

# Exit Cost Analysis: A New Approach to the Scientific Study of Brainwashing<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** This is the second part of a two-part article about brainwashing. In the first part, published in the premier issue of this journal, I discussed the history of this much maligned concept and attempted to rescue it from the fruitless culture wars in which it has become entangled. I offered a limited and precise definition of brainwashing with the goal of making it a useful concept in the social-psychological study of disaffiliation from religious movements. In this second installment, I attempt to complete the rehabilitation of brainwashing, transforming it from an ideological shibboleth to a carefully defined, limited, and useful sociological concept. The first step in this process is to reframe the concept as a tool for studying the neglected problem of religious disaffiliation. This involves theoretical reframing within the context of rational action theory and substantive reframing within the context of the investigation of external and internal costs of leaving a religious community. In contrast to some of the more grandiose claims sometimes made for brainwashing as the sole explanation of cult movement behavior, I argue instead that brainwashing is only one of the factors that needs to be examined in order to understand the more general phenomenon of exit costs as a barrier to free religious choice. Reframed in this manner, I then go on to establish the scientific validity of this reframed concept. But a concept may be valid and still not be very useful if it refers to events that occur only rarely. Therefore I next go on to present evidence that there are events which occur fairly frequently in cult movements for which the brainwashing conjecture offers one plausible explanation. Next, I discuss four alternative conjectures that purport to explain much the same phenomena and demonstrate that the brainwashing conjecture holds its own with any of them. In the final section of this paper, I speculate about ways of going beyond mere conjectural plausibility to the development of a testable theory. I point to some directions for future research that may eventually allow us to identify the actual processes by which brainwashing brings about a significant and, at times, overwhelming increase in the costs of disaffiliating from religious communities.

<sup>51</sup> See Raphael, *Theology and Embodiment*, 167-219.

<sup>52</sup> "Entering the Tents," 542.

<sup>53</sup> Goodman, "Sex, Symbols and the Unity of God," 98.

<sup>54</sup> "Variations of Jewish Feminism," 62.

<sup>55</sup> Goldenberg, *Resurrecting the Body*, 64-67.

<sup>56</sup> For example, The Re-Formed Congregation of the Goddess, based in Madison, but working throughout the United States and Canada. C.O.G. runs a Women's Theological Institute and Cella Training Program, completion of which grants the priestess legal ministerial credentials. See Jade (no surname given), "The Six Paths of the Inner Mysteries: A Spiritual Leadership Program for Women," *Woman of Power* 24 (1995): 82.

Brainwashing is a social-psychological concept of great potential importance.<sup>2</sup> The word "brainwashing" is, as Joseph Agassi has noted, "a very strong metaphor" for a very powerful kind of interpersonal influence.<sup>3</sup> It is generally assumed within the rational choice paradigm that individual preferences are formed during childhood socialization and thereafter change only slowly if at all. Interpersonal influence is assumed to leave the underlying preference structure of the individual unchanged, altering only attitudes derived from these preferences. Brainwashing is a theoretically important exception to that rule in that it alleges the possibility of a kind of influence that goes to the root of identity and changes preference structure itself.

Many scholars deny that brainwashing even exists and consider its use as a social science concept to be epistemologically fraudulent.<sup>4</sup> Others make grandiose claims for the brainwashing conjecture, often using it to account for virtually everything about human behavior in high-demand religious organizations.<sup>5</sup> Neither of these approaches is helpful. We need to rescue a precise and limited concept of brainwashing from these two extremes because the idea has theoretical importance both for understanding cults and for a general theory of the self and human socialization and resocialization.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it is important that research on the brainwashing conjecture be given time to develop and that the academic audience remain critical but open-minded.

In this paper, I attempt to build a foundation for brainwashing as a limited and well-defined social-scientific concept. To do so, I need first to make three simplifying assumptions. These assumptions will restrict the domain of the phenomena I will be considering in a way that will lend clarity to my exposition.

First, I will limit my discussion of brainwashing to religious groups. This is not, of course, because I believe brainwashing to be an intrinsically religious phenomenon. But I want to stay close to what I have seen with my own eyes. My field research has been primarily with cult movements and my personal motivation for writing this paper stems from curiosity about a startling homology between influence practices that I observed in a number of contemporary cult movements and influence processes in the Chinese "re-education centers" described by Robert Lifton.<sup>7</sup> I do not mean to imply that there is anything about religion *per se* that is especially conducive to brainwashing or that brainwashing is not also to be found in political, psychotherapeutic, military, and other totalist collectivities.

My second simplifying assumption has to do with charisma. Although brainwashing seems to me to be clearly associated with the exercise of charismatic authority, this association is tricky and complex. The mechanisms by which brainwashing is accomplished will be different depending on whether there is a direct face-to-face relationship with a charismatic leader, a relationship to an absentee charismatic leader, or

a relationship to some sort of charisma of lineage or charisma of office. These distinctions are important, but I cannot do justice to them within the scope of this paper. Therefore I am going to limit my discussion to the simplest charismatic situations. These happen also to be the ones I know most about. These are situations in which there is a face-to-face relationship between the subject and a living charismatic leader. The task of generalizing this discussion to more complex charismatic situations will be left to future work.

My third simplifying assumption will be to define brainwashing, in Steve Kent's useful phrase, "as a technique for *retaining* members not for *obtaining* members."<sup>8</sup> Metaphorically speaking, we may think of a cult as potentially having three distinct tools for personnel management. There is a magnet for attracting recruits and drawing them into the life (the obtaining function). There is a screwdriver for insinuating each member snugly but firmly into an intended niche (the retaining function). And there is a hammer for pounding any member whose niche has become threadbare back into his or her place (what we might call the restraining function).<sup>9</sup> In practice, the boundaries separating these functions are fuzzy. For example, part of the obtaining function may be to begin to discuss possible niches with the prospective member. And part of the restraining function may be to threaten a member who has become recalcitrant with disclosure of secrets recorded during the confessions that are obtained as part of the retaining function. Nevertheless, there can be no scientific value in confusing these three tools or functions. This paper will therefore ignore the magnet and the hammer in order to concentrate fully on the screwdriver.

## REFRAMING THE CONCEPT IN TERMS OF EXIT COSTS

### **Affiliation and Disaffiliation**

Rational choice theory has made significant contributions to our understanding of the dynamics of religious affiliation under societal conditions allowing for freedom of religious choice. Religious markets are modeled as settings in which religious entrepreneurs (churches, sect movements, cult movements, denominations, and individual charismatic preachers) compete for the affiliation of religious "consumers." James Coleman's discussion of the social construction of zeal<sup>10</sup> and Lawrence Iannaccone's modeling of religion as "a club good that displays positive returns to 'participatory crowding'"<sup>11</sup> are two major examples of theoretical advances made in this field.

