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IDENTITY ALTERATION VERSUS CONVENTIONAL PERSUASION: AN EXPERIMENTAL COMPARISON.

The Ohio State University,
Ph.D., 1977
Mass Communications

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IDENTITY ALTERATION VERSUS CONVENTIONAL PERSUASION: AN EXPERIMENTAL COMPARISON

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Jerry J. Roemisch, B.A., M.A.

* * * *

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1977

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The guidance and consultation provided by my doctoral committee, Dr. James Golden, Dr. Lyle Schmidt, Dr. Norman Elliot, and Dr. William Loadman, was appreciated. As a group, they provided the needed balance of constructive criticism and encouragement needed for a task that is both academically and psychologically stressful.

Special thanks goes to my advisor, Dr. Victor Wall, for the numerous hours spent at his office and house revising ideas and procedures. His patience and intellectual support created a climate that enhanced creativity and made the task much more pleasurable.

In addition to the academic assistance that I received, the emotional support given by my wife, Lou, provided a relaxed home life so essential to intellectual growth.

Finally, the careful editing and final draft typing done by Karen Greene resulted in technical work and format for which I am particularly appreciative.
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Chapter I
PERSUASION AND REALITY CONSTRUCTION

Persuasion can be regarded as some type of interpersonal influence that modifies an individual's attitudes, beliefs or behaviors relative to some set of stimuli (Miller, Brickman and Bolen, 1975). In empirical research, persuasive strategies have often been grounded in an "ought-to" mentality: the individual sees the evils of some present state and then is encouraged that he "ought to" adopt some alternative view (Miller, Brickman and Bolen, 1975).

Such conventional attitude change approaches face several difficulties. First, by focusing upon what one should do might ironically encourage counterargument. An audience opposed to a certain position may respond by "rehearsal of their own arguments while the topic is being presented" (Hovland, Lumsdaine and Sheffield, 1949, p. 201). Second, when individual attitudinal or behavioral states are the target of change, the "ought-to" approach may only remind the recipient of his current undesirable state. Attention is thereby directed toward his negative condition in such a way as to increase guilt, anxiety, helplessness or resistance (Miller, Brickman and Bolen, 1975). Finally, long term attitude change is generally lacking when conventional strategies are employed (Zimbardo and Ebbesen, 1969). Failure to achieve lasting change may suggest that new positions have not been sufficiently integrated into existing belief systems (Kelman, 1968).

From this conventional perspective, researchers have treated attitude change as if it were a process somewhat

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1 For the operational purposes of this study, persuasion is used synonymously with the concept of attitude change as employed in social psychological/communication empirical research. More specifically, the dissonance and balance theorists' (Festinger, 1957; Heider, 1958) development of attitude change constructs influences the definition of attitude change and persuasion incorporated in this research.
distinct from the simple conveying of information. Persuasion has been regarded as an activity disparate from the basic information processing procedures invoked by the subject to make the world meaningful and orderly. Rather than a separate process, however, persuasive communication can be viewed as being grounded in the same information processing activities employed in all sense-making procedures. Furthermore, if we may assume that individuals are active agents in the construction of their realities (Heider, 1958), then persuading persons to engage in different courses of action or belief requires altering those reality sets. From this perspective, understanding how individuals are persuaded is integrally related to comprehending how they make sense of their world. Persuasion would occur when one reality, or set of realities, is supplanted by another communicatively constructed reality set.

Independent of the theoretical view developed here, other social scientists have recently formulated approaches combining persuasion and information processing/concept formation:

The similarity of attitudes and concepts has not escaped the notice of social psychologists. Some believe that the same underlying processes are involved in both and that laboratory studies of concept formation will tell us quite a bit about how attitudes can be established or changed (Bourne and Ekstrand, 1976, p. 355).

That position, adopted for purposes of this dissertation, endeavors to understand the primary reality/identity construction processes central to persuasion.

From this perspective, gaining insight into how persuasion occurs is contiguous with an understanding of how humans make sense of their world. We adhere to those beliefs and behaviors that we believe to be real. We are persuaded to accept those viewpoints that we either validate personally or that we believe could be validated, if given the opportunity. This research will investigate how individuals construct reality and how reality alteration (persuasion) can be facilitated. Within the following chapter a theoretical perspective undergirding reality establishment and persuasion will be delineated. Specific reality construction procedures will be discussed and the role of communication will be regarded as central to this process. An experimental design comparing a conventional persuasion approach with an "identity alteration" approach will be developed in Chapter Three. Chapter Four will report the results and the final chapter will review the implications of those findings.
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Chapter II
THEORETICAL RATIONALE AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Most experimental studies of persuasion begin with an analysis of attitude formation and change drawn from numerous models now being tested. Any discussion of persuasion or attitude change cannot ignore this body of research. The theoretical grounding of this investigation, however, resides in assumptions broader in scope and more diverse in origin than a strict attitude study. Attitudes, as "an individual's self description of his affinities for and aversions to some identifiable aspect of his environment" (Bem, 1968, p. 197), provide a useful category for describing some sense-making activities of humans. But as an organizing device, the concept of attitudes does not reflect an overall model of how individuals institute their own order or perspective in a world marked by conflict over what is true and what is real. Insight into those sense-making activities seems crucial to understanding how those realities are altered; in essence, how persuasion occurs.

This chapter will examine basic concepts central to reality construction and persuasion. Particular emphasis will be placed on the notions of reflexivity and identity clustering. Specific identity construction procedures that underpin both reality development and persuasion will be discussed. Those procedures consist of the following: (1) self-perception of behavior; (2) reciprocity of perspectives; (3) the et cetera principle; (4) searching for a normal form. Although these procedures will be handled separately, it is noted that they compose a single, interactive identity construction process. After developing the theoretical base, including a review of relevant literature, a preview of the experimental procedure will be given.

Basic Concepts of Reality Construction

Reflexivity

In constructing an assumptive model of how our world is made meaningful, I am confronted by the irony of
constructing a "reality" that describes how realities are constructed. I engage in the very process that I portray. Reflexivity, the concept of concomitantly being in a scene or situation and yet also creating that scene, permeates the reality construction process. It is an undergirding assumption of this study that "the phenomenon of reflexivity is a feature of every reality . . . (it) is not only a facet of reasoning. It is a recurrent facet of everyday social life" (Mehan and Woods, 1975, pp. 14, 12). Mehan and Woods further note the relevance of reflexivity to communication by explaining that "talk itself is reflexive . . . . An utterance not only delivers some particular information, it also creates a world in which information itself can appear" (p. 12).

Reflexivity indicates that reality is constructed in an interactive or mutually constitutive manner. An actor exists within a particular situation that he both partially creates and constitutes. Upon encountering this situation, he has certain expectations about "how things out to be" derived from social knowledge and past experience from previous situations that are seen as similar. Through interaction with features of the particular scene (or situational elements), his conception of what is real may be either confirmed or altered.

For example, an instructor arrives to teach a class with an expectation of finding students seated, facing toward the lecturn and at least marginally attentive. If upon entry he encounters students with their backs to the lecturn and their heads resting on desks, the "reality" has detectably shifted. No longer is this "class as usual". The situation or structure could obviously be interpreted in many ways: an experiment, a joke, a protest, etc. The instructor might laugh or scold or threaten. Whatever his actions, they now become a constitutive element of what is "really" happening. A statement that "this must be a joke" or that "this must be a protest" constitutes a different sense of what is "actually" transpiring. The teacher's attempts to describe the situation also function as a determiner of what that situation "actually" is. He is both reacting to the scene and constructing the scene simultaneously.

From this illustration, three elements, the actor, the rules (expectations and typifications based upon prior social knowledge and experience), and the situation emerge as central to the unceasing reflexive activity of reality construction. Within the normative view, the actor, rules and situation are regarded as existing independently (Garfinkel, 1967; Mehan and Woods, 1975). These three components are not, from the normative perspective, viewed as interacting or mutually
constitutive. Garfinkel criticizes this normative conception of man adhering to standardized rules as a "judgmental dope" who acts "in compliance with preestablished and legitimate alternatives of action that the common culture provides" (1967, pp. 66, 68). Mehan and Wood further argue that normative theories convey neither the reflexive nature nor the interactional quality of reality construction:

In the normative theory of action, actors are thought to enter situations, define them, recognize which rules are applicable and act automatically. . . . The actor's presence . . . does nothing to inform the meaning of the situation. . . . The actor need only employ a simple "matching procedure". Once the situation's meaning is apparent, itself an automatic occurrence, the germane norms just flash in front of the actor like traffic signals, telling the person "walk" or "don't walk". . . . Rule use is neither automatic nor consistent. Whenever a rule is applied, it must be applied within a specific social situation. Relevant rules do not merely emerge once a social situation is determined. Actors, rules, and situations ceaselessly inform one another . . . (emphasis mine). A situation is never judged once and for all. Every judgment is situationally absolute, based on the realization that some later determinations may change the certainty of the here and now. The very invocation of a rule alters the situation. Rules, like actors and situations, do not appear except in a web of practical circumstances. Intertwined, the actor, rules, and the present definition of the situation constitute the situation. No single one of these can be abstracted out and treated as either cause or effect. Actors cannot be seen as outside of the situations judging them, for they are an integral and reflexive constituent of those situations (1975, pp. 75-76).

Although Mehan and Woods may overstate the case against normative theories, they clearly explain how reflexivity functions in our everyday understanding of phenomena. Reflexivity argues against those theories of attitude change that project humans as cognizing animals that automatically
seek to restore balance or relieve dissonance when confronted with a discrepant message from a highly credible source. A theory of reality construction examines those mental and situational processes preceding any manifestation of "dissonance" or "imbalance". Also of import is the dynamic quality of reflexivity as an ongoing yet retroactive/pro-active phenomenon. From this perspective, what is real is in flux: not only do individuals constantly update their precepts of "what is happening", they continually revise their views of "what did happen" and "what will happen".

The link to the concept of persuasion seems apparent. The mosaic of our thoughts, feelings and actions are in response to our view of the way things are. As that sense of reality shifts, a concomitant change in cognitive, affective and behavioral components should occur. And such a detectable, reflexive alteration in reality can be labeled persuasion.

