statistic and the chi square probability tables tell how often such a result would be obtained by chance. Being confident that there is a non-chance relationship, however, is not the same as knowing how strong the relationship is. There are four traditional measures of strength of relationship based on chi square: Tschuprow's T^2, Pearson's C, Carmer's V^2, and phi square.[4] In a 2 x 2 table, phi square is easily interpreted since it ranges from zero to an upper limit of unity. The interpretation of phi square is complicated, however, by the fact that in larger tables it can achieve a

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[4]Hubert M. Blalock, Jr., <u>Social Statistics</u> (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1960), pp. 295-298.

value larger than unity. T^2 and C are often found in the social science literature, but interpretation of these statistics is complicated by the fact that their upper limit is often less than unity. The upper limit of these statistics is dependant on the number of rows and columns in the table. V^2 is not commonly seen in the social science literature, but it seems preferable to these other measures since its upper limit can achieve unity even when the number of rows and columns are not equal. All of these measures of strength of relationship are used at various points in this study. Perhaps the best strength of relationship measure, however, is a simple comparison of percentages. Such a measure has a clearly understood intuitive meaning and thus in this analysis the greatest stress is placed on a comparison of percentages as a strength of relationship measure.

Homogeneity of Religious Influence as a Factor
in Evangelistic Persuasion

According to the identification model, reference groups are very important to an individual. A person makes self-defining choices in terms of his relationship to significant individuals and groups. As a person thus defines himself he becomes himself. Authentic selfhood emerges within this framework of identification. A person, therefore, needs such self-defining group affiliations. According to Shibutani, "Men are primarily responsive to the judgments of those who constitute their reference groups. One gains a sense of personal identity by locating himself within a meaningful social world, and he seeks recognition within this web of social relationships."[5]

When there is a homogeneous pattern of religious influence in a person's primary reference groups--with most of his relatives and close

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[5]Tamotsu Shibutani, Society and Personality (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), p. 274.

friends belonging to the same denomination--his reference groups probably serve a clear self-defining function in regard to religion. Heterogeneous patterns of influence, however, cannot serve this self-defining function. In the present study, therefore, one would predict on the basis of the identification model that subjects with a heterogeneous pattern of religious influence in their primary reference groups would be more likely to convert. Those with a homogeneous pattern would be less likely to convert and more likely to drop out if they do convert.

Results of a chi square test comparing the relative degree of homogeneity-heterogeneity for converts, drop-outs, and non-converts, are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1

HOMOGENEITY-HETEROGENEITY OF RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE

IN SUBJECTS' PRIMARY REFERENCE GROUPS

| Categories of Subjects | Pattern of Religious Influence | | | | | | | | | | TOTALS |
| | Most Homogeneous Groups: | | | | | | Most Heterogeneous | | | | |
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Converts	3	7	16	22	28	21	27	33	37	46	240
Drop-Outs	40	45	45	25	20	16	21	10	6	12	240
Non-Converts	70	51	38	23	12	11	10	12	10	3	240
TOTALS	113	103	99	70	60	48	58	55	53	61	720

Chi square=224.75, df=18 (minimum chi square at a=.001 is 42.312)
V^2=.16, T^2=.13, C=.49, phi square=.31

The relationship shown in Table 1 is relatively weak, but it is clearly a non-chance relationship and the direction is obvious. The prediction based on the identification model in this case was supported. Subjects with heterogeneous patterns of religious influence in their primary reference

groups were more likely to convert. Those with homogeneous patterns were less likely to convert and more likely to drop out if they did convert.

The above findings parallel the findings of other researchers. Backman, Secord, and Peirce found that there was less change of a subject's self-image when there was a high degree of consensus among the significant others of the subject's primary reference group, but there was much more change of self-image when there was a heterogeneous pattern of influence in the primary reference group.[6] Mannheim found that an unstable reference group pattern was associated with greater changes in the self-image than was a stable reference group pattern.[7] Berelson and Steiner's comment about the influence of reference groups on political preference probably would be equally applicable in the matter of religious preference:

> The more homogeneous a person's attitudinal, personal, and social background, the more firmly his political preferences are held and the more they conform to the modal position of the group. The less homogeneous the background—that is, the more cross-pressures the individual is subject to—the more changeable his preferences.[8]

Change in Life Situation as a Factor

in Evangelistic Persuasion

If reference group identification is important—as suggested by the identification model and by the data in Table 1—then it should logically follow that changes in a person's life situation should be associated with the

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[6]Carl W. Backman, Paul F. Secord, and Jerry R. Peirce, "Resistance to Change in the Self-Concept as a Function of Consensus Among Significant Others," Sociometry 26 (1963): 102-111.

[7]Bilah F. Mannheim, "Reference Groups, Membership Groups and the Self Image," Sociometry 29 (1966): 265-279.

[8]Bernard Berelson and Gary A. Steiner, Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964), p. 434.

differential results of evangelistic persuasion. Changes in life situation resulting from moving, changing jobs, changing marital status, and the like, break down previous identifications. New identifications in this period of transition are only potential and are likely still quite weak. Hence, the more change a person has recently experienced in his life situation, the more he should need group identification. It should, therefore, be more likely that a person who has recently experienced a high degree of change in his life situation would be receptive to evangelistic persuasion. His conversion would serve the function of establishing a new self-defining group affiliation to take the place of identifications which have been broken by changes in his life situation.

The above analysis is suggested by several writers. According to Lindesmith and Strauss, changes in status lead to changes in personality.[9] Schmitt, studying nuns who were going through a five year period of training, found significant changes in self-image as a function of role changes.[10] Discussing the relationship between changes in life situation and changes in self-image, Shibutani comments,

> Changes may also occur when a person finds himself in a different social setting, giving him opportunities for releasing previously suppressed impulses. . . . As a previously established balance is upset with the assumption of a new role, long hidden interests move to the forefront. Especially where different interpersonal roles are assumed, the changes can be quite extensive.[11]

The change in life situation variable presently under discussion and the homogeneity variable discussed earlier are conceptually related. Before

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[9]Alfred R. Lindesmith and Anslem L. Strauss, Social Psychology, 3rd. ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), pp. 579-607.

[10]Raymond L. Schmitt, "Major Role Change and Self Change," Sociological Quarterly 7 (1966): 311-322.

[11]Shibutani, p. 524.

considering the data on the change of life situation variable, it was
necessary first to determine the extent to which these two variables were
independent. For purposes of this comparison, non-converts and drop-outs
were grouped into a single category since no significant differences were
found between these two groups. Converts were compared with non-converts and
drop-outs on the homogeneity of religious influence variable with the change
of life situation variable as a control factor and then on the change of life
situation variable with the homogeneity of religious influence factor as a
control. In this comparison all subjects were divided into two groups on
each variable with the division coming at the mid-point of each scale. The
results of the chi square tests are presented in Table 2. These tests show
that the homogeneity of religious influence variable and the change of life
situation variable are relatively independent although related. The relative
degree of homogeneity of religious influence makes little difference for the
group with less change in life situation, but a major difference for the group
with more change in life situation. The degree of change in life situation
makes little difference for the group with a homogeneous pattern of religious
influence in their primary reference groups, but it does make some difference
for those with a heterogeneous pattern of religious influence in their
primary reference groups. A comparison of these two chi square tests suggests
that the change of life situation variable is more important than the
homogeneity of religious influence variable. While the tests of Table 2
show that these two variables are independent, they also indicate a
considerable area of overlap. The identification model, of course, implies
that these two variables are related. A comparison of the percentages shows
patterns of their relationship. In the high change group the homogeneity
variable was rather evenly distributed with 52% in the homogeneous category
and 48% in the heterogeneous category. In the low change group, however, the

TABLE 2

TEST OF INDEPENDENCE OF HOMOGENEITY OF RELIGIOUS

INFLUENCE AND CHANGE IN LIFE SITUATION

Subject Categories	Degree of Change in Life Situation					
	Low Change Group			High Change Group		
	Religious Influence			Religious Influence		
	Homo-geneous	Hetero-geneous	TOTALS	Homo-geneous	Hetero-geneous	TOTALS
Converts	11.2% (42)	1.33% (5)	12.53% (47)	9.86% (34)	46.09% (159)	55.94% (193)
Non-Converts and Drop-Outs	59.2% (222)	28.27% (106)	87.47% (328)	42.61% (147)	1.45% (5)	44.06% (152)
TOTALS	70.4% (264)	29.6% (111)	100% (375)	52.46% (181)	47.54% (164)	100% (345)

Chi square=9.27, df=1,   Chi square=222.98, df=1,
a<.01, phi square=.02   a<.001, phi square=.65

Combined chi square=232.25, df=2, a<.001, phi square=.32, C=.49

Subject Categories	Homogeneity-Heterogeneity of Religious Influence					
	Homogeneous Group			Heterogeneous Group		
	Degree of Change in Life Situation			Degree of Change in Life Situation		
	Low Change Group	High Change Group	TOTALS	Low Change Group	High Change Group	TOTALS
Converts	9.05% (42)	7.33% (34)	16.38% (76)	1.95% (5)	62.11% (159)	64.06% (164)
Non-Converts and Drop-Outs	58.41% (271)	25.22% (117)	83.62% (388)	17.97% (46)	17.97% (46)	35.94% (92)
TOTALS	67.46% (313)	32.54% (151)	100% (464)	19.92% (51)	80.08% (205)	100% (256)

Chi square=6.16, df=1,   Chi square=81.5, df=1,
a<.01, phi square=.01   a<.001, phi square=.32

Combined chi square=87.66, df=2, a<.001, phi square=.12, C=.34

distribution was quite different with 70% being in the homogeneous category
and only 30% in the heterogeneous category. Assuming that change in life
situation is one source of increased heterogeneity of reference group
influence, the above findings are about what one would expect. The second
chi square test shown in Table 2 demonstrates this relationship even more
clearly. In the homogeneous group, 67% were in the low change category and
only 33% were in the high change category. In the heterogeneous group, 20%
were in the low change category and 80% were in the high change category.
What all of this suggests is that both of these variables are important in
determining whether or not a person is likely to convert.

Since these two variables are independent, although related, we now
turn to an examination of the data on the change of life situation variable.
The relationships shown in this comparison are statistically significant, but
relatively weak. There are clearly no differences between the non-converts
and drop-outs. There is, however, a clear difference between these two
categories of subjects and those in the convert category. On this point the
predictions drawn from the identification model prove to be correct. The more
change a person had experienced in his life situation, the more likely he was
to convert. The less change a person had experienced, the less likely he was
to convert and the more likely he was to drop out if he did convert. Data on
this comparison are presented in Table 3.

<div align="center">

Patterns of Dissatisfaction as a Factor

in Evangelistic Persuasion

</div>

The data presented on the change of life situation variable and on the
homogeneity of religious influence variable suggest that there is a need for
self-defining group affiliation and that people who are not having that need
fulfilled are more likely to convert. Those who are having that need

TABLE 3

CHANGE IN LIFE SITUATION

| Subject Categories | Degree of Change in Life Situation | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Least Change | | | | | | | Most Change | | | |
	Groups: 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	TOTALS
Converts	3	3	6	11	24	22	26	34	53	58	240
Drop-Outs	27	36	29	40	21	27	20	17	11	12	240
Non-Converts	34	33	37	32	27	23	22	7	18	6	240
TOTALS	65	72	72	83	72	72	68	58	82	76	720

Chi square=213.526, df=18, a<.001, V^2=.15, T^2=.13, C=.48, phi square=.3

fulfilled are less likely to convert and are more likely to drop out if they do convert. If it can be granted that there is, indeed, such a need—and the data from the present study presented thus far leds support to the identification model on this point—then there is another prediction which logically follows. An individual's pattern of dissatisfaction should reflect this unfulfilled need. One would predict, therefore, that there should be a relationship between the change of life situation variable and the pattern of dissatisfaction variable—and also a relationship between the homogeneity of religious influence variable and the pattern of dissatisfaction variable. Further, one would predict that there would be a relationship between patterns of dissatisfaction and success in evangelistic persuasion. According to the identification model, the pattern of a subject's dissatisfaction in the time before anyone from the Church of Christ tried to influence him should be an important factor in determining whether or not the persuasion attempt succeeded.

In this study, some of the people interviewed reported no dissatisfactions at all. Few of these were converted and most who were dropped out soon

after their conversion. Others listed various concerns or dissatisfactions—
some personal, some impersonal, some weak, some intense. Not all concerns
expressed were relevant to the kind of evangelistic persuasion practiced by
the Church of Christ. Evangelistic persuasion presupposed a common ground of
concern over certain central problems: the fear of death; guilt or feelings
of guilt; uncertainty about the meaning of life—a lack of aim, direction,
goal, or purpose; a desire to improve the quality of family life; or, at a
more impersonal level, concerns about moral decay in society, corruption in
government, war, and the like. Of principal importance is the fact that
evangelistic persuasion is designed to bring about group affiliation.
Evangelistic persuasion thus presupposes a common ground of concern (whether
conscious or unconscious) over the need for such affiliation and the benefits
to be derived from it. Some of the subjects in this survey, however, reported
dissatisfactions over such things as lack of money, the inability to get the
kind of job they wanted, worry over inflation or high taxes. Some of the
expressed concerns were thus irrelevant to the evangelistic persuasion of the
Church of Christ. Others were directly inconsistent with that persuasive
attempt. One subject, for example, who lived in a "dry" county in the
western part of Texas, reported that his principal concern was over the
difficulty that he had in purchasing liquor. Another subject, a young man
who lived in a university community in the Midwest, reported that his
principal concern was his fear of being arrested for possession of marijuana.
There were even some religious concerns expressed which were inconsistent
with the evangelistic appeal of the Church of Christ. A few subjects who
were affiliated with extremely conservative fundamentalist denominations
expressed dissatisfaction because of their church becoming too "liberal."
One subject in an extremely liberal denomination expressed dissatisfaction
because of his church being too "conservative." Each subject was assigned

a scale position on the dissatisfaction variable following the methods outlined earlier. This was done in order to test the predictions of the identification model in regard to patterns of dissatisfaction.

According to the identification model, the dissatifaction variable presently under investigation is assumed to be related to the two variables discussed earlier: the relative homogeneity of religious influence in the subject's primary reference groups and the degree of change in the subject's life situation. It was assumed that the more heterogeneous a person's reference group influence and the more change he had experienced in his life situation the more likely he would be to have a pattern of dissatisfaction appropriate to the evangelistic persuasion intended to secure his affiliation with the Church of Christ. We have already reported that the change of life situation variable and the homogeneity of religious influence variable are separate, although related, factors. At this point we report comparisons made to determine whether or not the dissatisfaction variable is separate from the two other variables discussed earlier—that is, whether or not "dissatisfaction" is just another label for the change of life situation variable or the homogeneity of religious influence variable.

Since no significant differences were found between non-converts and drop-outs on any of these three variables, these two classes of subjects were combined in this test for independence. In addition, the pattern of dissatisfaction categories were collapsed into three groups: those with patterns of dissatisfaction inappropriate to persuasion by the Church of Christ (categories 1-4); those who expressed no dissatisfaction (category 5); and those with patterns of dissatisfaction appropriate to persuasion by the Church of Christ (categories 6-9).

Data on the test of independence of the dissatisfaction variable and the homogeneity variable are presented in Table 4. These data indicate that

TABLE 4

INDEPENDENCE OF PATTERNS OF DISSATISFACTION

AND HOMOGENEITY OF RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE

Subject Categories	Relative Homogeneity-Heterogeneity of Religious Influence							
	Homogeneous Group Pattern of Dissatisfaction				Heterogeneous Group Pattern of Dissatisfaction			
	Inappropriate Concerns	No Expressed Concerns	Appropriate Concerns	TOTALS	Inappropriate Concerns	No Expressed Concerns	Appropriate Concerns	TOTALS
Converts	3% (13)	1% (4)	12% (59)	17% (76)	0% (0)	13% (32)	51% (132)	64% (164)
Non-Converts Drop-Outs	20% (93)	53% (248)	10% (47)	84% (388)	36% (92)	0% (0)	0% (0)	36% (92)
TOTALS	23% (106)	54% (252)	23% (106)	100% (464)	36% (92)	13% (32)	51% (132)	100% (256)

Chi square=142.59, df=2,   Chi square=256.02, df=2,
a<.001, phi square=.31   a<.001, phi square=1.0

Combined chi square=398.61, df=4, a<.001, phi square=.55, C=.36

Subject Categories	Patterns of Dissatisfaction								
	Inappropriate Concerns			No Expressed Concerns			Appropriate Concerns		
	Homogeneity of Religious Influence			Homogeneity of Religious Influence			Homogeneity of Religious Influence		
	Homogeneous	Heterogeneous	TOTALS	Homogeneous	Heterogeneous	TOTALS	Homogeneous	Heterogeneous	TOTALS
Converts	6% (13)	0% (0)	6% (13)	2% (4)	11% (32)	13% (36)	27% (59)	60% (132)	87% (191)
Non-Converts Drop-Outs	40% (81)	54% (111)	94% (192)	87% (258)	0% (0)	87% (258)	13% (30)	0% (0)	13% (30)
TOTALS	46% (94)	54% (111)	100% (205)	89% (262)	11% (32)	100% (294)	40% (89)	60% (132)	100% (221)

Chi square=16.4,   Chi square=257.23   Chi square=51.49
df=1, a<.001,   df=1, a<.001,   df=1, a<.001,
phi square=.08   phi square=.87   phi square=.23

Combined chi square=325.12, df=3, a<.001, phi square=.45, C=.45

in this survey these two variables were, indeed, separate factors--but that they were clearly related. Only 22% of the subjects in the homogeneous category had an appropriate pattern of dissatisfaction while 51% of those in the heterogeneous category expressed appropriate concerns. Among those subjects who expressed no dissatisfaction at all, 89% were in the homogeneous category and only 11% were in the heterogeneous category. When the test of independence was done with the pattern of dissatisfaction variable controlled for homogeneity of religious influence, the combined chi square was 398.61. When the conditions were reversed and the homogeneity of religious influence was controlled for patterns of dissatisfaction, the combined chi square was 325.12. It would appear, therefore, that the dissatisfaction variable in the present study was slightly more important than the homogeneity variable in predicting conversion to the Church of Christ.

Data on the test for independence of the pattern of dissatisfaction variable and the change of life situation variable are presented in Table 5. These data show that the dissatisfaction variable and the change of life situation variable are also separate but related variables. A comparison of the combined chi squares in the two parts of this test for independence suggest that the pattern of dissatisfaction variable was much more important in predicting conversion to the Church of Christ in this survey than was the change of life situation variable--although the two are clearly related. When the test for independence was done with the pattern of dissatisfaction variable controlled for degree of change in life situation, the combined chi square was 358.39. When conditions were reversed and the degree of change in life situation variable was controlled for patterns of dissatisfaction, the chi square was only 199.33.

TABLE 5

INDEPENDENCE OF PATTERNS OF DISSATISFACTION
AND CHANGE IN LIFE SITUATION

Subject Categories	Degree of Change in Life Situation							
	Less Change				More Change			
	Patterns of Dissatisfaction				Patterns of Dissatisfaction			
	Inappropriate Concerns	No Expressed Concerns	Appropriate Concerns	TOTALS	Inappropriate Concerns	No Expressed Concerns	Appropriate Concerns	TOTALS
Converts	0% (0)	0% (0)	13% (47)	13% (47)	4% (13)	10% (36)	42% (144)	56% (193)
Non-Converts Drop-Outs	32% (120)	43% (161)	12% (47)	87% (328)	19% (65)	25% (87)	0% (0)	44% (152)
TOTALS	32% (120)	43% (161)	25% (94)	100% (375)	23% (78)	36% (123)	42% (144)	100% (345)

Chi square=160.66, df=2, a<.001, phi square=.43   Chi square=197.73, df=2, a<.001, phi square=.57

Combined chi square=358.39, df=4, a<.001, phi square=.5, C=.57

	Patterns of Dissatisfaction								
	Inappropriate Concerns			No Expressed Concerns			Appropriate Concerns		
	Degree of Change in Life Situation			Degree of Change in Life Situation			Degree of Change in Life Situation		
	Less Change	More Change	TOTALS	Less Change	More Change	TOTALS	Less Change	More Change	TOTALS
Converts	0% (0)	6% (13)	6% (13)	0% (0)	12% (36)	12% (36)	21% (47)	65% (144)	86% (191)
Non-Converts Drop-Outs	34% (69)	60% (123)	94% (192)	74% (218)	14% (40)	88% (258)	14% (30)	0% (0)	14% (30)
TOTALS	34% (69)	66% (136)	100% (205)	74% (218)	26% (76)	100% (294)	35% (77)	65% (144)	100% (221)

Chi square=7.06, df=1, a<.01, phi square=.03   Chi square=117.61, df=1, a<.001, phi square=.4   Chi square=74.66, df=1, a<.001, phi square=.34

Combined chi square=199.33, df=3, a<.001, phi square=.28, C=.38

Given that the pattern of dissatisfaction variable is a separate factor from the two variables discussed earlier, we now present, in Table 6, data concerning its relationship to the outcome of evangelistic persuasion.

TABLE 6

PATTERNS OF DISSATISFACTION

Subject Categories	Inappropriate Concerns				NO EXPRESSED CONCERNS	Appropriate Concerns				TOTALS
	Intense and/or very personal	Strong and/or personal	Moderate and/or impersonal	Weak and/or very impersonal		Weak and/or very impersonal	Moderate and/or impersonal	Strong and/or personal	Intense and/or very personal	
Converts	1	5	7	6	6	24	46	68	77	240
Drop-Outs	36	29	24	31	65	23	13	11	8	240
Non-Converts	37	33	26	24	86	19	9	4	2	240
TOTALS	74	67	57	61	157	66	68	83	87	720

Chi square=394.09, df=16, a<.001, V^2=.28, T^2=.18, C=.59, phi square=.55

It is possible, of course, that some degree of selective retention may be involved in these data. Those who convert may tend to forget the inappropriate concerns they had before their conversion. Those who decide not to convert and those who drop out may forget the appropriate concerns they had earlier. Such a process, however, would not likely offer a total explanation of the results reported in Table 6. Only 8% of the converts had inappropriate concerns while 50% of the non-converts and drop-outs expressed concerns of an inappropriate nature. Less than 3% of the converts reported no dissatisfaction while 36% of the non-converts and 27% of the drop-outs reported no dissatisfaction. Eighty-nine percent of the converts reported appropriate

concerns while only 14% of the non-converts and 23% of the drop-outs reported

appropriate concerns. On the basis of these data it is possible to conclude

that persons who had appropriate concerns were much more likely to convert.

Those who had no dissatisfactions or who had an inappropriate pattern of

dissatisfaction were much less likely to convert and if they did convert

they were much more likely to drop out.

<p style="text-align:center">Original Theological Position as a Factor</p>

<p style="text-align:center">in Evangelistic Persuasion</p>

The three sets of analyses presented thus far all relate in one way or

another to a person's primary reference groups and their influence. Reference

groups have been conceptualized in different ways by different authors, but

Shibutani suggests that a functional view is most useful.[12] He calls a

reference group a "functional unit" and suggests that more can be learned by

conceiving of reference groups in terms of what the groups do for the

individual rather than by thinking in terms of structure. Reference groups

serve several important functions in helping to form the self-concept of the

individual. Attitudes and beliefs are an important element of self-concept.

A person's primary reference groups serve as a source of normative beliefs

and attitudes, a reinforcer of such beliefs and attitudes, and as an anchor

or reference point in the perception of other beliefs and attitudes. In

regard to religion, a person's reference groups may be homogeneous or hetero-

geneous. The group influence may be specific or nebulous, relevant or

irrelevant. The person's primary reference groups, however, clearly have a

role in the formation and change of a person's religious beliefs and

attitudes—and thus of his self-concept.

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[12]Ibid., pp. 32-33.

If religious conversion is at least partially explained in terms of individuals forming self-defining group affiliations, then it should be easier to secure such affiliation if the individual is already at least partially identified with the group. On the basis of the identification model, one would thus predict that in the present study the closer a subject was in his original theological position to that of the Church of Christ the higher the likelihood of his conversion. Subjects whose original theological positions were much more conservative or much more liberal than that of the Church of Christ should be shown to have been much less likely to have converted and much more likely to have dropped out if they did convert.

If a person is alienated from his original reference group, it does not seem likely that he would be receptive to a new reference group which is essentially similar to the original group. Rather, an alienated individual would likely seek new reference groups which differ to some extent, especially on whatever factors of the original reference group contributed to the alienation. Thus a person who was alienated from his original religious reference group because of their position on a conservative-liberal continuum would not likely be attracted to a new group with essentially the same position on that continuum. It is possible, of course, that a person might be alienated from his original religious reference group because of one specific point of difference and yet still be essentially in agreement with their general position on a conservative-liberal continuum.

The idea presented earlier concerning religious conversion starting with alienation and involving a change of self-concept seems to be inconsistent with the idea of similarity between the new and old reference groups being important. The inconsistency, however, is only an appearance. Similarity is important in membership reference groups even for the

alienated individual. When a person becomes alienated from a membership reference group, he will seek a new group that does not have the features of the old group which he found objectionable, yet retains some of the desirable features of the old group which he found attractive. Hence, to be an attractive candidate for a new membership reference group, a group should be perceived by the person as free of the undesirable features of the old group yet not so different from that group that the person would find identification difficult. The reference group notion, then, places limits on how dissimilar a new group may be from the old group and still be attractive as a substitute reference group. Putting reference group notions with the idea of alienation produces a compromise temporizing both: the notion of alienation suggests that the new religious reference group must be dissimilar to the old group; the reference group formulation suggests that the new group must not be too dissimilar to the old group. What emerges, therefore, is a sort of uneasy compromise.

According to Schmitt, similarity between the values of the individual and the norms of a particular reference group is a major factor attracting the individual to the group.[13] Hartley found in her study of college freshmen that those who perceived more similarity between the norms of their original reference groups and the norms of the college were more likely to accept the college as a new reference group.[14] It seems likely that the same results would be obtained in a study of similarity between original religious reference groups and the new groups to which a person might be attracted.