Surprisingly, however, little comparable attention has been paid to rational choice modeling of disaffiliation from religious groups. In their

pathbreaking general theory of religion, it is interesting to note that Stark and Bainbridge hardly mention the issue of disaffiliation from religious groups.<sup>12</sup> This is surprising because the same deductive process that leads us to predict that religious groups will compete fiercely for valued consumers also leads us to predict that they will struggle fiercely to hold the loyalties of consumers once they have been captured. Although the ability to prevent disaffiliation is sharply curtailed by law and custom in a free religious marketplace, this ability is by no means nonexistent. Studies of the religious behavior of Black Americans in the rural south have shown the extent to which social constraints can limit freedom of individual choice even under formally free religious market conditions.<sup>13</sup> These studies do not deal directly with switching out of religious collectivities. However, one may assume that the same constraints sometimes apply to switching. With respect to totalistic religious groups, because of their relational isolation and the intense psychological investments sometimes required, I am hypothesizing that exit costs in these groups may sometimes be quite high.

### **Religious Switching, Exit Costs, and Manipulative Exit Costs**

The work of Jack Shand and others has shown that religious switching is the exception rather than the rule and that religious beliefs, practices, and loyalties are remarkably stable over the life course, especially after the late teen years.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, most switching, when it does occur, has little to do with the struggle for souls. As Hoge, Hadaway and Roof, and others have shown, mundane issues like intermarriage, neighborhood stability, and geographical mobility explain most of the cases of religious switching.<sup>15</sup> However, rational choice models have had a fair degree of success in accounting for that portion of religious switching that is conviction driven. Human capital and resource mobilization models have shown great success in applying market concepts to the explanation of affiliation decisions and their effect on the competition of religious bodies for market share.<sup>16</sup>

But more recent research on constraints has demonstrated that these models need to be corrected since they are based on the naive assumption that consumers of religion go into the market with no constraints other than their own wishes and longings.<sup>17</sup> Relational networks and dependence upon specific religions as life support systems both work powerfully to limit freedom of choice in switching decisions. In this paper, I build on the formulations of Ellison and Sherkat but take the investigation in a different direction by focusing on disaffiliation rather than private religious behavior.

Exit cost analysis may be defined as the systematic study of all disincentives for leaving voluntary collectivities. Clearly there are many

types of exit costs ranging from financial penalties, to relational commitments, to various sorts of cognitive and emotional dependencies. It is important to emphasize that exit cost analysis is not particularly concerned with *the exit process* or with the later stages of a person's involvement with a religious collectivity. On the contrary, exit cost analysis is primarily concerned with the paradox of feeling trapped in what is nominally a voluntary association. It asks not, "Why did they leave?" but rather, "What prevents them from leaving?"

My ultimate aim is to identify all of the various types of exit costs imposed by religious collectivities on members who might otherwise choose to leave. However, I focus in this paper on one particular type of exit cost. This is the type that results from the deliberate manipulation of members by charismatic leaders. The brainwashing conjecture argues that there are conditions under which members of a religious organization may be systematically resocialized to become deployable agents of that organization with strong internalized disincentives for leaving.

## VALIDITY OF THE CONCEPT

### What Facts Need to Be Explained?

Much of the acrimony surrounding the debate over the validity of brainwashing as a scientific concept is traceable to the fact that many who have argued about the concept have done so using culturally based definitions rather than definitions tied directly to attempts to explain observable behaviors.<sup>18</sup> Such moves are counterproductive. Without agreement on the behaviors for which explanation is sought, how can we ever find criteria for determining objectively which concepts are useful in building explanations? Fortunately (and surprisingly, in light of how much controversy surrounds the subject of brainwashing), a great degree of consensus among scholars exists at this elementary level of behavioral description.<sup>19</sup>

Let us start, therefore, by specifying just what puzzling behavioral facts need to be explained. These behavioral facts comprise a sequence of events often spread over a considerable number of years. This visible and relatively unambiguous sequence consists of up to five steps: (1) affiliation, (2) lifestyle modification, (3) disaffiliation, (4) disenchantment, and (5) temporal (in)consistency. People are observed to affiliate with certain high-demand religious groups. Affiliation is soon followed by a sharp and sudden rejection of prior roles and relationships and a substitution of new roles and relationships prescribed by the group. This

rejection is manifested in dramatic lifestyle modification that is often labeled deviant by people outside the group. Persons may stay affiliated with such groups for widely varying lengths of time ranging from an entire lifetime to less than twenty-four hours. After a while (for some but not all) disaffiliation from the group occurs. Among those that disaffiliate, a certain percentage eventually begin to complain that actions taken while associated with the group have come to be perceived as ego-dystonic (that is to say, highly alien to the person's own current values and to the values held prior to affiliation as they are now recollected). Without making any value judgments as to the veracity of these complaints, let us refer to this step in the behavioral process as disenchantment. It should be noted that such disenchantment sometimes comes before disaffiliation rather than afterwards. Some of those who express disenchantment blame it on manipulation by the religious collectivity. And, finally, some who do blame it on the collectivity continue to do so consistently throughout their lives whereas it is at least a logical possibility that others, if observed for a sufficient period of time, will recant (exhibit inconsistency). Here I define recant to signify the denial of brainwashing by a person who had previously claimed to be brainwashed.

For the purposes of this paper, I will assume that we all agree that these are the behavioral facts that need to be explained. In order to establish a level playing field in all that follows I will evaluate brainwashing as well as its rival conjectures solely in terms of their ability to account for these behaviors that we all agree occur and are in need of explanation.

### **A Definition of Brainwashing**

Brainwashing may be defined as a set of transactions between a charismatically led collectivity and an isolated agent of the collectivity with the goal of transforming the agent into a deployable agent. In the terminology I am using here, there exist three levels of affiliation in such collectivities: recruits, agents, and deployable agents. A recruit is a person who is considering membership in the group and perhaps is also being courted by the group. An agent is a person who has already made the commitment to become a member of the group and accept its goals. A deployable agent is a person who has internalized the group's goals to such an extent that he or she can be counted on with high probability to act so as to implement those goals even when free of direct surveillance and even when those goals run counter to the individual's personal goals.

The target of brainwashing is always an individual who has already joined the group. The brainwashing concept is not useful in explaining how recruits are transformed into ordinary members. Moreover, the

target of influence is always an isolated individual. Even when a closely bonded married couple joins a cult movement as a family, the brainwashing process at some point separates the two people from each other, psychologically if not always physically. Each individual is taken separately through a process of preference modification supported by a charismatically legitimated and internally consistent view of the world.

Some people may be more susceptible to brainwashing than others (and a given person may be more susceptible at certain times of life than others). However, the brainwashing model does not focus primarily on characteristics of the subject. The assumption is that many different kinds of people can, with enough effort, be brainwashed.

Since brainwashing is a result of social-psychological influences, a fuller definition of the term must include a description of the prerequisite structural conditions under which it can occur, the interaction process that actually produces the influence, and the effects that the influence has on both the individual subject and the collectivity.

### **Structural Prerequisites**

Brainwashing has always been a statistically rare phenomenon because most social situations are not conducive to its occurrence. The brainwashing model, as developed by Robert Lifton, requires that it take place within a complex and costly structure of social control. This system exhibits eight observable characteristics of totalism.<sup>20</sup> These are milieu control, mystical manipulation, the demand for purity, the cult of confession, the sacred science, loading the language, doctrine over person, and the dispensing of existence.

Ideological totalism is an efficient breeding ground for deployable agents. What makes it so is the absence of external frames of reference with which to evaluate critically the outcomes of charismatic influence.<sup>21</sup> Totalism is not a dysfunctional by-product of rigid minds. It can be a rationally optimal way to structure beliefs to make charismatic compliance, once achieved, something close to an absorbing personal status. Distinguishing features of ideological totalism are (1) an absence of even the smallest areas of personal privacy exempt from ideological evaluation and (2) an absence of peccadilloes, such that every sin becomes a cardinal sin. These features, while at first sight bizarre, serve a clear function in reducing defections among deployable agents.