Identity Clusters

The manner in which our realities or memories or cognitions are organized has received strikingly similar treatment from a wide array of disciplines and scholars. Piaget (1952, 1954) describes our organizing of reality as "cognitive schemata". In explaining how individuals assign causal attributions for phenomena, Kelley derives from Piaget a sub-category, "causal schemata", that "reflect the individual's basic notions of reality and his assumptions about the existence of a stable external world" (1972, p. 158). A similar conceptualization is proposed by George Kelly through his personal construct theory in which "one construct may subsume another as one of its elements" (1963, p. 57). Constructs result from "classifying objects by discerning similarities between them and ... (by) distinguishing members of a class from some other classification" (Duck, 1973, p. 17). Collins and Quillian (1972) view information taxonomically organized as a "semantic network" or cognitive tree. Alfred Schutz likewise terms such an aggregation of cognitions as "typifications" (Schutz, 1973). Furthermore, attitude theorists often regard attitudes as existing in groups or dimensions.

Although these various formulations possess distinct theoretical differences, they all share the perspective that man employs some organizing, relational schema to invoke a sense of order and meaning for the world in which he lives. Borrowing from several of these positions, particularly George Kelly's personal construct theory (1963), individuals establish the reality of new phenomena by delineating how they are both like and unlike previously acquired information contained in
identity clusters. As a construct, identity clusters suggest that perceptions are not conceived as unitary, unrelated bits of data; they consist of overlapping categorizations of prior experience and social knowledge that compose the realities of man's existence (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). This conceptualization reiterates several features found in other information processing models: (1) An overlapping taxonomy or hierarchy of cognition sets exist. Identity clusters might share elements or one cluster might subsume other identity clusters. Confusion may exist when an "identity" can be linked to more than one cluster—mixed attributes or multiple identities exist. (2) Identities are established through a comparison of similarities and dissimilarities. (3) It is such an organizing/processing schema that allows one to identify phenomena as familiar/unfamiliar and to determine what "rules" should be invoked.

As a concept, identity clusters also reflect several unique notions not associated with previous formulations: (1) Only sufficient and necessary information is sought in developing a new reality; complete information is not necessary. Rather than a sense of total accuracy and validity in establishing the identity of a new entity or act, individuals "gloss over" (Garfinkel, 1967) omissions. Rather than veridicality, humans seek only certitude that events "make sense". New information may disrupt that previously established certainty and alter identity cluster structure (see Brickman, Ryan and Wortman, 1975). (2) Extrapolated from ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967), the invocation of identity clusters is a taken-for-granted process. Assigning identity attributes to an object or event generally transpires without notice. Not until an event becomes "problematic" does identity search become more focused and more conscious. (3) And, most important in terms of persuasion, assimilating new information into extant identity clusters reflexively transforms those former cognitive groupings. The process exhibits an interactive effect: "old" clusters determine how new information is made meaningful while new information alters the structure and interrelationship of old clusters.

The underlying process of persuasion may be studied in terms of how events and ideas related to present identity clusters. In trying to understand the concept of identity clusters, for example, the reader is presently relating what has been written to relevant categories of previously acquired information. What clusters are pertinent? What previous understandings does the concept of reality clusters contrast with? As the reader arrives at what identity clusters "really mean", he or she may conclude that previous formulations should be modified to accommodate this concept. Such cognitive modification is at the root of persuasion.
Emphasis upon identity establishment (or reality construction) provides common ground for two discrepant theories: assimilation-contrast theory (Sherif and Hovland, 1961) and cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). While assimilation-contrast theory predicts attitude change will follow the assimilation of positions falling in the latitude of acceptance or the latitude of noncommitment, dissonance theory suggests that highly discrepant messages achieve the highest degree of dissonance, thereby providing the greatest potential for attitude change to relieve that dissonance. The manner in which information is related to identity clusters may account for both positions. When new information can easily be related or contrasted to extant identity clusters, the assimilation-contrast phenomenon may be encountered. When an individual is either conversant or concerned about a certain issue, the information presented may be easily linked to present reality structures. On the other hand, information that cannot be clearly linked to current identity structures may result in confusion, indecision and dissonance. As Sherif, Sherif and Nebergall conclude, "The manner in which an individual perceives and classifies a message determines the influence the message has on him" (1965, p. 27). In terms of identity clustering, whether or not a persuasive message should fall within the latitude of acceptance/neutrality or should be highly discrepant depends upon the way the information is related to existing identity clusters.

With reference to long-term persuasion, the process of identity clustering also encompasses McGuire's inoculation approach. McGuire's theory purports that individuals can be "inoculated" through small doses of opposing arguments. Such inoculation results in more persisting attitude change (1964). McGuire predicts that a one-sided persuasive argument achieves less resistance to counter-arguments than does a two-sided approach. Because a one-sided argument does not inoculate the recipient against counter-arguments, less long-term attitude change is achieved. In terms of identity clusters, a one-sided approach does not give adequate grounds for identity assimilation; the "identity" of the new information is only precariously grounded. When opposing arguments are advanced, the frail identity established through the one-sided argument is disrupted. A two-sided inoculation approach advocated by McGuire can be interpreted as an attempt to better relate the new information (or argument) to existing identity clusters, thereby enhancing resistance to counter-persuasion.

So as an identity establishment process, persuasion relates to at least two aspects of identity clusters. When new positions can be securely linked or assimilated with current
clusters, persuasion occurs. On the other hand, since identity clusters function reflexively, new information may significantly disrupt identity clusters. Such disruption and subsequent reorganization creates the new realities or new identities; such a process is critical to persuasion.

There are, however, factors limiting to persuasion. Much information neither sufficiently coincides with nor disrupts existing identity clusters. Robert MacLeod depicts how two individuals' "identity clusters" may be so disparate as to negate the likelihood of persuasion:

The individual for whom China is represented by the corner laundryman and Russia by the bewhiskered terrorist of the cartoons is living in a world quite different from that of the student of Chinese literature and Russian military strategy. Any attitudes which they evince towards China and Russia cannot be adequately understood until we know what cognitive structures are represented by these words (1958, p. 46).

These "cognitive structures" reflect the notion of identity clusters. When two individuals don't "see things the same way", their relevant realities cannot be adequately assimilated. On the other hand, there may be insufficient disruption of one's identity clusters or realities necessary to induce cluster restructuring. In both cases of inadequate assimilation or insufficient disruption, insufficient identity alteration occurs.

Identity Construction Procedures

How are identity clusters employed? Or, more concretely, how are realities established and altered? This study will manipulate some of those identity construction procedures to investigate how the world is made meaningful and how persuasion can occur. Derived partially from Aaron Cicourel's concept of "interpretive procedures" (1974), some identity construction activities will be described and then applied to persuasion.

The acquisition of interpretive procedures provides the actor with a basis for assigning meaning to his environment or a sense of social structure, thus orienting him to
the relevance of "surface rules" or norms . . . The traditional strategy . . . is to endow the model of the actor with the ability to assign meanings, but only after assuming that internalized attitudes and norms provide automatic guides to role-taking. The internalization of norms is assumed to lead to an automatic application of rules on appropriate occasions. Appropriateness, however, is not explained, nor is it viewed as developmentally and situationally constrained . . . Unlike the rather static notion of internalized attitudes as dispositions to act in a certain way, the idea of interpretive procedures must specify how the actor negotiates and constructs possible action, and evaluates the results of completed action . . . Interpretive procedures are not "rules" in the sense of such general policies or practices like operational definitions or legal and extra-legal norms, where a sense of a "right" or a "wrong" pre- or prescriptive norm or practice is at issue. Instead they are part of all inquiry yet exhibit empirically defensible properties that "advise" the members about an infinite collection of behavioural displays and provide him with a sense of social structure (or, in the case of scientific activity, provide an intuitive orientation to an area of inquiry) (Cicourel, 1974, pp. 45, 32, 51).

Cicourel provides a distinction between interpretive procedures and conventional application of norms and attitudes that is equally relevant to identity clusters. Identity clusters are integrally related to the reflexive process of reality construction. Identity clusters are formed reflexively and function reflexively. Such clusters act as reflexive recipes to help instruct what actions a member should display. The impact of those actions are then interpreted in terms of relevant identity clusters. "Agreement" between the recipe's predictions and actual outcome lead to a reinforcement of extant identity clusters. Discrepancy, however, may lead to the reflexive alteration of identities: "I no longer see things as I once saw them." So identity clusters both inform how an event is to be taken and reflexively accommodate any inconsistencies between the "way things are supposed to be" and the "way things are".
There are several ways in which identity clusters are reflexively formed and altered: First, observation of personal behavior reflexively confirms or alters identity clusters. Second, assuming a reciprocity of perspectives is interactionally essential to the belief that we all participate in and perceive the same world. Third, employing the et cetera principle "permits the speaker-hearer to make normative sense of immediate settings by permitting temporary, or 'concrete' linkages with a short-term or long-term store of socially distributed knowledge" (Cicourel, 1974, p. 35). Finally, humans search for or establish "normal forms" or recognizable patterns of events that help maintain certainty and a sense of the familiar. Each of these procedures will be developed more extensively.

Self-perception of behavior

The first procedure, observation of personal behavior, emanates from social psychologist Daryl Bem's self-perception theory. He proposes that individuals infer their attitudes and intentions from their self-perceptions of behavior. As Bem describes, "In identifying his own internal states, an individual partially relies on the same external cues that others use when they infer his internal states" (1970, p. 50). Although Bem conducted "interpersonal simulation" (1965, 1967) to support his hypothesis, more direct support came from experiments by Bandler, Madaras and Bem (1968) with subjects believing that they could either escape or endure ten of thirty shocks administered to all participants. Within the "freedom to escape" condition, there was escape from the optional ten shocks while within the "no freedom" condition participants experienced the complete series of thirty shocks. Both groups received identical shock levels but those in the freedom to escape condition reported that shocks were more painful than the no freedom condition. Bem suggests that those subjects escaping ten of the shocks inferred from their behavior that the shocks must have been painful. In terms of persuasion, those individuals that had their identification of "what was happening" altered were induced to report higher shock levels.