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[13]Schmitt, The Reference Other Orientation, p. 116.

[14]Ruth E. Hartley, "Personal Characteristics and Acceptance of Secondary Groups as Reference Groups," Journal of Individual Psychology 13 (1957): 45-55.

The chi square test comparing converts, drop-outs, and non-converts on original theological position--with theological position being represented as points along a 1-9 conservative-liberal scale in relation to the position of the Church of Christ--clearly confirm the predictions of the identification model (see Table 7).

TABLE 7

ORIGINAL THEOLOGICAL POSITION

Subject Categories	Original Theological Position of Subjects in Relation to the Theological Position of the Church of Christ									TOTALS
	Extremely More Conservative	Much More Conservative	Somewhat More Conservative	Slightly More Conservative	About the Same	Slightly More Liberal	Somewhat More Liberal	Much More Liberal	Extremely More Liberal	
Converts	5	7	13	23	72	48	36	25	11	240
Drop-Outs	37	30	24	21	11	23	25	34	35	240
Non-Converts	35	23	26	24	15	19	29	32	37	240
TOTALS	77	60	63	68	98	90	90	91	83	720

Chi square=150.24, df=18, a<.001, V^2=.1, T^2=.11, C=.42, phi square=.21

Thirty percent of the converts already had the same position on the conservative-liberal continuum as that of the Church of Christ. Only 6% of the non-converts and 5% of the drop-outs had that original position. Sixty percent of the converts had either the same original position as that of the Church of Christ or a position only slightly more conservative or slightly more liberal, while only 23% of the non-converts and drop-outs were in that category. Seventy-seven percent of the drop-outs and 76% of the non-converts were classified in the six most extreme categories, while only 30%

of the converts held comparable theological positions.

The data presented in Table 7 tend to support the identification model. Those who were converted to the Church of Christ tended to be those whose original theological position was already similar to that of the Church of Christ. Those whose original position was much more conservative or much more liberal were less likely to convert and more likely to drop out if they did convert.

Summary

The importance of these four individual characteristic variables— all of which relate in one way or another to reference group influence—can be seen in a test of their combined predictive power. Four main predictions were made and confirmed in the data presented in this chapter. These predictions relate to the question of which subjects would be in the categories of convert and which would be either non-converts or drop-outs. It would be possible to refine these predictions by a system of weighting and by considering the full range of categories on each variable. However, for purposes of this test, these four major variables were dichotomized so that each of the 720 subjects either matched or did not match the predictions discussed in this chapter. Subjects were considered as matching the predictions as to who would convert if they were:

1) in the 5-9 categories on the homogeneity of religious influence variable— indicating that they had a relatively heterogeneous pattern of religious influence in their primary reference groups;

2) in the 5-9 categories on the change of life situation variable—indicating that they had recently experienced a relatively high degree of change in their life situation;

3) in the 6-9 categories on the dissatisfaction variable—indicating that

they had a pattern of dissatisfaction appropriate to persuasion by the
Church of Christ; and,

4) in the 3-7 categories on the original theological position variable--
indicating that their original theological position was relatively
similar to that of the Church of Christ.

What was counted in this test, therefore, was the number of times that each
subject matched the predictions of conversion. Each subject thus received a
score of 0-4. The mean score for the converts in this survey was 3.19; the
mean score for the drop-outs was 1.3; and the mean score for the non-converts
was 1.09. An analysis of variance revealed a significant over-all difference
(as shown in Table 8).

TABLE 8

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR COMBINED

INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTIC VARIABLES

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	639.85	319.925	420.95	a<.001
Within	717	545.15	.76		
Total	719	1,185.00			

Multiple t-tests of differences between means revealed significant
differences between each of the three groups of subjects (as shown in
Table 9).

In all the major factors studied in this chapter, it has been
possible to distinguish between the converts on the one hand and the two
categories of failure in evangelistic persuasion (drop-outs and non-converts)
on the other hand. It has not been possible, however, on the basis of any

TABLE 9

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR COMBINED INDIVIDUAL

CHARACTERISTIC VARIABLES

Subject Categories	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Level
Converts, Drop-Outs	478	1.896	.0633	29.95	a<.001
Converts, Non-Converts	478	2.100	.0675	31.11	a<.001
Drop-Outs, Non-Converts	478	.2042	.0599	3.41	a<.001

single individual characteristic variable to distinguish between the non-convert and the drop-out. In the data presented in Table 9, a significant difference was found between non-converts and drop-outs. That difference is not as great as the difference between converts and drop-outs or between converts and non-converts, but it is statistically significant. Nineteen percent of the subjects in this survey matched all four conversion predictions regarding individual characteristic variables and all of them were converted. Ten percent of the subjects matched three of the four conversion predictions and 53% of these were in the convert category while 47% were in the drop-out category and none were in the non-convert category. Eighteen percent of the subjects matched only two of the four conversion predictions and only 20% of these were converted; 25% were drop-outs, and 46% were non-converts. Forty-four percent of the subjects matched only one of the conversion predictions and only 9% of these were converts; 47% were drop-outs, and 44% were non-converts. Nine percent of the subjects did not match on any of the conversion predictions and none of these were converts; 41% were drop-outs and 59% were non-converts. In this survey, when a subject did not match on any of the conversion predictions he was never a convert, but when a subject

matched on all of these conversion predictions he was always a convert. All of this adds support to the identification model as an explanation of persuasion in religious conversion--since each of these predictor variables was drawn from implications of the identification model. Religious conversion is a process in which the individual establishes a self-defining identification with a congregation as a reference group. When characteristics of the individual indicate a need for such self-defining group identification, that individual is likely to be receptive to an effort to persuade him to affiliate with a congregation.

Conclusion

In regard to individual characteristics, the identification model seems to offer a cogent explanation of the functioning of evangelistic persuasion. Predictions which logically follow from that model, were, for the most part, confirmed by the data. These predictions relate to the process in which an individual forms his self-concept through identification with reference groups. Homogeneity of religious influence in a subject's primary reference groups is important because if there is no such homogeneous pattern the subject's reference group identification does not help him form any clear self-concept in regard to religion. The degree of change in life situation is important because in periods of change old reference group identifications are broken. On this point Shibutani says,

> The importance of mutual support becomes especially apparent in crisis situations. When sudden changes in life conditions disrupt established social relationships and conventional norms prove inadequate, there is a transition period during which people are not certain of what to expect of one another. They do not know what to do, nor do they know what others expect of them. Under such circumstances men become highly sensitized to one another. . . . Several observers have noted that loneliness becomes intolerable in such emergancies. People want to be with others, even with those they do not particularly like. Being unsure of themselves, they seem to crave some kind of reassurance from other human beings. Such observations underscore the contention that social structures are

constantly developing as men come to terms with continually changing life conditions.[15]

It is possible, of course, to conceptualize affiliation with a religious group as coming after and as a result of changes in attitudes and beliefs. Some changes in attitudes and beliefs are obviously involved before religious conversion culminates in formal group affiliation. It is also possible, however, to conceptualize a process in which some kind of partial group identification comes before and contributes to the changes in attitudes and beliefs. Shibutani, in discussing the process of assimilation, says that people "acquire a new way of looking at their world. Assimilation is a slow, gradual process in which the perspective of a newcomer . . . is transformed until he shares the outlook of his new associates."[16] He further says that this process "involves a change in perspectives--a displacement of reference groups . . . gaining advantages at the cost of losing a part of one's former sense of identity."[17]

Patterns of dissatisfaction are also related to reference group identification. While dissatisfaction with present reference group identification is not the only important element in a subject's pattern of dissatisfaction, it is a factor which is clearly associated with receptiveness to evangelistic persuasion. As Shibutani expresses it,

> If a person forms disjunctive sentiments toward significant others who support the status quo or conjunctive sentiments toward those who are opposed to it, he will be receptive to changes and will defect when the occasion arises. . . . Conversely, if a person forms conjunctive sentiments toward significant others who support the status quo or disjunctive sentiments toward those who seek changes, he will find the violation of conventional norms painful and will resist change.[18]

This chapter on individual characteristics has focused primarily on those characteristics of the individual which reflect the influence of his

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[15]Shibutani, pp. 173-174.   [16]Ibid., p. 583.

[17]Ibid., p. 582.   [18]Ibid.

primary reference groups. The view of religious conversion suggested in this

discussion--that of a change in personal identity through a change in self-

defining group identifications--implies that human selfhood is a product of

symbolic interaction with significant others as members of primary reference

groups. Shibutani makes this explicit by saying,

> Although their views have been all but lost in this materialistic era, it
> appears that Cooley and his predecessors, the Scottish moralists, were
> correct in their insistence that human society rests upon a particular
> kind of communication, interchanges among those who identify sympathetic-
> ally with one another. . . . The key to understanding man's conduct
> appears to lie in his relationships with other people. No man who lives
> psychologically alone retains for long the attributes that make him
> human. Lives are inextricably intertwined, and personalities are formed,
> reaffirmed, and transformed in a succession of reciprocal exchanges
> marked by empathy.[19]

In addition to the importance of the reference group analysis, all of

the results reported in this chapter can also be understood in terms of

alienation. The identification model outlined in Chapter One suggests that

the process of conversion begins with alienation. Sherif and Sherif define

alienation as "the psychological state of dissatisfaction with and

estrangement from the prevailing social arrangements in which the individual

lives and the norms or values that regulate these arrangements."[20] It is not

just religious conversion that starts with alienation. According to Sherif

and Sherif, whenever an individual changes from one reference group to

another, the process starts with alienation from the original reference group.

As Sherif and Sherif express it,

> There are alienated individuals who find their lot within their own
> group unrewarding or unbearable for one reason or another and who do
> aspire to move toward what they see as greener pastures. Such persons

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[19]Ibid., p. 592.

[20]Muzafar Sherif and Carolyn W. Sherif, Social Psychology (New York:
Harper and Row, 1969), p. 420.

long to change their membership and do shift their identification to other groups that hold promise of better life.[21]

Shibutani quotes with evident approval the work of Niebuhr and Rapoport in suggesting that certain categories of people are more likely than others to be alienated.[22] Niebuhr calls these the "disinherited."[23] Rapoport found that the Indians who were attracted to the Mormon missions were those who did not fit Navaho life.[24] Shibutani calls the typical convert "disgruntled, maladjusted, and frustrated."[25] These pejorative terms create a rather negative image of the convert. The present study, however, found no support for this view. The lower socio-economic classes, which make up what Niebuhr calls the "disinherited," were not statistically over-represented in the convert category. While it is probably true that the "disinherited, disgruntled, maladjusted, frustrated, misfits" would be alienated, it is equally true that some who are not in any of these categories might also be alienated. In some cases it may be the original reference group that is to blame rather than the individual who is alienated from that group. In any case, however, it is clear that, as Shibutani expresses it, "the initial phase of conversion is the gradual alienation from significant others."[26]

Alienation suggests an imbalance and a motive to restore homeostasis. Selfhood cannot be sustained in isolation. Sherif and Sherif write, "In the

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[21]Ibid., p. 419.

[22]Shibutani, p. 525.

[23]H. Richard Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism (New York: Henry Holt & Co, 1929), pp. 26-76.

[24]Robert N. Rapoport, "Changing Navaho Religious Values," Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archeology and Ethnology 41 (1954), No. 2.

[25]Shibutani, p. 525.   [26]Ibid.

long term, stability of the person's self-identity and its continuity from day to day consist in no small part of his stable and continuing social ties and adherence to norms that he cherishes."[27] Viewing the state of alienation as a motivating factor Sherif and Sherif comment,

> Having dislodged himself psychologically from erstwhile ties with his actual membership group and allegiance to its role system and norms, the alienated person then lacks stable anchors and stable guides to action. . . . Being torn from stable anchors or becomming detached from them is psychologically painful. The state of normlessness is not comfortable.[28]

Conversion begins with alienation. Other factors are involved in the process: contact with representatives of other groups; identification with them as significant others; identification with the new reference group; displacement to some degree of the self-image which resulted from the original reference group identification—a displacement which may be gradual; and a resulting transformation of personal identity—at least to some degree. Concerning this process, Shibutani writes,

> In conversion a person who is alienated from himself and his significant others acquires a new perspective, which enables him to reappraise himself and to form new patterns of behavior. If the new standpoint provides some measure of relief, a lasting change may occur.[29]

The most general conclusion of this chapter is that the person most likely to convert is the person who is alienated. This is the first element in the identification model of persuasion in religious conversion. Other elements of this model are discussed in the following chapters.

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[27] Sherif and Sherif, p. 421.

[28] Ibid., p. 420.

[29] Shibutani, p. 528.

CHAPTER THREE

GROUP CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH

PERSUASION IN RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

Religious conversion is operationally defined in terms of affiliation with a local congregation. Through that local congregational affiliation, the new convert also becomes affiliated with a particular denomination or religious fellowship. Persuasion in religious conversion typically has been studied from the standpoint of how persuasive messages change the beliefs and attitudes of the subject and eventually result in the behavior change of formal religious affiliation. In the present study, however, religious conversion is viewed from a different perspective. Religious conversion is a type of transformation of personal identity. It is a process which involves establishing a self-defining affiliation with a congregation as a reference group. In this reference group identification process, the establishment of a meaningful personal relationship with members of the congregation as significant others is an important factor.

If religious conversion can be explained, at least partially, as a process in which a person establishes a self-defining reference group identification through his affiliation with a congregation, then it should logically follow that certain characteristics of the local congregation with which the person identifies when he converts would be relevant.

As reported in Chapter One, this study started with a random mail survey of 2,000 local congregations of the Church of Christ--with 1,009 congregations responding. On the basis of this mail survey, 48 congregations

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were selected for in-depth study: 16 in the top 20%, 16 in the middle 20%, and 16 in the bottom 20% in regard to conversion rate. Conversion rate was defined as the number of adult converts per year, per 100 members. In the obtained data, the conversion rate ranged from a low of 0 to a high of 9.9. As expected, it was possible to distinguish among the three groups of congregations on the basis of this defining characteristic of conversion rate. In the high conversion rate group of congregations, the mean conversion rate was 9.12; in the medium conversion rate group, the mean conversion rate was 6.9; and the mean conversion rate in the low conversion rate group was 2.84. An analysis of variance test indicated significant over-all differences (as shown in Table 10) and multiple t-tests indicated significant differences between each of the three groups (as shown in Table 11).

TABLE 10

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR CONVERSION RATE

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	325.17	162.59	102.26	a<.001
Within	45	71.76	1.59		
Total	47	396.93			

Success in evangelistic persuasion cannot be defined totally in terms of conversion rate. The purpose of evangelistic persuasion is not just to make, but also to keep converts. The three groups of congregations included in this study differed significantly in their drop-out rate. The high conversion rate group had a mean drop-out rate of 4.26, which means that these congregations were losing 47% of their converts. The medium conversion rate group had a mean drop-out rate of only .33, which means that they were losing only 5% of their converts. The low conversion rate group had a mean

TABLE 11

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR CONVERSION RATE

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Level
High-Medium	30	2.22	.20	11.1	a<.001
High-Low	30	6.28	.52	12.08	a<.001
Medium-Low	30	4.06	.53	7.66	a<.001

drop-out rate of 1.37, which means that they were losing 48% of their

converts. An analysis of variance test indicated significant over-all

differences on the drop-out variable (as shown in Table 12) and multiple

t-tests indicated significant differences between each of the three groups

(as shown in Table 13).

TABLE 12

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR DROP-OUT RATE

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	137.31	68.66	127.15	a<.001
Within	45	24.29	.54		
Total	47	161.60			

Success in evangelistic persuasion is best defined in terms of the

net growth rate (conversion rate minus drop-out rate). Significant

differences among the three groups of congregations were found on the net

growth rate variable, but the position of the two top groups was reversed.

Because of its high drop-out rate, the high conversion rate group had a

lower net growth rate than did the medium conversion rate group. The high

conversion rate group had a mean net growth rate of 4.86. The medium

TABLE 13

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR DROP-OUT RATE

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Level
High-Medium	30	3.93	.19	20.68	a<.001
High-Low	30	2.89	.30	9.63	a<.001
Medium-Low	30	1.04	.27	3.85	a<.005

conversion rate group had a mean net growth rate of 6.58. The low conversion rate group was also low on the net growth rate factor with a mean net growth rate of 1.37.

Since conversion rate was the basis on which the three groups of congregations were originally assigned to the high, medium, and low catagories, conversion rate has been the basis on which the groups have been arrayed up to this point. However, since the medium conversion rate group had a higher mean net growth rate, since net growth rate is the best definition of successful evangelistic persuasion, and since it simplifies the presentation of data, in the discussion which follows the three groups will be arrayed according to their net growth rate.

An analysis of variance test indicated significant over-all differences on the net growth rate factor (as shown in Table 14). Multiple t-tests indicated significant differences between each of the three groups (as shown in Table 15). What emerges from the study thus far is that the three groups of congregations differ significantly on conversion rate, drop-out rate, and net growth rate. The high net growth rate group had a moderately high conversion rate and a very low drop-out rate. The medium net growth rate group had a very high conversion rate, but also had a very high drop-out rate. The low net growth rate group had a relatively low conversion

TABLE 14

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR NET GROWTH RATE

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	199.54	99.77	134.82	a<.001
Within	45	33.47	.74		
Total	47	233.01			

TABLE 15

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR NET GROWTH RATE

Groups*	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Level
High-Medium	30	1.72	.21	8.19	a<.001
High-Low	30	5.21	.43	12.12	a<.001
Medium-Low	30	3.49	.71	4.92	a<.001

*NOTE: In this and all following tables comparing the three groups of congregations, the groups are arrayed according to their relative position on net growth rate—not conversion rate, as was the case in Tables 11 and 13.

rate and a high drop-out rate. In the remainder of this chapter this pattern of differences among these three groups is examined in a study of the following group characteristic variables:

1. Similarity of the congregation to the community in which it is located:

   A. Similarity in regard to age;

   B. Similarity in regard to socio-economic status;

   C. Similarity in regard to educational level;

2. The extent to which the congregation sustains a relationship to the community such that affiliation with the congregation would help fulfill aspirations of upward social mobility;

3. Relative homogeneity of the congregation in regard to:

    A. Age;

    B. Socio-economic status;

    C. Educational level;

4. Level of involvement in the congregation:

    A. Congregational size as a factor in involvement;

    B. The perceived roles/membership ratio as a factor in involvement.

The specific reasons for including each of these group characteristic variables is outlined in this chapter as each variable is discussed.

Similarity of the Congregation to the Community

According to the identification model, an effort to persuade a person to affiliate with a group is more likely to be successful if the individual and the group already have some areas of partial identification. The individual-group relationship is discussed in Chapter Four. It is necessary at this point, however, to introduce some of the findings from that part of the study. In the data obtained in the present survey, it was found that people were much more likely to convert if they were similar in age, socio-economic status, and educational level to the congregational averages on these variables. When there was much difference between the individual and the congregation on these variables, the subject was much less likely to convert and much more likely to drop out if he did convert. This being the case, it should logically follow that a congregation which is similar in regard to these variables to the community in which it is located would likely draw its converts from a wide population base. A congregation which is similar to the community should be drawing its converts from the largest area of the distribution curve. A congregation which differs significantly from the community should be drawing its converts from one or the other tail of

the distribution curve. A congregation which is similar to the community should, therefore, be making and keeping more converts than would be the case with a congregation which differs significantly from the community. If this prediction of the identification model is correct, then the survey results should reveal significant differences among congregations with a high, medium, or low net growth rate on the variables associated with the similarity of the congregation to the community in which it is located.

Similarity in regard to Age

Information on the average age in the congregation was obtained directly from church records listing the age of each member. In some cases church records did not contain information on age. In these cases estimates of the age of each member were obtained in interviews with church leaders. Information on the average age in the community was obtained in every case from interviews with church leaders. Since young children who have not yet been baptized are not counted in the official membership lists of local congregations of the Church of Christ--with most children in these local congregations being baptized somewhere between the ages of 12 and 15--it was necessary to instruct the church leaders to exclude children below the age of 12 in their estimates of the average age in the communities. In cases where the population of the city was under 20,000 and there was only one congregation of the Church of Christ in the city, the entire city was used as the basis of comparison. If there was more than one congregation of the Church of Christ in the city or if the city had a population of over 20,000, the neighborhood around the church building was used as the basis of comparison. In these cases, the church leaders who made the estimate of the average age in the neighborhood around the church building were not given any specific definition of "neighborhood." A follow-up study was conducted in

sixteen of the congregations to check on the reliability of judgments. Two judges not involved in the original study were asked to make the same judgment as to the average age level in the community. Both judges were ministers of the Church of Christ who lived in the same community, but who are not members of the congregations studied. The average correlation of inter-judge agreement was .87 and in no case did the judges differ by more than eight years in their estimates of the average age level in the communities being studied.

Each congregation was given a score representing the number of years difference (whether older or younger) between the average age in the congregation and the average age in the community. Results of the survey on this matter indicate that the more similar a congregation was in the average age of its members to the average age in the community, the higher the conversion rate (r=.61, df=46, a<.001) and the higher the net growth rate (r=.85, df=46, a<.001). In the high net growth rate group of congregations, the mean age difference between average age in the congregation and average age in the community was only 2.73 years; in the medium net growth rate group this figure was 7.61; and in the low net growth rate group the figure was 11.75. An analysis of variance test indicated significant over-all differences on this variable (as shown in Table 16). Multiple t-tests on difference between group means revealed significant differences between each of the three groups (as shown in Table 17).

Similarity in regard to Socio-Economic Status

Interviewers in this survey categorized congregations and communities as being in one of five socio-economic status levels: upper class, upper middle class, middle class, lower middle class, or lower class. For purposes of this comparison, the community was defined in the same way as in the age

TABLE 16

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR CONGREGATION-

COMMUNITY SIMILARITY OF AGE

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	927.17	463.59	133.22	a<.001
Within	45	156.50	3.48		
Total	47	1,083.67			

TABLE 17

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR CONGREGATION-COMMUNITY SIMILARITY OF AGE

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
High-Medium	30	4.88	.568	8.59	a<.001
High-Low	30	9.02	.734	12.29	a<.001
Medium-Low	30	4.14	.689	6.01	a<.001

comparison. No specific instructions were given to the survey workers as to

how congregations and communities were to be assigned to these categories.

These judgments, however, were made after the interviews with church leaders

and after extensive survey work in the area. A follow-up study was conducted

in one third of the congregations to check on the reliability of judgments.

Two judges who were not involved in the original study were asked to make the

same judgments as to the socio-economic status of the congregations and the

communities. The average correlation of inter-judge agreement was .92 and in

no case did the judges differ by more than one level.

Since five levels of socio-economic status were used in this

comparison, the maximum possible difference between the average socio-economic

status in the congregation and the community would be four levels. The

possible scores, therefore, ranged from a low of 0.0 indicating maximum similarity to a high of 4.0 indicating maximum difference. In the obtained data, the high net growth rate group of congregations had a mean score of .5625 and the medium net growth rate group had a mean score of .4375 indicating that in these congregations the average socio-economic status level was about half a level away from the community average. The mean score for the low net growth rate group was 2.125 indicating more than two levels of difference between congregation and community. An analysis of variance test indicated significant over-all differences (as shown in Table 18).

TABLE 18

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR CONGREGATION-COMMUNITY

SIMILARITY OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS LEVEL

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	28.29	14.1400	40.71	a<.001
Within	45	15.63	.3473		
Total	47	43.92			

Multiple t-tests revealed significant differences between the high and the low groups and also between the medium and the low groups, but no significant differences between the high and the medium groups (see Table 19). The failure to find a significant difference between the high and the medium net growth rate groups is discussed later in this chapter in a consideration of aspirations of upward social mobility. On the present measure of similarity between congregation and community, these two groups did not differ significantly. Both were about half a level away from the community average. The high net growth rate group, however, was about half a level above the community and the medium net growth rate group was about half a level below

TABLE 19

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR CONGREGATION-COMMUNITY

SIMILARITY OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS LEVEL

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Level
High-Medium	30	.125	.182	.69	NS
High-Low	30	1.5625	.199	7.85	a<.001
Medium-Low	30	1.6875	.199	8.48	a<.001

the community average. The data presented in Tables 18 and 19 are on the

subject of similarity, not aspirations of upward social mobility and they do

confirm the prediction that the more similar a congregation is in its average

socio-economic status level to the community in which it is located, the more

successful its efforts will be in making and keeping converts.

Similarity in regard to Educational Level

Information on the average educational level in the congregation and

in the community was obtained in interviews with church leaders. For the

purpose of this comparison, the community was defined by the same method as

that used in the age and the socio-economic status comparisons. Congregations

and communities were categorized at one of five educational levels in which

the average person had: 1) received a graduate degree; 2) received a B. A.

degree of its equivalent; 3) attended college without receiving a degree or

received some special training after high school, but not equivalent to a

four-year college program; 4) graduated from high school; or, 5) terminated

formal education before high school graduation. A follow-up study was

conducted in one third of the congregations to check on the reliability of

these judgments made originally by church leaders. Two judges not involved

in the original study were asked to estimate the average educational level

in the community. These judges were ministers of the Church of Christ who live in the same city, but who are not members of the congregations studied. The average correlation of inter-judge agreement was .91 and in no case did the judges differ by more than one level in their estimates of the average educational level in the communities studied.

Since five educational levels were used in this comparison, the maximum possible difference between the average educational level in the congregation and the community would be four levels. The possible scores, therefore, ranged from a low of 0.0 indiciating maximum similarity to a high of 4.0 indicating maximum difference. In the obtained data, the high net growth rate group had a mean score of .81 and the medium net growth rate group had a mean score of .75 indicating that in these congregations the average educational level was less than one level away from the community average. The mean score for the low net growth rate group was 1.69 indicating a larger difference between congregational and community averages on educational level. An analysis of variance test indicated significant over-all differences (as shown in Table 20).