It is probably not necessary to have every one of Lifton's eight structural characteristics of ideological totalism in place for brainwashing to occur. However, the closer a religious collectivity comes to embodying a system of social control characterized by these eight structural elements, the easier it is for brainwashing to occur.

## **Interaction Process**

Within the context of such a totalistic social system, an influence process is necessary for these modifications to be brought about. This influence process is a manipulative sequence of orchestrated events featuring the alternation of psychological assault and leniency over a prolonged period; periodic cycles of confession, rejection of confession, and reconfession; and ritualized rehearsals of taboo activities meant to desensitize the subject to their actual importance.<sup>22</sup> The process takes the subject through three sequential stages: (1) the stripping process, in which the old preference and value structures are removed; (2) identification, in which the subject attempts to become as much like the other cult members as possible; and (3) symbolic death and rebirth, in which the subject internalizes the new structure of preferences and values.<sup>23</sup> Lifton has argued that, throughout these stages, resocialization is energized primarily by the constant fluctuation between assault and leniency and repeated cycles of confession, reeducation, and refinement of confession.<sup>24</sup>

## **Effects**

The result of this process, when successful, is to make the individual a deployable agent of the charismatic authority. This is not merely commitment but a form of commitment that does not depend on continuous surveillance by the group. A rational choice perspective on the brainwashing model conceives of this process as a fundamental restructuring of self through a reorganization of preferences. We are talking about change on a deep although not necessarily permanent level. Lifton offers the hypothesis that, in cult movements, "Intense milieu control can contribute to a dramatic change of identity which I call 'doubling': the formation of a second self which lives side by side with the former one, often for a considerable time."<sup>25</sup> This "doubling" or creation of a shadow self is something that I have often observed but cannot pretend to understand on more than a metaphoric level. The problem of learning what exactly happens to the individual under these conditions is one of the major challenges for future research on brainwashing. I will offer my own speculative theory on this question in the last section of this paper.

## **The Epistemological Validity of the Concept**

Not all concepts that can be defined are scientifically valid. For a concept to be valid, it should additionally meet the following three

criteria. Its use in theory building must be to derive propositions about observable behavior that are potentially falsifiable. It will hopefully converge with similar concepts currently in use within other areas of sociology and behavioral science. And finally, there must be means for discriminating between it and other concepts that derive from competing theories. To what extent does the concept of brainwashing meet these criteria?

### **Falsifiability**

Like many scientific concepts, brainwashing is not a process that is directly observable. One cannot observe deployability. One cannot observe a preference. Therefore, we may conclude that brainwashing does not meet the core standard of logical positivist epistemology, “the verifiability criterion of meaning.”<sup>26</sup> However, this holds for most concepts used within the social sciences today. Even in the physical sciences, it is fair to assume that nobody has ever observed gravity or a quantum of energy. Nevertheless, these concepts are considered valid by virtue of the predictions they allow us to make about the future state of observables. If the observed values do not match those predicted by theory, the theory is considered indirectly falsified in this way.

The empirical propositions implied by the brainwashing conjecture certainly do meet this more general criterion of falsifiability. To take the simplest one first, if no significant number of apostates ever complained about brainwashing, this, in itself, would be a sufficient reason for considering the conjecture proven false. The same would be the case if all or almost all who complained later recanted. At the macro level, the brainwashing conjecture implies the existence of certain socialization procedures (forced confessions and alternating periods of leniency and severity, for example). Although the observation of these procedures in religious groups is certainly not proof of the existence of brainwashing, the failure to observe such procedures in *any* religious collectivity again would be a sufficient condition for declaring the conjecture false. Since the current state of evidence allows us to test the brainwashing conjecture by virtue of either of these criteria, we may conclude that it meets at least this basic epistemological requirement—the potential of falsifiability.

### **Convergent Validity**

Religious movements are not the only social context in which manipulative deep resocialization can take place. Prisons, mental hospitals, political re-education institutes, concentration camps, hostage

situations, abusive marriages, and even certain laboratory situations share these characteristics. It is reasonable to ask to what extent brainwashing in religious institutions converges with concepts used to explain behavioral changes that occur in these other contexts. The demonstration of such convergence does not in itself demonstrate the truth of any of these theories. False theories can also converge. Convergence merely demonstrates that a number of theoretical explanations drawn from a number of different disciplines are all barking up the same tree regardless of whether that tree ultimately turns out to be fruit bearing.

An examination of the literature in criminology, mental health, sociology of the family, memory research, and experimental social psychology provides evidence that theories generated in these various areas are barking up a tree which looks remarkably similar to the brainwashing tree. In criminology, students of hostage situations have built a conjecture around a concept known as the Stockholm Syndrome to account for an unexpected mutual positive regard that often develops between captors and captives.<sup>27</sup> Descriptions of the Stockholm Syndrome are homologous with descriptions of the first two stages of brainwashing, stripping and identification. In the mental health field, work by Frank has demonstrated the extent to which prolonged psychotherapy often resembles the sort of resocialization process we are discussing.<sup>28</sup> Research in the sociology of the family on the battered wife syndrome has also shown interesting parallels.<sup>29</sup> Two important tentative findings coming out of this literature are of particular note. One indicates that there is no single personality profile that makes a woman vulnerable to this syndrome. As I have alleged for brainwashing, it is situational and relational factors rather than predispositions that help us to predict this phenomenon. A second important finding is that perceived exit costs for a battered woman do not appear to be strongly correlated with her assessment of the danger of attempted escape. In many cases, changes in self conception make the very thought of living independently from the abuser unthinkable. Research on the false memory syndrome by Loftus and her colleagues demonstrates how malleable our view of our own reality can be under suggestion.<sup>30</sup> This provides an important clue as to how brainwashing may work. Finally, experimental research in social psychology by Asch, Zimbardo, Milgram, and many others converges well with many specific pieces of the brainwashing puzzle.<sup>31</sup>

### **Discriminant Validity**

Many scholars who are wary of taking brainwashing seriously as a concept base their reservations more on problems of discriminant validity than on falsifiability or convergent validity. Problems of discriminant

validity emerge when two or more different concepts can be used to explain the same empirical findings. Without some degree of divergence in what they predict, there is thus no practical way to determine why we should prefer one over another. The psychological concept of cognitive balance, the psychoanalytic concept of projection, and the social-psychological concept of brainwashing all are equally capable of generating accounts that allege high exit costs and so potentially pose a problem of this sort in accounting for allegations of manipulative resocialization in religious groups.<sup>32</sup>

To see why, let us imagine that Larry, Curly, and Moe each joined a cult movement, stayed for a while, became disillusioned, and left. Each claims that the costs of leaving were manipulative and were exceptionally high. For Larry, the problem was one of cognitive balance. He remained attached to his network of co-religionists after his belief in the religion was gone. Religion is a matter of both believing and belonging. Larry's exit costs are real but they are due to the pain of separation after believing has ceased. The cognitive balance theory would predict that you might claim never to have believed once you no longer belong.