Observing one's own behavior can reflexively alter identity clusters. From previous experience and social knowledge, one makes "hypotheses" about the veridicality of his beliefs and of behaviors related to those beliefs. After behavior has occurred, the hypotheses are to some degree supported or denied. Behavior reflexively confirms or alters those identity clusters from which hypotheses are made manifest. The reflexive use of behavior in altering identity clusters helps resolve the discrepant findings between
measured attitudes and actual behavior indicated by Fishbein (1967) when he notes that "traditional measures of attitude . . . are not likely to be related to behavior in any consistent fashion" (p. 491). Nisbett and Valins demonstrate how beliefs/attitudes (identity clusters) can be reflexively altered by behavior:

The proposition that we infer our beliefs from our behavior assumes that behavior is an important source of information for the evaluative process. . . . An inference should often be considered as a hypothesis rather than a conclusion. . . . The overt behavior of our subjects may not be a simple reflection of the internal state that we intended to manipulate but rather a reflection of the subjects' attempt to validate inferences about that state (1972, p. 74).

Support for this position can be inferred from Valins and Ray's (1967) manipulation of bogus heartbeats that subjects believed was feedback associated with the presence of snakes. Subjects who received feedback of an unchanging heart rate approached the snakes closer than those who received feedback of faster heart rates. The "closer approach" students did not report themselves to be less frightened of the snakes immediately after hearing slower heart rates. It seems likely that the behavior was a validation attempt and not a reflection of a changed attitude or an altered identity cluster. From an attitudinal framework, Karl Weick summarizes the implications of this view.

Behavior is more than an incidental accompaniment of attitudes. Behavior that occurs in close proximity to belief change or that is relevant to beliefs can validate, confirm, commit, disconfirm, stabilize or immunize. Behavior, in other words, is presumed to be an important determinant of the success of any attempt to change attitudes (1966, p. 244).

A further implication of this view is that behavior may disconfirm the hypotheses resulting in altered identity clusters. Behavior reflexively relates to the identity clusters as reality organizers. From our "world view" we create expectations about what "really" happens. As a consequence of these conjectures, we sometimes act. Although our actions emanate from identity clusters, they may reflexively change those structures. Indeed, behavior may
indicate a test of positions that are precariously held. Nisbett and Valins assess the paradoxes between "attitude" and behavior that can result:

We can conceive of conditions under which weak manipulations of attitude change might produce greater indications of behavior change than strong manipulations of attitude change. If the behavior under examination is more amenable to hypothesis-testing than it is to the expression of genuinely changed attitudes, then subjects who hold the attitude with little confidence might manifest more of the behavior than subjects who hold the attitude with much confidence. It is quite possible that if the attitude of the low confidence subject is confirmed by his behavioral test, then he might subsequently express attitudes equal in strength to those of the subject who initially held the attitude with much confidence. If the behavior validation attempt disconfirms the hypothesis, then the most paradoxical pattern of all would result: subjects who are most likely to display the behavior would be least likely to express attitudes in line with behavior (1972, p. 75).

And so the injunction of Proverbs that "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" may reflect only a partial truth. Evidence of the individual's attitudes or identity clusters gleaned from observations of behavior can lead to the erroneous conclusion that the behavior resulted from secure beliefs and stable identity clusters. The behavior, however, may signify only a search for certainty rather than a manifestation of it.

Reciprocity of perspectives

In addition to the reflexive use of behavior, three other procedures previously alluded to are important to identity cluster development and implementation. Largely an extension of Schutz's concern with the semantic or meaning component of interpersonal communication, Cicourel proposes three procedures that aid in identity maintenance: (1) reciprocity of perspectives; (2) et cetera principle; (3) searching for a normal form. The first procedure refers to the commonly held assumption that in interaction we share the same social setting or possess a "reciprocity of perspectives". Cicourel describes two common-sense idealizations
that help in sustaining the reciprocity of perspectives during interaction: "(1) Each would have the same experience if they were to change places and (2) that until further notice they can disregard any differences that might arise from their respective personal ways of assigning meaning to objects and events" (1974, pp. 85-86). Schutz notes that such a reciprocity is merely an ideal state because two individuals do not actually perceive the same scene because "certain objects are out of my reach (of my seeing, hearing, my manipulatory sphere, etc.) but within his, and vice versa"; furthermore, the "biographically determined situations" that two individuals bring to an event "must differ" (Schutz, 1964, p. 11).

Particularly germane to persuasion is the notion that two individuals must assume that they share the same reality for communication conducive to any alteration of identity clusters. The assumption that "our identity clusters overlap sufficiently so that we might take for granted any differences" suggests the relationship between persuasion and the reciprocity of perspectives. From this view, once a reciprocity of perspectives has been assumed, perceptual discrepancies may become problematic. When "we don't see things the same", effort must be expended to "account for" the differences. Attempts might be made to attribute discrepancies to either circumstances or dispositional qualities that "cause" individuals to view things differently. Conventional attitude research addresses this issue through examination of high/low source credibility and common ground. The concept of reciprocal perspectives encompasses both concepts and more directly relates to how one creates the identities that reflexively interact with behaviors.

The persuasive impact of the reciprocity of perspectives is perhaps best illustrated by the classic social conformity studies of Solomon Asch (1956) and the social comparison process (Festinger, 1954). In the Asch experiments, confederates unanimously agreed that an obviously shorter line was the longest of a set. After several confederates uniformly chose the incorrect line, the subject was asked to make a selection. In a consistently large proportion of the cases, the subject would "go along with the group". Subsequent follow-up interviews divulged various explanations for the selection by the subjects; many claimed they "really" didn't believe their selection was the longest. In a similar vein, Festinger proposes that individuals seek consensual validation for their actions and beliefs. Lack of such consensus therefore renders beliefs more susceptible to change.
A model of the actor based upon the reciprocity of perspectives suggests the persuasive relevance of these studies. When an individual is confronted with discrepant perceptions from persons whom he assumes share reciprocal perspectives, he must either attribute that discrepancy to circumstantial factors, to dispositional states, or to a shift in identity states. So the reciprocity of perspectives is a salient factor in reality maintenance and subsequent reality change.

Et cetera principle

A second feature of identity cluster construction employs the et cetera principle through which interaction is tacitly understood to be essentially incomplete and interactants must "fill in" or "let-pass" deleted meanings. Cicourel describes this interactional feature as an extension of the reciprocity of perspectives:

The participants of a conversation must "fill in" meanings throughout the exchange and after the exchange when attempting to recall or reconstruct what happened because of the inadequacies of oral and non-oral communication, and the routine practice of leaving many intentions unstated (Garfinkel, 1964). Vague or ambiguous or truncated expressions are located by members, given meaning contextually and across contexts, by their retrospective sense of occurrence. Present utterances or descriptive accounts that contain ambiguous or promissory overtones can be examined prospectively by the speaker-hearer for their possible meaning in some future sense under the assumption of filling in meanings now and imagining the kinds of intentions that can be expected later. Or, past remarks can now be seen as clarifying present utterances (Cicourel, 1974, p. 87).

The et cetera principle, therefore, consists of three interrelated parts: (1) Vague or ambiguous information is allowed to pass while clarifying information is sought. (2) Contextual information is employed to fill in the ambiguities. (3) Individuals engage in a retrospective-prospective search for information to make the utterances meaningful. Vagueness
or incompletely understood communication is allowed to pass with the expectation that future events will clarify the present ambiguity. New information not only expounds on previous communication, it also modifies expectations concerning future interaction.

Social psychological research in causal attribution further illumines how the et cetera phenomenon is instituted. Central to much of the research in attribution theory is the setting or the environment within which attributions are allocated. How do individuals decide which information should be attended to and which should be ignored? As previously stated, Brickman et al. indicate that individuals seek only sufficient information from their environment and from others to make explanatory attributions or to relate to identity clusters. Taylor and Fiske (1975) also suggest that the salience of information derived from the setting is a primary determiner of how realities are established. By altering the context, making some information more prominent, individuals were "persuaded" to shift their locus of causality.

In Taylor and Fiske's basic experiment, thirty-eight student subjects, told they were participants in a group dynamics study, were located in a circle surrounding two confederates engaged in a "get acquainted" conversation. Seating arrangement, the independent variable, was manipulated so that six subject-observers were positioned in a circle surrounding two confederates conversing. Two observers sat directly behind confederate A so they were facing confederate B, unable to see A's face. The reverse situation was applied to two other observers who sat directly behind B, facing A. Two other control subjects sat to each side of A and B, able to view both equally. Since previous research indicates that people remember what the attend to (Norman, 1969), a recall task was employed to check for any selective recall contamination. The two confederates exchanged equal amounts of information at approximately the same level of social desirability. The researchers found that subjects would rate the individual they faced as the causal agent in the interaction. Taylor and Fiske stress that:

Whatever one attends to within one's environment should influence one's perceptions of causality. If one attends to one part of the environment to the relative exclusion of another, the information from that part should be most salient. . . . Perceptually salient information is then over-represented in subsequent causal explanations" (p. 440).
So not only is the amount of information important, but the relative degree of prominence that information possesses alters the locus of causality and hence the reality of the participant.

In addition to salience, another feature of et cetera activity, the retrospective-prospective sense of occurrence is demonstrated by Brickman, Ryan and Wortman's (1975) use of varying amounts of information to influence the assignment of causal responsibility for an accident. They showed that supplying subjects more causal information retrospectively altered their previous causal attributions—subjects traced the cause to an antecedent agent or factor. Among other findings they indicate "subjects implicitly assumed that unspecified prior causes were of the same sort as the given immediate cause" (p. 1062). The et cetera principle was reflexively in operation: unknown information was "filled in" and old causal inferences were modified to account for any new information.

Normal forms

A final procedure that enhances identity clusters is Cicourel's "searching for a normal form" (1974). Normal forms relate closely to the "typifications" developed by Schutz (1964) and Garfinkel's "searching for a pattern" (1967). Both the reciprocity of perspectives and the et cetera principle presume the existence of "certain normal forms of acceptable talk and appearances upon which members rely for assigning sense to their environments" (Cicourel, 1974, pp. 43-54). Normal forms correspond to those conventional, taken-for-granted, recurring identities upon which individuals order their everyday existence. When events become problematic (e.g., the reciprocity of perspectives is in doubt or et cetera work can neither fill in nor ignore informational gaps), individuals seek to normalize events into identifiable patterns. Schutz describes such normal forms as "a stock of preconstituted knowledge which includes a network of typifications of human individuals in general, of typical human motivations, goals and action patterns" (1964, pp. 29-30). Stereotypes exemplify the construction of normal forms. Normal forms are the standardized products of identity clusters. Cicourel further elaborates:

The collapsing, typifying activity of immediate action scenes is context-bound, but enables the actor to make use of short and long-term store (socially distributed knowledge) so as to subsume the particulars
of an unfolding setting under more general normative rules (Cicourel, 1974, p. 35).