TABLE 20

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR CONGREGATION-COMMUNITY

SIMILARITY OF EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	8.79	4.395	6.85	$a<.01$
Within	45	28.88	.641778		
Total	47	37.67			

Multiple t-tests of differences between group means revealed significant differences between the high and the low net growth rate groups and also

between the medium and the low groups, but no significant differences between

the high and the medium groups (as shown in Table 21).

TABLE 21

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR CONGREGATION-COMMUNITY

SIMILARITY OF EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
High-Medium	30	.06	.208	.29	NS
High-Low	30	.88	.240	3.67	a<.001
Medium-Low	30	.94	.229	4.10	a<.001

The failure to find significant differences between the high and the medium

net growth rate groups on this variable may be associated with the same

aspirations of upward social mobility mentioned earlier and discussed more

fully later in this chapter. However, apart from any factor of upward social

mobility aspirations, the data presented in Tables 20 and 21 confirm the

prediction that the more similar a congregation is in average educational

level to the community in which it is located, the more successful its

efforts will be in making and keeping converts.

The data presented thus far on age, socio-economic status, and

educational level are all consistent with the identification model in its

prediction that affiliation with a group will be more likely when the

individual and the group already have some areas of partial identification.

Upward Social Mobility

In the previous discussion of socio-economic status and educational

level, the focus has been on the similarity of the congregation to the

community in which it is located. Attention now shifts to the position of

the congregation in relation to that of the community on these variables. When the concern was with the similarity of the congregation to the community, it made no difference whether the congregation was above or below the community averages. In that discussion, however, it was pointed out that there were some differences between the high and the medium net growth rate groups on the variables of socio-economic status and educational level, but that these differences were not evident when similarity scores were used. On the variable of socio-economic status, the high net growth rate group had a mean score of .5625 and the medium net growth rate group had a mean score of .4375 when scored for similarity to the community. These scores did not differ significantly. On the variable of educational level, the high net growth rate group had a mean score of .81 and the medium net growth rate group had a mean score of .75 when scored for similarity to the community. These scores also did not differ significantly. Significant differences, however, did appear in the obtained data when a scoring system was used in which the actual position of the congregation in relation to the community average was considered. Both the socio-economic status variable and the educational level variable involved five levels and thus a range of possible similarity scores from zero through four. In considering the actual position of the congregation in relation to the community averages on these variables, the maximum possible difference is four levels in either direction and thus there are nine possible positions of a congregation in relation to the community. Using this system, each congregation was assigned a score on socio-economic status and educational level relationships to the community using the following scale:

```
1=congregation 4 levels below the community
2=congregation 3 levels below the community
3=congregation 2 levels below the community
4=congregation 1 level below the community
5=congregation at same level as the community
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6=congregation 1 level above the community
7=congregation 2 levels above the community
8=congregation 3 levels above the community
9=congregation 4 levels above the community

When scored by this system, significant differences were revealed in the obtained data in regard to socio-economic status and educational level which did not appear when scored for similarity. In the case of the age variable, this scoring system using the absolute position of the congregation in relation to the community would not have yielded results differing in any way from the similarity scoring system discussed earlier. All of the congregations in this survey had an average age level above the community average. The results, therefore, would be exactly the same with either scoring system.

In considering the position of the congregations in relation to that of the communities on the variable of socio-economic status, the high net growth rate group of congregations had a mean score of 5.5625 indicating a position about half a level above the community. The medium net growth rate group of congregations had a mean score of 4.5625 indicating a position about half a level below the community average. The low net growth rate group of congregations had a mean score of 2.875 indicating a position more than two levels below the community average. An analysis of variance test indicated a significant over-all difference on this factor (as shown in Table 22). Multiple t-tests of differences between group means revealed significant differences between each of the three groups (as shown in Table 23) and this includes significant differences between the high and the medium net growth rate groups which had not appeared in the similarity scores of Tables 18 and 19.

In considering the position of the congregations in relation to that of the communities on the variable of educational level, the high net growth rate group of congregations had a mean score of 5.8125 indicating a position

TABLE 22

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR CONGREGATION-COMMUNITY

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS RELATIONSHIP

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	59.04167	29.52083	85.02	a<.001
Within	45	15.62500	.34722		
Total	47	74.66667			

TABLE 23

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR CONGREGATION-COMMUNITY

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS RELATIONSHIP

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
High-Medium	30	1.0000	.1811422	5.52	a<.001
High-Low	30	2.6875	.220676	12.18	a<.001
Medium-Low	30	1.16875	.220676	5.30	a<.001

almost one level above the community average. The medium net growth rate

group had a mean score of 4.375 indicating a position almost one level below

the community. The low net growth rate group had a mean score of 3.3125

indicating a position more than one level below the community. An analysis

of variance indicated a significant over-all difference (as shown in Table 24)

and multiple t-tests indicated significant differences between each of the

three groups (as shown in Table 25).

In the data obtained in this survey it was not possible to distinguish

among congregations in the high, medium, or low net growth rate groups on the

basis of their absolute position on either the socio-economic status variable

of the variable of educational level. Regardless of the absolute positions on

TABLE 24

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR CONGREGATION-COMMUNITY

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL RELATIONSHIP

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	50.375	25.1875	35.8388	a<.001
Within	45	31.625	.7028		
Total	47	82.000			

TABLE 25

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR CONGREGATION-COMMUNITY

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL RELATIONSHIP

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
High-Medium	30	1.4375	.2597	5.535	a<.001
High-Low	30	2.5000	.3154	7.926	a<.001
Medium-Low	30	1.0625	.3108	3.418	a<.01

these variables, however, if a congregation was far below the community averages there were few converts; if the congregation was slightly below the community averages there were many drop-outs; if the congregation was slightly above the community averages there was the greatest probability of making and keeping converts. As discussed earlier, there are many other complex factors involved in this process. The above results, however, may be partially explained in terms of aspirations for upward social mobility.

The person who affiliates with a group which has an average socio-economic status or an average educational level slightly higher than his own may find that such affiliation is more rewarding than if he affiliated with a group which has a lower average socio-economic status or a lower educational

level. For example, if a person belongs to the middle class and aspires to upper middle class membership, affiliation with a congregation in which the average member is in the upper middle class should provide at least a partial identification with the upper middle class group to which he aspires. On the other hand, if such a person affiliates with a lower middle class congregation, his religious affiliation would run counter to his aspirations for upward social mobility. The data of this survey indicate that a congregation was more likely to make and keep converts who were slightly lower than the average member of the congregation in terms of socio-economic status and educational level. Thus a congregation slightly higher in socio-economic status and educational level than the community in which it was located appeared the best at making and keeping converts. The data also indicate that a congregation was not at all likely to make many converts among people who were several levels higher than the congregational averages in terms of socio-economic status or educational level. Thus a congregation several levels lower than the community in socio-economic status or educational level was not in a favorable position for making or keeping converts. There were no data in this survey to suggest what would happen if a congregation were several levels above the community on these variables as no such congregations were included in the survey. It seems likely, however, that a congregation only slightly higher than the community averages on these variables would be more successful than a congregation several levels higher than the community since in aspirations of upward social mobility one is likely to aspire to a level which is feasible to achieve. According to Berelson and Steiner, "Typically, a class aspires to and struggles for mobility only to the next higher rank(s), the more distant ones being considered too far away for realistic approach."[3]

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[3]Bernard Berelson and Gary A. Steiner, Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1964), p. 465.

Some of the individual-group relationship data reported in Chapter Four seem to support this assumption, but before this conclusion is given great confidence, it would be necessary to locate and survey congregations in this particular situation.

Relative Homogeneity of the Congregation

In the study of the similarity between the congregation and the community, the important statistic was the mean. The categorization of congregations and communities was based on judgments of the means on the variables of age, socio-economic status, and educational level. In this section the attention shifts to the nature of the distribution curves. The focus at this point is not on the community or the congregation-community relationship, but simply on the characteristics of the congregation.

There are two possible but contradictory predictions about the nature of the distribution curves--both of which are within the focus of convienence of the identification model. This section, therefore, is an effort to clarify the processes operative under the identification model.

It is clear from the previous section that similarity of the congregation to the community was important in determining net growth rate. Results reported in Chapter Four indicate that the similarity of the subject to the congregation was also important. If a congregation has a very homogeneous membership in regard to such variables as age, socio-economic status, or educational level, then the congregation would be similar to only a small segment of the community. This might suggest that homogeneous congregations would be less successful in making and keeping converts than would be the case with heterogenous congregations. In a heterogeneous congregation, almost everyone in the community would find some people with whom he is already at least partially identified because of similarity in such things as age, socio-

economic status, and educational level. A heterogeneous congregation would, therefore, appeal to more people. It might be argued, however, that the appeal of a homogeneous congregation would be stronger--although that appeal would be limited to a smaller segment of the community. The question, then, is this: Is a weak appeal to a large segment of the population or a strong appeal to a small segment of the population more effective in producing a higher net growth rate?

Homogeneity in regard to Age

In the present survey, the age of each member of each congregation was obtained directly from church records or was estimated by church leaders. It was from these data that the mean age, used in the similarity comparison, was calculated. These same data were used in calculating the standard deviation for each congregation. The greater the standard deviation--and thus the flatter the distribution curve--the greater the heterogeneity of the congregation on the age variable. Congregations very homogeneous on the age variable had much smaller standard deviations and their distribution curves were much more peaked. The results of the survey on this matter indicate that the more heterogeneous a congregation was on the age variable, the higher the conversion rate ($r=.66$, $df=46$, $a<.001$) and the higher the net growth rate ($r=.78$, $df=46$, $a<.001$). Heterogeneity of age had no relationship with the drop-out rate ($r=.02$, $df=46$, NS). An analysis of variance on the variable of homogeneity of age indicated a significant over-all difference (as shown in Table 26). Multiple t-tests indicated significant differences between each of the three groups (as shown in Table 27).

Homogeneity of Socio-Economic Status

An estimate of the relative homogeneity of socio-economic status in each congregation was obtained by asking the survey workers to give each

TABLE 26

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR HOMOGENEITY OF AGE

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	210.29	105.15	142.09	a<.001
Within	45	33.19	.74		
Total	47	243.48			

TABLE 27

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR HOMOGENEITY OF AGE

Groups	df	Difference Between Means*	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
High-Medium	30	2.69	.2336	11.52	a<.001
High-Low	30	5.13	.215	23.86	a<.001
Medium-Low	30	2.43	.241	10.08	a<.001

*NOTE: The differences between means in this table are the differences
between mean standard deviations in each of the three groups.

congregation a score on a 0-9 scale in which 0=maximum homogeneity; 9=maximum
heterogeneity on the socio-economic status variable. In a follow-up
reliability study, two judges not involved in the original study were asked to
make the same judgments regarding one third of the congregations in this
survey. The average correlations of inter-judge agreement was .97 and in no
case did the judges differ by more than two levels in the 0-9 scale. The
obtained data ranged from a low score of 2 to a high score of 9 with a mean
of 5.27. Results of the survey indicate that the more heterogeneous a congre-
gation was in regard to socio-economic status: the higher the conversion
rate (r=.56, df=46, a<.001); the lower the drop-out rate (r= -.22, df=46,
approaches significance at a=.06); and the higher the net growth rate

(r=.90, df=46, a<.001). Analysis of variance indicated a significant over-all difference on this factor of homogeneity of socio-economic status (as shown in Table 28) and multiple t-tests indicated significant differences between each of the three groups (as shown in Table 29). On the homogeneity of socio-economic status variable, the high net growth rate group had a mean score of 8.0, the medium net growth rate group had a mean score of 5.125, and the low net growth rate group had a mean score of 2.6875.

TABLE 28

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR HOMOGENEITY OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	226.2917	113.1458	163.26	a<.001
Within	45	31.1875	.6931		
Total	47	257.4792			

TABLE 29

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR HOMOGENEITY OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
High-Medium	30	2.875	.3145764	9.14	a<.001
High-Low	30	5.3125	.2695482	19.71	a<.001
Medium-Low	30	2.4375	.2971216	8.20	a<.001

Homogeneity of Educational Level

An estimate of the relative homogeneity of educational level in each congregation was obtained in the same manner as the homogeneity of socio-economic status estimate outlined above. The test for inter-judge reliability was conducted in the same manner and resulted in an average correlation of .86. In no case did the judges differ by more than two levels in the 0-9 scale.

The obtained data ranged on this item from a low score of 2 to a high score of 9 with a mean of 5.42. The high net growth rate group of congregations had a mean score on this item of 8.0, the medium net growth rate group had a mean score of 5.0, and the low net growth rate group had a mean score of 3.25. The results of the survey indicate that the more heterogeneous a congregation was in regard to educational level: the higher the conversion rate ($r=.52$, $df=46$, $a<.001$); the lower the drop-out rate ($r= -.26$, $df=46$, approaches significance at $a=.06$); and the higher the net growth rate ($r=.90$, $df=46$, $a<.001$). An analysis of variance test indicated significant over-all differences (as shown in Table 30) and multiple t-tests indicated significant differences between each of the three groups (as shown in Table 31).

TABLE 30

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR HOMOGENEITY OF EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	184.67	92.3350	106.54	$a<.001$
Within	45	39.00	.8867		
Total	47	223.67			

TABLE 31

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR HOMOGENEITY OF EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
High-Medium	30	3.00	.28886751	10.39	$a<.001$
High-Low	30	4.75	.3476109	13.66	$a<.001$
Medium-Low	30	1.75	.347610	5.03	$a<.001$

The results on all three of these variables suggest that a hetero-geneous congregation was more successful in attracting and keeping new members than was a homogeneous congregation. Results which approach significance on two of the variables suggest that heterogeneous congregations had fewer drop-outs.

In the over-all study of congregational group characteristics, the results thus indicate that congregations are most likely to make and keep converts if they are similar to the community averages on the age, socio-economic status, and educational level variables—and if they are hetero-geneous rather than homogeneous in their own distribution on these variables. These results add both support and clarification to the identification model. In heterogeneous congregations which are similar to the community, more people in the community are likely to find areas of partial identification which would facilitate the process of establishing a self-defining reference group identification by affiliating with such congregations. Less transformation of personal identity would be required in affiliating with such congregations than would be the case with congregations differing significantly from the community averages. If a congregation differs from community averages, the best position seems to be slightly above the level of the community. In such a case, there is still enough similarity so that many people in the community find areas of partial identification and yet there is enough difference—in the right direction—so that aspirations of upward social mobility can be fulfilled by congregational affiliation.

Level of Involvement in the Congregation

The identification model explains religious conversion, at least in part, by the self-defining function of group affiliation. Identification, however, is not a condition which is either totally present or totally

absent--even though formal group affiliation might be seen in those terms.
People differ in the degree to which they are identified with various groups.
For some people, their religious group identification plays a very minor role
in their self-image. For others, it is central. It would seem reasonable to
assume that there must be a high positive correlation between an individual's
level of involvement in the group and the degree to which that particular
group identification is a central part of his self-image. In order to test
this assumption, it was necessary to devise a measure of an individual's
involvement in the congregation and also a measure of the degree to which
affiliation with the congregation was a central part of his self-image. No
effort was made to obtain these data on all 720 subjects of this survey.
This work was done, instead, in a separate study of 20 subjects who were not
a part of the larger study. There were 16 males and 4 females. Ages ranged
from 24-49.

In this study, the level of an individual's involvement in the
congregation was measured both objectively and subjectively. The objective
measure was made up of the following items:

1) the percentage of the time that the person attended each of the regularly
   scheduled services of his congregation--divided by the number of such
   services (this item could contribute a maximum of 100 points);

2) the number of leadership roles that the individual had in the
   congregation--with 10 points for each leadership role;

3) the number of specific work assignments that the individual had in
   connection with the activities of the congregation--with 5 points for
   each such assignment;

4) contribution per week--with one point for each ten cents of weekly
   contribution.

For the subjective measure of involvement, each subject was asked to indicate
on a 0-100 scale how involved he felt (0=no feeling of involvement; 100=a
maximum feeling of involvement).

It must be admitted that the objective involvement score is arbitrary
and the subjetive involvement score has all the usual problems of any self-
report by subjects. The objective score, however, at least has the virtue of
reflecting the way in which involvement is generally defined operationally by
church leaders. An indication of the validity of both measures is that there
was a very high positive correlation between the two scores ($r=.94$, $df=18$,
$a<.001$). The use of these two kinds of measures is not new. Wicker used an
objective measure similar to the one outlined above in his study of church
involvement.[4] He used a subjective measure similar to the one outlined above
in his study of assimilation of new members into congregations.[5]

In addition to the measures of individual involvement in the congre-
gation, it was also necessary to obtain some measure of the degree to which
affiliation with the congregation was a central part of the subject's self-
image. To do this, the construct system of each subject was studied by means
of the role repertory grid method.[6] An eight column, twenty row grid was used
in this study. Subjects were instructed to fill in the eight column headings
with the people in their own experience who filled the following roles:
father, mother, brother or male friend, sister or female friend, spouse,

[4]Allan M. Wicker, "Size of Church Mebership and Members' Support of
Church Behavior Settings," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 11
(1969): 278-288.

[5]Allan W. Wicker and Anne Mehler, "Assimilation of New Members in a
Large and a Small Church," Urbana, Illinois, 1969 (mimeographed).

[6]George A. Kelly, The Psychology of Personal Constructs, Vols, I & II,
(New York: Norton, 1955). See also: D. Bannister and J. M. M. Mair, "An
Introduction to Crid Methods,""in D. Bannister and J. M. M. Mair (eds.) The
Evaluation of Personal Constructs (New York: Academic Press, 1968), pp. 38-77.

most ethical person known to the subject, and saddest person known to the

subject. The final column was not used in the construct elicitation phase of

the study, but was reserved for a profile of the subject's self-image.

Following Kelly's usual technique, subjects were instructed to focus on three

of these people at a time on each of the twenty rows of the grid. They were

instructed to tell the most significant way in which two of these people are

alike and different from the third. The characteristic which the subject

ascribes to the two who are alike is what Kelly calls the "construct" and the

characteristic ascribed to the third person is what he calls the "contrast."

After the subjects had finished all twenty rows of the grid, they were

instructed to go back and check each person on each row who shared the

construct recorded for that row--including the eighth column for self-image.

This technique thus provides an indication of the person's self-image and it

also provides the data needed to determine the number of discriminable

constructs elicited. Once duplications were eliminated, the construct

system of each subject was studied using Hinkle's implication grid technique.[7]

In this technique, subjects are asked to imagine that they were to change their

personal characteristics on one particular construct, for example, change from

being homest to being dishonest. Subjects are then asked to consider all the

other constructs that have been elicited in their personal construct system

and decide which of these other constructs would also have to be changed if

they changed on the first construct. For example, if they were to change from

being honest to being dishonest, would they also have to change from being

happy to being sad. This technique thus rank orders the subject's personal

constructs from the one which implies the least change in the other constructs

to the one which implies the most change in the other constructs. Each of

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[7]D. N. Hinkle, "The Change of Personal Constructs from the Viewpoint
of a Theory of Implications," Ph.D. Thesis, Ohio State University, 1965. See
also Bannister and Mair, pp. 88-95.

the subjects in this study included "member of the Church of Christ" as one of his constructs in the role repertory grid. The implication grid technique was used for the purpose of determining the centrality of the construct "member of the Church of Christ" in the personal construct system of each subject. In the obtained data this construct ranged from a low position of 8th to a high position of 2nd place. The objective measure of involvement on these subjects ranged from a low of 45 to a high of 210. The subjective measure of involvement ranged from a low of 20 to a high of 90. There was a high positive correlation between the implication grid results and the objective measure of involvement (rho=.90, N=20, a<.001) and also a high positive correlation between the implication grid results and the subjective measure of involvement (rho=.95, N=20, a<.001). These high positive correlations indicate that the more a person was involved in the congregation, the more his construct of affiliation with the congregation was a central element in his personal construct system—and thus a central part of his self-image.

The identification model suggests that an individual affiliates with a congregation, at least in part, because of the self-defining function of such affiliation. The data outlined above suggest that the greater the involvement by the individual in the congregation, the more this self-defining function was operative. It logically follows, therefore, that a congregation which offers people many opportunities for involvement should be more successful in making and keeping converts than would be the case with a congregation which offers few opportunities for involvement. In order to test this assumption, each of the forty-eight congregations included in this survey was given an involvement score. That score was made up of the following items:

1) the percentage of members in attendance at the regularly scheduled services of the congregation—divided by the number of such services (this item could thus contribute a maximum of 100 points);

2) the percentage of members having a leadership role in the congregation;

3) the percentage of members having a specific church work assignment; and,

4) contribution per member per week--with one point for each ten cents in contribution (in the obtained data, the average contribution was $4 per member per week and this would add 40 points to the involvement score).

The congregational involvement scores in the obtained data ranged from a low of 120 to a high of 250 with a mean of 175. In the high net growth rate group of congregations, the mean involvement score was 207.187. The mean involvement score for the medium net growth rate group was 176.875. The mean involvement score for the low net growth rate group was 141.875. Analysis of variance indicated significant over-all differences on this variable (as shown in Table 32) and multiple t-tests indicated significant differences between each of the three groups (as shown in Table 33).

TABLE 32

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR INVOLVEMENT

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	34,184.38	17,092.19	40.09	a<.001
Within	45	19,185.94	426.35		
Total	47	53,370.32			

TABLE 33

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR INVOLVEMENT

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
High-Medium	30	30.312	7.649125	3.96	a<.001
High-Low	30	65.312	8.188454	7.97	a<.001
Medium-Low	30	35.000	5.858576	5.97	a<.001

The involvement level was clearly an important factor in determing whether or not a congregation was successful in making and keeping converts. The following sections of this chapter attempt to clarify when involvement is likely to be high in a congregation.

Size as a Factor in Involvement

The relation of group size and involvement has been studied in a number of different settings.[8] Research on group size effects in general has shown that larger groups tend to be less stable, have more difficulty in communication, inhibit individual participation, produce more frustration in that they inhibit aggressive behavior rather than encouraging its expression, be less productive in most situations, and have decisions which are less satisfactory to group members and which tend to be changed sooner than decisions made by small groups.[9]

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[8] R. G. Barker and P. V. Gump (eds.), Big School, small school: High School Size and Student Behavior (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1964); A. P. Hare, E. F. Borgatta, and R. F. Bales (eds.), Small Groups: Studies in Social Interaction (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1965); W. Gore and L. Hodapp, Change in the Small Community (New York: Friendship Press, 1967).

[9] J. James, "A Preliminary Study of the Size Determinant in Small Group Interaction," American Sociological Review 16 (1951): 474-477; R. F. Bales, F. L. Strodtbeck, T. N. Mills, and M. E. Rosenborough, "Channels of Communication in Small Groups," American Sociological Review 16 (1951): 461-468; A. K. Rice, "The Influence of Size of Kindergarten Group on Performance," Child Development 5 (1934): 295-303; J. R. Gibb, "The Effects of Group Size and of Threat Reduction upon Creativity in a Problem Solving Situation," American Psychologist 6 (1951): 324; Phillip W. Slater, "Contrasting Correlates of Group Size," Sociometry 21 (1958): 129-139; A. K. Rice, "The Use of Unrecognized Cultural Mechanisms in an Expanding Machine Shop," Human Relations 4 (1951): 143-160; A. P. Hare, "A Study of Interaction and Consequences in Different Sized Groups," American Sociological Review 17 (1952): 261-267; R. Marriot, "Size of Working Group and Output," Occupational Psychology 23 (1949): 47-57; D. W. Taylor and W. L. Faust, "Twenty Questions: Effeciency in Problem Solving as a Function of Size of Group," Journal of Experimental Psychology 44 (1952): 360-368; R. C. Zeller, "Group Size: A Determinant of the Quality and Stability of Group Decisions," Sociometry 20 (1957): 165-173.

Several different theories have been advanced to explain these detrimental effects of increased group size. The theory which has received the greatest attention, which has been tested the most, and which seems to be most relevant to the church situation is Barker's behavior setting theory.[10] According to Barker, the behavior of group members is greatly influenced by the number of people available to support the organization's activities. When the number of available people is small, members tend to work harder to maintain the activities of the group than when the number is large. "Undermanning" is the term Barker uses to describe the situation in which the number of people available is relatively small in relation to the number of roles available. Barker suggests that undermanning influences members to assume more positions of responsibility, to engage in a wider range of activities in support of the organization, and to enlist others to become members of the organization.

Barker's behavior setting theory has been tested in a series of investigations of student behavior in extra-curricular activities of large and small schools.[11] Barker and his colleagues have found that while the number of behavior settings and roles increases with school size, the rate of increase is not as great as the increase in the number of students. Data on a number of schools show that the student/behavior setting ratio increases

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[10] Roger G. Barker, Ecological Psychology: Concepts and Methods for Studying the Environment of Human Behavior (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1960; Roger G. Barker, "Ecology and Motivation," Nebraska Symposium on Motivation 8 (1960): 1-50; Roger G. Barker and H. F. Wright, The Midwest and Its Children (New York: H. F. Row, Peterson, and Company, 1954).

[11] E. P. Willems, "Sense of Obligation to High School Activities as Related to School Size and Marginality of Student," Child Development 38 (1967): 1247-1260; Allan W. Wicker, "Undermanning, Performance, and Student's Subjective Experience in Behavior Settings of Large and Small Schools," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 10 (1968): 255-261.