For Curly, the process was one of projection. Curly encountered his cult movement and had a genuine nonmanipulative conversion experience. This caused him to behave in ways that were very much at variance with his old preferences. But, of course, for some people (genuine) conversion is temporary. Curly's conversion lasted a few years and then wore off. He soon reverted to his old pre-cult self. He resented the lost years which his investment in the cult movement now represented to him. Rather than accept personal responsibility for his "mistake," he adopted the ego defense of projecting the cause of his conversion outward onto the movement's charismatic leader. His projection led him to falsely claim (and believe) that this leader brainwashed him.

Finally, Moe's experience was one of genuine brainwashing. The movement took him through a set of orchestrated stages as described earlier, culminating in a perception of rebirth that created in Moe a shadow self imbued with the cult ideology. The question then becomes the following: If we are confronted with these three gentlemen after they have disaffiliated, without knowing their names, can we determine which is Moe? In these terms, the problem of establishing discriminant validity becomes one of specifying a set of rules that will allow us to determine whether a new case is to be interpreted as a result of cognitive balance, projection, or brainwashing.

This task is trickier than it may seem. I have not been able to discover any single test that reliably discriminates among these three phenomena. However, the application of multiple tests can often accomplish this. Let us assume that we know that Larry fails Test A while Curly and Moe pass it and that Curly fails Test B while Larry and Moe pass it. It follows

that only the person who passes both of these tests has been brainwashed. In my research, I have found that the two tests that work best in this regard are what I call “the dread of reunion test” and “the residual guilt test.” To pass the first of these tests, the individual must show a dread of contact with the charismatic leader—either face to face, or on the phone, or even while watching him on videotape. In my experience, Larry generally fails this test while Curly and Moe pass it. To pass the second of these tests, one must experience a sense of shared guilt or responsibility for the previously held convictions and relationships. It’s not that the individual holds himself or herself entirely to blame; rather, there is a recognition that one was to some degree an accomplice in the process. In my experience, Curly generally fails this test while Larry and Moe generally pass it. Although this test is not foolproof, I would be dubious of classifying anyone as having been brainwashed who does not pass both of these tests. Of course, there are often better ways to discriminate among these three processes. When the respondent can be trusted to tell the truth, asking in detail about the specific steps of the alleged brainwashing may be the most direct. In addition, we find that those who are merely resolving cognitive imbalance experience much shorter periods of disenchantment than do those who were brainwashed. I am not arguing that it is easy but that it is possible to distinguish among these three processes with a reasonable degree of reliability.

On the basis of all of the above, I conclude that we have now established that brainwashing is not only a well-defined but also a scientifically valid concept. It remains to determine how useful it is. In order to determine this we must move from concept to conjecture in the next two sections of this paper and finally from conjecture to theory in the fifth and final section. The requirements for the viability of a conjecture are weaker than for a theory. A conjecture need not be testable. It merely has to tell a story in which an explanation for a class of events is embedded. And that story needs to be convincing. It needs to be as least as plausible as other competing tales that have been told to account for the same events. Let us now turn to an examination of the evidence for my assertion that the “story” that uses the concept of brainwashing to explain certain religious events is a plausible one.

### **EVIDENCE FOR BRAINWASHING**

Social scientists seeking to debunk the brainwashing conjecture have often spoken as if extensive research has already been done on the behavior of new religious movement (NRM) participants and definitive conclusions could now be formed. And, indeed, there has been a great deal published on cults in the past ten years. However, a close examination of this vast quantity of writings shows that it is based upon

a skimpy body of empirical research. The best research consists of ethnographic monographs on single NRMs, and all of this remains to be synthesized.<sup>33</sup> The few epidemiological or other comparative and quantitative studies have often been based upon small and unrepresentative samples.<sup>34</sup>

Stuart Wright's work, which is among the most careful of this genre, shows how even the best of these studies can yield misleading results. In one of his major questions—meant to test the degree to which ex-members of NRMs believed that they had been brainwashed—he asked the following question: “When you think about having been a member, how do you feel: 1. Indifferent? 2. Angry? 3. Duped/Brainwashed? 4. Wiser for the experience?” Clearly lumping “brainwashed” together with “duped” in the same response category shows a misunderstanding of the brainwashing concept, as does the assumption that it is mutually exclusive with feeling angry or even wiser for the experience.

Another area of confusion concerns the question of whether brainwashing is an all-or-none phenomenon. Often it is assumed that a demonstration that not all of a cult movement's members were brainwashed is equivalent to proof that none were brainwashed. But why does this follow? Even Mao never tried to brainwash *all* of the citizens of China. Why should he have? No leader needs that many deployable agents. The right question to ask is not whether *all* Moonies were brainwashed but whether *any* Moonies were brainwashed.

### **Membership Turnover**

Aggregate membership turnover rates can tell us nothing about the presence or absence of brainwashing. To see why, one need only do the following thought experiment. Imagine yourself in a strange land with many walled towns. As a stranger, you may not enter any of these towns but you may stand by their gates and observe people entering and leaving. It is known that half the towns allow people to enter and leave freely. The other half allow people to enter freely but impose a fee of \$10,000 on anyone wishing to leave. The problem is to determine, merely by standing at the gate and observing people going in and out, which towns impose exit costs and which do not. A little reflection will demonstrate that there is no way of doing so based simply on aggregate turnover statistics. But, since we have defined brainwashing as a form of imposed exit cost, it follows that such data, if they cannot tell us anything about exit costs in general, *a fortiori* cannot tell us anything about a specific class of exit costs. Population data by itself is inherently incapable of distinguishing groups that impose exit costs from groups that do not.

A common misconception about turnover data in cults stems from a confusion between the efficiency of brainwashing and the efficacy of

brainwashing. Barker and others have argued that, since very few NRM recruits become members, the resocialization process is not irresistible and therefore cannot involve brainwashing.<sup>35</sup> But nothing in the brainwashing conjecture predicts that it will work on everybody, and it says nothing at all about the proportion of recruits who will become agents. In fact, the efficiency of brainwashing, understood perhaps as the expected yield of deployable agents per 100 NRM agents, is an unknown (but discoverable) parameter of any particular brainwashing system and may often be quite low. For the system to perpetuate itself, the yield need only produce a sufficient number of deployable agents to compensate it for the resources required to maintain the brainwashing process. Nothing in the brainwashing conjecture is inconsistent with the finding of rapid turnover in religious communities. In general, drop-out rates tell us only about the rigor of the program, not about its effectiveness for those who stick it through to the end. As an analogy, if 99 out of 100 people training to be astronauts dropped out of the training program, we would be likely to have more rather than less confidence that the one who did not drop out had been thoroughly trained.

It does not follow, however, that population turnover data is worthless for the study of brainwashing. When we turn from aggregate rates to individual-based leaver-stayer models, we see that there is some value in knowing whether membership turnover obeys a thermodynamic model (probability of leaving independent of length of time stayed), a satiation model (probability of leaving directly dependent upon length of time stayed), or a commitment model (probability of leaving inversely dependent on length of time stayed). Of the three, only commitment turnover is compatible with an assertion of brainwashing. Observation of thermodynamic or satiation turnover is grounds for rejecting the brainwashing conjecture. However, this doesn't do us much good because those few leaver-stayer studies that have been done demonstrate thermodynamic turnover during the early years of membership<sup>36</sup> and commitment turnover thereafter.<sup>37</sup> Although commitment turnover is compatible with the brainwashing conjecture, it is also compatible with all other competing conjectures.

