Survey of Converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints at Brigham Young University Between September, 1965 and January, 1969

Marcus H. White
Brigham Young University - Provo

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SURVEY OF CONVERTS TO THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS AT BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY BETWEEN SEPTEMBER, 1965 AND JANUARY, 1969

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of Speech and Dramatic Arts
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Marcus H. White
May 1972
This thesis, by Marcus H. White, is accepted in its present form by the Department of Speech and Dramatic Arts of Brigham Young University as satisfying the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

J. LaVar Bateman, Committee Chairman

Wm. Dale Goodson, Committee Member

May, 1972

Date

Parley W. Newman, Department Chairman
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since becoming a student at Brigham Young University in September, 1965, the writer has been interested in the area of persuasion as it relates to public speaking, and especially as it relates to stake missionary activities. The purpose in this thesis is to determine selected characteristics of converts as listeners from Brigham Young University to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and compare them with characteristics determined by Audience Analysis by Wayne C. Minnick in his book The Art of Persuasion.1

An audience is described by Kimball Young, as people assembled with a definite purpose who are prepared to be affected and directed; they gather at a predetermined time and place and display fairly standard patterns of interaction.2 The converts met at predetermined times and places with other people in order to learn about the Church and to follow directions of the stake missionaries so that they could prepare to join The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As potential converts they displayed similar

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patterns of interaction. Since nearly one-third of all non-member students studied joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints while attending Brigham Young University, this large percentage may indicate a high degree of readiness of the potential converts to react as a receptive audience.

Thus, in order to determine selected characteristics of the Latter-day Saint converts as listeners, the study was limited to those converts between September, 1965, and January, 1969. To get as accurate a picture as possible, characteristics of the converts were to be determined from three sources: (1) interviews of the eight Brigham Young University stake mission presidents, (2) written reports by converts at the time they received the missionary lessons, and (3) surveys completed by the converts.

The writer will attempt to compare the characteristics of the converts with those by Wayne C. Minnick concerning "prior analysis" of an audience:

"I. How can the attention and interest of this audience be arrested and maintained?

"A. Assess and control, as much as possible, the physical circumstances of the audience.

"B. To what immediate and urgent wants of the audience can the speaker's remarks be related?

"II. How can the speaker be assured that this audience correctly understands him?

"A. The capacity of an audience to understand a speaker correctly is affected by a number of factors.

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3Paul Felt, private interview held at Provo, Utah, January 30, 1969.

"1. The capacity to understand is affected by age.
"2. The capacity to understand is affected by experience and knowledge.
"3. The capacity to understand is affected by education.
"4. The capacity to understand is affected by intelligence.

"B. The tolerance of an audience for deliberate ambiguity is affected by this: They will tolerate ambiguity more readily from a speaker who is highly respected.

"III. How can the speaker be assured that this audience will believe him?

"A. What is the extent and nature of their experience and knowledge with respect to this problem?
"B. What is the extent of the speaker's prestige?
"C. What expressed group opinions does this audience respect?
"D. To what degree will the immediate wants of this audience sway their beliefs?

"IV. What possible obstacles exist that may prevent the audience from acting?

"A. Are there tangible obstacles that prevent adoption of speaker's proposals?
"B. Are there intangible obstacles that prevent adoption of the speaker's proposals?"

Definition of Terms

To understand terms special to this study, some definitions are proposed:

1. Converts: Students who have been baptized and confirmed members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints while attending Brigham Young University.

2. Brigham Young University: An institution owned and operated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which will hereafter be referred to as BYU.

3. Mormon: A nickname for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints which is given because of
religious beliefs in a book of scripture called the Book of Mormon.  

4. LDS: An abbreviation for Latter-day Saints, or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

5. Nonmember: Any person who is not a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

6. Stake missionaries: Individuals, set apart as teachers to present six missionary lessons to potential converts at Brigham Young University from September, 1965 through January, 1969.

7. Investigator: A person who actively investigates the LDS Church.


9. Stake: An organizational unit often geographical and usually consisting of from five to ten wards or congregations.

10. Stake mission president: A man chosen as an ecclesiastical leader of a group of stake missionaries involved in missionary activities at BYU.

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5 Book of Mormon, trans. by Joseph Smith, Jr. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964).

6 A Uniform System for Teaching Investigators (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1962).
CHAPTER II

SURVEY OF LITERATURE

This chapter will review the works of prominent men in the fields of speech and psychology as they support the pattern of audience analysis described by Wayne C. Minnick in Chapter I of this thesis.

I. "How can the attention and interest of this audience be arrested and maintained?"

Leon Festinger, Stanley Scharter, and Kurt Black in Social Pressure and Informal Groups state that discussion groups need cohesiveness, or resistance to change will occur. In order to promote change these characteristics are needed: (1) There is an attraction to the group and resistance to leaving it. (2) Motivation to accomplish the goals of the group is high. (3) There is a coordination of efforts of members in the group to accomplish the group goals.

W. B. Pillsbury agrees with Festinger in suggesting that people are more easily persuaded when the surroundings in which communication occurs is controlled by the


speaker.³ Outside distractions keep listeners from concentrating on the message.

Minnick asks, referring to attention of an audience being maintained, to what immediate and urgent wants of the audience can the speaker's remarks be related?⁴ Just as physical circumstances affect the audience, so do wants, interests, and purposes. Some authorities feel that the most shifts of opinion occur in audiences in which these shape beliefs. F. H. Lund brought this out in an experiment concerning "The Psychology of Beliefs."⁵ As M. D. Karraker found, once the introduction gains shift of opinion or agreement, interest is most likely sustained when the audience has had experience with the subject.⁶

II. How can the speaker be assured that this audience correctly understands him?

Minnick states that the capacity of an audience to understand a speaker correctly is affected by a number of factors, such as age, experience and knowledge.⁷


⁴Minnick, The Art of Persuasion, p. 249.