Again, the "short and long-term store" of socially distributed knowledge partially reflects the concept of identity clusters.

This "searching for a recognizable pattern" is central to persuasion as identity construction. By providing individuals with a "normal form" or identity that they accept as reality, persuasion occurs. When, in dissonance research, beliefs are shown to be conflictual, the normal form has been disrupted. When, in assimilation-contrast theory, the advocate's position is "matched" to the latitude of acceptance or noncommitment, the receiver assimilates the new information into an already established "normal form". So, whether by use of dialectical procedures disrupting a sense of normality, or through an assimilation procedure that reinforces existing identity clusters, the incorporation of normal forms or identities seems highly relevant to persuasion.

The four procedures: a singular identity construction process

It would be erroneous and theoretically contradictory to regard self-perception of behavior, reciprocity of perspectives, the et cetera principle and searching for normal forms as separate entities in the identity construction process. Such procedures are overlapping, interactive and mutually constitutive. When one observes his behavior, he assumes a normal form exists. He infers that his behavior relates in some systematic way to internal affective and cognitive states (Bem, 1970). He also fills in informational gaps through use of the et cetera principle and assumes that other individuals, knowing what he knows, would reach the same inferences concerning his behavior.

Cicourel further notes that the reality interpretive procedures build upon each other in interpersonal interaction. Individuals assume reciprocal perspectives when employing the et cetera procedure. Conversation is made meaningful because truncated utterances are supplied necessary meaning. Unless each interactant believes that the other "perceives the world basically the same", then employing the et cetera principle of what "I believe the other interactant intended" serves no meaningful purpose. Finally, using the et cetera principle facilitates the establishment of normal forms. From a Gestalt perceptual perspective, the establishment of closure relates to the use or development of normal forms. Closure is attained by the perceiver filling in necessary sensory data not supplied
in an incomplete figure. In a similar manner, receivers supply necessary information to establish normal forms of meaningful, identifiable communication transaction.

These four overlapping constructs are not intended to reflect all the human activities employed to make phenomena meaningful. These identity establishment procedures do represent important processes that can improve information processing and enhance persuasion. Conventional persuasion activities, as a form of interpersonal communication and meaning establishment, also contain these procedures. Conventional persuasion approaches are often regarded as "sensible" to the recipient, thereby resulting in adoption of the desired position. The receiver processes information (assimilated with or disrupting to current identity clusters) through use of identity construction procedures. But, as previously mentioned, many traditional attempts at persuasion also contain those elements that thwart identity cluster alteration.

However, an identity structuring approach to persuasion would stress the current reality of the position "advocated" or of elements that would induce adoption of the target position. Furthermore, identity structuring actively encourages the persuasion target to employ those sense-making procedures in a manner intended to facilitate adoption of the desired position. The message recipient actively establishes a reality or identity cluster(s) that incorporates the advocated position. So, an identity structuring approach begins with statements reflecting facticity while actively involving the persuasion recipient through identity construction procedures. As Miller, et al. distinguish, positive attributions (identity-type statements) "need not involve persuasive intent but may instead be simple statements of fact . . . Indeed, their guise as truth statements may be thought of as their most effective advantage" (1975, p. 438).

The identity alteration approach also seeks to maximize the "essential incompleteness" of meaning. The reality construction procedures enable the message recipient to actively resolve the essential incompleteness of any data that he encounters. On the other hand, conventional counterargument stresses organization, clarity, overlearning, etc.—entities that assign the receiver to a more passive role where there is relatively little essential incompleteness that must be resolved to make the message sensible. The following design seeks to maximize differences in these two approaches.
Experimental Procedure

Conventional counterargument, involving a more passive information processing approach, was compared with an active identity alteration approach to the same topic. The experiment consisted of a post-test only, random assignment design (Campbell and Stanley, 1966) involving three treatment groups: (1) A baseline, irrelevant treatment group was involved in a topic-unrelated writing task followed by the administration of a Likert scale, the dependent measure in all groups. (2) Another group received a conventional persuasion approach involving arguments attributed to a highly credible source followed by the Likert scale given the baseline group. (3) A third group received an identity alteration treatment involving the same text given the conventional persuasion group. The identity alteration approach attempted to facilitate identity cluster alteration by inducing subjects to actively employ identity construction procedures to make the message personally meaningful. These subjects were also given the Likert dependent measure following the identity alteration procedure.

The Likert scale (development of the instrument will be discussed in the next chapter) measured the relative degrees of opposition or support for construction of a Columbus trash conversion electrical plant, the target issue. Both the conventional persuasion approach and the identity alteration procedure opposed construction of the plant. It was predicted that subjects randomly assigned to the identity alteration group would register significantly stronger opposition to the construction of a trash conversion electrical plant than subjects exposed to a conventional counterargument message. It was also hypothesized that both groups would manifest significantly stronger opposition than baseline subjects receiving an irrelevant message followed by the Likert measure.
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Asch, S.E.  Studies of independence and conformity: A minority of one against a unanimous majority. Psychological Monographs, 1956, 70.


Derived from the theoretical rationale for identity alteration, two hypotheses were posited: (1) Subjects receiving the identity alteration treatment would register significantly stronger opposition to the target issue than subjects receiving a conventional persuasion approach. (2) Both identity alteration and conventional persuasion groups would express significantly stronger opposition to the target issue than an irrelevant task control group.

Within this chapter, the three treatment conditions will be developed, with emphasis on identity alteration message construction, source credibility, attitude scale construction, and statistical analysis. Subject composition and the experimental setting will also be described.

Treatment Conditions

Conventional persuasion condition

The conventional persuasion treatment was based upon those features of persuasion that have received strong research support for their efficacy. A highly credible source (Hovland and Weiss, 1951; Hovland, Janis and Kelley, 1953) will be attributed to a repeated message (Staats and Staats, 1958) containing an explicitly stated conclusion (Hovland and Mandell, 1952) supported by arguments that stress the benefits (or, in this case, the disadvantages) of change (Greenwald, 1965) followed by overlearning through a recall task, another element enhancing persuasive impact (Cook and Wadsworth, 1972).

In this conventional persuasion approach, randomly assigned subjects read material opposing construction of a city-owned trash conversion electrical plant for the Columbus area (see Appendix A for text). This text was attributed to a highly credible source: Dr. John Stevenson, Chairman of
the Engineering Department at Ohio State (how credibility was established will be discussed later).

To aid in meeting the criterion of a repeated message, subjects were instructed to reread the text "at least twice". The message related specific disadvantages of constructing a city trash conversion electrical plant. Also, in the introduction to the text, Dr. Stevenson explicitly concluded that "a proposed trash conversion electrical plant for Columbus should be rejected since it would actually increase electrical costs while hampering long-term growth of electrical supply" (Appendix A). To help achieve overlearning, subjects were told that they would receive a short test to assess "comprehension and retention" of the material. After taking the test, they were given the Likert dependent measure to ascertain the degree of support/opposition to construction of a trash conversion facility.

Identity alteration approach

The identity alteration procedure was designed to elicit more active "sense-making" by inducing subjects to invoke identity construction procedures to complete the message. This group received the same text read by the conventional persuasion group. This time, however, words were randomly deleted and the source of the message was attributed to a summary of a survey of Franklin University students. Subjects were instructed to "fill in the necessary words to make the text as sensible to you as possible. Don't be concerned with correct grammar or syntax. . . . You may also delete any words necessary to make the text more sensible" (Appendix A). After participants supplied their own meaning to the text, they were asked to "construct 3-5 arguments opposing the plant based upon the text that you have just completed. Later you will be given the 'answers' (the complete original text) to see how closely you matched the opposition expressed by other students participating in the original survey" (Appendix A). After subjects developed their own arguments, the Likert instrument was administered.

The random deletion of words is akin to earlier research conducted by Garfinkel (1967) and McHugh (1968). In both studies subjects were told that they would be encountering a new counseling procedure in which they could only ask questions that could be answered either yes or no by a "counselor" shielded from view by a partition. After each answer by the counselor, subjects were to verbally "make sense" of the affirmative or negative response. In actuality, the yes/no answers were randomly made--the "client" was supplying meaning to responses that, at times, would appear as contradictory.
to the observer. Although the Garfinkel and McHugh research was not directly related to persuasion, it provides partial support for the notion that individuals will construct identities based upon some random deletion or, in the counseling studies, random distortion of some data base.

In the present study, the identity construction features of et cetera, invoking normal forms, reciprocity of perspectives and self-perception of behavior were regarded as mutually constitutive and interactive. In the theoretical discussion, these reality construction features were described discretely for analytic purposes. However, in the message construction phase of the experimental identity alteration treatment, subjects operationally filled in their own meanings (et cetera) derived from their existing identity clusters. Furthermore, participants were given considerable freedom to supply their own normal forms: they could edit the text, be unconcerned about grammar or syntax and fill in only those words that were needed to make the text meaningful. To facilitate implementing the norm of reciprocity, the text was described as a summary of findings from a representative survey of Franklin students.

To further enhance self-perception of behavior, participants were also instructed to "construct five of your own arguments opposing the plant based upon the text that you have just completed" (Appendix A). Subjects were given that directive on a separate sheet with a full page to develop their arguments. In a pilot study, subjects who developed arguments consistently followed the instructions, constructing between three and five arguments opposing construction.

**Identity message construction**

When constructing the identity alteration message, the goal was to achieve the highest degree of active sense-making without making the task too discouraging for the respondents. The search was for some optimal level of essential incompleteness that was both a challenging and yet viable level of word deletion. Consequently, a pilot study was run which involved five different treatment groups containing various levels of word deletion: (1) "A" group received the total text (the conventional persuasion condition). (2) "B" group consisted of the deletion of every sixth word, approximately 16 percent of the entire text. (3) "C" group contained six words followed by the elimination of two words, approximately 25 percent of the text. (4) "D" group reflected the random deletion of 23 words, 10 percent of the message. (5) "E" group followed the same deletion procedure as "D" group, except with 20 percent of the words randomly selected. In
all, four deletion groups only "significant words" were con-
sidered—articles and most prepositions were not designated
as significant words and, therefore, not considered in word
deletion. It was assumed that an optimal level of essential
incompleteness would depend upon the interaction of the
number of words deleted and the manner in which they were
deleted. Depending upon the pattern of deletion, the more
words that could be eliminated without making identity con-
struction impossible, the more "potent" the identity altera-
tion intervention. So, if words were deleted in some recurring
pattern, say every fifth or sixth word, the sense-maker
would have more opportunity to supply his own normal form than
if words were eliminated in no discernible fashion.