### **Ethnographic Observation**

Of somewhat more value is direct ethnographic observation of brainwashing mechanisms. An observer can often determine whether a specific cult movement has institutionalized such mechanisms as identity stripping, forced confessions, alternating periods of severity and leniency, and initiation through a symbolic death and rebirth ordeal. These mechanisms are presumably costly to maintain, so we are justified

in asking, in movements in which they are observed, what purpose do they serve? While it does not follow that the answer must be brainwashing, the burden of proof is on those who wish to reject the brainwashing conjecture to come up with alternative plausible explanations for the presence of these costly mechanisms.

My own research in this area has convinced me that this is a promising line to pursue.<sup>38</sup> When I first studied the Bruderhof thirty years ago using ethnographic methods, I was struck by the homology between the stages of the Bruderhof novitiate and the stages of brainwashing in Chinese re-education centers described by Lifton.<sup>39</sup> Since I could think of no other reason why the Bruderhof would support such a costly and labor intensive resocialization program if it were not to create deployable agents with long term loyalty to the community, I hypothesized that something akin to brainwashing must be occurring. My observations over the next thirty years have only strengthened my confidence in the correctness of this hypothesis. Bruderhof members were never kept from leaving by force or even by the threat of force. But the community put substantial time and energy into assuring that many defections would be made extraordinarily difficult by imbuing in its members an addictive attraction to the community experience and a terror of life outside the community.

What is the frequency with which we find institutionalized structures that approximate those that were found in the foundational brainwashing literature? For the purposes of this paper, I selected the ten religious collectivities other than the Bruderhof in which I have done the most extensive field work. Institutional mechanisms supportive of the brainwashing conjecture were observed in seven of these ten religious collectivities. Since these institutional mechanisms are costly for the collectivity to maintain, it may reasonably be inferred that they would not be maintained if they did not serve some important collective function. However, this evidence, though suggestive, falls somewhat short of definitive proof because of the possibility that the connection is spurious and that these institutional mechanisms actually serve an important collective function having nothing to do with the manipulation of exit costs.

### **The Veracity of Apostate Accounts**

Another promising area of evidence has to do with apostate testimonies of disenchantment. While the brainwashing conjecture clearly requires a world in which at least some of these testimonies reflect true experiences, it does not require that all such testimonies be accepted as true. Researchers attempting to fit their data to a brainwashing model

will generally approach the retrospective accounts of ex-members of NRMs with skepticism. However, in instances where a great many individuals independently report similar accounts of disenchantment, and where there are no apparent financial or emotional incentives for fabricating evidence, these accounts deserve to be taken seriously.

When looked at over a considerable length of time, these accounts show an extraordinary consistency. To my knowledge, there has not emerged even a small number of cases of apostates who claimed they had been brainwashed but who later recanted and admitted that their brainwashing allegations had been lies or self-deceptions. It is this negative evidence—the lack of any significant number of subjects who lied about exit costs but who later changed their stories and admitted they were fabrications—that convinces me that the brainwashing hypothesis cannot be rejected at this time.

### **Red Herrings: Physical Coercion and Mental Breakdown**

Before leaving the topic of empirical evidence, I must address two issues that have often been cited as proof that cult movements do not brainwash. Because of the dearth of receptivity to genuine brainwashing research in the sociology of religion, a “straw man” model of brainwashing has been allowed to circulate unchallenged for quite some time. This dubious model alleges that brainwashing always requires physical force or restraint to be effective. It further alleges that brainwashed individuals are programmed zombies out of touch with reality and that their insanity can be measured by objective tests of psychosis. When ethnographers fail to find signs of physical coercion or psychosis in cults, these facts are taken as “proof” that there can have been no brainwashing.

It is true that cult movements rarely retain their members by the use of physical force or constraint. But is the necessity of force or the threat of force required for true brainwashing? This widespread belief is based on a misreading of Lifton and Schein. This misreading came about because, in fact, many (although by no means all) of the cases they studied were brought to a state of agency by real or threatened force. As incarcerated agents, they were forced to go through the brainwashing process although the desired goal of that process was to give them their freedom as deployable agents.

Within family sociology, it used to be the tendency to say of battered wives, “Why don’t they just leave the abusive situation? Nobody is holding them there by force.” Now it is much better understood that chronic battering can wear down not only the body but the capacity to make independent decisions about leaving. I fail to see any significant differences between this phenomenon and the phenomenon of the charismatically abused participant in a cult movement. Furthermore,

there is no known human behavior (from murder, to suicide, to child abuse, to self-mutilation) that can be experimentally induced in human subjects by force that cannot also be produced by manipulation of the psychological and social environment. Why should brainwashing be the only phenomenon that is an exception to this rule?

It is also true that researchers studying NRM members have often administered mental functioning tests which usually find little significant psychotic disorientation.<sup>40</sup> Such results have erroneously been taken as evidence that the members could not possibly have been brainwashed. In fact, the brainwashing conjecture predicts disorientation only during some of the intermediate stages of the brainwashing process, not at the end state. The popular association of brainwashing with zombie or robot states comes out of a confusion between the physical characteristics of people *going through* the brainwashing process and the characteristics of people who *have completed* the process. The former are, at times, so disoriented that they do appear to resemble caricatures of zombies or robots: Glassy eyes, inability to complete sentences, and fixed eerie smiles are characteristics of disoriented people under randomly varying levels of psychological stress. But the brainwashing process does not simply take people apart. It puts them back together in a new and functionally adequate way. If it did not, they would be useless as deployable agents.

I, myself, happened to witness an entire building full of several hundred highly disoriented Moonies, and it is not an experience that I will ever be able to forget. These people, although gentle and harmless, were frightening in their disjointed affect and loose cognition. But they were not brainwashed, or at least not fully brainwashed. Most of them, quite likely, never went on to complete the brainwashing process. Some may have broken down mentally and been discarded by the movement. Others may have finally found the resources within themselves to leave. Still others may have stayed within the group but were never fully processed through the system. A fully brainwashed person is emotionally and mentally functional as long as he or she does not contemplate disobedience or apostasy. There are no defining bizarre physical characteristics unless one counts a total unwillingness to discuss or even think about certain taboo subjects. Only the underlying values and preferences of the individual have been modified. The value of deployable agents is precisely that they are submissive *without* being functionally immobilized.

## COMPARISON WITH OTHER CONJECTURES

The brainwashing conjecture is based on a theory of preference modification. Since there is no direct way to observe or measure the process of preference transformation, we can currently test this

conjecture only at the level of plausibility. In other words, we need to ask whether the brainwashing explanation is more or less plausible than other conjectures that purport to explain the same observable phenomena. In this section I will discuss the four such competing conjectures that have been advanced in the literature on NRMs. I do not mean to imply that these four comprise an exhaustive list of the explanations proposed. But I offer this list as a convenient way to organize the literature that attempts to explain the commitment behavior of NRM members.