Chapter Ten of *The Art of Persuasion* states that the susceptibility of an audience to persuasion and its capacity to understand is affected by age. The audience must be old enough to understand the communication. Yet, in comparing age groups, younger audiences are found to be more easily persuaded when they understand the communication. Marple emphasized this in stating, "There appears to be a decline of suggestibility with increasing age." As we grow older, our beliefs tend to become stronger, and we are less likely to give them up. In *Experimental Social Psychology*, Gordon Murphy, Louis Murphy, and Theodore Newcomb point out that the younger he is the more easily a person is persuaded.

Other important factors affecting the capacity to understand are experience and knowledge. In 1957 Vance Packard said that a listener responds favorably to a communicator's propositions when dominant attitudes are touched off by the persuader. Minnick points out that a speaker can be assured that his audience will believe him

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when the experiences or knowledge presented reinforce the beliefs of the listener.\textsuperscript{12}

Education and intelligence also affect the capacity of an audience to understand.\textsuperscript{13} A series of studies, conducted by Charles E. Hovland and his co-workers, found that people of high intelligence (graduation from high school) would tend to be more influenced by logical arguments than those with low intellectual ability.\textsuperscript{14}

As the audience correctly understands the speaker, they will tolerate deliberate ambiguity more readily from a speaker who is highly respected.\textsuperscript{15} Speakers unknown to their audiences show that appropriate introductions outlining high status "'credentials' will significantly increase favorable attitudes resulting from the speech." Berlo and Gulley demonstrated that there is significant correlation between the effect of an audience's prior judgments of a speaker's ethos and acceptance of his point of view.\textsuperscript{16} This is also explained by Tannenbaum's "congruity principle"—

\textsuperscript{12}Minnick, \textit{The Art of Persuasion}, p. 248.
\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{15}Minnick, \textit{The Art of Persuasion}, p. 248.
that attitude changes always point toward increasing their harmony with existing listener frames of reference or sets of expectations.\textsuperscript{17}

Not only do expectations gain speakers prestige, but also bearing and delivery. W. K. Clark found that audiences ranking fourteen qualities of speakers and speaking listed "sincerity" and "poise" respectively as most essential. Speakers who appear honest, purposeful, confident, and considerate create favorable attitudes resulting from a speech.\textsuperscript{18}

III. How can the speaker be assured that this audience will believe him?

According to Alvin Zander and Arthur R. Cohen, attitude change occurs very often among those who accept ideas from speakers with high prestige.\textsuperscript{19} E. H. Henrikson demonstrated that "likeability," or earned status, brought


H. Gilkenson and his associates, F. S. Haiman, S. F. Paulson, and T. M. Scheidel demonstrated in their experiments that speakers having prestige significantly influence listeners more than those who do not. E. P. Bettinghaus found that prestige may be earned by a speaker's manner. Effectiveness of delivery significantly relates to prestige, and thus, persuasiveness.

Not only prestige of the speaker, but also the immediate wants of the audience are important in order to sway their beliefs. Studies, similar to the previously mentioned ones involving prestige, by S. E. Asch demonstrate that listeners tend to conform to the beliefs and actions of

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fellow listeners. Even though they might behave differently when alone, listeners in audiences generally prefer to avoid extreme behavior that will distinguish them from their fellows. T. M. Sawyer, experimenting along similar lines to Asch's found a significant correlation between the extent to which the individual was influenced by a speech and his estimate of the degree to which other listeners were influenced.

As found by T. M. Ewing, most listeners are persuaded more toward the speaker's beliefs, if at the beginning of the speech he asserts that his views correspond with those of his hearers, even though he actually advocates a proposition contrary to their initial opinions. In a similar way W. Weiss demonstrated that a communicator can influence an audience more easily if in discussing a controversial issue, he makes opportunities to express other topic opinions in accord with those of his hearers. If, by means of suggestion, the speaker can persuade his audience that the

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majority opinion is different than it really is, as Marple stated, they will shift attitudes toward majority position.\textsuperscript{31}

No studies are cited in this chapter which deal directly with the fourth selected point of Minnick's audience analysis concerning what obstacles may prevent adoption of speaker's proposals. Most studies relating to this factor deal with motivation to overcome obstacles.

The studies cited in this chapter tell why Wayne C. Minnick's points of audience analysis dealing with the following items are valid: (1) Attention and interest of an audience must be arrested and maintained, (2) The speaker can be assured the audience will correctly understand him, (3) The audience will tolerate ambiguity from a speaker who is highly respected, and (4) The speaker must know that the audience believes him. The points of audience analysis are supported by several studies. When the converts fit Minnick's audience analysis, the studies cited in this chapter apply to them also.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF DATA

A. Interviews with Mission Presidents

The first source used to obtain information concerning converts was the eight BYU stake mission presidents. At the beginning of the semester, each mission obtains the names of all nonmember students in its mission area.

Each nonmember student who is accepted for registration for the coming semester must have his name printed on a "Record Card for Nonmembers" [one for the council of stake mission presidents, the stake mission president, and the missionary assigned to that area]. . . . When a baptism occurs, the nonmember cards are transmitted by the mission secretary to the University registrar for appropriate record changes.¹

Each mission keeps its own record of converts. The writer contacted each mission president to obtain the names and addresses of converts, and each convert was then contacted. Each of the eight mission presidents also gave his opinion concerning the characteristics and personal data of the converts in his mission area. Almost all of the mission presidents gave similar answers in describing the characteristics of potential converts.

Several conclusions may be reached from information supplied by the eight stake mission presidents. Six mission

presidents indicated that most of their converts were freshmen, one indicated that most were sophomores, and one other from a married stake indicated most were juniors.

All mission presidents indicated that high grades, attending a greater number of Church meetings, having a larger number of Mormon friends, greater knowledge, greater interest, and more preparation for the discussions were definite characteristics of converts in their mission areas. Minnick agrees with these points as they relate to persuasion.\(^2\) He states that the greater ability to understand (clarity, interest, organization, age, education, as indicated by grades, intelligence), prior preparation (meeting attendance), group opinions (number of friends), prior knowledge (reading LDS literature, discussing beliefs, praying to know the truth, and attending meetings), all contribute to persuadability.