Based upon the level and pattern of word deletion, dif-
ferent levels of opposition to construction of a city trash
conversion electrical plant, as measured by the Likert in-
strument, should be found between the conventional persuasion
condition (group "A") and the other identity alteration
treatments (groups "B" through "E"). Furthermore, it was
expected that the degree of difference between the two
approaches would be a function of both the number of words
deleted and the pattern of deletion. Specifically, group
"E", with a 20 percent deletion rate and with the highest
rate of random-pattern deletion, should register the greatest
difference from group "A". Group "D", 10 percent deletion
rate, also reflecting a random pattern, should have the second
greatest difference—even though groups "C", 25 percent, and
"B", 16 percent, both had higher rates of "patterned" dele-
tions.

Subjects were volunteers from an introductory sociology
class at Franklin University. They were randomly assigned
to each treatment group. Table 1 displays a summary of the
raw data.

Table 1
Data Summary of Word Deletion Patterns\(^a\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>St. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)The figures reflect an attitude scale ranging from 1 (opposed
to a city trash conversion electrical plant) to 5 (favoring
the plant).
As can be seen, the means fell into the expected pattern. That is, group E was expected to show the greatest divergence from group A and group D was expected to show the second greatest difference. However, an analysis of variance failed to indicate a significant difference among the groups ($F (4, 29) = 1.39$, need $F = 2.70$ at the .05 level). Lack of statistical significance may well be attributed to the lack of power due to the small sample size.

While statistically significant differences were not obtained, the decision was made to use the group E deletion pattern for the final study for the following reasons. First, the direction of the means was as predicted. Second, the magnitude of differences between groups B through E and A were as predicted. Although the data were sparse, this combination of results tend to support the theoretical rationale for deleting the largest number of words possible in an unpatterned fashion.

Irrelevant treatment control group

These subjects engaged in a non-persuasive, irrelevant task followed by the Likert instrument. Participants were instructed to "describe in detail" five major issues facing Ohioans. Subjects were encouraged to give examples and propose possible solutions. After discussion the five issues, subjects received the attitude scale. Time required for this task was approximately equivalent to the other two experimental conditions (see Appendix B).

Other Operational Issues

Source credibility

For the conventional persuasion condition, establishing a high level of source credibility was achieved through a survey of 29 Franklin students. The survey assessed the relative credibility of "Dr. Stevenson" to other possible sources: consumer advocate Ralph Nader, Columbus Mayor Tom Moody, Ohio Governor James Rhodes and "other students". Subjects were asked to rank-order the possible sources in terms of how much they would "trust their word on the city trash conversion electrical plant issue". A mean rank was determined by summing the ranks and dividing by $n$. The following table depicts the rank order and means.
Table 2
Source Credibility Rankings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Ranks</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>n=29</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Stevenson</td>
<td>54(^a)</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Nader</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Moody</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Franklin students</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Rhodes</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)The lower the sum, the higher the credibility ranking.

Subjects were also asked to rate each of the sources on seven point bipolar adjective scales. The bipolar scales involve ascriptions of "trustworthiness", "knowledgeability", and "believability", three dimensions of credibility receiving strong research support (Hovland, Janis and Kelley, 1953). These results also confirmed Stevenson as a highly credible source as shown below.

Table 3
Source Credibility Bipolar Adjective Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trustworthy-Dishonest</th>
<th>Knowledgeable-Ignorant</th>
<th>Believable-Not Believable</th>
<th>n=38</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Stevenson</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Nader</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Franklin students</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Moody</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Rhodes</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1=High credibility
7=Low credibility

Whereas Dr. Stevenson received high credibility marks, "Franklin students", the identity alteration source, was ranked fourth out of five sources and rated third on the dimensions of trustworthiness, knowledgeability, and believability. Dr. Stevenson was ranked and rated first in all categories.
Attitude scale construction

The Likert summated rating procedure was employed because of its high reliability with few items, simplicity in construction and widespread acceptance (Edwards and Kenney, 1967). When compared with the Thurstone equal interval method, also widely used, Edwards and Kenney favor the Likert technique partially because "scales can be constructed by the method of summated ratings more quickly and with less labor than by the equal appearing interval method" (1967, p. 251). Moreover, "scales constructed by the Likert method yield higher reliability coefficients with fewer items than scales constructed by the Thurstone method" (p. 255).

Construction of the Likert instrument was a multi-step, multi-method process: (1) Volunteers were asked to respond to open-ended questions concerning construction of a city-owned trash conversion electrical plant. This survey was taken about two weeks after the November bond issue in which a proposed city trash conversion plant was on the ballot. Subjects were asked such questions as "What were the most important issues concerning construction of a city trash conversion plant?" (2) Responses were then classified in terms of content and 27 Likert items were constructed on a five-point scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". (3) Forty undergraduates, some of which had responded to the initial open-ended questionnaire, answered the 27 item Likert measure. These 27 items were then assessed by correlating each item with total score, a common method of construct validation (Kerlinger, 1973). Only items with a correlation of .60 or better were kept. (4) As another check of construct validity, t-tests between the upper and lower respondent quartiles were then applied to the remaining items. Only those items that were significantly different at the .01 level (two-tailed test), and whose means were over one scale unit apart, were accepted.

After applying these two procedures, 14 items remained. (5) This 14 item scale was then given to 28 new subjects from an undergraduate sociology class at Franklin to assess the reliability of the instrument. (These subjects had been randomly assigned to the five treatment groups discussed in the identity alteration approach section.) Using the split-half method with the Spearman-Brown correction, the instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of .90. The final dependent measure consisted of 13 of these 14 items. Item number 6 was eliminated because of its lack of relevance to the final text used in the two treatment conditions.
Statistical analysis

Experimental results were assessed through a one-way analysis of variance with a Scheffe F-test among the groups of summated ratings for each of the three treatment conditions. It was hypothesized that subjects in the identity alteration treatment would register significantly stronger opposition (p < .05) to the target issue than subjects in the conventional persuasion condition. It was also hypothesized that both treatment groups would express significantly stronger opposition than subjects in the baseline-irrelevant task condition.

Subjects

Subjects were volunteers from psychology courses at Franklin University. Franklin is a private, four-year college primarily appealing to full and part-time working adults. The undergraduate median age for all 1976 students was 27—probably older than most college and university undergraduate populations. Selection from this group appears to be more representative of the general population in terms of age range and socio-economic status than many universities. This might contribute favorably to external validity concerning the sample group. Students have also had little, if any, prior exposure as subjects in experiments.

Volunteers were given extra course credit (10 extra points on one of twelve weekly quizzes) for participating in the study. Since the extra credit was given subjects in all three experimental conditions, any demand characteristics emanating from the reward of extra credit should not affect dependent measure differences between groups.

The experimental setting was a classroom at Franklin University. Administration time was approximately one hour. Subjects first received the appropriate experimental task, then received the Likert dependent measure. After finishing the Likert scale, a final questionnaire (Appendix C) assessed the subjects' perceptions of the experiment. After the experiment was completed, participants were verbally debriefed about the purpose and results of the experiment.

This design represents an initial attempt to operationalize those procedures that are employed in making phenomena meaningful. At best, this research reflects only a partial test of identity alteration theory. Other, nonexperimental procedures may prove more insightful in elucidating the relationship between concept formation and attitude change—particularly since much of the literature for this approach
emanates from a more phenomenological, non-experimental base. Still, a predictive test derived from operationally defined behaviors that are constitutively linked to a theory of identity alteration should be quite useful in reconceptualizing persuasion as another facet of information processing.
REFERENCES


Chapter IV

RESULTS

The design concerned two issues related to persuasion. First, does either persuasive approach have any effect at all? Would either procedure result in a significant difference over a control group receiving no persuasive treatment? Second, and more important, were there significant differences between the two approaches? As it was operationalized, would identity alteration be more effective than the conventional persuasion approach as measured by a post-test only Likert scale?

To test these hypotheses, subjects were divided into three groups: (1) no treatment group "A", (n=29); (2) conventional persuasion group "B", (n=26); (3) identity alteration group "C", (n=27). All three treatments were administered in a college classroom at the same time. An initial analysis of variance (Table 4) revealed significant findings between some combination of groups at the .01 level, \( F(2, 79) = 9.038 \), needed \( F(2,60) = 7.76 \).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>ms</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>141227.0000</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>114.8890</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between</td>
<td>1732.8294</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>866.4147</td>
<td>9.0380</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within</td>
<td>7573.1826</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>95.8631</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further analysis comparing pairs of means for each of the groups employed the conservative Scheffe' method (Ferguson, 1966; Lindman, 1974; Brunning and Kintz, 1968). The initial hypothesis was confirmed. Both conventional (B) and identity alteration (C) approaches to persuasion produced significantly different levels of support \( p < .05 \) as compared to the control
group (A). The second hypothesis, however, was not confirmed. As a result of the Scheffe' analysis, the null hypothesis could not be rejected; no significant difference was found between the identity alteration (C) and conventional persuasion (B) conditions (Table 5).

Table 5

Comparison of Scheffe' F Values Between Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups Compared</th>
<th>Scheffe' F</th>
<th>F' (s, 65)a</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A to B</td>
<td>17.45</td>
<td>6.28</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A to C</td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>6.28</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B to C</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>6.28</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aScheffe' F' needed for significance at the .05 level.

A visual comparison of means and standard deviations for each condition indicates that both persuasive conditions resulted in substantially lower levels of support for the proposal. The identity alteration approach, however, failed to achieve a significantly greater amount of opposition to the trash conversion issue than did the conventional approach.