### **The Deviant Labeling Conjecture**

The most parsimonious challenge to the brainwashing conjecture comes from labeling theory. The argument here is simply that there is nothing to explain. Conversion is viewed as an opportunity, not as a trap. Plain vanilla religious commitment mechanisms assure that the disaffiliate will experience exit costs.<sup>41</sup> All this is normal and has gone on for millennia in all religions. It is only the deviant nature of the doctrines of some religions that calls this normal process into question.

According to this perspective, what goes on in cult movements is no different from what any religious organization experiences in its early stages. However, public opinion is threatened by these new movements and therefore labels their converts as brainwashed dupes. The deviant labeling conjecture and the brainwashing conjecture do not differ with regard to the affiliation process. They do, however, differ in their modeling of disaffiliation and disenchantment. The deviant labeling conjecture accounts for ex-members' experience of strong emotional obstacles to disaffiliation by reference to the belonging dimension of religion. Even after disenchantment sets in with regard to belief, there is still a strong sense of belonging to the group that holds these beliefs. These exit costs are similar to those experienced by a married couple who are no longer in love but still feel bound to the relationship.

The Lofland and Stark model of conversion is probably the most sophisticated and influential of this genre.<sup>42</sup> Like the brainwashing model, it describes a process that develops over time in specific stages. However, unlike the brainwashing model, it emphasizes the decisions and activities of the individual convert rather than the manipulative activities of the cult. Lofland and Stark divide the process into three predisposing steps followed by four situational steps. The predisposing steps are: (1) feelings of tension or deprivation of some duration; (2) development of a problem-solving strategy within a religious perspective; and (3) definition of oneself as a seeker after religious truth. The situational steps are: (1) a sudden opportunity to abandon an old way of life and embrace an entirely new one; (2) development of intense

emotional bonds between the individual and group members; (3) atrophy of relationships with nonmembers; and (4) intense communal involvement in a totalistic social structure.

A critical experiment to distinguish between a spontaneous conversion that has been labeled as deviant and a manipulated conversion that involves brainwashing depends to some degree upon a more detailed specification than now exists in the literature of just what happens to an individual during spontaneous conversion. At minimum, attention should be paid to the role played by the cult movement in manipulating stresses on the individual. In addition, these two conjectures predict somewhat different outcomes at the disenchantment stage. Spontaneous conversions labeled as deviant should show a positive correlation between the extent of disenchantment and the degree to which the subject's post-group social environment disdains the movement. Conversions brought about by brainwashing should instead show a correlation between the extent of disenchantment and the degree to which movement beliefs and activities were dystonic to the pre-affiliative self.

Without a model of what happens to individuals during "normal" conversion, we cannot hope to distinguish it from brainwashing definitively. It is possible that some brainwashing may have a normal conversion component. But it is equally possible that much of what we consider normal conversion experiences may involve a measure of what I have been calling brainwashing.

### **The Seekership/Spite Conjecture**

This conjecture is based on the assumption that recruits to NRMs are dissatisfied seekers whose quests may cause them to affiliate (temporarily or permanently) with these groups. Any allegations of mental or emotional coercion that such a person may utter against the movement after ceasing to be a member are best explained as spiteful reactions of disenchanting idealists. There is actually no single body of work that fits this name because those using this explanation have not generally taken as full a longitudinal perspective as we are doing here. Therefore I am combining the congruent speculations of those who explain affiliation in terms of seekership and those who explain the attitudes and beliefs of disaffiliates in terms of spite.

There are individuals known as seekers. These seekers have measurable characteristics that distinguish them from the larger population. They find cult movements and join them as part of their seeking for something that the dominant culture does not offer. Some stay while others move on to further episodes in their seekership careers. Still others outgrow seekership.

The empirical key to establishing the plausibility of the seekership conjecture is the discovery of a reliable and valid measure of the seeker personality traits. Ideally, the application of such a measure should be able to prospectively determine the likelihood of an individual becoming a member of a cult movement. Some efforts to delineate such a measure have produced some interesting findings but have not, to date, begun to converge into one or more general measures of seekership.<sup>43</sup>

When individuals leave an organization to which they have been totally committed, there is sometimes a spite response. This stems from a psychological need to completely disavow, perhaps even take vengeance upon, this organization. This kind of apostasy falls into two distinct categories. The first we may call apostasy at the behest of family enmeshment. Because of the pathology of enmeshed families, total disavowal of the offending group may be a requirement for full reacceptance into the family of origin. Under such circumstances, a mutual agreement that the former member was brainwashed may be the path of least resistance for all concerned.

A second type may be called apostasy in the service of litigation. Feigned distress is always a possibility in civil suits. Could brainwashing be the psychic analog to whiplash in auto accidents? If the brainwashing conjecture creates sympathy for potential plaintiffs, this may give them the motivation to fabricate a history of brainwashing.

A critical experiment to distinguish the seekership/spite conjecture from the brainwashing conjecture would hinge upon the issue of whether loyal, committed members are drawn from a wide spectrum of personality types or from a relatively narrow band known as seekers. Close observation of the recruitment process is necessary here to assure that data are recorded on the characteristics not only of movement members, but of recruits and prospective recruits as well.

The spite portion of the seekership/spite conjecture predicts that the probability of disenchantment is subject to a cost-benefit calculus. Therefore, a high positive correlation between degree of disenchantment and independent measures of the benefits to the individual of an apostasy stance would constitute evidence for the spite conjecture. To the extent that we find apostasy accounts in individuals with nothing to gain by these accounts, we should be more willing to consider their possible veracity. Another approach consists of looking for consistency in in-depth interviews. Still another approach is the development of a lie factor in questionnaires designed to document the process of movement disenchantment.

However, the best way of comparing these two conjectures involves the fifth stage of the behavioral process discussed above. Seekership/spite suggests that reinterviews with apostates many years after leaving the group should show significant signs of retreat from claims of manipulation, especially when there has been a successful reintegration

into the larger society. The brainwashing conjecture, by way of contrast, predicts that apostates will hold fast to their accounts of manipulative resocialization for the rest of their lives. I have followed a sample of respondents for periods of time up to twenty years from the date of declared apostasy and have found no examples of recanted accounts. This suggests to me that the spite argument is not consistent with observed data over a sufficient period of time.

### **The Role Playing Conjecture**

At certain points in life—most notably during the transition from adolescence to adulthood—individuals need to experiment with radically new sets of attitudes and behavioral roles. Often the need is to commit to these allegiances intensely and absolutely. These experiments are almost always short-lived and have few adverse consequences for later life. There may also be behavioral role playing (even of the most fanatical type) without any inner conviction. The role playing conjecture predicts not only that young people affiliate with cult movements based on no great commitment, but also that they are able to stay loosely bonded and disaffiliate when it suits them, with relative ease.

An example of this approach is to be found in Pilarzyk's alternation conjecture.<sup>44</sup> Alternation is viewed as a religious transformation that is less pervasive than conversion. Research in this area tries to distinguish those NRMs whose members undergo true conversion from those whose members undergo a more temporary and superficial process known as alternation. The notion of alternation is important in understanding why some disaffiliates experience exit costs while other members of the very same movement do not.

A role theory approach is associated with the work of Jehenson<sup>45</sup> and later of Bromley and Shupe.<sup>46</sup> Role theoretic approaches tend to be associated with suspicion concerning the reliability and validity of apostate data. Defining apostates by virtue of a shared role rather than by virtue of a shared choice seems to make it easier to justify stereotypical prejudgment of their responses, overlooking the great diversity within this category.