All mission presidents agree that converts sincerely wanted to know more about the Church and felt a need to incorporate into their lives the things the missionaries were telling them. This agrees with Minnick who states that people looking for answers or solutions to problems are more susceptible to persuasion than those who are not.

Another factor that Minnick indicates aids in persuadability is a speaker's prestige.\(^3\) Prestige is indicated

\[^2\]Minnick, op. cit., pp. 247-251.

\[^3\]Ibid., pp. 248-249.
by a number of factors in the mission presidents' interviews such as knowledge and respect for missionaries. All these points or characteristics were rated positive by the converts, thus supporting Minnick's ideas on audience analysis.

Minnick indicated that obstacles which would prevent a listener from being persuaded are usually few or can be overcome for those who are persuaded. 4 The eight stake mission presidents indicated that the main obstacle to baptism was that the convert felt he was "not ready." This obstacle was overcome usually through information given in the stake missionary discussions.

According to Minnick, the last area relating to persuadability is control of the physical circumstances of the listener. 5 The eight stake mission presidents indicate that physical surroundings (circumstances of surroundings and number in attendance) contributed to keeping the attention, and the number of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the group made it easy for the converts to conform to the beliefs of the group.

As a group, the mission presidents indicated that the converts from September, 1965 to January, 1969 had the characteristics indicated. All the characteristics agree with characteristics Minnick says are important to listener persuasion.

4Ibid., p. 251.
5Ibid., pp. 247-248.
B. Written Accounts by Converts

This section deals with written accounts by the converts. Each written statement is compared with one or more of the listener characteristics listed in Minnick's audience analysis. A number was assigned each convert which corresponds to his written statement and his answer in the survey. Each number corresponding to a particular convert will be put in brackets in order to distinguish it from another number. This way the reader may compare the two. This may aid in future research of audience analysis of converts to the LDS Church. The reader will note that the numbers are not consecutive because some converts did not make any comments which could fit a category of audience analysis.

The first area of audience analysis deals with:

"I. How can the attention and interest of this audience be arrested and maintained?"

"A. Assess and control, as much as possible, the physical circumstances of the audience."

Response of Converts:

(2) "From the Mormon point of view, they \[the missionaries\] constantly held my interest. I feel that if they were more aware they could have slowed me down a bit. I was a little to \[sic\] eager."

(4) "Missionaries knew the discussions well and always appeared to be well organized. They knew what they were doing, saying and were guided."

(16) "When you really want something like I did the gospel, things will be clear as were the six lessons. The missionaries were extremely well prepared."

(24) "There was no conflict in surroundings since I was given the lessons here at B.Y.U., in my apartment, with my roommates listening, too."

(27) "They [the missionaries] worked well as a team and exchanged parts at will."

(32) "The flannel board method is much more effective than the former method missionaries used [sic] of just drawing diagrams, pictures, etc. to explain the discussions."

(35) "The informality and friendliness of the missionaries was of great benefit to the progression of the discussions."

(36) "A quiet place, in the Y Center--alone without interruptions is where we had the discussions."2

All of the above comments indicated the missionaries were able to control as much as possible the circumstances of the audience. The converts wrote, "held my interest," "well organized," "well prepared," "no conflict in surroundings," "missionaries used [sic] of drawing diagrams,

pictures, etc.," and "A quiet place in the Y Center;" these are all quotes that indicate that the missionaries were able to control the circumstances of the audience.

"B. To what immediate and urgent want of the audience can the speaker's remarks be related?"

(2) I got the impression I couldn't be baptized without them [discussions]. I felt that I had a great need to find the truth."

(4) I "wasn't very interested in Church to begin with and then I began to wonder about what they were saying."

(5) "I was always interested."

(6) "I was always interested in the Church from the first day I came here, and before, but before I took lessons I wanted to talk to my parents."

(7) "I was so interested in the Church that I wanted to hear everything--I thought it was the greatest thing that had happened in my life!"

(9) "For the first time I found some answers to questions I had had for a long time."

(11) "I needed something to base my life on--a reason for living."

(12) "I wanted to be qualified for baptism."

(13) "My roommates took me to Church often soon after I arrived at the 'Y.' When I received the missionary

discussions I had, for the most part, already been converted.

(14) "I wanted to be baptized by a certain time."

(15) "I was very enthusiastic before I took the lessons because I just had the feeling and new [sic] that I must be baptized into this Church."

(20) Being an idealistic searcher, the story of the Mormons, the Joseph Smith story and teachings greatly interested me, especially since my home is located on Western New York near Palmyra. I felt at times as if I had heard familiar teachings before, somewhere perhaps in the pre-existence.

(21) "I had a great desire to see what the Church had to offer its members."

(26) "I was always interested; I wanted to know. They could have been boring to some, but I would have been interested in any L.D.S. telling of his faith."

(27) "The lessons seemed to have more meaning as the lessons progressed."

(28) "I did not take the discussions as such. Was already a 'dry' Mormon. Had been raised in church (Mother a member) but hadn't decided to commit myself."

All the previous comments indicate the convert had an "immediate and urgent want." The want may be demonstrated by such words as "couldn't be baptized without them," "great need," "I needed the understanding," "I began to wonder," "always interested," "it was the greatest thing." Number 4Letters written to the writer.
eight was the only comment which came close to refuting Minnick's points of audience analysis when the convert said he took the missionary discussions "more [for] curiosity than anything." The convert was "curious," though. All these converts, then indicated some need for the missionary discussion.

Besides control of the circumstances Minnick states that clarity of understanding is important. He asks and then answers:

"II. How can the speaker be assured that this audience correctly understand him?