with school size, suggesting that behavior settings in small schools are generally undermanned more than is the case in large schools. Subsequent investigations have confirmed that students will be more involved in small schools.[12] Baird has demonstrated that these differences are directly related to the situation and do not reflect basic personality differences. His study found that students in small schools are more involved than those in large schools, but that these differences did not extend beyond high school into college. He did find, however, that college achievement was negatively related to college size.[13] Wicker went even further in showing that school size influences the scores on a cognitive complexity test which was assumed to measure a stable personality trait.[14] When students moved from small to large schools or from large to small schools, their cognitive complexity scores changed accordingly. Students in smaller schools were cognitively more complex in discrimination among behavior settings. Wicker suggests that this is because of the greater frequency of interaction in the smaller schools. In a larger school there are more students with whom a given student can interact, however Wicker's study found that the larger the school the less frequent and less meaningful the interaction. This finding was also clearly shown by Selltiz, Hopson, and Cook.[15] All of these findings clearly demonstrate that undermanning of behavior settings encourages greater involvement by the members in the activities of the group.

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[12]P. V. Gump and W. V. Friesen, "Participation in Non-Class Settings," in Barker and Gump, Big School, small school.

[13]Leonard L. Baird, "Big School, Small School: A Critical Examination of the Hypothesis," Journal of Educational Psychology 60 (1969): 253-260.

[14]Wicker, "Undermanning."

[15]Clair Seltiz, Anna Lee Hopson, and Stuart W. Cook, "The Effects of Situational Factors on Personal Interaction between Foreign Students and Americans," Journal of Social Issues 12 (1955): 33-51.

The application of behavior setting theory to churches is very recent and little research has been done in this area. Wicker studied five Methodist congregations in Milwaukee using both objective and subjective measures of involvement.[16] The results of his study indicate that the larger the congregation the lower the level of involvement. Wicker and Mehler found that new members tend to be assimilated into small congregations faster and with a higher reported feeling of involvement than was the case with new members of large congregations.[17]

In 1970 the present author conducted a study which has not previously been published replicating Wicker's design with congregations of the Church of Christ. Two hundred congregations of the Church of Christ were selected from the most estensive available list of congregations.[18] Selection was made on the basis of a table of random numbers. One hundred and thirty of these congregations responded in the original mail survey. Follow-up by mail, telephone, and personal contact eventually resulted in returns from all 200 congregations. In that study the objective measure of congregational involvement outlined earlier in this chapter was computed for each congregation and that involvement score was compared with congregational size. The mean size for these 200 congregations was 135.9 and the mean involvement score was 198.38. In that survey, the larger the membership size, the lower the involvement score ($r= -.49$, $df=198$, $a<.001$). These results are essentially the same as those found by Wicker. They also closely parallel the results found in this present study of 48 congregations. In the present study, the

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[16]Wicker, "Size of Church Membership."

[17]Wicker and Mehler, "Assimilation."

[18]Where the Saints Meet (Austin, Texas: Firm Foundation Publishing Company, 1970).

mean size of the congregations was 425.31 and the mean involvement score was 175.31. In the present study, as in the author's 1970 study and as in the studies by Wicker, the larger the membership size the lower the involvement score ($r = -.51$, df=46, a<.001). The present study also found that the larger the membership the lower the conversion rate ($r = -.26$, df=46, approaches significance at a<.07) and the lower the net growth rate ($r = -.43$, df=46, a<.001). In the present study of 48 selected congregations, it was possible to distinguish among groups of congregations on the basis of size. The mean congregational size in the high net growth rate group was 195, in the medium net growth rate group the mean congregational size was 414, and in the low net growth rate group the mean congregational size was 667. An analysis of variance test on the size variable indicated significant over-all difference (as shown in Table 34) and multiple t-tests indicated significant differences in two of the three comparisons (as shown in Table 35).

TABLE 34

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR SIZE

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	1,785,377	892,688.5	9.85	a<.001
Within	45	4,079.827	90,662.8		
Total	47	5,865,204			

TABLE 35

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR SIZE

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Level
High-Medium	30	219	20.825	10.52	a<.001
High-Low	30	472	129.214	3.65	a<.001
Medium-Low	30	253	129.879	1.95	NS

On the surface it appears that there might be a contradiction between these data on size and involvement and the data presented earlier regarding congregation-community similarity and homogeneity in the congregation. One might assume that the larger the congregation the more similarity there would be to the community and the more heterogeneity there would be in the congregation. In the present survey, however, the larger the congregation:

1) the less similar the congregation was to the community in terms of:

   A) average age ($r = -.49$, $df = 46$, $a < .001$);

   B) average socio-economic status ($r = -.47$, $df = 46$, $a < .001$);

   C) average educational level ($r = -.37$, $df = 46$, $a < .005$);

2) the less heterogeneous the congregation was in terms of:

   A) age ($r = -.47$, $df = 46$, $a < .001$);

   B) socio-economic status ($r = -.51$, $df = 46$, $a < .001$);

   C) educational level ($r = -.46$, $df = 46$, $a < .001$).

It should be remembered that the congregations of this study were not selected randomly, but on the basis of conversion rate. Additional research in randomly selected congregations would be needed before any conclusion could be reached as to whether or not large congregations in general tend to be less similar to the community and less heterogeneous than small congregations. There is a possible tentative explanation which may help clarify this unusual finding. An unintended development was that smaller congregations selected for this study were the only congregations of the Church of Christ in their cities. The larger congregations selected for this study tended to be located in cities with several congregations of the Church of Christ. This situation is likely what one would find in a totally random survey of congregations. The larger congregations of the Church of Christ are almost all located in cities where there are other congregations of the Church of Christ. In a city with only one congregation of the Church of Christ, that

one congregation would have to serve all members of the Church of Christ in the area--regardless of such factors as age, socio-economic status, or educational level. Such a congregation would, therefore, be more heterogeneous and would be more similar to the community on these demographic variables. In a city with several congregations of the Church of Christ, it would be possible for some congregations to form along rather narrow lines in regard to these demographic variables.

There has been a tendency in the Church of Christ to establish a great many relatively small congregations. Although the Church of Christ in the United States has only 2,500,000 members, these members are served by 17,000 local congregations. The Roman Catholic Church has around ten times the membership of the Church of Christ and yet it has only 18,000 local congregations in the United States. It is possible that the above reported findings regarding the larger congregations being less similar to the community and less heterogeneous may reflect the tendency in the Church of Christ to establish many relatively small congregations which are quite restricted on such variables as age, socio-economic status, and educational level.

One additional item of support for the conclusion discussed about the size-involvement relationship needs to be mentioned. The 48 congregations selected for in-depth study in this survey were chosen from the 1,009 congregations which responded to a mail questionnaire. That questionnaire included the objective measure of congregational involvement discussed earlier and a report of congregational size. Furthermore, in the in-depth study of the 48 congregations, one of the tasks of the survey workers was to collect the same data as that included in the mail questionnaire on five congregations of the Church of Christ in the same area as the congregation in which they were doing the in-depth study. It was possible, therefore, to do a correlational study of size and involvement with a very large data base including:

1) the 48 congregations in which the in-depth survey was conducted;

2) the 961 congregations which responded in the present mail questionnaire, but which were not included in the in-depth survey;

3) the 240 congregations surveyed in connection with the 48 congregations which were the main focus of the present study; and,

4) the 200 congregations included in the author's 1970 study of size and involvement.

This gave a total of 1,449 congregations of the Church of Christ--8.52% of the congregations of the Church of Christ in the United States--on which data are available about size and involvement. In this combined study, the mean congregational size was 149 and the mean involvement score was 185. In these data there was a significant negative correlation between size and involvement ($r= -.55$, $df=1,447$, $a<.001$). Therefore, while it is not possible to reach any conclusion as to whether or not large congregations generally tend to be less similar to the community or less heterogeneous, it is possible to conclude that size and involvement are negatively correlated. It should be remembered, however, that this correlation of -.55 explains only 30% of the variance. In the obtained data there were many small congregations with a low involvement score and some large congregations with a high involvement score. Additional investigation of this matter, therefore, appears warranted.

Perceived Roles/Membership Ratio

as a Factor in Involvement

The key element in Barker's behavior setting theory is the ratio of the number of available roles for the members to the number of members available to fill those roles. To be more specific, it is not simply the roles/membership ratio that is important, but rather the member's perception of the roles/membership ratio. All previous studies of Barker's behavior setting theory, however, have used the experimenter's perception of the

number of roles available or group leaders' perception of the number of roles
available, rather than asking group members about their perception of the
number of roles available. In order to examine this matter, a follow-up
study was undertaken in each of the 48 congregations of this survey. A random
sample of at least 10% of the members, or 50 members, whichever was larger,
were asked to complete the following form:

> In each congregation there are many jobs to be done other than just
> attending the services and giving. Congregations need elders, deacons,
> teachers, preachers, song leaders, ushers, people to visit the sick, and
> people to fill many other roles. In many of these works, there is a need
> for many people to be involved in the same kind of work. What is the
> total number of specific jobs that you are aware of that are available
> for the members of this congregation?

The answer that each person gave to this question was his perception of the
number of available roles in the congregation. That figure divided by the
membership of that congregation is that person's perception of the roles/
membership ratio in his congregation--or the number of roles the subject
perceives as being available for each member of his congregation. The figures
given by all subjects surveyed in each congregation were averaged for that
congregation and the resulting figure was used as an estimate of the roles/
membership ratio as perceived by the average member of that congregation.

When the perceived roles/membership ratios were averaged for all
congregations in the high net growth rate group of congregations, the result-
ing figure was .54625--meaning that these people were aware of about 55 jobs
for each 100 members of their congregation. The average perceived roles/
membership ratio for the medium net growth rate group of congregations was
.42625 or about 43 roles for each 100 members. The average perceived roles/
membership ratio for the low net growth rate group of congregations was
.274375 or about 27 jobs for each 100 members. An analysis of variance
revealed significant over-all differences on this factor (as shown in
Table 36) and multiple t-tests revealed significant differences between each

of the three groups (as shown in Table 37).

TABLE 36

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR PERCEIVED ROLES/MEMBERSHIP RATIO

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	59.40375	29.70188	40.2654	a<.001
Within	45	33.19438	.73765		
Total	47	92.59813			

TABLE 37

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR PERCEIVED ROLES/MEMBERSHIP RATIO

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
High-Medium	30	.120000	.03179033	3.77	a<.005
High-Low	30	.271875	.03430068	7.93	a<.001
Medium-Low	30	.151875	.02406318	6.31	a<.001

There was an extremely high positive correlation between the involvement score in each congregation and the perceived roles/membership ratio for that congregation (r=.99868, df=46, a<.0001). This correlation explains all but .0026% of the variance. One reason for this correlation being so high, of course, is that it at least partially correlates size with size. The larger the congregation the more roles there are. The important factor in this comparison, however, is that the number of roles does not increase as fast as the number of members to fill those roles. In fact, in the obtained data, there was a significant negative correlation between congregational size and the perceived roles/membership ratio (r= -.50, df=46, a<.001). The larger the congregation the lower the perceived roles/

membership ratio. It may be that the larger congregations included in this survey actually had a lower roles/membership ratio or it may be that these larger congregations simply had a harder job persuading their members that there were roles available for each of them. However, the almost perfect positive relationship between involvement and the perceived roles/membership ratio suggests that congregational size alone is not the most important factor. Regardless of congregational size, if the members felt that there were many roles available for them, they tended to be more involved. The data from this survey also reveal that when the perceived roles/membership ratio was high, the conversion rate also tended to be high (r=.55, df=46, a<.001) and the net growth rate tended to be high (r=.75, df=46, a<.001).

These findings help to explain involvement and the level of involvement in a congregation helps to explain its level of success in attracting and keeping new converts. The more a person is involved in the work of a congregation the more his congregational affiliation serves the function of a self-defining identification with a congregation as a reference group. Congregations with a high level of involvement would thus be in the best position to fulfill the needs of a new convert in this regard.

Summary

This chapter has presented data suggesting that certain group characteristics must be considered in predicting the success of a congregation in its effort to attract and keep new members. On the basis of the data presented in this chapter, the following conclusions can be reached about the optimal conditions for evangelistic persuasion in the present survey:

1) the average age in the congregation was similar to the average age in the community;

2) the average socio-economic status and the average educational level in

the congregation was similar to or slightly above the average in the community;

3) the congregation was heterogeneous in regard to age, socio-economic status, and educational level; and,

4) the congregation had a high level of involvement based on a high perceived roles/membership ratio--which was generally found in the smaller congregations.

The importance of these group characteristic variables can be seen in a test of their combined predictive power. Seven predictions, as outlined above, were made and confirmed in the data presented in this chapter. These predictions relate to the question of which congregations will be in the high, medium, or low net growth rate groups. For purposes of this test of combined predictive power, these seven variables (the three similarity scores, the three heterogeneity scores, and the involvement score) were dichotomized so that each congregation either matched or did not match the predictions discussed in this chapter. A congregation which did not match any of these predictions would thus score zero and one which matched all predictions would score seven. In the obtained data, the average congregation in the high net growth rate group scored 6.81, the mean score in the medium net growth rate group was 5.81, and the mean score in the low net growth rate group was 2.06. Analysis of variance revealed a significant over-all difference on this factor (as shown in Table 38). No congregation in the high net growth rate group scored lower than 5 and 14 of the 16 congregations in this group matched on all 7 predictions. No congregation in the low net growth rate group scored higher than 3. Multiple t-tests of differences between group means revealed significant differences in two of the comparisons (see Table 39).

All of these group characteristic variables fit harmoniously within the focus of convienence of the identification model--indeed, they follow

TABLE 38

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR COMBINED GROUP CHARACTERISTIC VARIABLES

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	17.66	8.83	8.33	a<.001
Within	45	47.82	1.06		
Total	47	65.48			

TABLE 39

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR COMBINED GROUP CHARACTERISTIC VARIABLES

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
High-Medium	30	1.00	.63	1.58	NS
High-Low	30	4.75	.52	9.13	a<.001
Medium-Low	30	3.75	.49	7.65	a<.001

logically from that model. It would seem, therefore, on the basis of the individual characteristic data discussed in Chapter Two and the group characteristic data discussed in this chapter that there is strong support for the identification model. The individual most likely to convert and not drop out is the individual who, for some reason, has a higher than average need for establishing a self-defining identification with a congregation as a reference group. The congregation which is most likely to make and keep converts is the congregation which is in the best position to fulfill the needs of individuals who are seeking a self-defining identification with a congregation as a reference group.

Conclusion

The identification model of persuasion in religious conversion as outlined in Chapter One suggests that religious conversion involves the following processes: the alienation of the individual from his original reference groups; contact with representatives of other reference groups; identification with these people as significant others; identification with their group as a new reference group; displacement of the self-image which resulted from the original reference group identification; and an eventual transformation of personal identity. The focus of Chapter Two was on alienation. The important factors in the analysis of data presented in this chapter are contact and group identification.

A heterogeneous congregation would likely be more similar to the community in which it is located than would a homogeneous congregation. The projection of a congregational image of heterogeneity or of similarity to the community, however, is probably not the crucial factor. In the conversion process, people identify with significant others on an individual basis before they identify with the group which these significant others represent. The crucial factor about congregational heterogeneity is that in such a congregation some members would have contact with almost every segment of the community. According to Berelson and Steiner, "Voluntary personal relations—friendships, cliques, dating, associations, etc.—are primarily carried on within classes, especially at the extremes."[19] An additional finding reported by these authors is that "the farther apart the classes, the fewer the personal relations as 'equals.'"[20] Opportunity for contact is an

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[19]Berelson and Steiner, p. 482.

[20]Ibid., p. 483.

important factor. Jackson found that "a person's attraction to membership in any group will vary directly with the amount of interaction the person has with other members of the group."[21]

The process of persuasion in religious conversion, however, must go beyond the point of contact. It is essential that the individual see something in the group that would fulfill his basic needs. On this point Hartley says, "The more successful a new group is perceived to be in meeting the personal needs of an individual, the more likely he is to accept it as a reference group."[22] A basic presupposition of this study is that individuals need reference group identification in order to establish and maintain their own personal identity. As was pointed out in this chapter, the more highly an individual is involved in a congregation the more his membership in the congregation serves a self-defining function in regard to his personal identity.[23] It would seem logical to conclude, therefore, that the more an individual perceives the possibility of becoming highly involved in a congregation the more attractive that congregation would be to him as a new reference group. A congregation with a high perceived roles/membership ratio would likely be seen by an individual as a group in which he would be wanted and needed. According to Jackson, "The more highly valued a person perceives himself to be by others in his group, the greater will be his attraction to that group."[24]

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[21]Jay M. Jackson, "Reference Group Process in a Formal Organization," Sociometry 22 (1959): 327.

[22]Ruth E. Hartley, "Personal Needs and the Acceptance of a New Group as a Reference Group," Journal of Social Psychology 51 (1960): 350.

[23]Pp. 37-89.

[24]Jackson, p. 308.

The above line of analysis suggests that the conversion process will be most effective when the individual is not only exposed to persuasive messages designed to secure his affiliation with the congregation, but is also exposed to those messages which are used within the congregation to increase the involvement level of the members. A full discussion of this subject must await the chapter on message and media variables. It should be noted at this point, however, that a distinction that is traditionally made in the Church of Christ between "evangelism" to attract new members and "edification" to increase the involvement level of the present members is not necessarily a valid distinction. Any communication designed to increase the involvement level of the present members by showing how much they are needed and how many things they could be doing in the congregation would also serve an evangelistic function of attracting new members. Such communication would make these prospective members see the congregation as a group in which they would be needed and wanted. In a similar way, any communication designed to attract new members could serve as edification for the present members in that it would tend to reinforce their original commitment to the group.

CHAPTER FOUR

SIMILARITY RELATIONSHIPS ASSOCIATED WITH

PERSUASION IN RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

According to the identification model, religious conversion is explained, at least in part, as a process in which a person makes a self-defining choice to identify himself with a congregation as a reference group. According to Shibutani, the transformation of personal identity involved in conversion "is both preceded and followed by changes in interpersonal relations, usually with different individuals as significant others. Each person forms a conception of himself by acquiring the perspective of the various groups of which he is a part. . . ."[1] Persuasion in religious conversion involves influencing a person to affiliate with a congregation. Such congregational affiliation is, in fact, the operational definition of conversion used by most church leaders. Data presented in this chapter suggest that such an identification process is facilitated when there are already some areas of partial identification between the individual and the group.

In Chapter Three the focus was on similarities between the congregation and the community in which it is located. In this chapter the focus is on similarities between the individual and the congregation and similarities between the individual and various representatives of the congregation.

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[1]Tamotsu Shibutani, Society and Personality (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1961), pp. 531-532.

One of the criticisms directed against traditional persuasion research in Chapter One was that most researchers have failed to study communication as process. Source, message, channel, or receiver variables have been studied in isolation. The unit of analysis has typically been the source or the receiver, but not the relationship between the source and the receiver. Rogers and Bhowmik suggest that "future inquiry should utilize relational analysis as a means of probing the nature of communication behavior."[2] Relational analysis has involved a number of conceptual labels. Lazarsfeld and Merton used the terms "homophily" and "heterophily."[3] According to Rogers and Bhowmik, "Homophily is the degree to which pairs of individuals who interact are similar in certain attributes, like beliefs, values, education, social status, etc. . . . Heterophily is the degree to which pairs of individuals who interact are different in certain attributes."[4] The aim of this chapter is to provide the kind of relational analysis suggested by Rogers and Bhowmik. This analysis focuses on relationships between the individual and the congregation and between the individual and various representatives of the congregation.

In considering areas of similarity between the subject and the congregation, it is useful to consider the congregation as a whole, the congregation as it is represented by its minister, and the congregation as it is represented by the member most responsible for the effort to persuade the

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[2]Everett M. Rogers and Dilip K. Bhowmik, "Homophily-Heterophily: Relational Concepts for Communication Research," in Larry L. Barker and Robert J. Kibler (eds.), Speech Communication Behavior: Perspectives and Principles (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), p. 209.

[3]Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton, "Friendship as a Social Process: A Substantive and Methodological Analysis," in Monroe Berger and others (eds.), Freedom and Control in Modern Society (New York: Van Nostrand, 1954). See also: Rogers and Bhowmik, p. 210.

[4]Rogers and Bhowmik, p. 209.

subject to affiliate with the congregation. For purposes of simplicity, the members thus identified are referred to as "persuaders." In this chapter the following relationships are considered:

1. subject-congregation relationships:

    A. similarity of the subject's age to the average age in the congregation;

    B. similarity of the subject's educational level to the average educational level in the congregation;

    C. similarity of the subject's socio-economic status to the average socio-economic status in the congregation;

2. subject-minister relationship regarding the similarity of the subject's cognitive style to that of the minister;

3. subject-persuader relationships:

    A. similarity of cognitive style;

    B. similarity of age;

    C. similarity of educational level; and,

    D. similarity of socio-economic status.

Subject-Congregation Relationships

Relational analysis is not the same thing as analysis of the subject's individual characteristics or the characteristics of the group. In the data concerning individual characteristics of subjects, as reported in Chapter Two, it was not possible to distinguish among converts, non-converts, and drop-outs on the variables of age, educational level, or socio-economic status. Converts, drop-outs, and non-converts came from all categories about equally on these variables. As was reported in Chapter Three, it was not possible to distinguish among congregations in the high, medium, and low net growth rate groups on the basis of congregational averages on these variables. What was discussed in Chapter Three was not congregational averages on these variables,

but the relationship between congregational averages and community averages on
these variables. What is discussed in this chapter is not the absolute
position of subjects or of congregations on these variables, but the relation-
ship between subject and congregation. If it were not for the kind of
relational analysis suggested by Rogers and Bhowmik, these points would be
ignored. In the data obtained in the present survey, it did not make any
difference whether a subject was young or old, educated or uneducated, high
or low status. It did not make any difference whether the congregation was
made up of people who were young or old, educated or uneducated, high or low
status. Presumably it did not make any difference whether the community in
which the congregation was located was made up of people who were young or old,
educated or uneducated, high or low status. What emerged as important in the
data reported in Chapter Three was that the congregation be similar to the
community on these variables. What emerges in this chapter as important is
that the subject and congregation be similar on these variables.

Similarity of Age

In the data obtained in the present survey, it was possible to
distinguish among converts, non-converts, and drop-outs on the basis of the
relative degree of similarity between the subject's age and the average age in
the congregation.[5] The mean difference between the age of the subjects and
the average in their related congregations was: 5.32 years for the converts;
10.98 years for the drop-outs; and 14.05 years for the non-converts. An
analysis of variance revealed a significant over-all difference on this
variable (as shown in Table 40). Multiple t-tests revealed significant
differences between each of the three groups (as shown in Table 41).

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[5] For a review of how the average age in the congregation was
estimated, see pp. 68-69.

TABLE 40

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR SUBJECT-

CONGREGATION SIMILARITY OF AGE

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	9,486.12	4,743.06	53.78	a<.001
Within	717	63,236.01	88.19		
Total	719	72,722.13			

TABLE 41

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR SUBJECT-CONGREGATION

SIMILARITY OF AGE

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
Converts, Non-Converts	478	8.73	.2646	32.99	a<.001
Converts, Drop-Outs	478	5.66	.2372	23.86	a<.001
Non-Converts, Drop-Outs	478	3.07	.2594	11.84	a<.001

These data reveal that the greater the similarity between the age of the subject and the average age in the congregation the more likely the subject was to convert. The greater the difference between the subject's age and the average age in the congregation the less likely the subject was to convert and the more likely he was to drop out if he did convert.

Similarity of Educational Level

The educational levels used in this comparison are the same five levels outlined in Chapter Three. Since five educational levels were used, the maximum possible difference between the subject's educational level and the average educational level in the congregation would be four levels in

either direction. This system results in a 0-9 scale: 0=the subject being four levels below the average educational level in the congregation; 9=the subject being four levels above the average educational level in the congregation. Such a scale, of course, is not limited to a measurement of similarity, but also includes an indication of upward social mobility aspirations. Both similarity and aspirations of upward social mobility are associated with the identification process. For purposes of simplicity in presentation, the data have been collapsed in Table 42 into three categories: subjects two to four levels below the average educational level in the congregation; subjects at the same level as the congregation, one level above, or one level below; and subjects two to four levels above the congregation.

TABLE 42

SUBJECT-CONGREGATION EDUCATIONAL LEVEL RELATIONSHIP

Educational level of the subject in relation to the average educational level in the congregation	Categories of Subjects			TOTALS
	Converts	Non-Converts	Drop-Outs	
Subject had less education	100	51	40	191
Subject had about same education	99	72	61	232
Subject had more education	41	117	139	297
TOTALS	240	240	240	720

Chi square=95.35, df=4, a<.001, V^2=.07, T^2=.07, C=.12, phi square=.13

Sixty-eight percent of the subjects in this survey had an educational level which differed from the average educational level in their related congregations by two or more levels. Fifty-nine percent of the converts, 70% of the non-converts, and 75% of the drop-outs came from this group. By comparison, 32% of the subjects had about the same educational level as the average in their related congregations and yet 41% of the converts, 30% of the non-

converts and 25% of the drop-outs came from this group. Similarity of educational level resulted in a statistical over-representation of converts while dissimilarity of educational level resulted in a statistical under-representation of converts. The reverse was true in regard to non-converts and drop-outs. These differences are an indication that similarity of the subject to the congregation in regard to educational level is an important factor.