I seek to define this term empirically, in a way that does not prejudge any of the questions addressed in this paper. Unfortunately, apostasy is not always so defined as, for example, in the following study that looks at apostasy from a role theory perspective:

"Apostates" constitutes a special category of defectors who have moved beyond simple disaffiliation to establish a "career" which involves assuming an active role in the anti-cult movement. . . . Exhibiting much the same type of emotional polar reversal as former alcoholics who have become crusading teetotalers,

former inmates who counsel juvenile delinquents, and self-proclaimed “sinners” who have been “born again,” apostates campaign against their former cause. These actions, of course, constitute means of simultaneously burning bridges with the new religious group and building bridges with the anti-cult group and conventional society.<sup>47</sup>

The problem here is that the authors have put the theoretical cart before the empirical horse. Instead of attempting to determine what proportion of ex-members hold strong “anti-cult” views and for what reasons, they define a deviant role solely in terms of holding such a view and thereby dismiss its importance by assuming that apostasy is “merely a stage” through which some ex-members pass.

### **Mental or Physical Impairment Conjectures**

There are a number of explanations of the phenomena we are investigating which rest on the assumption that the actions taken by the individual NRM member are a result of impairment. These divide naturally into two rather distinct classes: “pre-existing condition” models, which allege one must be crazy or deficient in some way to join a NRM in the first place, and “iatrogenic” models, which allege that it is the movement itself that inadvertently impairs you or drives you crazy as an unintended by-product of its attempt to bring you to salvation or enlightenment.

The leading figure of the “pre-existing condition” school is Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi.<sup>48</sup> Beit-Hallahmi’s work, like Galanter’s to some degree,<sup>49</sup> has shown evidence of a correlation between conversion and pre-conversion mental and emotional problems. Silvano Arieti has argued that NRMs are sometimes unconsciously sought out by schizophrenics and can sometimes be of greater help than psychotherapy in arresting cognitive degeneration due to some types of schizophrenia.<sup>50</sup> Robert Simmonds has made a similar argument for drug and alcohol abusers, giving evidence that joining a NRM may be seen as a way of trading in a more harmful addiction for a less harmful one.<sup>51</sup>

Another “pre-existing condition” that has been advanced as an explanation for cult affiliation and disaffiliation is hypnotic suggestibility. Orne has done some interesting experimental work on the extent to which subjects can be hypnotized to do things against their will.<sup>52</sup> Katchen claims to have developed a reliable and valid measure of hypnotic susceptibility.<sup>53</sup> He argues that it can be used to predict vulnerability to cult movements. If this is true, it should be a relatively straightforward task to determine the degree to which this correlates with the amount of time spent in a cult movement.

Another “pre-existing condition” conjecture comes from the anthropological literature. Kehoe and Giletti have argued, based on

their observation of shamanistic trance states, that there is reason to believe that calcium deficiency in diet may be related to charismatic susceptibility and suggestibility.<sup>54</sup> At least one follow-up study has refined this argument by pointing out that, under certain circumstances, extreme stress reduces the body's ability to retain calcium regardless of diet.<sup>55</sup> It would follow from their argument that calcium deficiency may merely be an intermediate variable between stress and charismatic susceptibility. As far as I know, there have been no attempts to date to apply this conjecture to NRMs despite the fact that many of them provide highly deficient diets to their members. It should be easy to test this conjecture with adequate measures of dietary intake and metabolism of NRM members.

Margaret Singer is the leading name associated with the "iatrogenic" school. She sums up her argument as follows:

Despite the myth that normal people don't get sucked into cults, it has become clear over the years that everyone is susceptible. . . . Contrary to the myth that those who join cults are seekers, it is the cults that go out and actively and aggressively find followers. Eventually, these groups subject their followers to mind-numbing treatments that block critical and evaluative thinking and subjugate independent choice in a context of a strictly enforced hierarchy. . . . Some cult members end up in psychiatric hospitals; others sometimes drift for years after a cult experience, never quite getting it together. People who have had such intense experiences, particularly when combined with a concerted breaking down of their selves, require special care afterward . . . . Even those who may not experience severe psychological difficulties often will have considerable problems adjusting to normal life after leaving a cult.<sup>56</sup>

The snapping conjecture, which posits a kind of information overload disease, is a more extreme example of an "iatrogenic" theory. According to Conway and Siegelman, the originators of the conjecture, the human mind is limited in its ability to process information.<sup>57</sup> When stressed in certain ways, the mind snaps and can then be imprinted with the designs of NRM leaders. Minds in this condition are infinitely malleable and vulnerable to any influences. Almost anyone is potentially vulnerable to this type of rapid imprinting. Imprinted individuals, even those with no prior interest in NRMs, become totally deployable agents of movement leaders. This condition will often be permanent unless there is a forcible intercession (e.g., deprogramming).

A critical experiment to distinguish between brainwashing and snapping involves determining the rapidity with which conversion takes place. Brainwashing predicts a slow nonlinear process of conversion with many intermediate crises and backsliding. The snapping conjecture suggests that the conversion happens at a specific point in time. The two models also differ in that snapping predicts impaired mental functioning among the converted whereas brainwashing does not.

Therefore, measures of mental functioning before, during, and after affiliation will be important in any critical experiment to distinguish brainwashing from snapping.

Sirkin and Wynne's *folie à deux* conjecture is yet another interesting attempt to account for NRM member behavior in "iatrogenic" terms. According to the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, *folie à deux* is a delusional system shared by and supported by a network relationship.<sup>58</sup> As it applies to this conjecture, it refers to the dyadic relationship between the charismatic leader of a NRM and each of his followers.<sup>59</sup> Evidence for this conjecture should be based on the observable diagnostic criteria of psychotic delusion which most observers have not found to be characteristic of many known NRMs. However, I believe this perspective has something important to teach us about the study of brainwashing, notably that it is not an individual level characteristic but is rather an emergent property of relationships.

Having reviewed these various conjectures, I think it is fair to conclude that none account for NRM member behavior in a way that is clearly superior to the brainwashing conjecture. On the other hand, neither have I succeeded in showing that the brainwashing conjecture is so far superior to these others that it may be declared our theoretical champion. The point of these comparisons has not been to declare a winner but to establish a research agenda.

### **FROM CONJECTURE TO THEORY: BRINGING THE BRAIN BACK IN**

These sorts of comparisons can only be made on the basis of plausibility. If we want a theory we can actually test, we need to model the phenomenon in terms of measurable changes to persons and relationships. At the present time I believe we are still far away from such an achievement. That is why I have repeatedly referred to arguments concerning brainwashing as conjectures rather than as theories. However, in the last section of this paper I am going to speculate on what a real theory of brainwashing may eventually look like.

Earlier I defined brainwashing as a set of transactions between a charismatically-led collectivity and an isolated member of the collectivity with the goal of transforming the member into a deployable agent. A deployable agent is one who can be relied on to continue to carry out the wishes of the collectivity even when they are in opposition to his or her own simple hedonic interests and in the absence of any external controls. The theoretical problem then becomes to develop hypotheses concerning measurable physiological and behavioral changes occurring in the course of this process and then to determine whether these

changes in fact occur. The theoretical direction I am proposing suggests that internalized changes at both cognitive and emotional levels must occur to result in brainwashing. Understanding these changes will involve work in advancing the study of both credulity and the addictive aspects of strong emotional attachment.