"A. The capacity of an audience to understand a speaker correctly is affected by a number of factors.
"1. The capacity to understand is affected by age.
"2. The capacity to understand is affected by experience and knowledge.
"3. The capacity to understand is affected by education.
"4. The capacity to understand is affected by intelligence." 5

Response of Converts

(1) "I had attended Primary and Mutual and one of my closest girlfriends was L.D.S. and the one person who was instrumental in having me attend the 'Y.'"

(2) I was taking a Book of Mormon class at the time of having the missionary discussions. The discussions seemed quite clear, but I had good background knowledge before having the discussions.

(5) I investigated the Church for 2 years prior to baptism--a full 1½ years before I went to B.Y.U. I had

gone through the discussions twice prior to going to B.Y.U. I only had a review and the 6th discussion from the stake missionaries. I had chosen a set date for baptism and met them the 1st time seven days prior to the date I'd chosen. I always attended the church at home for the 1½ years.

(6) I didn't miss a one meeting since I came here. Nothing, or very little was new to me in the lessons, because I had been to all meetings, read a lot, been shown example, and had good home teachers.

(11) "I had had the discussions twice before the ones at the 'Y.'"

(16) "My brother was an early convert and I was taught some by him."

(19) "I had taken two Book of Mormon classes, one Old Testament, one Gospel in Principle and Practice class."

(23) "After I read the Book of Mormon I was convinced that it was true and did quite a bit of studying about the Church before I took the missionary lessons."

(24) I had read all four major Mormon scriptures before coming to BYU and had attended LDS Church with a close friend for about three years in high school but had never had the six full discussions until last year.

(25) "My close friend and I discussed quite deeply the points of doctrine in A Marvelous Work and a Wonder." 6

The comments, "I attended the church meetings," "I was taking a Book of Mormon class," "I investigated the Church 2 years before baptism," "I had had the discussions twice before the ones at the 'Y,'" "I was taught," "I read

6Letters written to the writer.
the Book of Mormon," "I discussed ... A Marvelous Work and a Wonder," showed preparation on the part of the converts.

The reader will note that no comments were made by the converts concerning age, education, or intelligence. However, comments were made about experience and knowledge which Minnick says are important in analyzing an audience.

Another important area of audience analysis is respect.

"B. The tolerance of an audience for deliberate ambiguity is affected by this: They will tolerate ambiguity more readily from a speaker who is highly respected." 8

Several converts made some interesting comments about prestige.

(4) There were several important influences in teaching me to live the Gospel. They were my two roommates and my home teachers who were such perfect examples for me plus hundreds of other wonderful Latter-day Saints just going through every day happily living the Gospel.

(20) They knew the lesson material very well--but I usually had an hour's worth of questions which, if they couldn't answer, we worked out (discussed, looked up, asked help on, and/or prayed about) together.

(30) "The enthusiasm of especially one missionary who always seemed delighted at any response I made contributed highly to my own enthusiasm."

(32) "They knew all the answers. I asked them and they were eager to find out additional factors for me when necessary."


(35) "I was interested in the discussions because I was interested in the missionaries, whom I felt were deeply interested in me."

(37) "These two stake missionaries impressed me very much because they were so sincere and never put any pressure on me to join the Church."

Such comments as "we worked out ... together," "one missionary ... contributed to my own enthusiasm," "they knew all the answers," and "missionaries impressed me," indicate these converts highly respected the missionaries.

Comments about the missionaries, the lessons, or converts could be made under a section of belief.

"III. How can the speaker be assured that this audience will believe him?

"A. What is the extent and nature of their experience and knowledge with respect to this problem?
"B. What is the extent of the speaker's prestige?
"C. What expressed group opinions does this audience respect?
"D. To what degree will the immediate wants of this audience sway their beliefs?"

This area has already been discussed in earlier sections. The parts previously covered overlap into this section as it relates to knowledge, speaker's prestige, and immediate wants. Therefore, these aspects will not be discussed again. One aspect of Minnick's analysis, that of

9 Letters written to the writer.
10 Minnick, The Art of Persuasion, p. 249.
group opinion, is not mentioned by the converts in their written accounts.

The last area of comparison to Minnick's audience analysis is the area of obstacles.

"IV. What possible obstacles exist that may prevent the audience from acting?

"A. Are there tangible obstacles that prevent adoption of speaker's proposals?
"B. Are there intangible obstacles that prevent adoption of the speaker's proposals?" 11

Response of Converts

(1) "I asked my parents permission to further investigate the Church and perhaps some day join. No objection to this came up."

(2) "What would have been problems at home 'never materialized' at school."

(3) "The missionaries were 'pushy.' I went home for the summer--had no missionary contact--came back to school and finally felt I was ready to be baptized."

(4) "Couldn't decide if it was what I really wanted and my parents wanted me to wait a year to be sure (they weren't against the Church)."

(6) "I had no objection from my parents, in fact, they encouraged me."

(9) "I believed it was the truth; but had to wait three years to join."

11Ibid., p. 251.
(16) "Parental objection was about the greatest because my parents are not LDS. But they knew that if I wanted something bad enough I would get it."

(17) "There was no obstacle that prevented my acceptance, I accepted it from the start."

(19) "No obstacles at all. Parents and friends were all for it."

(25) Hardly anyone in my town knows anything about the LDS Church and my parents are and I was very active members of the Methodist Church. Feeling a very real closeness to these people, especially my parents, it was difficult to make the final decision.

(26) "I didn't want to be committed."

(27) "I didn't feel I was quite ready for the baptismal challenge and wondered what my parents and friends would say."

(32) "There were none; my parents supported me and I accepted the gospel."

(37) "My parents felt that I should wait, 'being baptized' but they knew that they couldn't stop me."¹²

Such comments as "I asked my parents permission," "never materialized," "couldn't really decide," "had to wait three years to join," "parental objection," "no obstacle," "it was difficult to make the final decision," "I didn't want to be committed," "didn't feel ready," "there were none," and "my parents felt that I should wait," show that there were a few obstacles to overcome for some of the

¹²Letters written to the writer.
converts, and none for others. Minnick points out in his chapter on audience analysis that obstacles are usually few or none or acceptance of the speaker's proposals won't occur.\textsuperscript{13}

This chapter dealing with written accounts agreed with Minnick's audience analysis. The converts did accept the suggestion of the missionaries by being baptized, and they seemed to possess most of Minnick's characteristics of an audience which would be persuaded.