The data presented in Table 41 also indicate that aspirations of upward social mobility are important. Twenty-seven percent of the subjects were two to four levels below the average educational level of their related congregations and yet 42% of the converts came from this group. Twenty-seven percent of the non-converts came from this group (which is exactly the expected frequency), but only 17% of the drop-outs came from this group. By way of contrast, 41% of the subjects were two to four levels above the average educational level in their related congregations and yet only 14% of the converts came from this group while 39% of the non-converts and 47% of the drop-outs came from this group. When subjects were two to four levels below the average educational level in their related congregations they were more likely to convert and less likely to drop out, but when subjects were two to four levels above the average educational level in their related congregations they were less likely to convert and more likely to drop out if they did convert. These figures indicate that the data in Table 41 might be explained partially in terms of upward social mobility aspirations as well as in terms of similarity. Both factors, however, are involved in the identification process. When a person is at about the same educational level as the congregational average, he already has an area of partial identification with that congregation. When a person is below the congregational educational level, affiliation may fulfill upward social mobility aspirations.

Similarity of Socio-Economic Status

The socio-economic status levels used in this comparison are the same five levels outlined in Chapter Three. As was the case with the educational level comparison, this system results in a 0-9 scale: 0=the subject being four levels below the congregational average; 9=the subject being four levels above the congregational average. This scale indicates both similarity and aspirations of upward social mobility. The data on the socio-economic status relationship between subject and congregation have been collapsed in Table 43 into three categories as was done with the educational level comparison.

TABLE 43

SUBJECT-CONGREGATION SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS RELATIONSHIP

Socio-economic status of the subject in relation to the average level in the related congregation	Categories of Subjects			
	Converts	Non-Converts	Drop-Outs	TOTALS
Subject below congregational average	71	95	87	253
Subject & congregation about same	134	46	50	230
Subject above congregational average	35	99	103	237
TOTALS	240	240	240	720

Chi square=101.99, df=4, a<.001, V^2=.07, T^2=.07, C=.12, phi square=.14

An indication of the importance of subject-congregation similarity regarding socio-economic status is seen in the fact that 68% of the subjects differed from the congregational average by two to four levels, but only 45% of the converts came from this group, while 81% of the non-converts and 79% of the drop-outs came from this group. In contrast, 32% of the subjects were at about the same level as their related congregations, yet 55% of the converts came from this group, while only 19% of the non-converts and 21% of the drop-outs came from this group.

The data in Table 43 concerning subjects below the congregational average on socio-economic status do not support an explanation in terms of aspirations for upward social mobility. Thirty-five percent of the subjects were below the congregational average regarding socio-economic status and this group accounted for 30% of the converts, 40% of the non-converts, and 36% of the drop-outs. None of these are major departures from expected values. There were, however, greater departures from expected frequencies in regard to the subjects who were above the congregational average regarding socio-economic status. Thirty-three percent of the subjects were in this category and yet only 15% of the converts came from this group while 41% of the non-converts and 43% of the drop-outs came from this group. These data seem to indicate that aspirations of upward social mobility were not a motive for those who converted, but may have been an influence keeping others from converting or leading to their decision to drop out. Both the factors of upward social mobility aspirations and similarity fit within the focus of convienence of the identification model. These data seem to lend some support to the similarity factor as being of some importance in the process of persuasion in religious conversion.

Subject-Minister Similarity: Cognitive Style

A congregation's minister is generally assumed to play an important role in projecting the image of the congregation. There are several variables associated with the minister which one might assume would yield statistically significant results distinguishing among congregations in the high, medium, or low net growth rate categories or influencing the matter of which subjects would be in the categories of convert, non-convert, or drop-out. In the present study, however, the only minister-related variable to emerge as significant was the variable of cognitive style.

No attempt was made in the present study to measure the over-all cognitive style of subjects, ministers, or persuaders. The cognitive style index used in this study concerned only the person's religious construct system. The Religious Construct Test used in this study is a modified version of Kelly's Role Repertory Test for construct elicitation.[6] As was mentioned in Chapter Three, Kelly's procedure involves asking the subject to identify persons filling several roles such as "father," "mother," "sister," "brother," or "best friend," then to consider three of these people at a time and tell how two are alike and at the same time different from the third. The dimensions elicited in this fashion are what Kelly calls "constructs" and their "contrasts." Kelly uses this technique to elicit a number of bi-polar constructs which the subject uses in ordering his perceptions. Extensions of Kelly's technique can also be used to study the nature and relative complexity of a person's construct system. After a number of constructs have been elicited, the subject is asked to check all the people listed who are positive instances of each construct. Subjects often use many different labels for the same construct and this procedure allows for a determination of the functional similarity in the use made of each elicited construct so as to ascertain the functional complexity of the subjects constructs.

The modified version of Kelly's role repertory test used in the present study involves a twenty row construct repertory grid.[7] There are twenty columns on this grid. Subjects are instructed to write in the column headings the names of churches, denominations, or religious groups with which they are familiar. This Religious Construct Test has now been given to over

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[6]George A. Kelly, The Psychology of Personal Constructs, Vols I & II, (New York: Norton, 1955).

[7]D. Bannister and J. M. M. Mair, The Evaluation of Personal Constructs (London: Academic Press, 1968), pp. 38-96.

1,300 people. Most are able to fill in at least the first six column headings with no trouble. The few who have trouble thinking of six churches are instructed to list whatever churches they can think of, even though they may not really be very familiar with them. Subjects are instructed to list at least six churches. More than half of the subjects tested thus far have listed between ten and fifteen churches. Few are able to fill out all twenty column headings.

Once the subject has listed at least six churches--and as many as he can up to twenty--the subject is then instructed to focus on three of these churches at a time. That portion of the grid which includes the six churches most familiar to the individual (the first six columns) contains all of the focal points of the grid. Confining the focal points to the first six columns makes it possible for subjects who list only six churches to use all twenty rows of the grid. Each of the twenty rows has a different pattern of focal points and thus it is possible for a subject to go through all twenty rows comparing three churches at a time and never focus on the same three churches twice. Kelly found that a twenty row grid was adequate to elicit the entire construct repertory of most subjects.[8]

As the subjects focus on the three churches, they are asked to tell the most important way in which two of these churches are alike and different from the third. To the right of the grid the subjects are instructed to write the characteristic shared by the two churches. This is the construct. To the right of the construct they are instructed to write the characteristic of the other church which makes it different from the two which are alike. This is the contrast. On each row, subjects are instructed to place an "X" mark in the column of the two churches which are alike on the construct used for that

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[8]Ibid., p. 46.

row. After all twenty rows of the grid have been completed in this manner, subjects are instructed to go back through each row and place an "X" mark in the column of every other church which is also a positive instance of the construct indicated for each row. A comparison of the pattern of "X" marks and voids in the cells is then used to calculate matching scores. According to Bannister and Mair,

> The most convenient way of calculating matching scores (in this test, the measure of relationship between constructs) is to make a copy of row 1 (construct 1) on a slip of paper, place this underneath row 2 and count the number of times that tick matches tick and blank matches blank, repeating this comparison of row 1 with rows 3, 4, and so on. Then row 2 is copied and scanned against the remaining rows. Subsequent rows are dealt with similarly.[9]

A number of techniques have been developed for obtaining very precise measures of the functional similarity of various constructs.[10] The very simple method used in the present study involves some data loss, but in a study of this size some simplification was essential. In the measurement of functional similarity of constructs, the aim is to determine the number of functionally discrete constructs. Sometimes people use different labels for the same construct. If the pattern of "X" marks and voids in the cells on two rows are identical, it is obvious that these two verbal labels do not describe different ways of organizing perceptions. It is also evident that if the matching score in the comparison of two rows is zero, the two rows simply describe the opposite ends of a bipolar construct. In the present study, if a subject listed only six churches in the columns, the matching score in the comparison of any two rows could range from zero to six. In such cases a matching score of zero or six was counted as functional equivalence and matching scores of one through five were counted as functionally discrete constructs. There is some data loss in this system.

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[9]Ibid., p. 57.

Obviously a matching score of one would be close to the construct identity end
of the scale and a matching score of five would be close to the contrast
identity end of the scale. In those cases in which subjects listed less than
eight churches in the columns, however, two constructs were not counted as
being functionally equivalent unless there was a perfect match or a perfect
contrast. If a subject listed from eight to fourteen churches in the columns,
two constructs were counted as being functionally equivalent if there was a
perfect match, a perfect contrast, or if the matching score was just one
point removed from a perfect match or a perfect contrast. When a subject
listed fifteen to twenty churches in the columns, two constructs were counted
as being functionally equivalent if the matching score was as much as two
points removed from a perfect match or a perfect contrast. Thus if a subject
listed churches in fifteen to twenty columns, two constructs were counted as
being functionally equivalent if the matching score was 0, 1, 2, 18, 19, or 20.
After all functional identities are removed, the number of functionally
discrete constructs is then counted as the subject's score. For purposes of
this study, cognitive simplicity is operationally defined as the use of four
constructs or less. Only 3% of the subjects tested thus far have used two,
three, or four constructs. Forty-four percent used only one construct.
Fifty-three percent used five or more. The highest obtained thus far has been
eighteen functionally discrete constructs used by one subject. The mean number
of functionally discrete constructs used by people in the cognitively complex
group is nine. These subjects use all sorts of constructs to distinguish
among churches: theological, historical, the socio-economic status of the
members, the type of architecture of the church buildings, the geographic
region in which a particular church has its greatest concentration of
members, and so on.

In the work done to date with the Religious Construct Test, 572 subjects have used only one functionally discrete construct. Of these, 555 have used an evaluative construct. These subjects see churches as "good" or "bad," "right" or "wrong," "true" or "false." They often use a diversity of labels, but if each church labeled as "good" is also labeled as "true" or "right," then these are just three different labels for what is functionally the same construct. These different labels do not provide different ways of discriminating among churches for these subjects.

In the data obtained in this survey, it was possible to distinguish among congregations in the high, medium, and low net growth rate groups on the basis of the relative cognitive complexity of the congregation's minister (as measured by the Religious Construct Test). For purposes of this comparison, the score assigned to each congregation was the number of functionally discrete constructs used by its minister on the Religious Construct Test. The scores for these 48 ministers ranged from a low of one to a high of ten. The mean score for the ministers in the high net growth rate group was 5.9, in the medium net growth rate group the mean score was 1.5, and in the low net growth rate group the mean score was 1.25. Analysis of variance revealed a significant over-all difference on this variable (as shown in Table 44) and multiple t-tests revealed significant differences between the high net growth rate group and the two other groups, but the difference between the medium and the low net growth rate groups was not significant (see Table 45).

One might assume that it would be possible to distinguish among converts, non-converts, and drop-outs on the basis of the subject-minister relationship on cognitive style. For purposes of this comparison subjects and ministers were categorized as being cognitively complex (using five or more functionally discrete constructs on the Religious Construct Test) or cognitively simple (using four or less functionally discrete constructs on

TABLE 44

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR MINISTERS' COGNITIVE STYLE

AS MEASURED BY THE RELIGIOUS CONSTRUCT TEST

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	222.5417	111.2708	43.95	a<.001
Within	45	113.9375	2.5319		
Total	47	336.4792			

TABLE 45

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR MINISTERS' COGNITIVE STYLE

AS MEASURED BY THE RELIGIOUS CONSTRUCT TEST

Groups*	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
High-Medium	30	4.40	.679882	6.47	a<.001
High-Low	30	4.65	.658083	7.06	a<.001
Medium-Low	30	.25	.232737	1.07	NS

*NOTE: The scores are those of ministers in the high, medium, or low
net growth rate groups of congregations.

the Religious Construct Test). There were, therefore, four possible relation-
ships between subject and minister. Results of this test are reported in
Table 46.

The over-all relationships in Table 46 were quite weak. The only
major difference between expected and observed frequencies were in the drop-
out category when the subject was in the cognitively complex group. If a
cognitively complex person affiliated with a congregation in which the
minister is cognitively simple, the subject was much more likely to drop cut.
If he affiliated with a congregation in which the minister is cognitively

TABLE 46

SUBJECT-MINISTER MATCH ON COGNITIVE STYLE

Cognitive Style of Subject and Minister:	Categories of Subjects			TOTALS
	Converts	Non-Converts	Drop-Outs	
Subject: Simple Minister: Simple	65	57	69	191
Subject: Simple Minister: Complex	58	67	69	194
Subject: Complex Minister: Simple	55	53	98	206
Subject: Complex Minister: Complex	62	63	4	129
TOTALS	240	240	240	720

Chi square=74.16, df=6, a<.001, V^2=.05, T^2=.04, C=.09, phi square=.1

complex, he was much less likely to drop out. These data suggest that the match of cognitive style between subject and minister had little to do with the question of whether or not the subject would affiliate with the congregation, but did have something to do with the question of whether or not the subject would remain in the congregation.

Subject-Persuader Relationships

Church leaders who are concerned about congregational image and the role of the minister in projecting that image would probably have predicted that the comparisons discussed in the first part of this chapter would have been the most important comparisons. The data presented thus far, however, have shown relatively weak statistical relationships. The only comparisons of this chapter which were even moderately strong statistically were those which follow in this section on the subject-persuader relationships.

Similarity of Cognitive Style

The Religious Construct Test outlined earlier was administered to all 720 subjects and to the persuaders associated with each of these subjects. Some of the persuaders were associated with more than one subject. The total number of persuaders included in this survey was 510. For purposes of this comparison, subjects and persuaders were characterized as being cognitively simple or complex using the same system outlined above in the subject-minister comparison on cognitive style. Subjects were arrayed according to the relation of their cognitive style to that of the persuader with whom they were associated.

The data presented in Table 47 show that the subject was most likely to convert when his cognitive style in regard to his religious construct system matched that of the persuader. When the subject and the persuader were both cognitively complex, the subject was most likely to convert and least likely to drop out. The next most effective relationship involved a match between cognitively simple subjects and persuaders—although the drop-out rate was higher in this case. The third most effective relationship involved a cognitively complex persuader and a cognitively simple subject. The conversion rate in this case was low, but the drop-out rate was also low. The least effective relationship, by far, involved the cognitively simple persuader matched with the cognitively complex subject. Most of the subjects in this category did not convert and most of those who did convert dropped out of the congregation soon after their conversion.

Similarity of Age

In the data obtained in this survey it was possible to distinguish among converts, non-converts, and drop-outs on the basis of the relative degree of similarity between the age of the subject and the age of the persuader. The mean age difference between subject and persuader in the

TABLE 47

SUBJECT-PERSUADER SIMILARITY OF COGNITIVE STYLE

Cognitive style of the subject and the persuader	Categories of Subjects			TOTALS
	Converts	Non-Converts	Drop-Outs	
cognitively simple subject cognitively simple persuader	90	13	113	236
cognitively simple subject cognitively complex persuader	31	83	71	185
cognitively complex subject cognitively simple persuader	1	133	33	167
cognitively complex subject cognitively complex persuader	118	11	3	132
TOTALS	240	240	240	720

Chi square=475.73, df=6, a<.001, V^2=.33, T^2=.27, C=.63, phi square=.66

convert category was 11.26, for the non-converts this figure was 25.9, and the figure for the drop-outs was 23.59. An analysis of variance revealed a significant over-all difference on this variable (as shown in Table 48) and multiple t-tests revealed significant differences between each of these three groups (as shown in Table 49).

TABLE 48

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR

SUBJECT-PERSUADER AGE SIMILARITY

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	29,727.45	14,863.73	118.6	a<.001
Within	717	89,862.54	125.33		
Total	719	119,589.99			

In the data obtained in this survey, the typical persuader was younger than the average member of the congregation and was also younger

TABLE 49

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR SUBJECT-PERSUADER AGE SIMILARITY

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
Converts, Non-Converts	478	14.64	.2908	50.34	a<.001
Converts, Drop-Outs	478	12.33	.2953	41.54	a<.001
Non-Converts, Drop-Outs	478	2.31	.3222	7.17	a<.001

than the subject he was trying to influence. Forty-seven percent of the persuaders were trying to influence older subjects while only 38% were trying to influence younger subjects.

Similarity of Educational Level

The educational levels used in this comparison are the same five levels outlined in Chapter Three and used earlier in this chapter in the subject-congregation comparison. This scale, of course, is not limited to a measurement of similarity, but also includes an indication of relative positions and thus may also indicate aspirations of upward social mobility. As shown in Table 50, 51% of the subjects had an educational level which differed from that of their related persuaders by two or more levels, but only 34% of the converts came from this group, while 60% of the non-converts and 62% of the drop-outs came from this group. By way of contrast, 49% of the subjects had the same educational level as their related persuaders or just one level above or below, yet this group accounted for 66% of the converts, while accounting for only 40% of the non-converts and 38% of the drop-outs. These departures from expected frequency are an indication that similarity of the subject to the persuader in regard to educational level was an important factor.

TABLE 50

SUBJECT-PERSUADER EDUCATIONAL LEVEL RELATIONSHIP

Subject Categories	Converts	Non-Converts	Drop-Outs	TOTALS
Subject 4 levels above persuader	1	14	12	27
Subject 3 levels above persuader	7	19	21	47
Subject 2 levels above persuader	16	25	29	70
Subject 1 level above persuader	39	27	31	97
Subject & persuader on same level	60	37	29	126
Subject 1 level below persuader	59	31	32	122
Subject 2 levels below persuader	32	37	35	104
Subject 3 levels below persuader	19	24	27	70
Subject 4 levels below persuader	7	26	24	57
TOTALS	240	240	240	720

Chi square=62.3, df=16, a<.001, V^2=.05, T^2=.07, C=.28, phi square=.09

The data in Table 50 regarding subjects who had an educational level
two to four levels below that of their related persuaders provides no
support for an explanation in terms of upward social mobility aspirations.
Thirty-one percent of the subjects were in this category, yet only 24% of the
converts came from this group, while 36% of the non-converts and drop-outs
were in this category. If a person has a higher educational level than the
persuader, identification with that persuader as a significant other would be
contrary to upward social mobility aspirations. This may offer a partial
explanation for the obtained data in regard to subjects who were two to four
levels above the persuaders. Twenty percent of the subjects were in this
category and yet this group accounted for only 10% of the converts, while
24% of the non-converts and 26% of the drop-outs came from this group. Thus
upward social mobility aspirations do not appear to have been a motivating

factor for the converts, but may have influenced the decision of the non-
converts and drop-outs. The typical persuader in this survey had less
education than the average in his congregation and less than the person he
was trying to influence. Fifty percent of the persuaders in this survey were
seeking to influence people with more education than they had while only 33%
were seeking to influence people with a lower educational level.

Similarity of Socio-Economic Status

The socio-economic status levels used in this comparison are the same
five levels outlined in Chapter Three and used earlier in this chapter in
reference to subject-congregation similarity. This scale indicates both
similarity and relative position. Data from this comparison are presented in
Table 51. In 45% of the cases reported in Table 51, the subjects had a level
of socio-economic status which differed from that of their related persuaders
by two or more levels, but only 20% of the converts came from this group
while 68% of the non-converts and 88% of the drop-outs were in this category.
By way of contrast, 55% of the subjects had a level of socio-economic status
the same as their related persuader or one level above or below, yet this
group accounted for 80% of the converts while only 32% of the non-converts
and 12% of the drop-outs came from this group. These departures from
expected frequencies are an indication that similarity of the subject to the
persuader in regard to socio-economic status was an important factor.

The data in Table 51 regarding subjects who had a socio-economic
status two to four levels below that of their related persuaders provides no
support for an explanation in terms of upward social mobility aspirations.
Thirty percent of the subjects were in this category, yet only 19% of the
converts came from this group while 40% of the non-converts and 30% of the
drop-outs were in this category. However, data regarding subjects who had

TABLE 51

SUBJECT-PERSUADER SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS RELATIONSHIP

Subject Categories	Converts	Non-Converts	Drop-Outs	TOTALS
Subject 4 levels above persuader	0	18	8	26
Subject 3 levels above persuader	0	19	15	34
Subject 2 levels above persuader	2	29	21	52
Subject 1 level above persuader	12	24	36	72
Subject & persuader at same level	92	27	40	159
Subject 1 level below persuader	88	26	49	163
Subject 2 levels below persuader	23	29	35	87
Subject 3 levels below persuader	13	36	18	67
Subject 4 levels below persuader	10	32	18	60
TOTALS	240	240	240	720

Chi square=179.46, df=16, e<.001, V^2=.125, T^2=.06, C=.2, phi square=.25

a socio-economic status two to four levels above that of their related
persuaders provide some support for an explanation in terms of aspirations
for upward social mobility. Fifteen percent of the subjects were in this
category, yet this group accounted for less than 1% of the converts, while
28% of the non-converts and 47% of the drop-outs were in this category. The
relative success in the effort to convert subjects one level below the
persuader in socio-economic status contrasted with the relative failure to
convert subjects one level above the persuader can be understood in terms of
the subject's aspirations of upward social mobility. Such aspirations would
give the subject lower in socio-economic status an area of desired identifi-
cation which would not be present with the subjects higher in socio-economic
status than the persuader. In 26% of the cases studied in this survey, the
persuader was seeking to influence a subject of higher socio-economic status

in contrast to the 55% of the persuaders who were trying to influence subjects who had a higher educational level. Data from the educational level comparison might be interpreted in terms of upward social mobility aspirations of the persuaders, but since 53% of the persuaders were seeking to influence people of lower socio-economic status, such an explanation does not seem likely.

Summary

This chapter has presented data suggesting that certain relationships must be considered in predicting the success of evangelistic persuasion. On the basis of data presented in this chapter, the following conclusions can be reached about the optimal conditions for evangelistic persuasion in the present survey:

1) the subject was similar to the congregational averages regarding age, educational level, and socio-economic status;

2) the subject was similar to the minister in cognitive style;

3) the subject was similar to the persuader in terms of cognitive style, age, educational level, and socio-economic status.

The importance of these relationships can be seen in a test of their combined predictive power. Eight predictions, as outlined above, were made and supported in the data presented in this chapter. These predictions relate to the question of which subjects will be in the convert, non-convert, and drop-out categories. For purposes of this test of combined predictive power, these eight variables were dichotomized so that each subject either matched or did not match the predictions discussed in this chapter. A subject who did not match any of the predictions would score zero and one who matched all the predictions would score eight. In the obtained data, the mean score for the converts was 6.01, for the drop-outs the mean score was 4.77, and for the non-converts the mean score was 2.97. Analysis of variance revealed a

significant over-all difference on this factor (as shown in Table 52) and multiple t-tests revealed significant differences between each of the three groups of subjects (as shown in Table 53).

TABLE 52

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR COMBINED RELATIONSHIP VARIABLES

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	69.2622	34.6311	10.79	a<.001
Within	717	2,301.5700	3.2100		
Total	719	2,370.8322			

TABLE 53

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR COMBINED RELATIONSHIP VARIABLES

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
Converts, Non-Converts	478	3.94	.2916	13.51	a<.001
Converts, Drop-Outs	478	2.14	.2143	9.99	a<.001
Non-Converts, Drop-Outs	478	1.80	.2973	6.05	a<.001

Throughout this chapter it has been suggested that religious conversion, according to the identification model, involves the establishment of meaningful personal relationships between the subject and members of the congregation with which he affiliates. This appears to be the reason for the results attributable to the subject-congregation relationship being weaker than the results attributable to the subject-persuader relationship. The subject-congregation match on age, educational level, and socio-economic status simply reflects a potential for meaningful personal relationships

TABLE 54

CHANGES IN FRIENDSHIP PATTERNS

Subject Categories	Number of Changes in Friendship Pattern Following Conversion										TOTALS
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Converts	0	0	0	1	2	2	8	13	12	12	50
Drop-Outs	8	13	14	8	4	2	1	0	0	0	50
TOTALS	8	13	14	9	6	4	9	13	12	12	100

Chi square=83.54, df=8, a<.001, V^2=.84, T^2=.28, C=.46, phi square=.84

It is evident from the data in Table 54 that when subjects formed meaningful personal relationships with members of the congregation they were likely to maintain their affiliation with the congregation, but when they did not form such personal relationships, they were likely to drop out.

The most general conclusion of this chapter is that when there were people in the congregation who were similar to the subject so that the subject could perceive some areas of partial identification with them and have the potential of forming meaningful personal relationships with them, the subject was much more likely to convert. When such personal relationships were not established, the subject was likely to drop out. Where little potential existed for identification leading to a meaningful personal relationship, the subject was much less likely to convert. This general conclusion clearly fits the identification model of persuasion in religious conversion. Similarity of identifying characteristics is one of the major factors in interpersonal attraction.[11] The establishment of meaningful and

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[11] E. G. Beir, A. M. Rossie, and R. L. Garfield, "Similarity plus Dissimilarity of Personality: Basis for Friendship," Psychology Report 8 (1961): 3-8. See also: J. A. Broxton, "A Test of Interpersonal Attraction Predictions Derived from Balance Theory," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 63 (1963): 394-397.

with members of the congregation. Some degree of a meaningful personal relationship can be presumed to have already existed between the subject and the persuader before the subject converted.

Additional evidence of the importance of a meaningful personal relationship is reflected in Table 54. Converts and drop-outs were asked to indicate changes in their friendship patterns. Each subject was given a score reflecting the degree of change in his friendship pattern. In that score, one point was added for each former friend (not a member of the Church of Christ) who was no longer a close friend. An additional point was added for each new close personal friendship formed between the subject and some member of the congregation with which he affiliated. In the obtained data these scores ranged from zero to nine. One problem with comparing converts and drop-outs on this variable was that the drop-outs might have formed fewer closer personal friendships in the congregation simply because they dropped out and thus did not have the same opportunity to form such friendships as did the converts who did not drop out. In order to correct for this, it was necessary to match converts and drop-outs for the length of time they were active members of the congregation. For example, converts who were interviewed six months after they affiliated with the congregation were matched with drop-outs who were active members of the congregation for six months before they dropped out. It was not possible to find such a match on all 240 converts and 240 drop-outs. There were, however, 50 converts whose length of membership matched that of 50 drop-outs. This comparison, therefore, was limited to those 100 subjects. The data from that comparison suggest that when subjects formed meaningful personal relationships with members of the congregation they were likely to maintain their affiliation with the congregation, but when they did not form such personal relationships, they were likely to drop out (see Table 54).

rewarding personal relationships in a new reference group is one of the major factors involved in the transformation of personal identity. As Shibutani expresses it,