Table 6

Group Means and Standard Deviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Meana</th>
<th>St. Dev.</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>.71261</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>1.05805</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>1.13556</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aThe higher the mean, the stronger the support. The persuasive messages opposed the issue. Means were divided by 13 to reflect single-item scale values that range from 1 to 5.
Post Hoc Analysis of Likert Instrument

Because a significant difference between the conventional and the identity alteration approach failed to materialize, further analysis was conducted to determine if there were problems with the measuring instrument. Specifically, the possibility existed that the instrument was measuring more than one dimension of the attitude associated with the trash conversion plant issue. To better determine if this were the case, an inter-item correlation matrix was generated to assess the between-item correlation as well as the item-to-total score correlation (Kerlinger, 1973, p. 468). The three groups used in the experiment were collapsed to form one large group (n=82) from which the matrix displayed in Table 7 was generated.

Table 7
Item Correlation Matrix²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>n=82</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.772</td>
<td>.649</td>
<td>.474</td>
<td>.581</td>
<td>.669</td>
<td>.800</td>
<td>.709</td>
<td>.654</td>
<td>.736</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>.427</td>
<td>.666</td>
<td>.830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.643</td>
<td>.460</td>
<td>.652</td>
<td>.623</td>
<td>.625</td>
<td>.659</td>
<td>.668</td>
<td>.772</td>
<td>.166</td>
<td>.493</td>
<td>.776</td>
<td>.846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.649</td>
<td>.581</td>
<td>.652</td>
<td>.652</td>
<td>.518</td>
<td>.668</td>
<td>.772</td>
<td>.335</td>
<td>.415</td>
<td>.640</td>
<td>.753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.474</td>
<td>.581</td>
<td>.460</td>
<td>.468</td>
<td>.550</td>
<td>.525</td>
<td>.328</td>
<td>.402</td>
<td>.458</td>
<td>.656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.669</td>
<td>.800</td>
<td>.709</td>
<td>.654</td>
<td>.736</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>.427</td>
<td>.666</td>
<td>.776</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.772</td>
<td>.709</td>
<td>.654</td>
<td>.736</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>.427</td>
<td>.666</td>
<td>.776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.669</td>
<td>.709</td>
<td>.654</td>
<td>.736</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>.427</td>
<td>.666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.518</td>
<td>.550</td>
<td>.525</td>
<td>.328</td>
<td>.402</td>
<td>.458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.669</td>
<td>.709</td>
<td>.654</td>
<td>.736</td>
<td>.212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.336</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>.427</td>
<td>.666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.166</td>
<td>.335</td>
<td>.536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.415</td>
<td>.649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tot.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

²Need r=.437, (df=26, one tailed test) for significance at the .01 level.

As can be seen, nine of the thirteen items had correlation coefficients of .8 or better with the total score. Of the remaining four items, three had correlations of .66 or better (items 3, 4, and 12), only one item (11) registered a coefficient below that level. (The inter-item coefficients for item 11 clearly indicate that it failed to correlate highly with the other items in the instrument.)

With the exception of item 11, the data displayed in Table 7 did not appear to provide much evidence that the
instrument was multi-dimensional. Given the low item-to-total score correlation produced by item 11, however, one further analysis was conducted which addressed the issue of multi-dimensionality. Item 13 ("I would rate my feelings towards this topic (in terms of support for or opposition to the proposal) as (1) Strongly Favor . . . (5) Strongly Oppose") was the single question which most directly reflected the persuasive purpose of both experimental treatments. Because item 13 best reflected the message's persuasive intent, an analysis of variance was performed using this single item. It was reasoned that if multi-dimensionality existed within the summated scores, the ANOVA results on item 13 would produce an observably different pattern of results.

The ANOVA on item 13 was conducted and the results are summarized in Table 8. A significant F was obtained so the

Table 8
Single Item ANOVA Between Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>ms</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>81</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

same Scheffe' comparison procedures were performed on each of the groups. Table 9 shows the results of this analysis. The control group (A) was found to be directionally consistent with the theoretical predictions and significantly different from both groups B and C. As with the summated results, the single-item results failed to produce a significant difference between groups B and C.

Table 9
Single Item Scheffe' F Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups Compared</th>
<th>Scheffe F</th>
<th>F' (2, 70)(a)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A to B</td>
<td>13.71</td>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A to C</td>
<td>9.08</td>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B to C</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10 displays the means and standard deviations for each group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>St. Dev.</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>.743</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.071</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.109</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*aScale values ranged from 1 (strongest opposition) to 5 (strongest support). The persuasive messages opposed the issue.

Given the high item-to-total score correlation coefficients, and given that the analysis of item 13 produced results identical to the summated score results, further pursuit of the possible contaminating effects of multi-dimensionality did not appear warranted.
REFERENCES


Chapter V

DISCUSSION

As stated earlier, this study represents an initial operationalization of identity formation and alteration as it relates to persuasion. Although some of the following discussion centers directly on the theory and findings, much of the analysis examines operationalization issues affecting the study. Specifically, the significance of the findings will be examined along with the operational issues of norm of reciprocity (source credibility), one versus two-sided messages, and treatment power. The experimental context will be discussed and, finally, suggestions for further research will be posited.

Since both identity alteration and conventional persuasion can be viewed from a reality construction perspective, the theoretical difference between the two approaches rests on whether or not the sense-making activities of the individuals to be persuaded are systematically considered when designing a persuasive campaign. The identity alteration approach seeks to maximize those sense-making activities that would facilitate adoption of the persuasive position. Conventional persuasion does not directly focus on those sense-making activities deemed essential to reality/identity construction (et cetera, normal forms, reciprocity of perspectives and self-perception of behavior). The persuasion recipient is encouraged to be a more active information processor in the identity alteration framework. Although that greater amount of information processing activity did not produce statistically greater amounts of attitude change than the conventional approach, its efficacy as a persuasive strategy was supported. The next section briefly describes the persuasive significance of identity alteration.

Significance of Findings

The study provided support for the basic claim that identity alteration can have persuasive impact in an experimental setting. The results indicate that identity alteration
influenced participants to oppose the target issue when compared with a base line, irrelevant-task group. Furthermore, identity alteration fared as well as a research-based conventional persuasion treatment even though there was a seemingly large discrepancy between the low source credibility of identity alteration and the high credibility of the source attributed to conventional persuasion (as discussed in the following section). Although identity alteration did not prove "superior" to conventional persuasion, it merits further research; particularly in light of the operational issues analyzed in the following sections.

Operational Issues

As with any theory, validation of the identity alteration construct hinges upon how it is operationalized. The operational procedures used in this experiment were directly derived from the theoretical rationale. Viewed in retrospect, however, some of the procedures may have contributed to the lack of significant differences between groups B and C. The specific operational issues which deserve attention are: (1) The norm of reciprocity and source credibility, (2) One-sided messages and identity construction, and (3) Treatment power.

The norm of reciprocity and dimensions of source credibility

In the identity alteration group, the source of the incomplete text was attributed to "a recent survey of a cross-section of Franklin students". In terms of source credibility, Franklin students were rated fourth out of five sources along the dimensions of knowledgeable, trustworthiness and believability. On the other hand, "Dr. John Stevenson, Chairman of the Ohio State Engineering Department", the source ascribed to the conventional persuasion message, received the highest ratings in all three dimensions. This credibility discrepancy between Stevenson and Franklin students constitutes a possible intervening variable contributing to the non-significant results of the second hypothesis. Inclusion of a highly credible source to enhance persuasion receives strong support in communication and social psychological research while low credibility tends to detract from persuasive impact. Inclusion of a low credible source in the identity alteration condition may have been detrimental to achieving the optimal degree of persuasion.
In the follow-up survey the most frequently recurring comment emphasized the "need for more information before making a decision on the issue". Under such circumstances the disparity in credibility might have had an inordinate amount of influence on responses to the Likert survey. As Insko concludes, "In view of the high degree of consistency in the source credibility literature we can safely generalize that a high-credibility source will be more influential than a low credibility source" (1967, p. 48).

The difference in credibility between experimental conditions was not only a matter of degree but also a matter of the different types of credibility invoked. The norm of reciprocity, as operationalized in this study, relates closely to the traditional rubric of "common ground" as it relates to the sharing of perspectives or the sharing of realities. (See Chapter II under reciprocity of perspectives for a discussion of this issue.) Similar beliefs, however, may not be the appropriate dimension of credibility for all types of issues. When subjects' identity clusters are relatively primitive, when insufficient information has been presented to insure that identity clusters are stable or well-formed, expert credibility may be a much more powerful source attribution than one derived from similar beliefs. In an extensive review of research on "Similarity, Credibility, and Attitude Change", Herber Simons and associates concluded that expert testimony may often be superior to similarity in beliefs (Simons, Berkowitz and Moyer, 1970). They describe a situation with striking parallels to the current research:

Although it might seem clear that emphasis on speaker-audience similarities would help effect persuasion, upon reflection it is by no means obvious that such would inevitably be the case. The distinguished professor of economics, speaking to a lay audience on the subject of international trade, might do well to stress differences in expertise and experience between himself and his audience. With the same audience and subject, a lay speaker who confessed that he shared his audience's lack of expertise might well be liked for his honesty, but not believed. Clearly, the relationships between perceived similarities, attitude change, and the variables which mediate among them are more complex than is familiarly supposed (1970, p. 1).

As shown in pre-experimental attitude surveys on source credibility (see Chapter III) and as perhaps evidenced in the
experimental outcome, the expertise of "Dr. Stevenson" may have had an inordinate influence when compared to the lay source, "other Franklin students", that was incorporated in the identity alteration approach.

In terms of the norm of reciprocity, rather than a shared perspective, the relatively uninformed audience may have encountered perceptual discrepancies that could become problematic; "when 'we don't see things the same', effort must be expended to 'account for' the differences" (Chapter II). To test this claim, a study similar to this one might include the same source attribution in both the identity alteration and conventional persuasion groups. Any positive differences in favor of the identity alteration condition would support the credibility analysis presented here.

It might be argued that an identity alteration theory of persuasion and information processing makes no unique claims concerning source credibility. To some extent this is true. The identity alteration approach assumes that individuals in part form their realities through consensual validation (Festinger, 1965; Chapter Two). The opinions and views of others, particularly in interaction, significantly impacts the manner in which identity clusters are formed or modified. As an underlying process, however, the norm of reciprocity, in conjunction with the et cetera principle, normal forms and self-perception of behavior, seeks to examine how credibility is employed in sense-making and reality construction. Shared perspectives, for example, may be more appropriate when individuals possess sufficient information to invoke the et cetera principle and establish normal forms without great difficulty or confusion. On the other hand, when identity clusters are relatively undeveloped on a particular topic, a source that is seen as providing a perspective or challenging a precariously held position (e.g., makes it problematic) may have more persuasive power. In both bases, the norm of reciprocity, in mutually constituted action with other identity construction procedures, can be regarded as operative.