\textsuperscript{13}Minnick, \textit{The Art of Persuasion}, p. 251.
CHAPTER V

SURVEY DATA

Chapter V is designed to discuss the results of surveys returned by 88 out of some 326 converts to whom the survey letter was given. The surveys were to be answered according to the investigator's circumstances at the time he was taking the individual six missionary lessons. No effort is made to show statistical comparisons, but frequency of responses and scores are shown.

Table 1, 2, and 3 are compared with Minnick's first point of audience analysis:

"I. How can the attention and interest of this audience be arrested and maintained?"

"A. Assess and control, as much as possible, the physical circumstances of the audience.

"B. To what immediate and urgent wants of the audience can the speaker's remarks be related?"1

When physical surroundings were controlled so that attention could be focused on the speaker, then interest was maintained more easily. The survey asked the converts these questions, number 18 dealing with surroundings and number 8 dealing with interest. Each table is combined with each question for simplicity:

1Ibid., p. 247.
TABLE 1
FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES FOR SURVEY QUESTION CONCERNING SURROUNDINGS:

18. SURROUNDINGS. The missionaries handled the circumstances of your surroundings:
a. Not at all ............... 2
b. Poorly ................... 3
c. Fairly well ............... 19
d. Very well ................ 38
e. Extremely well ........... 21

Table 1 shows that the converts felt that the missionaries handled the circumstances of the surroundings "very well." They marked "d" most often (38 times).

TABLE 2
FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES FOR SURVEY QUESTION CONCERNING INTEREST:

8. INTEREST. My degree of interest toward the six discussions:
a. No Interest ............... 3
b. Indifferent ............... 11
c. Became Interested ....... 28
d. Enthusiastic Beginning .... 18
e. Enthusiastic Before ...... 28

Table 2 shows that the converts indicated that their interest fell in the categories "Became interested as the discussions progressed," and "Enthusiastic before the discussions began." They marked "c" and "e" 28 times. The survey answers indicated that stake missionaries were able to control the circumstances under which the converts received the discussions.

Table 3 shows that the converts felt that most discussions were clear from the beginning. "Were clear
from the beginning" was marked 55 times with "clear during discussions" 24 times.

TABLE 3
FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES FOR SURVEY QUESTION CONCERNING CLARITY:

11. CLARITY. The missionaries' explanations were:
   a. Always Unclear .................. 0
   b. Frequently Unclear .............. 3
   c. Clear at Conclusion .............. 6
   d. Clear During ..................... 24
   e. Clear from Beginning ............. 55

The survey asked question 16 concerning "need":

TABLE 4
FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES FOR SURVEY QUESTION CONCERNING NEED:

16. NEED. How much did you feel a need for what the missionaries were telling you?
   a. None ............................... 3
   b. Very Little ....................... 11
   c. Some .............................. 20
   d. Quite a Bit ....................... 18
   e. Very Much ......................... 36
   f. Undecided ......................... 0

Table 4 shows that the converts felt that they had a need rated "very much" since 36 marked answer "d" as their response. Investigators with a great enough need were probably persuaded to accept the investigator lesson proposals of the missionaries who answered that need.

Table 5 through 8 are compared with Minnick's second point of audience analysis:
"II. How can the speaker be assured that the audience correctly understands him?

"A. The capacity of an audience to understand a speaker is affected by a number of factors. "1. The capacity to understand is affected by age. "2. The capacity to understand is affected by experience and knowledge. "3. The capacity to understand is affected by education. "4. The capacity to understand is affected by intelligence.

Thirty-nine of the converts were freshmen (all were college students) as indicated by converts' responses to the survey summarized in Table 5. Previously cited studies by Hovland indicate high school graduates can be persuaded by logical arguments more easily than non high school graduates. The converts in this study probably all had great enough ability to understand the discussions.

TABLE 5

FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES FOR SURVEY QUESTION CONCERNING CLASS STANDING:

1. CLASS STANDING AT B.Y.U. My class standing was
   a. Freshman ................. 39
   b. Sophomore ................ 16
   c. Junior ................... 25
   d. Senior .................... 6
   e. Graduate .................. 2

Table 6 shows that the converts indicated that they fell in the "B" grade category. According to BYU standards they indicated (probably a high estimate by the convert) above average ability gradewise. 2.00 (B-) was an average

TABLE 6
FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES FOR SURVEY QUESTION
CONCERNING GRADE POINT AVERAGE:

4. GRADES. In my university classes
(B.Y.U. or elsewhere), my approximate
average grade has been (if you had not
received any university grades, use high
school average.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 shows that the converts indicated they
attended five to six LDS meetings. They marked "C" 26 times.

Minnick states that prior experience with a subject helps a
speaker persuade listeners.  
It is interesting to note that there are six missionary lessons usually given one each week
for six weeks and that the majority of investigators
attended six L.D.S. church meetings before being baptized.
It is also interesting to note that all the investigators
attended at least one L.D.S. church meeting before being
baptized. Attendance at meetings probably greatly affected
the convert in such a way that it was easier to accept the
missionaries' proposals than if he had not attended the
meetings. Respondant thirteen said, "My roommates took me

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2Interview with Bruce Higby, Assistant Director,

3Minnick, p. 248.
to church often soon after I arrived at the 'Y'. When I received the missionary discussions I had, for the most part, already been converted." Respondant five said, "I always attended the church at home for the 1½ years." At most L.D.S. meetings, not only would the investigator receive instruction in beliefs of the L.D.S. Church but also would receive fellowship with those who already accept L.D.S. teachings.