> The new meanings and self-conceptions are reinforced by a new set of significant others with whom more cordial interpersonal relationships are established. Since any conception of reality is a social process, a new way of approaching one's surroundings is likely to be transitory unless it wins the support of others whom one respects. It is through the constant comparison of experiences that consensus emerges and is reaffirmed. The sympathetic support of other people is a crucial part of all conversions.[12]

Conclusion

The identification model of persuasion in religious conversion outlined in Chapter One suggests that after an individual is alienated from his original reference group and has come into contact with a representative of a new group, it is essential that he identify with that person as a significant other and with that group as a new reference group in order to displace the self-image which resulted from the original reference group identification and experience a transformation of personal identity. This chapter has focused on the process of identification with significant others and with a new reference group.

Shibutani places a great stress on the important role of new significant others in the conversion process:

> New converts are warmly welcomed. The sincerity and genuine concern of the members give the newcomer a sense of belonging. . . . Converts are often able to withstand the severe discipline requires in their new way of life because of the sense of personal loyalty toward their new associates.[13]

Identification with the congregation as a new reference group is an important part of the conversion process, but identification with significant others

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[12]Shibutani, pp. 527-528.

[13]Ibid., p. 528.

individually is even more important. Stressing the role of individuals in this process, Shibutani writes,

> The displacement of perspectives is both preceded and followed by changes in interpersonal relations, usually with different individuals as significant others. Each person forms a conception of himself by acquiring the perspective of the various groups of which he is a part, but such participation is always in the company of specific people. A person is not likely to redefine himself without a change in perspectives, and a displacement of reference groups is not likely to occur unless the significant others representing the points of view are also replaced. A convert not only develops a new self-conception, but may also assume new interpersonal roles more congenial to his personality. . . . Being accepted within some primary group is a matter of crucial importance for all men. Personal stability rests upon reasonable satisfaction with oneself, and it is difficult for anyone to accept himself without the affection and respect of significant others.[14]

In this process of identifying with significant others and through them with the group they represent, similarity is crucial. According to Smith, "The extent to which a person sees another as resembling himself in consequential aspects will determine at least to some degree the extent to which he will accept that person."[15] Stressing the importance of similarity, Rogers and Bhowmik write,

> More effective communication occurs when source and receiver are homophilous. When the source(s) and receiver(s) share common meanings, attitudes, and beliefs, and a mutual code, communication between them is likely to be more effective. Most individuals enjoy the comfort of interacting with others who are similar in social status, education, beliefs, etc.[16]

Results reported in this chapter support the belief that similarity is important in such areas as age, socio-economic status, educational level, and cognitive style. These findings parallel the conclusions of Streufert

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[14]Ibid., pp. 531-532.

[15]A. J. Smith, "Similarity of Values and Its Relation to Acceptance and the Projection of Similarity," Journal of Psychology 43 (1957): 260.

[16]Rogers and Bhowmik, p. 213.

and Fromkin.[17] In regard to similarity of cognitive style, Runkel comments, "Since the effects of a communication depend on the manner in which it 'meshes' with an existing cognitive map, we might entertain the notion that these effects will take place more readily when the cognitive maps of the communicators are similar in structure."[18] Data presented in this chapter tend to support this idea.

On the subject of similarity it is important not to over-simplify. The work of Simons and others has indicated that some kinds of similarity do not contribute to attitude change.[19] Some similarities seem to facilitate interpersonal attraction, but not attitude change. In some situations certain areas of dissimilarity seem to be important in increasing source credibility. Much more research is needed, therefore, before any firm conclusions can be reached about the specific kinds of similarities that are essential in evangelistic persuasion. The results of this preliminary investigation, however, strongly suggest that some areas of subject-persuader, subject-minister, and subject-congregation similarity are important in the process of religious conversion.

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[17]Siegfried Streufert and Howard L. Fromkin, "Cognitive Complexity and Social Influence," in James T. Tedeschi (ed.), The Social Influence Process (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1972), p. 165.

[18]P. J. Runkel, "Cognitive Similarity in Facilitating Communication," Sociometry 19 (1956): 178.

[19]Herbert W. Simons and others, "Similarity, Credibility and Attitude Change: A Review and a Theory," Psychological Bulletin 73 (1970): 1-16. See also: E. Berscheid, "Opinion Change and Communicator-Communicatee Similarity and Dissiminarity," Journal of Personal and Social Psychology 4 (1966): 670-680.

CHAPTER FIVE

MESSAGE AND MEDIA VARIABLES ASSOCIATED WITH

PERSUASION IN RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

In almost all religious groups--certainly in the group involved in the present study--there is a commitment to a certain content in evangelistic messages regardless of how popular or unpopular that message content might be. Evangelistic persuasion presupposes a belief that the appropriate content of evangelistic messages is known only by Biblical revelation and is not discovered through empirical investigation. For this reason it did not seem appropriate in the present study to attempt any direct investigation of content variables. However, a limited and indirect investigation of message variables was undertaken since some general message variables are associated with the identification model used as the analytic framework in this study. Even here, however, no value judgments are made. The only use made of message variable data is in clarifying the nature of the process by which an individual makes a self-defining choice to identify with a congregation as a reference group and with significant others in the congregation as primary reference group members.

The Minister's Message

Data presented in Chapter Four reveal that the relationships between certain characteristics of the subject and the persuader are more important than similar relationships between the subject and the minister. The pulpit minister, however, is the congregation's chief practitioner of evangelistic

persuasion. As such, he sets the tone for the evangelistic persuasion
practiced on a person-to-person basis by the members of the congregation.
Both his view of evangelism and the style of his preaching are likely to be
reflected in the evangelistic persuasion practiced by the members of the
congregation. These two factors, therefore, are considered before discussing
message variables associated with the subject-persuader encounter.

The Minister's View of Evangelism

The ministers interviewed in the present study were asked to read
three statements concerning the nature of evangelism.[1] These statements
were designed to reflect what might be called an information transmission
model, a manipulative monologue model, and a non-manipulative dialogue model.
Each minister was asked to indicate the statement which came the closest to
expressing his own view. In the obtained data, it was possible to distinguish
among congregations in the high, medium, and low net growth rate groups on the
basis of the minister's view of evangelism. All of the congregations in the
high net growth rate group had pulpit ministers who accepted a non-manipulative
dialogue model as their view of evangelism. In the medium net growth rate
group, 94% of the congregations had ministers who accepted the manipulative
monologue model. In the low net growth rate group, 87% of the congregations
had ministers who accepted the information transmission model (see Table 55).
It was also possible to distinguish among subjects on the basis of the view of
evangelism held by the minister in the congregation with which they were
associated. Sixty-seven percent of the converts were associated with congre-
gations where the minister accepted the non-manipulative dialogue model.
Seventy-two percent of the drop-outs were associated with congregations where
the minister accepted a manipulative monologue model. Seventy-nine percent of

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[1]See Appendix C.

the non-converts were associated with congregations where the minister accepted an information transmission model (see Table 56).

TABLE 55

MINISTER'S VIEW OF EVANGELISM AND NET GROWTH RATE

Net Growth Rate Groups of Congregations	Minister's View of Evangelism			TOTALS
	Information Transmission	Manipulative Monologue	Non-Manipulative Dialogue	
High	0	0	16	16
Medium	1	15	0	16
Low	14	1	1	16
TOTALS	15	16	17	48

Chi square=77.71, df=4, a<.001, V^2=.81, T^2=.81, C=.79, phi square=1.62

TABLE 56

INFLUENCE ON SUBJECTS OF THE MINISTER'S VIEW OF EVANGELISM

Categories of Subjects	Minister's View of Evangelism			TOTALS
	Information Transmission	Manipulative Monologue	Non-Manipulative Dialogue	
Converts	40	40	160	240
Drop-Outs	43	173	24	240
Non-Converts	189	26	25	240
TOTALS	272	239	209	720

Chi square=500.99, df=4, a<.001, V^2=.35, T^2=.35, C=.64, phi square=.7

Style of Preaching

In a pilot study in which the survey instruments for this study were prepared, 100 ministers were asked to describe their style of preaching. Two groups emerged in this pilot study. One group of ministers characterized their preaching as being basically positive, aimed primarily at the needs of

people who are already members of the Church, and intended to provide encouragement, inspiration, and instruction. The other group of ministers characterized their preaching as being basically negative ("corrective" was the term that most of these ministers preferred), aimed primarily at the needs of people who are not members of the Church, and intended to demonstrate the errors of various religious doctrines and practices.

The pulpit ministers of each of the forty-eight congregations included in this survey were given two statements to read concerning style of preaching. One statement characterized the positive and the other the negative styles as outlined above.[2] These ministers were asked to indicate which statement came the closest to being an accurate description of their own style of preaching. In the obtained data it was possible to distinguish among congregations in the high, medium, and low net growth rate groups on the basis of the minister's style of preaching. In the high net growth rate group, 87% of the ministers chose the positive style. In the medium net growth rate group, 81% of the ministers chose the negative style. In the low net growth rate group, 75% of the ministers chose the negative style (see Table 57). It was also possible to distinguish among subjects on the basis of the style of preaching characteristic of the minister in the congregation with which they were associated. In this comparison, the only major departures from expected frequency were in the drop-out category. It seems, therefore, that the minister's style of preaching may not have been a factor influencing the subject to convert, but could be a factor influencing a subject to drop out after he converted. Ninty-three percent of the drop-outs were associated with congregations where the minister's style of preaching was negative (see Table 58).

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[2]See Appendix B.

TABLE 57

STYLE OF PREACHING AND NET GROWTH RATE

| Net Growth Rate Groups of Congregations | Minister's Style of Preaching | | TOTALS |
	Positive	Negative	
High	14	2	16
Medium	3	13	16
Low	4	12	16
TOTALS	21	27	48

Chi square=18.8, df=2, a<.001, V^2=.39, T^2=.28, C=.53, phi square=.39

TABLE 58

INFLUENCE ON SUBJECTS OF THE MINISTER'S STYLE OF PREACHING

| Categories of Subjects | Minister's Style of Preaching | | TOTALS |
	Positive	Negative	
Converts	126	114	240
Drop-Outs	17	223	240
Non-Converts	117	123	240
TOTALS	260	460	720

Chi square=132.1, df=2, a<.001, V^2=.18, T^2=.13, C=.4, phi square=.18

As one might suspect, in the obtained data the minister's view of evangelism and the style of preaching were related. Eighty percent of the ministers who accepted the information transmission model as their view of evangelism had a negative style of preaching. Ninty-four percent of those who accepted the manipulative monologue model had a negative style of preaching. All of those who accepted a non-manipulative dialogue view of evangelism had a positive style of preaching (see Table 59).

TABLE 59

MINISTER'S STYLE OF PREACHING AND VIEW OF EVANGELISM

| Style of Preaching | Minister's View of Evangelism | | | TOTALS |
	Information Transmission	Manipulative Monologue	Non-Manipulative Dialogue	
Positive	3	1	17	21
Negative	12	15	0	27
TOTALS	15	16	17	48

Chi square=34.43, df=2, a<.001, V^2=.72, T^2=.51, C=.65, phi square=.72

The Persuader's Message

Three indirect methods were used to investigate some general characteristics associated with the messages used by the persuaders in their effort to influence subjects to become members of the Church of Christ. These methods involved collection of data concerning the persuader's view of evangelism, the subject's perception of the persuader, and the subject's perception of the interaction.

The Persuader's View of Evangelism

The persuaders involved in this study were asked to read the same three descriptions of evangelism that were used in the study of ministers. Each persuader was asked to indicate which of the three statements came the closest to describing his own view of evangelism. In the obtained data it was possible to distinguish among converts, non-converts, and drop-outs on the basis of the persuader's view of evangelism. Subjects associated with persuaders who accepted a non-manipulative dialogue model as their view of evangelism were the most likely to convert. Seventy percent of the converts were in this category. When the persuader accepted the information transmission model as his view of evangelism, the subject was the least likely

to convert. Eighty-seven percent of the non-converts were in this category. When the persuader accepted a manipulative monologue model as his view of evangelism, the subject was most likely to convert and then drop out soon after his conversion. Seventy-five percent of the drop-outs were in this category (as shown in Table 60).

TABLE 60

INFLUENCE ON SUBJECTS OF THE PERSUADER'S VIEW OF EVANGELISM

| Categories of Subjects | Persuader's View of Evangelism | | | TOTALS |
	Information Transmission	Manipulative Monologue	Non-Manipulative Dialogue	
Converts	34	36	169	240
Drop-Outs	25	209	6	240
Non-Converts	180	58	2	240
TOTALS	240	303	177	720

Chi square=671.51, df=4, a<.001, V^2=.47, T^2=.47, C=.69, phi square=.90

The Subject's Perception of the Persuader

Each subject was asked whether the persuader with whom he was associated seemed more like "a teacher teaching a lesson," "a salesman selling a product," or "a friend discussing a matter of mutual interest." In the obtained data it was possible to distinguish among converts, drop-outs, and non-converts on the basis of this variable. Seventy-one percent of the converts saw the persuader in the role of friend. Eighty-five percent of the drop-outs saw the persuader in the role of salesman. Eighty-seven percent of the non-converts saw the persuader in the role of teacher (see Table 61).

The Subject's Perception of the Interaction

Subjects were asked whether or not the persuader, as he sought to influence them, ever asked them to express their views on topics being

TABLE 61

INFLUENCE ON SUBJECTS OF THEIR PERCEPTION OF THE PERSUADER

Categories of Subjects	Subject perceived persuader as being like a:			TOTALS
	Teacher	Salesman	Friend	
Converts	5	65	170	240
Drop-Outs	36	203	1	240
Non-Converts	208	22	10	240
TOTALS	249	290	181	720

Chi square=772.88, df=4, a<.001, V^2=.54, T^2=.54, C=.72, phi square=1.07

discussed. If the subjects reported that the persuader did ask them to express their views, they were asked whether it seemed that the persuader was simply using this as a manipulative technique or that the persuader was genuinely interested. In the obtained data it was possible to distinguish among converts, drop-outs, and non-converts on the basis of this variable. Seventy-one percent of the converts reported that the persuader asked them to express their views and seemed to do so because of a genuine interest. Eighty-three percent of the drop-outs reported that the persuader asked them to express their views but seemed to do so simply to manipulate. Eighty-six percent of the non-converts reported that the persuader did not ask them to express their views (see Table 62).

As one might suspect, the subject's perception of the persuader and his perception of the interaction were highly related. Ninety-nine percent of the subjects who saw the persuader in the role of teacher reported that the persuader did not ask them to express their views. Ninety-nine percent of the subjects who saw the persuader in the role of salesman reported that the persuader asked them to express their views but seemed to do so in order

TABLE 62

INFLUENCE ON SUBJECTS OF THEIR PERCEPTION OF THE INTERACTION

Categories of Subjects	Subject's Perception of the Interaction			TOTALS
	Persuader did not ask subject to express his views	Persuader asked subject to express his views--in order to manipulate	Persuader asked subject to express his views--and seemed to have a genuine interest	
Converts	5	65	170	240
Drop-Outs	36	200	4	240
Non-Converts	207	23	10	240
TOTALS	248	288	184	720

Chi square=753.62, df=4, a<.001, V^2=.53, T^2=.53, C=.71, phi square=1.05

to manipulate. All of the subjects who saw the persuader in the role of friend reported that the persuader asked them to express their views and seemed to do so because of genuine interest (see Table 63).

TABLE 63

RELATION OF SUBJECT'S PERCEPTION OF PERSUADER AND INTERACTION

Subject perceived persuader as being like a:	Subject's Perception of the Interaction			TOTALS
	Persuader did not ask subject to express his views	Persuader asked subject to express his views--in order to manipulate	Persuader asked subject to express his views--and seemed to have genuine interest	
Teacher	246	0	3	249
Salesman	2	288	0	290
Friend	0	0	181	181
TOTALS	248	288	184	720

Chi square=1,408.96, df=4, a<.001, V^2=.98, T^2=.98, C=.81, phi square=1.96

It is possible, of course, that the subject's perception of both the persuader and the interaction were influenced by the choice that the subject made. Those who converted might have altered their perception or their memory of their original perception of the persuader and the interaction. Original negative impressions may have been altered so as to be more consistent with the choice that the subject made to convert. Similarly, subjects who decided not to convert or to drop out after conversion might have altered any original favorable impressions in order that their perceptions might be more consistent with their subsequent behavior. Such an explanation might be accepted as a total explanation if the obtained data revealed nothing but relationships between various perceptions of the subject. In the obtained data, however, there was also a strong relationship between the subjects perceptions, both of the persuader and of the interaction, and the persuader's self-reported view of evangelism.

The relationship between the persuader's view of evangelism and the subject's perception of the persuader suggests some measure of veridicality in the subject's perceptions. When the persuader accepted the information transmission model as his view of evangelism, 87% of the time he was seen by the subject as being in the role of teacher. Persuaders who accepted the manipulative monologue model were seen 89% of the time as being in the role of salesman. Ninty-six percent of the time persuaders who accepted the non-manipulative dialogue model were seen by the subjects as being in the role of friend (see Table 64).

The relationship between the persuader's view of evangelism and the subject's perception of the interaction also suggests a measure of accuracy in the subject's perception. When the persuader accepted the information transmission model as his view of evangelism, 96% of the subjects reported that the persuader did not ask them to express their views. When the

TABLE 64

PERSUADER'S VIEW OF EVANGELISM AND SUBJECT'S PERCEPTION OF PERSUADER

Persuader's View of Evangelism	Subject perceived persuader as being like a:			TOTALS
	Teacher	Salesman	Friend	
Information Transmission	209	20	11	240
Manipulative Monologue	33	270	0	303
Non-Manipulative Dialogue	7	0	170	177
TOTALS	249	290	181	720

Chi square=1,107.41, df=4, a<.001, V^2=.75, T^2=.75, C=.77, phi square=1.49

persuader accepted the manipulative monologue model, 94% of the subjects

reported that he asked them to express their views but seemed to do so in

order to manipulate. When the persuader accepted the non-manipulative

dialogue model all subjects reported that he asked them to express their

views and seemed to do so because of a genuine interest (see Table 65).

The data presented in Tables 64 and 65 strongly suggest that the

persuader's view of evangelism was reflected in the pattern of his

interaction with the subject and that the subject formed his perception of

the persuader, at least in part, on the basis of this pattern of interaction.

The relation of the above findings to the identification model is that when

the persuader interacted with the subject in such a way that the subject

perceived the persuader in the role of friend rather than teacher or salesman,

the interaction was much more likely to lead to conversion of the subject.

The role of the minister's view of evangelism and his style of preaching seems

to have been in setting the pattern which was followed by the persuaders in

their person-to-person evangelism. The conversion process involves a self-

TABLE 65

PERSUADER'S VIEW OF EVANGELISM AND SUBJECT'S PERCEPTION OF INTERACTION

Persuader's View of Evangelism	Subject's Perception of the Interaction			TOTALS
	Persuader did not ask subject to express his views	Persuader asked subject to express his views--in order to manipulate	Persuader asked subject to express his views--and seemed to have genuine interest	
Information Transmission	230	3	7	240
Manipulative Monologue	18	285	0	303
Non-Manipulative Dialogue	0	0	177	177
TOTALS	248	288	180	720

Chi square=1,286.71, df=4, a<.001, V^2=.90, T^2=.90, C=.80, phi square=1.79

defining choice to identify with a member of the congregation as a significant other and with the congregation as a reference group. The above data strongly support the idea that the establishment of a pattern of friendship is an important part of the process of transformation of personal identity involved in religious conversion.

Media Influences in Evangelistic Persuasion

In the pilot study which was done to prepare the survey instruments for the present research, the subjects interviewed reported eleven different media of evangelistic persuasion through which they had been influenced. The total number of these media of influence used by each congregation in the present survey was recorded. These eleven media of evangelistic influence were:

1) Sermons in the regular worship services;

2) Bible classes;[3]

3) Evangelistic meetings;[4]

4) Cottage meetings;[5]

5) Informal Bible study involving primarily conversation;

6) Religious radio programs;[6]

7) Religious television programs;

8) Church-sponsored direct mail advertising;

9) Bible correspondance courses;

10) Religious books, tracts, and other printed matter;

11) Church-related social activity.[7]

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[3]The Bible classes referred to here are the regularly scheduled classes conducted at the church building--typically on Sunday morning before the morning worship service and on Wednesday evening. In this list these are distinct from the home Bible class, called "cottage meetings," which are typically conducted in private homes and are not a part of regular congregational activity.

[4]These are often called "Revival Meetings" in many denominations. They are special preaching services conducted once or twice a year for three to eight days and are generally more evangelistic in thrust than are the regular worship services.

[5]Cottage meetings are private home Bible study courses conducted by a member of the congregation usually in the home of the subject. They usually involve presentation of formal lessons--often with the use of visual aids.

[6]The various mass media methods of evangelism referred to here were not always directly sponsored by the congregation being studied, but they were used by the congregations studied and the subjects studied were or could have been exposed to evangelistic persuasion through these media. These programs were identified as being sponsored by the Church of Christ, although the local congregation was not always identified.

[7]Church related social activities are not typically regarded in most congregations of the Church of Christ as being a medium of evangelistic persuasion. Subjects, however, reported that they were often influenced by association with members of the congregation in such social situations--even though the situation involved no formal presentation of any evangelistic messages. For this reason, this kind of association was included as a medium of evangelistic influence. This is one case in which it appears that the medium was, indeed, the message.

The mean numbers of media of influence used by congregations in this survey were: for the high net growth rate group, 8.62; for the medium net growth rate group, 6.9375; and for the low net growth rate group, 3.375. Analysis of variance revealed a significant over-all difference regarding the number of media used by the congregations of this study (as shown in Table 66). Multiple t-tests revealed significant differences between each of these groups (as shown in Table 67).

TABLE 66

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR NUMBER OF EVANGELISTIC MEDIA USED

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	229.8750	114.9375	65.11	a<.001
Within	45	79.4375	1.7653		
Total	47	306.3125			

TABLE 67

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR NUMBER OF EVANGELISTIC MEDIA USED

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
High-Medium	30	1.6825	.494501	3.40	a<.01
High-Low	30	5.2450	.463231	11.32	a<.001
Medium-Low	30	3.5625	.421739	8.45	a<.001

A record was also made of the number of media of influence to which each subject in this survey was exposed. The converts of this survey were exposed to a mean of 5.79 different media of evangelistic influence. The corresponding figure for drop-outs was 2.16 and 2.07 for non-converts. Analysis of variance revealed a significant over-all difference on this

factor (as shown in Table 68). Multiple t-tests revealed significant differences between the converts and the other two groups, but no significant differences between the drop-outs and non-converts (as shown in Table 69).

TABLE 68

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR NUMBER OF EVANGELISTIC

MEDIA TO WHICH SUBJECTS WERE EXPOSED

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	74.1033	37.05165	89.26	a<.001
Within	717	297.6300	.41510		
Total	719	371.7333			

TABLE 69

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR NUMBER OF EVANGELISTIC

MEDIA TO WHICH SUBJECTS WERE EXPOSED

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
Converts, Drop-Outs	478	3.63	.183984	19.73	a<.001
Converts, Non-Converts	478	3.72	.186186	19.98	a<.001
Non-Converts, Drop-Outs	478	.09	.096774	.93	NS

The findings in Table 68 suggest that the greater the number of media of evangelistic influence a congregation used the greater the chances were that the congregation would be in the high net growth rate group. Similarly, the data in Table 69 suggest that the greater the number of media of evangelistic influence to which a subject was exposed the greater the chances were that he would be a convert.

Group-Related Media

The identification model explains religious conversion, at least in part, as being a process in which an individual makes a self-defining choice to identify with a congregation as a reference group. An implication of this model is that media of influences which are group-related should be more effective than those that are not group-related. Four of the media of influence included in this study are clearly group related: sermons in regular worship services; Bible classes; evangelistic meetings; and church-related social activities. These media of influence all involve direct participation by the subject in a context which puts him into contact with the congregation as an assembled and functioning unit.

Most of the congregations included in this survey used these four group-related media of influence at least to some degree and therefore it was not possible to distinguish among congregations in the high, medium, and low net growth rate groups on the basis of the number of group-related media of influence used by the congregations. Many of the subjects in this survey, however, were exposed only to media of influence which are not group-related. The mean number of group-related media of influence to which the subjects were exposed was: for the converts, 3.29; for the drop-outs, .62; and for the non-converts, .59. Analysis of variance revealed a significant over-all difference on this variable (as shown in Table 70). Multiple t-tests revealed significant differences between the converts and the two other groups, but no significant difference between the drop-outs and non-converts (as shown in Table 71).

Personal Media

The personal relationship with individual members of the congregation as significant others is even more important, according to the identification model, than is the relationship with the group as a whole. Six of the media

TABLE 70

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR NUMBER OF GROUP-RELATED

MEDIA TO WHICH SUBJECTS WERE EXPOSED

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	59.8129	29.9065	106.92	a<.001
Within	717	200.5291	.2797		
Total	719	260.3420			

TABLE 71

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR NUMBER OF GROUP-RELATED MEDIA

TO WHICH SUBJECTS WERE EXPOSED

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
Converts, Drop-Outs	478	2.67	.142248	18.77	a<.001
Converts, Non-Converts	478	2.70	.140552	19.21	a<.001
Drop-Outs, Non-Converts	478	.03	.142857	.21	NS

of influence outlined earlier involve personal contact either in a group

context or in a private context. These include the four group-related media

discussed earlier plus cottage meetings and informal Bible study primarily

involving conversation. The mean number of personal media of influence the

congregations reported using was: for the high net growth rate group, 5.94;

for the medium net growth rate group, 4.94; and for the low net growth rate

group, 4.125. Analysis of variance revelaed a significant over-all difference

on this variable (see Table 72) and multiple t-tests revealed significant

differences between each of these three groups (see Table 73).

TABLE 72

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR NUMBER OF

. PERSONAL MEDIA USED BY CONGREGATIONS

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	25.355	12.6775	157.29	a<.001
Within	45	3.625	.0806		
Total	47	28.980			

TABLE 73

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR NUMBER OF PERSONAL MEDIA USED BY CONGREGATIONS

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
High-Medium	30	1.000	.1505	6.64	a<.001
High-Low	30	1.815	.1753	10.35	a<.001
Medium-Low	30	.815	.1820	4.48	a<.001

In the obtained data it was also possible to distinguish among subjects on the basis of the number of personal media of influence to which they were exposed. The means were: 4.16 for the converts, 2.17 for the drop-outs, and 1.85 for the non-converts. Analysis of variance revealed a significant over-all difference on this factor (as shown in Table 74) and multiple t-tests revealed significant differences between the converts and the other two categories of subjects, but no significant difference between the drop-outs and non-converts (see Table 75).

It is possible to conclude on the basis of obtained data that in this survey the greater the number of media of influence used by a congregation and the more a congregation used group-related and personal media, the greater the probability that the congregation would be in the high net growth rate group.

TABLE 74

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR NUMBER OF PERSONAL

MEDIA TO WHICH SUBJECTS WERE EXPOSED

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	48.82445	24.4122	34.21	a<.001
Within	717	511.70784	.7137		
Total	719	560.53229			

TABLE 75

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR NUMBER OF PERSONAL MEDIA

TO WHICH SUBJECTS WERE EXPOSED

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
Converts, Drop-Outs	478	1.99	.213129	9.34	a<.001
Converts, Non-Converts	478	2.31	.204969	11.27	a<.001
Drop-Outs, Non-Converts	478	.32	.220189	1.45	NS

Furthermore, the greater the number of media of influence to which a subject was exposed and the more a subject was exposed to group-related and personal media, the greater the probability that he would be converted.

The principal difference between the converts and the drop-outs of this survey was that the converts tended to have been influenced more by group-related media while the drop-outs tended to have been influenced largely by cottage meetings—which are personal, but not group-related. When a person has no meaningful contact with the congregation as an assembled and functioning group in the process of his conversion, he is likely to feel no meaningful relationship with the congregation after his conversion and

therefore is likely to drop out. When people are exposed to evangelistic persuasion through some personal, but not group-related medium--such as the cottage meeting--and at the same time are also exposed to group-related media, they are much more likely to be in the convert rather than the drop-out group. This seems to be a reasonable explanation of the data obtained in the present survey.