Future research might operationalize the norm of reciprocity in a dyadic conversational setting in which a confederate discusses the topic followed by further identity alteration procedures. Another approach might combine identity construction procedures in a manner similar to the bogus counseling session reviewed in Chapter III. Such an approach might integrate interaction with identity construction (Garfinkel, 1967; McHugh, 1968).
One-sided message and identity construction

Within the early theoretical development of identity clusters (Chapter II), McGuire's inoculation approach was analyzed in terms of identity alteration—particularly with reference to one- versus two-sided messages. The theoretical discussion centered upon the need for a two-sided message for long term attitude change because a one-sided approach "does not give adequate grounds for identity assimilation; the 'identity' of the new information is only precariously grounded" (Chapter II). The purpose of this study, however, was not to achieve long term change—the Likert instrument was given immediately after the treatment and no long term follow-up data was planned. In retrospect, the absence of a highly credible source in the identity alteration group may have created the need for other forms of validation by the message recipients for even short-term persuasion to transpire. In order to develop a perspective, an identity framework, both sides of a relatively novel issue should have been given. When the audience is well educated, two-sided arguments achieve greater attitude change than one-sided approaches (Lumsdaine and Janis, 1953; Insko, 1962). In making sense of the issue, identity alteration subjects had a greater need for a two-sided message. They faced an uncertain task associated with a low-credible source concerning a controversial issue about which they knew very little. For these reasons, a two-sided approach would probably facilitate identity alteration. Also, for the reasons given above, the lack of a two-sided approach in both experimental treatments might be more acutely felt within the identity alteration procedure. In fact, the second most frequent comment, primarily expressed by identity alteration participants requested a "two-sided approach" consisting of "opposing views" or containing the "other side of the issue". Likewise, there was criticism of the "one-sided arguments" that was again most frequently voiced by identity alteration participants.

Treatment power

Further research into information processing and identity alteration should augment the level of sense-making activities engaged in by the persuasive targets. Based upon follow-up data, some question arises about whether participants "internalized" the task. Did they consider the et cetera and normal forms activity (filling in the blanks) and the self-perception procedure (construct your own arguments) as mental activities that increased/altered their understanding or as pure mechanical tasks performed to fulfill the requirements of the experiment? As one respondent put it, "I really don't know how I feel about the task so how can I guess how someone else feels?" Whether or not this is a representative view, it still denotes that
some participants might regard the identity alteration operation as simply a passive, "matching" exercise not contingent upon personal sense-making necessary for identity alteration.

The ultimate question is whether the experimental tasks represented a significantly disruptive action affecting existing identity clusters. Simply guessing someone else's probable response might not assure that participants are actively and personally involved in constructing their realities. So disruption of normal forms might not have been sufficiently extensive to induce the subjects' identity construction. Although the task was somewhat novel, it could easily have been constructed as another "fill-in-the-blanks test"--a normal form that would not yield much persuasive power.

As self-perceivers of behavior, participants may have regarded the task as simply enumerating arguments existing within the text. The construction of original arguments was minimal. Before an individual can self-perceive his advocacy or opposition to an issue, he must first feel that some initial identity exists. In the case of a city trash conversion electrical plant, the majority of the subjects stressed that more knowledge about the topic was needed before they could "make up their minds". Some frame of reference for developing arguments seems essential. A simple "copying" of someone else's arguments would not achieve the theoretical impact of identity alteration since the subject is still in a relatively passive role as reality constructor.

Finally, only limited identity alteration could occur under these experimental constraints. Subjects were exposed to a relatively unknown topic for approximately 30 minutes and given only one side of the issue. To the extent that identity clusters relevant to the topic exist, identity alteration powerful enough to influence how the participant responded to the Likert questionnaire would be difficult to achieve.

So overall, low source credibility, absence of a two-sided message and perhaps diminished treatment power could possibly have detrimental effects on identity alteration subjects when compared to conventional persuasion participants. Moreover, any interaction effects of these three factors might compound the problem.
Experimental Context

A final factor, viewed from a phenomenological perspective, is the context in which the research took place. Participants were fully aware that they were engaged in an "experiment". They were "doing" experimental behavior (Garfinkel, 1967). Perhaps the "definition of the situation" (McHugh, 1968) was not primarily one of considering whether or not to construct a trash conversion electrical plant. That issue, and the resulting Likert instrument, may have been secondary to the concern of "how do you do an experiment". A sense of "how the experiment should be done" was less ambiguous for the conventional experimental group. They simply read a message, tried to learn it, then received a questionnaire related to it. With the identity alteration group more uncertainty existed. The task was not easily identifiable as a standard persuasive approach. The most salient attribution may have been "this is an experimental task", rather than "this is a persuasive message". As discussed in Chapter II, the salience of information is a primary determiner in how realities are constructed (Taylor and Fiske, 1975). If the identity alteration approach highlighted the "doing of an experiment" to a greater degree than the more straightforward conventional persuasion, a discrepancy unfavorable to the persuasive impact of the identity alteration condition would exist. Identity alteration subjects would be more concerned with doing an experiment while conventional persuasion participants were concerned with a persuasive issue.

In the future, research modifications of operational procedures and awareness of the experimental setting should receive attention. There could be a dyadic or group interaction to operationalize the reciprocity of perspectives. A more active task requiring more than just simple matching of beliefs would help achieve normal forms and the et cetera principle. An advocacy task involving the self-perception of behavior should require that the individual actively inform himself about the issue before advocacy is requested. The construct of identity alteration received empirical support--it proved "persuasive" in terms of the operational requirements of the experiment. But perhaps because of operational features and experimental context, the superiority of identity alteration to conventional persuasion has yet to be demonstrated.
Further Research

Extended research should occur on two fronts. First, studies should be conducted in a non-experimental, naturalistic setting. Second, construct inter-relationships need to be experimentally assessed and, when possible, naturalistic findings should be scrutinized under more controlled experimental conditions.

Naturalistic research

In a naturalistic setting considerable research currently examines rule-governed aspects of conversation. A field study might seek to manipulate the cognitive "rules" of identity structuring (et cetera, norm of reciprocity, etc.) in a persuasive context. A subject might receive a persuasive protocol in an interview situation. As the subject interacted with the researchers, any "shifts" in identity clusters evidenced in verbal and nonverbal communication might be recorded and analyzed. The persuasive message, designed to fit with the interview, would directly facilitate identity construction procedures.

In a different naturalistic vein, the extent and quality of identity structuring which currently exists in specific advertising approaches and campaigns needs to be assessed for its persuasive impact. When, for example, do media campaigns "whet curiosity" or induce the receiver to "fill in the gaps" with his or her own information? Advertising strategies that use polls, questionnaires, etc. that are related to their persuasive task should be content analyzed and indications of advertising effects should be ascertained.

Finally, such selling devices as the "foot-in-the-door" technique should be examined in light of identity alteration. Employing the foot-in-the-door approach (Freedman and Fraser, 1966) involves obtaining assent to smaller, relatively insignificant requests that lead to larger, more significant behavioral concessions; once the salesperson gets his or her foot in the door, the definition of the situation supposedly changes from "this is an adversary trying to get my money" to "this is a guest in my home". This technique seems closely related to self-perception of behavior as well as providing a "normal form" for compliance. Once the individual "invites" the salesperson into the home, a self-perception inference might be made that "I treat people in my home like guests"—particularly in low-pressure situations that don't appear to be forced compliance by the salesperson. The "normal form" of how "I treat guests in my home" might then be manipulated
by the salesperson: asking for a drink of water, explaining the product at the kitchen table, etc. The procedures employed in such an approach and the persuasive effects should be naturalistically analyzed.

**Experimental setting**

From a more experimental stance, interrelationships of constructs central to identity alteration need to be tested. First, experiments should parcel out individual identity structuring techniques. The literature and theory suggest that the norm of reciprocity, et cetera, normal forms and self-perception of behavior are interactive and mutually constitutive. It may be insightful to violate this assumption by experimentally comparing these procedures for possible differential impact as persuasive facilitators. The theoretical problem, of course, is to validly operationalize each procedure in a manner that does not substantially overlap with other procedures.

Experimental efforts are needed to discern whether optimum levels of identity disruption exist. Presenting the subject with too much disarray compels cognitive withdrawal from the task. Too little disruption, a possibility in this experiment, leads to passivity and minimal identity disruption. The appropriate level of disruption may be inter-related with intelligence level, initial degree of commitment to the topic, and the interpersonal and environmental setting in which identity alteration was pursued. Experimental manipulation might elucidate these inter-relationships and provide guidelines for what levels of identity disruption are most effective.

Finally, the notion of identity assimilation needs development. How can "normal forms" be extended from one issue to another in order to alter identities? How can identity structuring activities minimize resistance to an assimilation approach? Both experimental and naturalistic research are needed to answer these questions.

**Concluding Thoughts**

This study has attempted to view persuasion as an aspect of information processing. Chapter I contrasted the emphasis of conventional persuasion strategies with an approach that regards how individuals construct their realities as central to persuasion and attitude change. Chapter II provided a conceptual framework for the notion of identity construction.
and alteration. Particular attention was paid to the concept of reflexivity and to the way in which identities are organized. The specific identity construction procedures, et cetera, normal forms, norm of reciprocity and self-perception of behavior, were then developed.

Derived from the theoretical development of Chapter II, the third chapter operationalizes identity construction procedures and proposed an experimental test comparing identity alteration with conventional persuasion and with a control group receiving an irrelevant-task treatment. Two specific hypotheses were suggested: (1) Subjects receiving the identity alteration treatment would register significantly stronger opposition to the target issue than subjects receiving a conventional persuasion approach. (2) Both identity alteration and conventional persuasion groups would express significantly stronger opposition to the target issue than an irrelevant-task control group.

Chapter IV related findings of the experiment. Although identity alteration proved "persuasive", confirming the second hypothesis, no significant difference was found between the persuasive impact of the conventional treatment versus the identity alteration procedure. A post hoc analysis of the Likert instrument was conducted to assess the question of unidimensionality; support for unidimensionality was reviewed.