**TABLE 7**

FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES FOR SURVEY QUESTION CONCERNING NUMBER OF MEETINGS:

5. NUMBER OF MEETINGS. I had attended the following total number of Latter-day Saint meetings prior to the discussions (including meetings attended other than at B.Y.U.):  
   a. One-Two .................. 8  
   b. Three-Four ................. 20  
   c. Five-Six ................... 26  
   d. Seven-Eight ................ 20  
   e. Nine or More ............... 14

Table 8 shows that 43 converts circled answer "c" and 34 converts circled answer "b" which indicated that from three to four LDS members were in attendance at most of the investigator lessons. Minnick states that respected group opinions aid a speaker in persuading an audience.\(^4\)

Most investigators had a number of LDS individuals at the lessons which would probably tend to influence the investigator to accept the missionaries' proposals. This

\(^4\)Minnick, p. 249.
would be especially true when the LDS members were highly respected. A number of previously quoted investigators in Chapter 3 seem to support this supposition. Respondant thirty said, "The enthusiasm of especially one missionary who always seemed delighted at any responses I made contributed highly to my own enthusiasm." Respondant four said, "There were several important influences in teaching me to live the Gospel. They were my two roommates and my home teachers who were such perfect examples for me . . . ." Other examples could be cited, but these are the kind of responses given by the converts which may indicate an important factor in persuasion of the investigator to adopt the missionaries' proposals.

TABLE 8

FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES FOR SURVEY QUESTION CONCERNING NUMBER OF LDS IN ATTENDANCE:

19. NUMBER OF L.D.S. MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE. On the average, how many L.D.S. members (including missionaries) attended the discussions with you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Two</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Three</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Four</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Five</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Six or More</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 shows that the converts indicated they had "very much knowledge" about the LDS Church. They marked "e" 55 times and "c" 24 times. Minnick states that prior knowledge about a subject aids the speaker in persuading
the listeners. The factor of experience in aiding the converts to accept the missionaries' proposals can be shown by examples who stated, "I was taking a Book of Mormon class at the time of having the missionary discussions. The discussions seemed quite clear, but I had good background knowledge before having the discussions." Respondant sixteen said, "My brother was an early convert and I was taught by him." These comments are probably typical of the kind of prior experience these investigators had.

| TABLE 9 |
| FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES FOR SURVEY QUESTION CONCERNING INVESTIGATOR KNOWLEDGE: |

7. KNOWLEDGE. What was the extent of your knowledge about the Latter-day Saint Church?
   a. None .................................. 0
   b. Very Little ............................. 3
   c. Some .................................... 6
   d. Quite a Bit .............................. 24
   e. Very Much ................................ 55

Along with point A previously discussed, dealing with an audience's capacity to understand, is:

"B. The tolerance of an audience for deliberate ambiguity is affected by this: They will tolerate ambiguity more readily from a speaker who is highly respected.

Table 10 shows that the converts "very highly respected" the missionaries as indicated by 40 responses to letter "e" and 34 responses to letter "d." Minnick states that listeners are persuaded more by respected speakers than non respected speakers.

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5Ibid., p. 248.
The respect for the missionaries most likely contributed to the investigators being persuaded. Respondant thirty-seven states, "These two stake missionaries impressed me very much because they were so sincere and never put any pressure on me to join the Church." It will be noted that the previously cited investigator was impressed with the sincerity of the missionaries. The missionary lessons call for the missionary to bear a sincere testimony. This probably greatly influenced the investigator. Respondant thirty-five said, "I was interested in the discussions because I was interested in the missionaries, whom I felt were deeply interested in me." These comments probably represent most of the investigators who were persuaded to accept the respected missionaries' proposals.

**TABLE 10**

**FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES FOR SURVEY QUESTION CONCERNING RESPECT FOR MISSIONARIES:**

15. RESPECT OF MISSIONARIES. What was the extent of your respect for the missionaries?

- a. Not at All .................. 1
- b. Little ......................... 0
- c. Respected .................... 13
- d. Highly ......................... 34
- e. Very Respected ............... 40

All obstacles were in most cases easily overcome toward the end of the discussions or they would not have been baptized.

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6Ibid., p. 249.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Study

The purpose of this thesis was to determine certain listener characteristics of 88 converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at Brigham Young University and compare them with characteristics of an "audience analysis" as discussed by Wayne C. Minnicks in his book The Art of Persuasion. (The selected parts of "audience analysis" are found in Chapter I.) Of 326 converts during the period of time studied 231 could not be contacted because their letters were returned undelivered or no address was available.

Listener characteristics of the converts were first determined from interviews with the eight BYU Stake mission presidents and compared with Minnicks's characteristics of "audience analysis."

Characteristics of the converts were secondly determined through written reports by the converts at the time they received the missionary lessons. These were compared with Minnicks's characteristics of "audience analysis."

Characteristics of the converts were thirdly
determined through surveys filled out by the converts concerning their circumstances at the time they received the missionary lessons. These were compared with Minnick's characteristics of "audience analysis."

Delimitation of Study

In order to determine selected listener characteristics of the converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at Brigham Young University, the study considered those converts during the period from September, 1965 to January, 1969.

Conclusions

Wayne C. Minnick in his "audience analysis" and the survey of literature revealed the following points listed under capital letters. The survey of converts, interviews with stake mission presidents, and written accounts of converts revealed the points listed under the numbers.

Minnick and Literature Survey

"A. Attention and interest of an audience can be arrested and maintained through cohesiveness of the audience and control of the surroundings in which the communication occurs."

Stake Mission Presidents Opinions:

1. Most converts were interested in the six missionary lessons.

2. Most converts prepared themselves for the discussions by regularly attending meetings and praying.
3. Most converts sincerely wanted to know more about the LDS Church.

4. Missionaries were able to control the physical surroundings under which the investigator lessons were given.

**Written Accounts of Converts:**

1. Many converts wrote that their attention in the missionary lessons was arrested.
2. Many converts wrote that their interest was maintained.