It should be remembered that the medium net growth rate group of congregations had the highest conversion rate, but also had the highest drop-out rate. These congregations tended to put the greatest stress on the cottage meeting medium of evangelistic persuasion. It appears, therefore, both from the congregational data and from the individual data, that when the cottage meeting medium of evangelistic persuasion was used in isolation, without the subject also being exposed to group-related media of evangelistic persuasion, the subject was much more likely to be in the drop-out category rather than the convert category.

Summary

The identification model explains religious conversion, at least in part, as a process in which an individual makes a self-defining choice to identify with certain members of a congregation as significant others and with the congregation as a reference group. This would imply that the message in evangelistic persuasion should be such as would help the subject see the persuader in the role of friend. It also implies that personal and group-related media of influence should be more effective in persuading subjects to affiliate with the congregation. Data presented in this chapter tend to support these views.

An indication of the importance of message and media variables is seen in a test of the combined influence of all the predictions made in this chapter regarding which congregations would be in the high net growth rate

group. Five of the predictions of this chapter relate to this matter. A congregation is most likely to be in the high net growth rate group if:

1) its minister views evangelism as a non-manipulative dialogue;

2) its minister has a positive style of preaching;

3) the congregation uses many media of evangelistic influence;

4) the congregation uses many group-related media of influence; and,

5) the congregation uses many personal media of influence.

In the obtained data it was possible to distinguish among congregations in the high, medium, and low net growth rate groups on the basis of the number of these predictions which the congregation matched. The means were: 4.11 for the high net growth rate group, 2.04 for the medium, and .1875 for the low. Analysis of variance revealed a significant over-all difference on this variable (as shown in Table 76) and multiple t-tests revealed significant differences between each of the three groups (see Table 77).

TABLE 76

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR COMBINED INFLUENCE

ON CONGREGATIONS OF MESSAGE AND MEDIA VARIABLES

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	178.1252	89.0626	29.30	a<.001
Within	45	136.7999	3.0399		
Total	47	314.9251			

It was also possible to distinguish among converts, drop-outs, and non-converts on the basis of how many of the predictions of this chapter each one matched. These predictions concerned which subjects would convert and stay converted. There were eleven such predictions. The first five of these predictions had to do with the subject being associated with the kind of

TABLE 77

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR COMBINED INFLUENCE ON CONGREGATIONS

OF MESSAGE AND MEDIA VARIABLES

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Level
High-Medium	30	2.07	.072226	28.66	a<.001
High-Low	30	3.92	.130706	29.99	a<.001
Medium-Low	30	1.85	.136817	13.52	a<.001

congregation outlined above in the predictions about which congregations would be in the high net growth rate group. The remaining six predictions are that the subject would be most likely to convert if:

1) the persuader with whom the subject was associated viewed evangelism as a non-manipulative dialogue;

2) the subject perceived the persuader in the role of friend;

3) the subject's perception of the interaction was that the persuader asked him to express his views and did so because of a genuine interest;

4) the subject was exposed to several media of evangelistic influence;

5) the subject was exposed to more group-related media of influence; and,

6) the subject was exposed to more personal media of influence.

Subjects could, therefore, match on as many as eleven of these predictions. The actual means were: 8.56 for the converts, 3.92 for the drop-outs, and 2.11 for the non-converts. Analysis of variance revealed a significant over-all difference on this variable (as shown in Table 78). Multiple t-tests revealed significant differences between each of the three groups (as shown in Table 79). The influence of the combined predictions of this chapter indicate that message and media variables are important aspects of persuasion in religious conversion.

TABLE 78

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR COMBINED INFLUENCE

ON SUBJECTS OF MESSAGE AND MEDIA VARIABLES

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	225.3048	112.6524	63.92	a<.001
Within	717	1,263.6501	1.7624		
Total	719	1,488.9549			

TABLE 79

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR COMBINED INFLUENCE ON

SUBJECTS OF MESSAGE AND MEDIA VARIABLES

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
Converts, Drop-Outs	478	4.64	.241039	19.25	a<.001
Converts, Non-Converts	478	6.45	.265105	24.33	a<.001
Drop-Outs, Non-Converts	478	1.81	.213695	8.47	a<.001

Conclusion

Theory, practice, perception, and results were related in the findings
of this chapter. Of special interest are the findings which relate communica-
tion theory with communication practice. When the ministers of this study
accepted an information transmission model or a manipulative monologue model
of evangelism, this implicit communication theory was associated with a
negative style of preaching and a high drop-out rate. When the persuaders of
this study accepted an information transmission model or a manipulative
monologue model of evangelism, their implicit communication theory was
associated with ineffective treatment of feedback, negative perception by the

subjects, and results which were generally negative. This connection between
theory and practice seems to be in contrast to an implication of certain
results found by Triandis.[8] The two major results of his study are consistent
with the findings of the present study. He found that communication is more
effective when two people use the same dimensions in examining an object.
This is what he called "attribute similarity." He also found that communica-
tion is more effective when two people use the same dimensions in communicat-
ing about an object. This is what he called "communication similarity."
The finding of his study which seems to contrast with the results of the
present study--at least in one implication--is that there was no correlation
between attribute similarity and communication similarity. This would seem to
suggest that senders and/or receivers of his study were using one set of
dimensions to examine objects and a different set of dimensions to communicate
about those objects. If evangelism is viewed as object, the findings of
Triandis would imply that some people use one set of dimensions in examining
evangelism and a different set of dimensions in their evangelistic communica-
tion. The findings of the present study do not support this view. The
subject's perception and the reported practice seemed to be consistent with
the implicit communication theory accepted by persuaders and ministers.

The persuader's treatment of feedback was not only related to his
implicit communication theory, but was also related to the subject's
perception of the persuader and of the interaction as well as to the eventual
outcome of the of the encounter. Although feedback is important in any
communication, it is perhaps less important in communication as information
transmission or in communication as manipulative monologue than it is in

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[8]Harry C. Triandis, "Cognitive Similarity and Communication in a
Dyad," Human Relations 13 (1960): 175-183.

communication as non-manipulative dialogue. When persuaders accepted an information transmission model of evangelism, they did not ask for feedback, they were perceived by the subjects as being in the role of "a teacher teaching a lesson," and the result was generally that the subject did not convert. When persuaders accepted a manipulative monologue model of evangelism, they asked for some feedback, but the subject perceived this request for feedback as being only for purposes of manipulation and not a reflection of a genuine interest in sharing, the persuader was perceived as being in the role of "a salesman selling a product," and the result in these cases was generally that the subject did not convert or that he dropped out soon after conversion. When the persuader accepted a non-manipulative dialogue view of evangelism, he asked for feedback, the subject perceived the request as reflecting a genuine interest in sharing, the persuader was perceived as being in the role of "a friend discussing a matter of mutual interest," and the result was generally that the subject converted and stayed converted. In all of these cases studied, there was at least some degree of difference between persuader and subject and as Rogers and Bhowmik state, "Heterophilous communication is more effective when the source attends to feedback from his receivers."[9]

Some of the findings of the present chapter in regard to unsuccessful persuasive attempts seem to suggest a lack of empathy on the part of the persuaders. "Empathy," according to Rogers and Bhowmik, "is the ability of an individual to project himself into the role of another."[10] Two of the

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[9]Everett M. Rogers and Dilip K. Bhowmik, "Homophily-Heterophily: Relational Concepts for Communication Research," in Larry L. Barker and Robert J. Kibler (eds.), Speech Communication Behavior: Perspectives and Principles (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 222.

[10]Ibid., p. 221.

propositions advanced by Rogers and Bhowmik are especially relevant to the
persuader-subject relationship in evangelism: "Heterophilous communication is
more effective when the source has a high degree of empathy with the
receiver. . . . Heterophilous communication is more effective when the source
has greater empathy than the receiver."[11]

Two kinds of influence are needed in the conversion process. The
subject needs to be exposed to some kind of personal influence from at least
one individual with whom he is relatively homophilous in order to identify
with that individual as a significant other. The subject also needs to be
exposed to some group-related media of influence in order to facilitate his
identification with the congregation as a new reference group. Two kinds of
influence are needed in another sense. According to Rogers and Bhowmik, there
are two kinds of credibility associated with two kinds of sources: "A
heterophilous channel/source is perceived by a receiver as having qualification
credibility, while a homophilous channel/source is perceived by a receiver as
having safety credibility."[12] Qualification credibility is important at the
knowledge stage of the conversion process when the subject is gaining
information, but safety credibility is more important later in the conversion
process when the subject is influenced to act on the basis of the new informa-
tion. This would imply that a subject needs to be exposed to influence
through personal media of evangelistic persuasion from a relatively homophilous
source--such as some kind of personal encounter with one or more members of
the congregation--and through some group-related media of evangelistic
persuasion from a relatively heterophilous source--such as sermons by the
minister in worship services of the congregation.

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[11]Ibid., pp. 221-222.

[12]Ibid., p. 219.

Some of the congregations in the present study seem to have been ineffective in evangelistic persuasion because of an exclusive reliance on only one kind of influence. Most of the congregations in the low net growth rate group depended largely on sermons in the regular worship services or in evangelistic meetings, lessons in Bible classes, or communication through various mass media as their means of evangelism. The result of these efforts was that subjects tended to decide not to convert. Most of the congregations in the medium net growth rate group made little effort to get subjects to attend the services before their conversion. These congregations depended almost entirely on the "cottage meeting" method of evangelism. Most of the subjects exposed to this kind of persuasive effort did not convert or dropped out of the congregation soon after conversion. The low net growth rate congregations were neglecting the personal media. The medium net growth rate congregations were neglecting the group-related media.

Many of the drop-outs of this study were influenced only through personal media such as cottage meetings and were not exposed to any group-related media of evangelistic persuasion before their conversion. These subjects had no meaningful contact with the congregation as an assembled and functioning body in the process of their conversion and may have felt little sense of identification with the congregation after their conversion.

Sermons would likely fit into the category which Rogers and Bhowmik describe as being effective in the knowledge stage, but not in the final persuasion stage.[13] Sermons designed to teach non-members would serve this knowledge function. If a non-member is a part of the audience when the sermon is designed to increase the involvement level of the members, the experience would still be useful for the non-member in that it would

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[13]Ibid., pp. 218-219.

facilitate his identification with the congregation as a new reference group. Subjects need to be exposed both to personal media of evangelistic persuasion (in order to facilitate identification with an individual member of the congregation as a significant other) and to group-related media of evangelistic persuasion (in order to facilitate the process of identifying with the congregations as a new reference group). Subjects also need to be exposed both to heterophilous sources in the knowledge stage and to homophilous sources in the persuasion stage of the conversion process.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The identification model of persuasion in religious conversion, which
is used as the analytic framework in the present study, views religious
conversion as a complex process of changes in interpersonal relations. In
this process an individual is alienated from significant others and from a
reference group. He is also alienated from his own self-concept which
resulted from that original reference group identification. He comes into
contact with representatives of another reference group. He identifies with
them as new significant others and with the group they represent as a new
reference group. As a result of his change of significant others and of
reference groups, he experiences a transformation of his own personal identity.
Data presented in this study have tended to provide support for the identifica-
tion model as at least a partial explanation of persuasion in religious
conversion.

An indication of the validity of the identification model as a partial
explanation of persuasion in religious conversion is seen in the combined
influence of the various predictions drawn from that model. Twelve of these
predictions related to the question of which congregations would be in the
high net growth rate group. These predictions were that a congregation would
likely be in the high net growth rate group if:

1. the average age in the congregation was similar to the average age in
    the community in which the congregation is located;

2. the average socio-economic status level in the congregation was similar

to or slightly above the average socio-economic status level in the community in which the congregation is located;

3. the average educational level in the congregation was similar to or slightly above the average educational level in the community in which the congregation is located;

4. the congregation was relatively heterogeneous in regard to the age of its members;

5. the congregation was relatively heterogeneous in regard to the socio-economic status of its members;

6. the congregation was relatively heterogeneous in regard to the educational level of its members;

7. the congregation had a high involvement level;

8. the congregation's pulpit minister viewed evangelism as a type of non-manipulative dialogue;

9. the congregation's pulpit minister had a positive style of preaching;

10. the congregation used a relatively large number of media of evangelistic influence;

11. the congregation used a relatively large number of group-related media of evangelistic influence; and,

12. the congregation used a relatively large number of personal media of evangelistic influence.

Considering each of these predictions as a dichotomous variable, each of the forty-eight congregations surveyed was given a score, which could range from zero through twelve, indicating the number of times that the congregation matched the predictions drawn from the identification model. In this comparison, the mean scores were: 10.17 for the high net growth rate group of congregations, 6.92 for the medium net growth rate group, and 3.48 for the low net growth rate group. Analysis of variance revealed a highly significant

over-all difference on this variable (as shown in Table 80). Multiple t-tests revealed significant differences between each of the three groups (as shown in Table 81).

TABLE 80

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR COMBINED INFLUENCE

ON CONGREGATIONS OF ALL VARIABLES

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	65.5122	32.7561	170.25	a<.001
Within	45	8.6580	.1924		
Total	47	74.1702			

TABLE 81

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR COMBINED INFLUENCE

ON CONGREGATIONS OF ALL VARIABLES

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
High-Medium	30	3.25	.160573	20.24	a<.001
High-Low	30	6.69	.224950	29.74	a<.001
Medium-Low	30	3.44	.297578	11.56	a<.001

Other predictions were drawn from the identification model indicating which of the 720 subjects surveyed would most likely be in the convert category rather than in the drop-out or non-convert categories. These predictions were that a subject was likely to be in the convert category if:

1. the subject had a relatively heterogeneous pattern of religious influence in his original primary reference groups;

2. the subject had recently experienced a relatively high degree of change

in his life situation;

3. the subject was already dissatisfied with his non-religious life style or with his present religious affiliation and his pattern of dissatisfaction was such as would reasonably be resolved by affiliation with the Church of Christ;

4. the subject's original theological position was relatively similar to that of the Church of Christ on a conservative-liberal continuum;

5. the subject's age was similar to the average age in the congregation;

6. the subject's educational level was similar to or slightly lower than the average educational level in the congregation;

7. the subject's socio-economic status was similar to or slightly lower than the average socio-economic status in the congregation;

8. the subject was similar to the congregation's pulpit minister in cognitive style as measured by the Religious Construct Test;

9. the subject was similar to the persuader with whom he was associated in cognitive style as measured by the Religious Construct Test;

10. the subject's age was similar to that of the persuader;

11. the subject's educational level was similar to or slightly lower than the educational level of the persuader;

12. the subject's socio-economic status was similar to or slightly lower than the socio-economic status of the persuader;

13. the persuader with whom the subject was associated viewed evangelism as a non-manipulative dialogue;

14. the subject was exposed to a relatively large number of media of evangelistic influence;

15. the subject was exposed to a relatively large number of group-related media of evangelistic influence;

16. the subject was exposed to a relatively large number of personal media of

evangelistic influence;

17. the subject perceived the persuader in the role of friend;

18. the subject's perception of the interaction with the persuader was that

    the persuader asked the subject to express his views and did so because

    of a genuine interest; and,

19. the subject had a relatively large number of changes in his friendship

    pattern after his conversion.

The last three predictions in this list, of course, are useful only in a

post hoc analysis and prediction number nineteen would apply only in

distinguishing between converts and drop-outs. Related to these predictions,

of course, are the predictions that the subject most likely to convert would

be associated with a congregation matching the twelve predictions discussed

earlier. There was, therefore, a total of thirty-one predictions, each viewed

as a dichotomous variable, on which each of the 720 subjects of this survey

either matched or did not match. In the obtained data, the means on this

prediction matching score were: 23.66 for the converts, 14.31 for the drop-

outs, and 8.93 for the non-converts. Analysis of variance revealed a highly

significant over-all difference on this variable (as shown in Table 82).

Multiple t-tests revealed significant differences between each of the three

groups of subjects on this variable (as shown in Table 83).

Implications for Communication Theory

The study of communication theory is often pursued as though theory

were totally isolated from practice. The data obtained in the present study

give strong support to the belief that an individual's theory of communication

is clearly reflected in his practice. Ministers who had differing views of

evangelism reflecting different theories of communication had very different

styles of preaching. Differences in persuaders' views of evangelism were

associated with different ways of interacting with subjects and with

TABLE 82

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR COMBINED

INFLUENCE OF ALL VARIABLES ON SUBJECTS

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	413.5217	206.7609	188.53	a<.001
Within	717	786.3339	1.0967		
Total	719	1,199.8556			

TABLE 83

MULTIPLE T-TESTS FOR COMBINED INFLUENCE

OF ALL VARIABLES ON SUBJECTS

Groups	df	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
Converts, Drop-Outs	478	9.35	.517719	18.06	a<.001
Converts, Non-Converts	478	14.73	.648327	22.72	a<.001
Drop-Outs, Non-Converts	478	5.38	.720214	7.47	a<.001

differences in subjects' perception of persuaders. The present study

obviously involved three very different populations. Converts, drop-outs,

and non-converts represent three very different categories of people. The

congregations in the high, medium, and low net growth rate groups represent

three very different groups of congregations. It is likely that a totally

random sample of congregations or of subjects would not yield such results.

It is likely, however, that even in a totally random sample and on issues

other than religion, an individual's theory of communication would be
reflected in his practice of communication.

The present study has suggested that persuasion in religious
conversion involves some transformation of personal identity. This process
may be sudden or gradual, but some transformation of personal identity seems
to be an essential part of any religious conversion. It seems likely that
much persuasion involves a similar transformation of personal identity, at
least to some degree. If the persuasive effort is aimed at changing a
central element in a person's self-definition or self-image, the situation
would surely be a close parallel to the kind of transformation of personal
identity involved in religious conversion. Any theory of communication which
ignores the role of communication in the continual development of authentic
selfhood cannot be a totally satisfactory explanation of communication in
interactions involving teachers and students, parents and children, husbands
and wives, therapists and clients, or friends. While these situations usually
involve a more gradual transformation of personal identity than is the case
in the often sudden and dramatic examples of religious conversion, the basic
principle would seem to be the same.

In the present study, the autonomous selfhood of the receiver has been
taken seriously. The strength of the obtained results indicates that this is
a valuable way of viewing communication. The selfhood of the receiver,
however, is not taken seriously in theories which view communication as a
process of information transmission or as a manipulative monologue. It is
only when communication is viewed as a non-manipulative dialogue that the
selfhood of the receiver is taken seriously. It would seem, therefore, that
more work is needed in the development of a theory of communication as
non-manipulative dialogue.

The present study has indicated that reference group influence is important in evangelistic persuasion. A subject with a homogeneous pattern of religious influence in his primary reference groups is likely to be less receptive to evangelistic persuasion designed to secure his affiliation with another religious group. A subject with a heterogeneous pattern of religious influence in his primary reference group is likely to be more receptive to evangelistic persuasion since his present pattern of primary reference group influence is not serving the function of self-definition in regard to religion. A subject who has recently experienced a high degree of change in his life situation and who thus is without significant reference group influence is likely to be more receptive to evangelistic persuasion.

It is possible that these findings in regard to reference group influence are applicable in situations other than evangelistic persuasion. A persuasive campaign designed to increase membership in most groups would probably involve some of the same factors of reference group influence. Political campaign persuasion may simply involve an effort to get people to vote for a candidate. Even here, reference group influence is likely an important factor. Any effort to persuade a person to change his party identification would surely involve these factors of reference group influence. Any theory of communication which treats the receiver as though he were totally isolated from reference group influence cannot be a totally satisfactory explanation of the processes involved in persuasion.

The present study has suggested that the perceptions of the receiver are crucial. If the subject perceived the persuader as being in any role other than friend, the effort seldom led to lasting conversion. If the subject's perception of the interaction was that the persuader did not ask the subject to express his views or that the persuader asked the subject to express his views only for the purpose of manipulation, the effort was not

likely to lead to lasting conversion. It is evident that in these cases the meaning that the subject attributed to the persuader was crucial. Most theories of communication, however, do not focus on the attribution process of the receiver. Most theories of communication are sender-oriented or message-oriented. What seems to be needed is a theory of communication which is receiver-oriented and focuses on the process by which the receiver attributes meaning to the sender. It seems, therefore, that studies of person perception and attribution should not be considered minor and isolated factors on the periphery of communication theory, but should be viewed as the central core of a meaning-centered, receiver-oriented theory of communication.[1]

It should be evident that some forms of communication, which reflect particular implicit theories of communication, simply are not effective in producing conversion. Successful evangelism usually takes the form of a sharing process rather than manipulation. As long as communication theories limit their range of convienence to those situations in which a sender seeks to manipulate a receiver, those theories will neglect some of the most significant forms of human communication.

Implications for Future Research

The results obtained in the present study suggest several implications for future research concerning both methodology and subjects requiring further investigation. The first methodological suggestion growing out of the present study is that any research paradigm is incomplete if it considers only those situations in which the sender is not a significant other or in which the receiver is isolated from his reference groups. A second suggestion involves the subject's perceptions. The present study found that the subject's

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[1]See Appendix D.

perceptions of the persuader and of the interaction were important factors in determining the outcome of the persuasive effort. It would be useful to apply some existing interaction process analysis technique or to develop some new techniques of interaction process analysis in order to determine more specifically what kind of factors lead to various kinds of perceptions and how these perceptions influence the results.

A suggested area of future research indicated by the results of the present study would be to investigate the factors involved in the perceived roles/membership ratio. At this point it is clear that the higher the perceived roles/membership ratio the higher the involvement level in the congregation. It is also clear that generally the larger the congregation becomes the lower the perceived roles/membership ratio becomes and thus the lower the involvement level becomes. In the obtained data of the present study, however, there were a few relatively large congregations with a high perceived roles/membership ratio and thus a high involvement level. There were also a few relatively small congregations with a low perceived roles/membership ratio and thus a low involvement level. The present study has provided strong support for a relationship between the perceived roles/membership ratio and the involvement level. What remains to be done is to determine what factors influence a high perceived roles/membership ratio. Congregational size, obviously, is a major factor, but evidently is not a total explanation. It would be useful to compare congregations of equal size, but with contrasting perceived roles/membership ratios and contrasting involvement levels in order to determine what the significant differences are between such congregations.

Another line of future research suggested by the present study would be to test the predictive power of the relevant variables identified in this study. The Church of Christ often uses multi-media, community-wide

evangelistic campaigns. In such efforts, door-to-door contact is often used to find people who would be interested in a home Bible study course—typically of the "cottage meeting" variety. It would be possible for a researcher to conduct a study after subjects had been enrolled but before any actual persuasive effort had been attempted. The researcher could use the same interview techniques as outlined in the present study in order to gather data concerning the subjects, the persuaders who had been assigned to conduct the home Bible study courses with these subjects, the congregations with which these subjects would be associated if they converted, and the ministers of these congregations. At this point, before any actual persuasive effort had been attempted other than the initial contact with the subjects, the researcher could make predictions as to which subjects would eventually be in the convert, drop-out, and non-convert categories. Such a research strategy would avoid the weakness inherent in the post hoc explanation approach of the present study. Such a research strategy would also provide a means of refining the predictions of the present study and perhaps could lead to the development of a system of empirically derived weighting coefficients to be applied to the various predictor variables.

Another research strategy suggested by the present study would be to conduct a longitudinal study of belief and attitude change as a function of the experience of interaction with members of a congregation as significant others and with the congregation as a reference group. On the basis of the present study, one would suspect that a minimal amount of belief and attitude change would be necessary before the subject would affiliate with the congregation. One would also suspect, however, that the longer a subject remained in the congregation the more his beliefs and attitudes would conform to congregational norms.

Results obtained in the present study suggest a new approach to the measurement of persuasive effectiveness. Instead of using pencil and paper attitude measuring instruments in a pre-test, manipulation, post-test design, persuasive effectiveness could be measured by studying changes in a subject's personal construct system. The technique of using the implication grid as an index of the centrality of beliefs or attitudes in a subject's self-definition could be a valuable measure of persuasive effectiveness. Exposure to various persuasive messages could be correlated with changes in the centrality of beliefs or attitudes in a subject's self-definition and these changes, in turn, could be correlated with changes in behavior. Such a technique would seem to be especially useful in a longitudinal study as outlined earlier.

Another line of possible research is suggested by Shibutani's comparison of religious conversion to the theraputic relationship:

> Recovery from mental disorders also has many features that resemble conversions. Indeed, Burke once referred to successful psychoanalytic therapy as a "secular conversion" in that the patient is persuaded to redefine himself from a new standpoint. . . . Among other things, successful psychotherapy involves a transformation of self-conceptions. Rogers put the matter explicitly by contending that, as therapy progresses, the patient becomes more able to accept himself as a person worthy of respect. . . . Before a patient can be persuaded to accept the new perspective, the therapist must establish a particular kind of inter-personal tie between them. . . . The doctor becomes a significant other who teaches the new outlook and then supports it. . . . In many cases a patient who had recovered reverts to his old behavior patterns soon after his treatment is terminated; without the interpersonal support, the new meanings cometimes do not persist. Since psychiatrists trained in many different schools of thought apparently have approximately the same rate of success, special techniques based upon doctrines probably have little to do with recovery. The one common feature seems to be the establishment of warm personal ties.[2]