The final chapter discussed the significance of findings. Particular emphasis was placed on the fact that identity alteration received support as a viable persuasive approach even though it was not demonstrated as statistically superior to conventional persuasion. Operationalization issues and the experimental context were analyzed as factors possibly contributing to the lack of significance between identity alteration and conventional persuasion. Finally, possibilities for further research in both naturalistic and experimental settings were submitted.

Identity alteration offers the advantage of viewing human information processing activities from a unified perspective. Persuasion becomes part of those sense-making activities that enable reality construction. Such a perspective is gaining support on independent fronts in communication, psychology and sociology. To be fully accepted, however, identity alteration requires more "disruptive" research-support to alter existing identities on persuasion and communication.
REFERENCES


General Instructions

The material that you will receive represents issues of concern to Columbus area residents. You will not all have the same packets or the same tasks. Please concentrate only on your task and read all instructions carefully. Please take your time and take the task seriously. All responses are completely anonymous. I am not concerned with individual responses but with overall group trends. As soon as you have finished with the first packet, please signal me for additional information. Now begin with the first packet, and please don't rush.

*Numbers on the packets only denote what general group you are in--they do not in any way reveal individual identities.
Task-Irrelevant Control Group (A)

IMPORTANT OHIO ISSUES

As we were made aware this winter, energy concerns are important to Ohioans. What are some other issues that you feel are particularly important to Ohio? On the paper provided, describe in detail five other major issues facing Ohio. Develop each issue fully, giving examples. Finally, propose possible solutions for each of the five problems. If you need more paper, please ask me. After you have finished, please signal me for additional information.
The following arguments, given by Dr. John Stevenson, Chairman of the Engineering Department at Ohio State, stress the disadvantages that will result from the construction of a city trash conversion electrical plant. Such a plant would burn waste, thereby converting it into energy used to generate electricity. During a recent conference on "Energy Alternatives and Pollution Control", Dr. Stevenson concluded that "a proposed trash conversion electrical plant for Columbus should be rejected since it would actually increase electrical costs while hampering long term growth of electrical supply."

The following material is an excerpt of the arguments given by Dr. Stevenson. To help you remember as much of the material as possible, reread the text at least twice. To test comprehension and retention, you will be given a short test over the material later.
City Trash Conversion Electrical Plant

Although it sounds like an innovative idea, building a Columbus trash conversion electrical plant would be very impractical. The purpose of such a facility would be to generate significant amounts of electricity at a reasonable cost. In actuality, a city trash conversion electrical plant would substantially raise the price of electricity while only increasing supplies an insignificant amount.

Building and maintaining a city trash conversion electrical plant would be a very costly venture. Since the technology for building a trash conversion plant is primitive, construction costs are extremely high—perhaps twice as high as construction costs for a conventional electrical generating facility. In addition to initial construction outlays, the operation costs would also be higher than for a plant with a proven technology. Finally, costs would be inflated even more because of an insufficient supply of burnable trash needed for a trash conversion electrical plant. Because Columbus does not have enough usable trash, the city would be forced to purchase burnable wastes from other municipalities and then pay to have it hauled to Columbus.

So as a result of high construction/operation costs and of an insufficient supply of burnable trash, electricity produced by a city trash conversion electrical plant would be more expensive than electricity produced by private companies. Rather than encouraging private utilities to hold down the cost of electricity, a Columbus trash conversion plant would ironically intensify pressures to raise the price to consumers.

Furthermore, a trash conversion electrical plant would not significantly increase the supply of electricity. Even if adequate amounts of trash could be located and purchased, a city plant would meet only 10% of Columbus' electrical power needs. A 10% increase is simply not sufficient to justify the cost involved in setting up the plant in the first place. However, should the city still decide to build a trash conversion electrical plant, such a move would have an added disadvantage: it would discourage the private sector from investing/building a plant that could adequately handle Columbus' needs.

Although a trash conversion electrical plant offers the appeal of "innovation" and "progressiveness", it would actually increase the cost of electricity while doing little to remedy current electrical supply problems. In reality, a Columbus trash conversion electrical plant would actually magnify the problems that it seeks to solve.
In a recent survey of a cross section of Franklin students, strong opposition to a city-owned trash conversion plant was found. The summary of survey findings found on the next page contains some of the most frequent reasons students gave for opposing construction of a city trash conversion electrical plant. The purpose of such a plant would be to burn waste, converting it into electricity.

Within the following summary, material has been left out from each sentence. Your task is to see how closely your responses can match the responses of students participating in the original survey. Fill in the necessary words to make the text as sensible to you as possible. Don't be concerned with correct grammar, spelling or sentence structure. Simply fill in the blanks with the word or words that you feel are needed to (1) make the text most meaningful to you and (2) match with the majority of responses that opposed construction of the trash conversion electrical facility. You may also delete any words necessary to make the text sensible.

Later you will be given the "answers" (the complete original text) to see how closely you matched the opposition expressed by other students participating in the original survey.
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Although a conversion electrical plant offers the appeal of "innovation" and "progressiveness", it would actually to remedy supply problems. In reality, a Columbus conversion actually magnify the problems that it seeks to.
Now that you have finished filling in the blanks, construct from three to five of your own arguments opposing the plant based upon the text that you have just completed. In developing your positions, be thorough and rely primarily on the data in the previous summary. You can, however, include your own additional information to support positions derived from the summary. Again, grammar, spelling and sentence structure are not of primary importance. Develop your positions below:
APPENDIX B
After carefully reading each of the numbered statements, select one of the following alternatives that best describes your view of the statement. For each statement select one of the following alternatives:

___ strongly agree
___ agree
___ undecided
___ disagree
___ strongly disagree

PLEASE READ EACH STATEMENT VERY CAREFULLY AND RESPOND TO ALL STATEMENTS.

1. Construction of a city facility to use trash to produce electricity would be an effective way to help solve electrical supply shortages.

___ strongly agree
___ agree
___ undecided
___ disagree
___ strongly disagree

2. Building a trash conversion electrical plant would be a wasteful economic venture for the city.

___ strongly agree
___ agree
___ undecided
___ disagree
___ strongly disagree

3. A city owned trash conversion electrical plant would help keep electrical costs from rising.

___ strongly agree
___ agree
___ undecided
___ disagree
___ strongly disagree

4. The cost of operating a city trash conversion electrical plant would be prohibitively high.

___ strongly agree
___ agree
___ undecided
___ disagree
___ strongly disagree
5. Private industry can provide sufficient electrical supply, a city trash conversion electrical plant is not needed.
   ___ strongly agree
   ___ agree
   ___ undecided
   ___ disagree
   ___ strongly disagree

6. A trash conversion plant would cause the cost of electricity to increase.
   ___ strongly agree
   ___ agree
   ___ undecided
   ___ disagree
   ___ strongly disagree

7. Construction of a city trash conversion electrical plant is impractical.
   ___ strongly agree
   ___ agree
   ___ undecided
   ___ disagree
   ___ strongly disagree

8. Construction of a trash conversion electrical plant for the Columbus area should be opposed.
   ___ strongly agree
   ___ agree
   ___ undecided
   ___ disagree
   ___ strongly disagree

9. Cost for constructing a city trash conversion plant is too high.
   ___ strongly agree
   ___ agree
   ___ undecided
   ___ disagree
   ___ strongly disagree

10. Construction of a trash conversion electrical plant for the Columbus area should be supported.
    ___ strongly agree
    ___ agree
    ___ undecided
    ___ disagree
    ___ strongly disagree
11. Construction of a city trash conversion plant would cause an increase in the tax rate.

   ____ strongly agree
   ____ agree
   ____ undecided
   ____ disagree
   ____ strongly disagree

12. The city should not be in the electricity business in competition with private electrical companies.

   ____ strongly agree
   ____ agree
   ____ undecided
   ____ disagree
   ____ strongly disagree

13. I would rate my feelings towards this topic (in terms of support for or opposition to the proposal) as

   ____ strongly favor
   ____ favor
   ____ undecided
   ____ oppose
   ____ strongly oppose
Follow-Up Questionnaire

In order to help in understanding your views of this study, please answer each question fully and specifically. Give examples, details to help accurately portray your impressions of this study.

1. The initial instructions were clear, easy to understand.
   ___ strongly agree
   ___ agree
   ___ undecided
   ___ disagree
   ___ strongly disagree
   PLEASE EXPLAIN YOUR ANSWER:

2. The "filling in the blanks" task was easy to complete.
   ___ strongly agree
   ___ agree
   ___ undecided
   ___ disagree
   ___ strongly disagree
   PLEASE EXPLAIN YOUR RESPONSE:

3. In terms of commitment to the study, I felt highly committed to do the best I could.
   ___ strongly agree
   ___ agree
   ___ undecided
   ___ disagree
   ___ strongly disagree
   PLEASE EXPLAIN:

4. The "filling in the blanks" task was difficult to do.
   ___ strongly agree
   ___ agree
   ___ undecided
   ___ disagree
   ___ strongly disagree
   PLEASE EXPLAIN:
5. I had sufficient time to complete all tasks.
   ___ strongly agree
   ___ agree
   ___ undecided
   ___ disagree
   ___ strongly disagree
   PLEASE EXPLAIN:

6. Overall, the task was interesting and pleasant.
   ___ strongly agree
   ___ agree
   ___ undecided
   ___ disagree
   ___ strongly disagree
   PLEASE EXPLAIN:

7. Finally, what were your impressions of the study? Did you fully understand what you were doing? Were you suspicious? Confused? Were there any aspects of the study (setting, procedures, the researcher, the nature of the study, etc.) that upset you? What suggestions or observations do you have? Please be specific.
As with the other questionnaires, the following information is anonymous. This data will be summarized for all experiment participants and compared to the overall population of Franklin students.

1. Sex: ___ male ___ female
2. Age: ______
3. Marital status: ___ single ___ married ___ divorced ___ widowed
4. Total average income: ___ $5,000-10,000 ___ $10,000-15,000 ___ $15,000-20,000 ___ $20,000-25,000 ___ Above $25,000
5. Employment: ___ full time ___ part time ___ not employed
6. Grade level: ___ freshman ___ sophomore ___ junior ___ senior
7. How many years have you been out of high school? ______ years
8. How many hours are you presently taking? ______ hours
9. What is your overall grade point average? ______ GPA
10. Do you intend to attend graduate school? ___ yes ___ no

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP IN THIS STUDY!
REFERENCES