**Survey of Converts:**

1. Most (78) converts felt that the missionaries handled the circumstances of the surroundings "very well."
2. Most (38) converts felt that the missionaries were able to control the circumstances under which they received the discussions.
3. Most (55) converts indicated that the discussions were clear from the beginning.

**Minnick and Literature Survey**

"B. A speaker's remarks should be related to immediate and urgent wants relating to audience experience with the subject."

**Stake Mission Presidents Opinions:**

1. Most converts had a number of LDS friends attend investigator lessons with them.
2. Most converts had some prior knowledge about the LDS Church.
Written Accounts by Converts:

1. Many converts wrote that they had immediate and urgent wants which were related to the missionaries remarks in the investigator lessons.

2. Many converts wrote that they had positive and previous experience and knowledge in regards with those things the missionaries said during the investigator lessons.

3. Many converts wrote that they had several LDS friends who attended the investigator lessons with them.

4. Many converts wrote that they already believed much of what the missionaries told them in the six investigator lessons.

Survey of Converts:

1. Investigators (38 most) had a need which aided the missionaries to persuade them to join the LDS Church.

2. The fellowshipping and instructions at the LDS meetings probably gave the investigators positive experience and knowledge which aided the missionaries to persuade them to accept the proposals of the six missionary lessons.

3. The LDS members probably aided in influencing the investigators to accept the missionaries' proposals.

Minnick and Literature Survey

"C. An audience will more likely understand the speaker when the audience is old enough to understand and when experience and knowledge are sufficient enough to aid the audience to understand."
Stake Mission Presidents' Opinions:

1. Most converts were freshmen.
2. Most converts had higher than average grades at BYU.

Written Account by Converts:

1. Many converts wrote that they had previous experience and positive knowledge in regards with those things the missionaries said during the investigator lessons.

Survey of Converts:

1. All investigators were college students and were probably persuaded by logical arguments more than if they had not been college students.
2. Most (56) converts felt that they had a "B" average at BYU.
3. Most (55) investigators indicated they had knowledge about the LDS Church prior to the discussions. This knowledge probably aided the missionaries to persuade the converts to accept the missionaries proposals.

Minnick and Literature Survey

"D. Ambiguity will be tolerated more readily from a speaker who is respected. Introductions outlining high status "credentials," in harmony with existing listener sets of expectations, sincerity, poise, and likeability will aid the speaker's being respected."

Stake Mission Presidents' Opinions:

1. Most converts highly respected the missionaries
and thus probably tolerated any ambiguity from the missionaries.

**Written Accounts by Converts:**

1. Many converts wrote that they respected the stake missionaries except one respondent who did not respect the first set of missionaries that taught him the investigator lessons.

**Survey of Converts:**

1. The respect the converts had for the missionaries as indicated on the survey most likely contributed to their being persuaded to accept the proposals of the lessons given by the missionaries.

**Minnick and Literature Survey**

"E. Obstacles preventing adoption of the speaker's proposals need to be overcome."

**Stake Mission Presidents Opinions:**

1. The converts were able to overcome obstacles to baptism.

**Written Accounts by Converts:**

1. All investigators who wrote about obstacles to baptism eventually overcame the obstacles.

**Survey of Converts:**

1. All obstacles to acceptance of the lesson proposals given by the missionaries were overcome. Had they
not been overcome the converts would not have been baptized.

The findings summarized in this final chapter were compared with Wayne C. Minnick's "Audience Analysis" as found in his book *The Art of Persuasion*.

The survey of literature supported his points of analysis on every point discussed. No studies could be found which could be satisfactorily compared with his point of analysis concerning obstacles.

The interviews with the Stake Mission Presidents revealed that they felt the converts had certain characteristics. Those characteristics were compared with Minnick's audience analysis. Every characteristic mentioned by the mission presidents was similar to what Minnick said would typify listeners who would accept a speaker's proposals.

The written accounts by the converts were compared with Minnick's points of audience analysis. The points the converts wrote about themselves typified what Minnick said would be the characteristics needed to persuade an audience.

The surveys filled out by the converts typified characteristics Minnick said would be common to a persuaded audience. Speaking about the converts as a group:

*Attention and interest.*--Most converts felt the circumstances of the discussions were controlled by the missionaries and were clear from the beginning.

*Needs and wants.*--Most investigators felt a need for that which the missionaries taught them. Association with
LDS members probably aided the converts to make the decision to join the LDS Church.

**Age, experience and knowledge.**—Being college students, all investigators were probably persuaded more by logical arguments than if they had not been. Most investigators had a positive knowledge about the LDS Church prior to taking the discussions.

**Ambiguity.**—Most converts probably tolerated any ambiguity from the missionaries since the converts respected the missionaries.

**Obstacles.**—All obstacles to acceptance of the lesson proposals given by the missionaries were overcome.

**Recommendations**

All of the above conclusions and any other the reader may draw from this analysis of converts to the LDS Church are based on a small sample. Additional analysis of converts would be necessary before the conclusions drawn could be accepted with a high degree of probability in determining characteristics of other converts. Thus, it is recommended that further study be done in the area of analyzing characteristics of converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at Brigham Young University.

Information about the potential converts could be obtained from the Registrar or other sources and could be compared to information about the converts to The Church
of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Predictions about potential converts could be made.

If a larger number of converts were studied, an analysis of them before and after conversion would be more valuable. Such a study might also reveal if changes occurred because of the discussions. Even though this study is limited to a few, it is a beginning. No studies of this nature have tried to determine characteristics of converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at BYU as this one has. It is hoped that the conclusions and recommendations made will aid others to know more about these converts and possibly inspire others to investigate more about converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at Brigham Young University.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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APPENDIX
SURVEY OF CONVERTS' REACTIONS TO
DISCUSSIONS AND TEACHING

This is a survey which will help missionaries more effectively teach others about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We ask for your cooperation in filling out this survey at your earliest convenience. Since it is important that this be done as soon as possible, a return, self-addressed envelope is enclosed to aid you in making an immediate response.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Circle the answer(s) which best describe you and your circumstances at the time you were taking the six missionary lessons from stake missionaries at Brigham Young University.