It would be useful to explore the ways in which the persuader-subject relationship in religious conversion parallels the "transference" phenomenon of the theraputic relationship. Mowrer suggests that the congregation serves

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[2]Tamotsu Shibutani, Society and Personality (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), pp. 529-530.

the function of a theraputic group.[3] It would be useful to explore the functioning of the congregation as a theraputic community.

Practical Applications in the Area of
Evangelistic Persuasion

There is nothing as practical as a good theory. Data from the present study indicate that a good theory of evangelism is essential to successful evangelistic persuasion. One of the principal elements in the theology of the Church of Christ is a belief in free will and a rejection of all doctrines of determinism. However, the view of evangelism accepted by many of the ministers and persuaders of this study reflects an assumption of deterministic linear causality. Both the information transmission model and the manipulative monologue model are thus inconsistent with the theology of this group. Results obtained in the present study strongly indicate that when a subject was associated with a minister and/or a persuader who viewed evangelism as a process of information transmission, the subject was most likely to be in the non-convert category. When the minister and/or the persuader viewed evangelism as being a manipulative monologue, the subject was most likely to be in the drop-out category. It was only when the minister and the persuader viewed evangelism as a non-manipulative dialogue that the subject was most likely to be in the convert category. It would seem, therefore, that both for theological consistency and practicality, the Church of Christ would be well advised to stress the non-manipulative dialogue view of evangelism.

In addition to the need for a more appropriate theory, there are practical suggestions growing out of the present study in the areas of congregational development, planning evangelistic campaigns, and conducting person-to-person evangelism. Congregational development is an area in which the findings of the present study could find practical application. When a congregation plans to build a new church building and move to a new

neighborhood, church leaders would be will advised to consider the findings of the present study in regard to the similarity of the congregation to the community in which it is located. In the past, the Church of Christ has tended to establish a large number of very small and very homogeneous congregations. Data from the present study suggest that church leaders would be well advised to make a deliberate effort to achieve greater heterogeneity within congregations.

Results of the present study could also be applied to the planning of evangelistic campaigns. Evangelistic campaigns conducted by the Church of Christ have typically been designed to be as non-selective as possible. The effort has usually been to enroll as many "prospects" as possible in some kind of home Bible study course.[4] Data obtained in the present study suggest that a more effective strategy would be to design the initial mass media campaigns and the door-to-door campaigns to be highly selective. The initial effort should not be to persuade as many people as possible to enroll in a home Bible study course, but rather should be to identify the people in the community who are already dissatisfied with their present non-religious life style or with their present religious affiliation and who match the other predictor variables identified in the present study. Each subject could then be matched with a persuader who would be appropriate for that subject according to the predictor variables identified in the present study. Given that the Church of Christ has a limited number of available workers, this approach would seem to be far more efficient.

The last practical application which needs to be considered has to do

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[4]I wish to register a personal protest against the use of the term "prospect" in reference to subjects of evangelistic persuasion. The term implies an object to be used in a manipulative manner. Inasmuch as these are autonomous human beings, perhaps the term "person" would be better than "prospect"--although the term "prospect" is commonly used in books on person-to-person evangelism.

with the conduct of the persuasive effort. The suggestion made throughout

the present study that the interaction should be in the nature of a non-

manipulative dialogue should not be taken to mean that no effort would be

made to change the subject. The concept of dialogue does not suggest the

abandonment of persuasion, but rather a kind of restrained partisanship.

Ehninger says,

> By accepting the risks implicit in an attitude of restrained partisanship the arguer both bestows "personhood" on his opponent and gains "personhood" for himself. For to enter upon argument with a full understanding of the commitments which as method it entails is to experience that alchemic moment of transformation in which the ego-centric gives way to the alter-centric; that moment when, in the language of Bubar, the ich-es is replaced by the ich-du; when the "other" no longer regarded as an "object" to be manipulated, is endowed with those qualities of "freedom" and "responsibility" that change the individual as "thing" into a "person" as "not thing."[5]

This kind of communication may be difficult since speakers often address

listeners who tend to accept blindly whatever they are told and thus do not

experience the creation of their own authentic selfhood. Olbricht contends,

however, that a speaker can achieve the objective of helping his listeners

develop authentic selfhood--even with such an audience:

> If he has a chance to speak to such auditors over a period of time, and if he is concerned about their selfhood, he will try to persuade them to take up the burden of choice. In a sense what I have proposed here is a form of strategy, but I content that it is a different form of strategy than that of the manipulator. The manipulator is dedicated to win the other to his point of view, even at the expense of selfhood. But in the strategy I have proposed, the selfhood of the other is the primary consideration. Persuasion in this case has succeeded equally well when the auditor has understood an argument and has decided to reject it, as when he is moved and accepts it. Selfhood is enhanced both in rejection and acceptance, when what is at stake is understood.[6]

The person-to-person influence in evangelism needs to be in the form

of non-manipulative dialogue for only then does the subject identify with the

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[5]Douglas Ehninger, "Argument as Method: Its Nature, Its Limitations, and Its Uses," Speech Monographs 37 (1970): 109-110.

[6]Thomas H. Olbricht, "The Self as a Philosophical Ground of Rhetoric," Pennsylvania Speech Annual 21 (1964): 33.

the persuader as a new significant other. The person-to-person influence, however, needs to be supplemented with some group-related influences so that the subject can identify with the congregation as a new reference group. Even while the subject is being influenced at the person-to-person level, he needs to be brought into the communication channels of the congregation. Shibutani writes,

> The "lost soul" is introduced to a new communication channel often by accident, and he becomes aware of another way of looking at life and at himself. . . . When a person partakes in a new communication channel, suddenly or gradually, he enters a new social world. Experiences are classified differently; many old objects become unfamiliar, and others take on new significance. The convert becomes responsive to a new audience, which uses different standards in placing an estimate upon him.[7]

Conclusion

The identification model of persuasion in religious conversion should not be understood in terms of deterministic linear causality. Alienation was presented as the first stage in the conversion process, but it may not always be experienced first. Alienation from original reference groups and from significant others may come after and as a result of contact with someone who represents a new reference group. It may be that the individual experiences some transformation of personal identity before he identifies with new significant others and with the congregation as a new reference group. He may then select these new significant others and this new reference group because of their relation to his emerging new personal identity. It seems likely, however, that the transformation of personal identity would not be extensive or lasting apart from identification with new significant others and with a new reference group. It may be that the individual identifies first with the congregation as a new reference group and only later identifies with various members of the congregation as new significant

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[7]Shibutani, pp. 526-527.

others. It seems likely, however, that in most cases the identification with
new significant others comes before identification with the congregation as a
new reference group. In any event, all of these elements of the identifica-
tion model should be viewed as being highly interrelated and not as isolated
steps in the sense of linear causality.

In most cases it would appear that religious conversion involves the
alienation of an individual from his original significant others, from his
original reference groups, and from his original self-concept which resulted
from that reference group identification. Such an individual comes into
contact with representatives of a particular congregation—a potential new
reference group. He comes to identify with these representatives as
significant others. Through them he comes to identify when the congregation
as a new reference group. Through this process, suddenly or graudally, he
displaces his original self-concept and experiences the transformation of
personal identity known as religious conversion. Persuasion in religious
conversion should be thought of as the facilitation of all elements in this
process.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY FORM FOR BASIC CONGREGATIONAL DATA

NOTE: Appencides A, B, and C contain the necessary instructions for a replication of the present study. In the actual survey work done in the present study the forms were quite lengthy since they included space for responses and collection of data for studies of interest to church leaders, but not a part of this study. Material included in the first three appendices provide the generation of all the kinds of data included in the present study.

The following question were asked in the mail survey of 2,000 randomly selected congregations--1,009 of which were returned in usable form. Survey workers gathered the same information on the 48 congregations included in the in-depth study and on 240 congregations located in the same areas as the congregations of the in-depth study. Thirty of these 240 congregations had been included in the original random mail survey and had not responded. Data from these 30 congregations provided a rough estimate of the bias in the results of the mail survey.

1. What is the location of the congregation (address, city, and state)?

2. What is the population of the city in which the congregation is located?

3. What is the present membership size of the congregation?

4. How many adults (18 years of age and older) were baptized in this congregathion in the past twelve months? Exclude from this figure the baptism of children who had already been attending services with their parents. This study concerns only adults converted from some other religious group or from a non-religious background.

5. How many drop-outs have there been in this congregation in the past twelve months? A drop-out is defined as a person who was baptized less than five years ago and has since stopped attending the services of the church to the extent that he has been removed from the official church roll.

6. Over the past twelve months, what has been the percentage of the membership in attendance at the regularly scheduled services of the congregation?

    A. Sunday Morning Bible Classes___

    B. Sunday Morning Worship Service___

    C. Sunday Evening Worship Service___

    D. Mid-Week Services (Bible Classes, Prayer Meeting, etc.)___

    E. If the congregation has some other pattern of regularly scheduled services, please explain.

7. What percentage of the members of the congregation have some identifiable leadership role--such as elder, deacons, committee chairman, etc.?

8. What percentage of the members of the congregation have some identifiable church work assignment?

9. What was the average contribution per member per week in the past twelve months in this congregation?

Bias in the Mail Survey

In order to provide a rough estimate of possible bias in the mail survey in which 1,009 congregations responded, 30 of the non-responding congregations were contacted and the same data collected. Data comparing the two samples are presented below.

Variables Compared	1,009 Congregations of the Mail Survey	30 Congregations of the Follow-Up Study	Difference Between Means	Pooled Standard Error	t	Significance Levels
Mean Size of Congregations	431	379	52	34.61	1.5	a<.07
Mean Conversion Rate	6.29	5.9	.39	.41	.95	NS
Mean Drop-Out Rate	1.92	1.85	.07	.19	.36	NS

These data indicate that while the congregations responding in the mail survey were slightly larger and with a slightly higher conversion rate, drop-out rate, and thus a slightly higher net growth rate--the differences were not significant. This still does not mean that the data from the mail survey are what one would find in a sample including all the non-responding congregations, but this rough estimate indicates that the bias in the sample of 1,009 responding congregations probably is not extensive.

APPENDIX B

GENERAL SURVEY FORMS

Data on Congregations

Answer all questions listed in Appendix A and the following questions:

1. What is the average age of the members of the congregation? Obtain the age of each member from church records or obtain an estimate of the age of each member from church leaders in order to calculate this and the following figure.

2. What is the standard deviation on the age variable for the members of this congregation?

3. What is the average age of the community in which the congregation is located? Make this estimate after talking to church leaders and after your own observations in the area. In a city of over 20,000 population or a city with more than one congregation of the Church of Christ, use the neighborhood around the church building rather than the entire city in your estimate of average age in the community.

4. What is the average socio-economic status in the congregation? On this item use the following levels:
   A. Upper Class;
   B. Upper Middle Class;
   C. Middle Class;
   D. Lower Middle Class; and,
   E. Lower Class.
   Make this estimate after interviews with church leaders and after your own observations in the congregation.

5. On a 0-9 scale, what is the relative homogeneity-heterogeneity of the congregation on the socio-economic status variable? 0=maximum homogeneity; 9=maximum heterogeneity. Make this estimate after interviews with church leaders and your own observations in the congregation.

6. What is the average educational level of the members of this congregation? Use the following levels:
   A. Terminated formal education before high school graduation;
   B. High school graduate;
   C. Attended college but did not graduate--or had some training beyond the high school level, but not the equivalent of a four year college program;
   D. Graduated from college with B.A. degree or equivalent;
   E. Graduate level degree.
   Make this estimate after interviews with church leaders and after your own observations in the congregation.

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7. On a 0-9 scale (0=maximum homogeneity; 9=maximum heterogeneity), what is
   the relative homogeneity-heterogeneity of this congregation on the
   educational level variable? Make this estimate after interviewswith
   church leaders and your own observations in the congregation.

8. Which of the following media of evangelistic influence do the leaders of
   this congregation report as being a part of their program of evangelism?
   A. Sermons in the regular worship services;
   B. Bible classes;
   C. Cottage meetings;
   D. Informal Bible study involving primarily conversation;
   E. Religious radio programs;
   F. Religious television programs;
   G. Church-sponsored direct mail advertising;
   H. Bible correspondance courses;
   I. Religious books, tracts, and other printed matter;
   J. Church-related social activity.
   (For an explanation of these terms, see p. 148.)

Data on Ministers

1. What is the age of this congregation's pulpit minster?

2. Which of the following statements did the minister accept as being closest
   to the way in which he would describe his style of preaching?
   A. "More than half of my sermons are intended largely to meet the needs of
      non-Christians by showing the errors of various false religious
      doctrines and practices. The emphasis in these sermons is on what
      Paul called 'reproof, rebuke, and correction.'"
   B. "More than half of my sermons are intended largely to meet the needs of
      Christians through a positive emphasis on inspiration, instruction,
      and encouragement."

3. Which of the following statements did the minister accept as being closest
   to his own view of evangelism?
   A. "Evangelism is a process of telling others about Jesus Christ. In the
      work of evangelism, the Christian teaches others what they must do to
      be well pleasing to the Lord. The Christian corrects the false
      doctrines of others and tells them what they must do to obey the gospel
      of Christ. This is essentially a one-way communication process. The
      Christian is in the role of 'teacher' and the other person is in the
      role of 'learner.' Evangelism is not a process of sharing between the
      Christian and the other person, for that would mean putting Truth on
      the same level with error. It is for this reason that in evangelism
      the Christian does most of the talking while the other person listens."
   B. "Evangelism is a process of causing others to obey the gospel of Christ.
      The Christian corrects the false doctrines of others and gets them to
      obey the gospel of Christ. This is essentially a one-way communication
      process. Evangelism is not a process of sharing between the Christian
      and the other person, for that would mean putting Truth on the same
      level with error. The Christian has the Truth, the other person does
      not. If the Christian does his job properly, the other person will be
      baptized. If he is not baptized, the Christian has failed."
   C. "Evangelism is a process in which a Christian shares with another person
      his faith, his insight, and his understanding of the Bible. It i-

essentially a two-way communication process. The Christian hopes to influence the other person to accept as his own the faith, understanding, and insight that the Christian wants to share with him. The Christian believes, however, that he could learn from the faith, understanding, and insight that the other person has to share with him. Therefore the Christian does not see himself in the role of 'teacher' and the other person in the role of 'learner.' Rather, he sees himself and the other person as 'fellow-students' or 'fellow seekers of truth.' In this spirit the Christian sees evangelism as a dialogue, rather than a monologue."

4. How many functionally discrete constructs did the minister use on the Religious Construct Test? (See the end of this Appendix for a copy of the Religious Constuct Test and pp. 116-120 for a discussion of how this test is administered.)

Data on Subjects

With the help of church leaders, identify five converts, five drop-outs, and five non-converts. (See Appendix A, p. 185 for a definition of these terms.) Answer the following questions regarding each subject:

1. Which member of the congregation does this subject identify as being most responsible for the effort to convert him?

2. What is this subject's age?

3. What is this subject's educational level? (Use the levels outlined on p. 187.)

4. What is this subject's socio-economic status level? (Use the levels outlined on p. 187.)

5. What was this subject's religious affiliation at the time before anyone from the Church of Christ tried to influence him to convert?

6. What was the level of his religious affiliation?
   A. Active member;
   B. Inactive member, but still formally affiliated;
   C. Church preference only--no formal affiliation;
   D. No preference.

7. Have the subject list his three closest friends and the following members of his family: father, mother, brothers, sisters, spouse, children, and any other members of his immediate household. Get the following data on each person listed:
   A. Religious affiliation (or preference);
   B. Is this person a member of the subject's immediate household?
   C. Does the subject report that he feels especially close to this person?
   D. Does the subject report that he ever discusses religion with this person?
   E. Does the subject report that this person influenced his decision regarding conversion to the Church of Christ?

8. What was this subject's score on the Holmes' Change of Life Scale? (See p. 30.)

9. How many functionally discrete constructs did this subject use on the Religious Construct Test? (See the end of this Appendix for a copy of the Religious Construct Test and pp. 116-120 for a discussion of how this test is administered.)

10. Does this subject report that in the time before anyone from the Church of Christ tried to influence him to convert he was already dissatisfied with his religious affiliation or with his non-religious life style? If so,
A. Why was the subject dissatisfied?
B. What things worried him at that time?
C. In general, what things concerned him at that time?
D. What was he looking for in life at that time?

11. How many of the media of evangelistic persuasion listed on p. 188 was the subjected exposed to? List all media to which the subject was exposed.

12. Which of the following descriptions did the subject select as being closest to his perception of the "persuader" (the person most responsible for the effort to convert the subject)?
A. A salesman selling a product;
B. A teacher teaching a lesson; or,
C. A friend discussing a matter of mutual interest.

13. Which of the following descriptions of the interaction did the subject select as being closest to his perception of the interaction?
A. The persuader did not ask the subject to express his views on the matters being discussed;
B. The persuader asked the subject to express his views on the matters being discussed, but seemed to do so only in order to learn what "false doctrines" he would have to correct; or,
C. The persuader asked the subject to express his views on the topics being discussed and seemed to do so because of a genuine interest.

14. (For Converts Only) How long ago was this person converted to the Church of Christ?

15. (For Drop-Outs Only) How long was this person an active, attending member of the congregation before dropping out?

16. (For Converts and Drop-Outs Only) How many changes have there been in this person's pattern of friendship since he converted to the Church of Christ?
A. How many people who were close personal friends before this subject converted are no longer close personal friends?
B. How many new close personal friends has this person made in the congregation since his conversion?

Data on Persuaders

A "persuader" is the member of the congregation identified by a subject as being the person most responsible for the persuasive effort intended to influence the subject to convert. In order to do relational analyses, it is necessary to match subject data and persuader data.

1. Which subject did this persuader influence or try to influence to become a member of the Church of Christ?

2. What is the age of this persuader?

3. What is the educational level of this persuader? (Use the levels outlined on p. 187.)

4. What is the socio-economic status level of this persuader? (Use the levels outlined on p. 187.)

5. Which of the "views of evangelism" outlined on p. 188 did this persuader accept as being closest to his own view of evangelism?

6. How many functionally discrete constructs did this persuader use in the Religious Construct Test? (See pp. 116-120 for a discussion of how this test is administered and see also a copy of the Religious Construct Test below.)

Religious Construct Test

1. Ask the subject to identify the church, denomination, religious group, etc. with which he is most familiar and write that church in the column heading of column # 1.

2. Ask the subject to identify the church with which he is next most familiar and list it in the column heading of column # 2. Continue the process through as many churches as the subject can name until all twenty column headings have been filled in, if the subject can think of that many churches.

3. Insist that the subject name at least six churches. If the subject is not able to do so, suggest names of familiar churches to help the subject. The first six columns must be filled in with the names of churches. Do not insist that the subject list more than six churches, but try to get as many as possible on the list up to twenty.

4. On row # 1, ask the subject to think about the three churches indicated by the columns with a "O" in the cells for that row. Ask the subject to tell the most important way in which two of these churches are alike and different from the third.

5. Put "X" marks in the circled cells ("Ⓧ") for the two churches which the subject says are alike.

6. In the column marked "Construct," write the characteristic which the subject says these two churches have in common.

7. In the column marked "Contrast," write the characteristic which the subject says the third church has which makes it different from the other two.

8. Repeat the process outlined above in points 4-7 for all twenty rows of the grid.

9. After all twenty rows of the grid have been completed in the above manner, go back to row # 1 and ask the subject to think about the characteristics listed in the "Construct" and "Contrast" columns. Ask the subject to think about all the other churches listed and tell which ones share the characteristic listed in the "Construct" column. Place an "X" mark in the cells under each of the churches the subject says share this "Construct" characteristic. Leave blank all the other cells of that row.

10. Repeat the process outlined in point # 9 for all twenty rows of the grid.

11. Take a sheet of paper or a card and place it under row # 1. Copy the pattern of "X" marks and voids in the cells of row # 1.

12. Place that sheet of paper or card under row # 2 and count the number of times that the pattern of "X" marks and voids in the cells of row # 1 match the pattern of "X" marks and voids in the cells of row # 2.

13. If the subject listed six or seven churches in the columns, count row # 2 as being a functionally discrete construct unless the two rows match perfectly or contrast perfectly.

14. If the subject listed eight to fourteen churches in the columns, count row # 2 as being a functionally discrete construct unless there was a perfect match, a perfect contrast, or just one point away from a perfect match or a perfect contrast. Thus if the subject listed fourteen churches, row # 1 and row # 2 would be counted as functionally equivalent if the matching score was 0, 1, 13, or 14.

15. If the subject listed fifteen to twenty churches in the columns, count row # 2 as being a functionally discrete construct unless the matching score was less than three points away from a perfect match or a perfect contrast. Thus if the subject listed twenty churches, row # 1 and row # 2 would be counted as functionally equivalent if the matching score was 0, 1, 2, 18, 19, or 20.

16. Repeat the process outlined above in points # 11-15 for all twenty rows of the grid.

17. Row # 1 will always be counted as a functionally discrete construct. Mark all rows which socre as functionally equivalent to any other row. Count the number of rows which are not marked. That is the number of functionally discrete constructs used by the subject.

A copy of the Religious Construct Test (in reduced size) is reproduced on the following page.

Sample Copy of Religious Construct Test

List churches in column headings.

																							CONSTRUCT	CONTRAST
1	0	0	0	'																				
2	0	0		0	'																			
3	0	0			0	'																		
4	0	0				0																		
5	0		0	0																				
6	0		0		0																			
7	0		0			0																		
8	0			0	0																			
9	0			0		0																		
10	0				0	0																		
11		0	0	0																				
12		0	0		0																			
13		0	0			0																		
14		0		0	0																			
15		0		0		0																		
16		0			0	0																		
17			0	0	0																			
18			0	0		0																		
19			0		0	0																		
20				0	0	0																		

APPENDIX C

DATA ON CERTAIN NON-SIGNIFICANT RESULTS

Most of the non-significant findings of the present study call for no additional comment. A few of the findings of non-significance, however, are contrary to what some might have predicted and therefore this additional presentation of data seems to be needed.

Age of Subjects

The mean ages of subjects in this survey were: 25.67 for the converts; 27.93 for the non-converts; and 28.14 for the drop-outs. Analysis of variance revealed no significant over-all difference, as shown below.

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	30.12	15.06	2.1	NS
Within	717	5,123.49	7.16		
Total	719	5,153.61			

Socio-Economic Status of Subjects

The average convert, non-convert, and drop-out of this survey were all in the middle class in regard to socio-economic status. There were no major departures from expected frequency in a 3 x 5 chi square test comparing the three categories of subjects on the five levels of socio-economic status used in the present study. Chi square=13.39, df=8, a<.1 (NS).

Educational Level of Subjects

The average convert, non-convert, and drop-out of this survey were all in the same educational level category: all had either attended college or had some training beyond the high school level, but had not graduated from college. There were no major departures from expected frequency in a 3 x 5 chi square test comparing the three categories of subjects on the five levels of education used in the present study. Chi square=9.93, df=8, a<.5 (NS).

Cognitive Style of Subjects

The distribution of converts, non-converts, and drop-outs in the cognitively simple and cognitively complex categories was approximately equal. There were no major departures from expected frequency in a 3 x 2 chi square

comparing the three categories of subjects on these two categories of cognitive style. Chi square=3.22, df=2, a<.2 (NS).

Age of Ministers

The mean ages of ministers in this survey were: 41.15 for the high net growth rate group; 39.44 for the medium net growth rate group; and 37.97 for the low net growth rate group. Analysis of variance revealed no significant over-all difference on this variable, as shown below.

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ratio	Significance Level
Between	2	16.33	8.165	1.08	NS
Within	45	340.20	7.560		
Total	47	356.53			

APPENDIX D

COMMUNICATION THEORY

The development of a communication theory was beyond the scope of the present study. It was suggested, however, that the results of the present study seem to suggest the need for a theory of communication which is meaning-centered and receiver-oriented with a major stress on perception and attribution. I would now like to close this work by offering a very brief and tentative outline of what such a theory of communication might involve.

People communicate in an effort to share meanings, but meanings are a part of the personal, private, subjective world of our internal experience. Meanings cannot be transmitted or received. Objects and events in the external world do not have meaning. Only people have meaning. We never experience the external world directly. We experience only our perceptions of that external world. Our perceptions are organized. Perception is selective. We are not passive in the process of perception. We construct our perceptions of reality in the external world. We attribute meaning to the objects and events of the external world. It is through perception and attribution that a part of the external world becomes a part of our internal world and is given meaning.

In an effort to share our meanings with others we use symbols: words, gestures, and the like. Symbols do not have meaning, but through the use of symbols we can at least come relatively close to a genuine sharing of our meanings. Thus we construct symbolic messages, select a channel through which we can transmit that message, and then send the message through the channel. We have then created a new event in the external world of the other person. He experiences our symbolic message in the same way that he experiences any other part of his external world. He perceives our message and attributes to it his own meaning. Unless there is an overlap between the fields of experience of the sender and the receiver, and unless the sender's message is within the area of that overlap, it is not likely that the receiver will attribute to the message a meaning very similar to that of the sender.

Once the receiver perceives and attributes meaning to the message of the sender, the receiver can then become the sender in a feedback process. He goes through the same symbolization process. He selects a channel and sends his symbolic message. The original sender, now receiver, experiences the feedback message, perceives it, attributes meaning to it, and can then decide whether the meaning that he thinks the other person has is similar enough to the meaning that he intended in the first place. If not, he can repeat the process until he is satisfied that for all practical purposes both he and the other person have essentially the same meaning. But it is never really the same and this delicate process can break down at any point.

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A COMMUNICATION MODEL