2. List reason(s) for your answer(s) if desired.

SECTION I: INFORMATION ABOUT THE CONVERT

1. CLASS STANDING AT B.Y.U. My class standing was
   a. Freshman.
   b. Sophomore.
   c. Junior.
   d. Senior.
   e. Graduate.

2. AGE. My age was
   a. 18 or under.
   b. 19 - 20.
   c. 21 - 22.
   d. 23 - 24.
   e. 25 or over.

3. SEX. My sex is
   a. Male.
   b. Female.

4. GRADES. In my university classes (B.Y.U. or elsewhere), my approximate average grade has been (if you have not received any university grades, use high school average.)
5. **NUMBER OF MEETINGS.** I had attended the following total number of Latter-day Saint meetings prior to the discussions (including meetings attended other than at B.Y.U.):
   a. One or two.
   b. Three or four.
   c. Five or six.
   d. Seven or eight.
   e. Nine or more.

6. **NUMBER OF FRIENDS.** I had the following total number of Latter-day Saint friends prior to the discussions (including those at or away from B.Y.U.):
   a. One or two.
   b. Three or four.
   c. Five or six.
   d. Seven or eight.
   e. Nine or more.

7. **KNOWLEDGE.** What was the extent of your knowledge about the Latter-day Saint Church?
   a. None.
   b. Very little.
   c. Some.
   d. Quite a bit.
   e. Very much.

8. **INTEREST.** My degree of interest toward the six discussions:
   a. No interest at all.
   b. Indifferent to them.
   c. Became interested as the discussions progressed.
   d. Enthusiastic from the beginning.
   e. Enthusiastic before the discussions began.
   Please list reason(s) for your above answer(s) if desired.

9. **PREPARATION.** Prior to each discussion I prepared myself by:
   a. Reading the Book of Mormon.
   b. Reading pamphlets about the Church.
   c. Discussing beliefs of the Church with friends or teachers.
   d. Praying to know the truth.
   e. Attending Latter-day Saint meetings.
   f. Other or none.
   Please list reason(s) for your above answer(s) if desired.
10. **Reasons for Discussions.** My reason(s) for taking the six discussions was (were):
   a. Pressure from roommates or friends.
   b. Pressure from missionaries.
   c. Felt pressure from being at a Mormon University.
   d. Encouragement from roommates or friends.
   e. Curiosity.
   f. Sincerely wanted to know more about the Church.
   g. Other.
   Please list reason(s) for your above answer(s) if desired.

11. **Clarity.** The missionaries' explanations were:
   a. Always inadequate and unclear.
   b. Frequently unclear.
   c. Became clear at the conclusion of the discussions.
   d. Became clear as the discussions progressed.
   e. Were clear from the beginning.
   Please list reason(s) for your above answer if desired.

12. **Organization.** How well organized were the presentations of the missionaries?
   a. Not at all.
   b. Poorly.
   c. Fairly well.
   d. Very well.
   e. Extremely well.
   Please list reason(s) for your above answer if desired.

13. **Knowledge.** The missionaries seemed to demonstrate a
   a. Seriously inadequate knowledge.
   b. Frequently inadequate knowledge.
   c. Adequate knowledge.
   d. Broad and accurate knowledge.
   e. Thorough and profound knowledge.
   Please list reason(s) for your above answer if desired.

14. **Interest.** The missionaries
   a. Hardly ever held my interest.
   b. Only occasionally held my interest.
   c. Usually held my interest, but often did not.
   d. Nearly always held my interest.
   e. Consistently held my interest.
   Please list reason(s) for your above answer if desired.
15. RESPECT OF MISSIONARIES. What was the extent of your respect for the missionaries?
   a. Not respected at all.
   b. Respected little.
   c. Respected.
   d. Highly respected.
   e. Very highly respected.

16. NEED. How much did you feel a need for what the missionaries were telling you?
   a. None.
   b. Very little.
   c. Some.
   d. Quite a bit.
   e. Very much.
   f. Undecided.

Please list reason(s) for your above answer if desired.

17. OBSTACLE(S). What obstacle(s) existed that may have prevented acceptance of the missionaries' proposals?
   a. Lack of interest.
   b. Unsure.
   c. Not ready.
   d. Parental objections.
   e. Cultural obstacles.
   f. Friends or fiance(ee) objections.
   g. Other religion.
   h. Mate objections.
   i. Other.

Please list reason(s) for your above answer(s) if desired.

18. SURROUNDINGS. The missionaries handled the circumstances of your surroundings:
   a. Not at all.
   b. Poorly.
   c. Fairly well.
   d. Very well.
   e. Extremely well.

Please list reason(s) for your above answer if desired.

19. NUMBER OF L.D.S. MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE. On the average, how many L.D.S. members (including missionaries) attended the discussions with you?
   a. Two.
   b. Three.
   c. Four.
   d. Five.
   e. Six or over.
SURVEY OF CONVERTS TO THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS AT BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY BETWEEN SEPTEMBER, 1965 AND JANUARY, 1969

Marcus H. White
Department of Speech and Dramatic Arts
M.A. Degree, May 1972

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to determine selected characteristics of converts from Brigham Young University to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints during the time from September, 1965 to January, 1969 and compare them with characteristics of "Audience Analysis" as discussed by Wayne C. Minnick in his book The Art of Persuasion.

Selected listener characteristics of the converts were determined from three sources: (1) Interviews of the eight Brigham Young University stake mission presidents, (2) Written reports by the converts at the time they received the missionary lessons, and (3) Surveys completed by the converts.

Conclusions from this study are that all the sources about the converts indicate that the selected converts exemplified characteristics similar to those Wayne C. Minnick stated would typify an audience which would be persuaded. Sufficient data was not received to generalize any conclusions about other converts.

COMMITTEE APPROVAL:  
J. LaVar Bateman, Committee Chairman

Wm. Dale Goodson, Committee Member

Parley W. Newman, Department Chairman