### **The Charismatic Relationship and the Free Rider Problem**

Since brainwashing as I have defined it is possible only in the presence of charismatic authority, a theory of brainwashing must be seen in the context of a theory of charisma. This is not to say that all charismatic relationships involve brainwashing, but that brainwashing is a solution to a fundamental problem posed by charismatic authority. This problem is charisma's tendency to create cycles of reciprocally escalating demands between the leader and the leader's agents that result, for the collectivity, in a positive feedback loop which must, sooner or later, spin out of control unless the agents can be made deployable.

Coleman has suggested that charisma can be explained as a rational response to the free rider problem.<sup>60</sup> If all the members of a collectivity can somehow agree to transfer authority over their own actions to a leader who will make decisions on behalf of the group, there can be a vast increase in "social capital," allowing the collectivity to perform actions beyond the sum of the abilities of the aggregate of individuals. It is possible to see how the maintenance of even a very costly structure for perpetuating charismatic influence can therefore be rational for a collectivity in its pursuit of ambitious collective goals requiring many willing hands. However, charismatic compliance is never or rarely in the interest of a reasonably competent individual conceived as a simple hedonic actor. As Coleman points out, what is puzzling about charismatic influence is why a rational actor would ever submit to it.<sup>61</sup>

An individual's control over his own actions is inalienable. The compliance of an agent can be revoked at any moment, however long the history of fidelity. For a charismatic collectivity to have any degree of stability over time, it must find a way to create agents that are not merely committed but deployable as well. Otherwise, a rational individual will retain authority over his or her own decision making while taking a free ride on the charismatic investments of all the other members. This will create for the group a second-order free rider problem.

In the short run, this problem can be staved off by a continuing cycle of crises and triumphs. But the point made by Weber about the need for charismatic authority to be continually proved thrusts two ways.<sup>62</sup> If the charismatic leader can never rest on his laurels in legitimating his authority, neither can the leader's agent be trusted to remain loyal

through yet another crisis just because he or she has been trustworthy in the past. The charismatic leader must appear to be capable of accomplishing extraordinary deeds. Otherwise, there is no basis for the heavy claims that charismatic influence makes on its agents. But one of the things that makes such accomplishments possible is the trustworthiness of the leader's agents. This trustworthy corps of agents allows the leader to accomplish deeds that appear even more miraculous which, in turn, justify even greater claims on the followers.

It is obvious that such a system, caught in a positive feedback loop of mutually increasing expectations of miracles and loyalty, can never attain equilibrium. One way out of the loop is finding a way for the loyalty of the agents to be guaranteed regardless of the actions of the leader. This is possible only to the extent that the hedonic self is transformed into one driven in large part by normative precommitments involving high exit costs. Only individuals who have made such precommitment can be trusted to support a charismatic leader in the long run. Such complex internal structures are called by Coleman internal constitutions.<sup>63</sup>

But none of this is helpful to us in theory building unless we can find a window through which we can observe the process whereby individuals develop internal constitutions. Can we observe a rational agent transferring authority over his or her actions from the hedonic self to the self governed by an internal constitution, thus becoming a deployable agent? This may be possible to the extent that something observable gets rearranged inside the individual when this happens. I would argue that what gets rearranged are cognitive beliefs of a certain type and emotional dependencies.

### **Charisma and Cognitive and Emotional Restructuring**

Weber asserts that actions based on charismatic influence "are very closely related to phenomena which are understandable either only in biological terms or are subject to interpretation in terms of subjective motives only in fragments and with an almost imperceptible transition to the biological."<sup>64</sup> My argument is that this transition to the biological involves both a suspension of incredulity and an addictive orientation to the alternation of arousal and comfort comparable to the mother-infant attachment. This argument is based on the key assumption that all charismatic relationships are dyadic. Although higher order networks are important and often indispensable in providing the institutional infrastructure for charismatic authority, my assumption is that each follower's relationship with the charismatic leader is lonely and private.

At the cognitive level, this relationship involves the suspension of left-brain criticism of right-brain beliefs such that the beliefs are uncritically and enthusiastically adopted. There exists some biological

evidence for the universality of convictions. Michael Gazzaniga sees convictions as neurologically inevitable byproducts of the division of labor within the brain.<sup>65</sup> The left-brain interpreter working with various right-brain behavior modules imposes consistency on them through mechanisms of belief formation. Gazzaniga further argues that cognitive dissonance can be shown to be a neurologically inevitable consequence of this internal control mechanism.<sup>66</sup> He cites evidence from temporal lobe epilepsy that a brain injury can cause a deepening of religious conviction: “the brain lesion frees the patients from their personal histories and prepares them for any set of beliefs.”<sup>67</sup> By preventing even low-level testing of the consequences of our convictions, the individual is able rapidly to be convinced of a changing flow of beliefs, accepted uncritically.<sup>68</sup>

It seems reasonable to hypothesize that the cognitive mechanism for precommitment is through the development of certain kinds of beliefs. Beliefs can be divided into two categories serving different functions: (1) testable beliefs which serve an obvious social reality function and (2) distal beliefs which cannot be tested and seem to serve no obvious function.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, distal beliefs are held by pretty much everyone, so there must be some non-obvious function that they serve. Let us limit our concern to those convictions that can be classified as distal beliefs (not ordinarily subject to empirical verification). From this point on, I will use the term convictions to refer to strongly held distal beliefs.

In the normal person, there is some evidence that convictions, once developed, are treated by the actor as valued possessions. There are, in other words, costs (possibly substantial) to the actor in giving them up. There is abundant evidence that people tend to defend their convictions even against highly reasonable attacks. Coleman has shown how direct attacks on beliefs polarize communities.<sup>70</sup> Greenwald has shown that there is a low correlation between recollection of the rational arguments used in persuasion and the degree to which one is persuaded.<sup>71</sup> Abelson offers linguistic evidence that convictions are treated as possessions more than as ways of testing reality.<sup>72</sup>

Based on the above considerations, we can postulate that the cognitive aspect of a simple internal constitution consists of the following: a fluid substrate of hedonic preferences; a mantle of more rigid preferences locked in via convictions; will power as the inner agent that speaks for convictions when they are in opposition to hedonic interests. However, a more complex (and probably more realistic) model of the internal constitution makes room also for ego defenses—stress induced reactions to anything that threatens convictions and will power. Ego defenses, like convictions, are virtually universal but functionally useless to individuals who are willing constantly to modify their convictions, rationally, in the light of new evidence.

At the emotional level, my hypothesis is that the charismatic relationship recapitulates the attachment-separation relationship between mother and infant. The initial impulse of the charismatic leader is to nurture and of the disciple to be nurtured. The discarded infantile hope for absolute nurturance and the parental hope for unconditional innocent love are revived. As Smith has argued,

. . . the extreme dependency of disciples or followers immediately suggests that there is a root for charismatic appeal in experiences somehow analogous to those of infancy. In particular, the propensity of followers to attribute charismatic qualities to a leader seems akin to the developmental readiness of an infant to “discover” greatness in a parental figure.<sup>73</sup>

This relationship involves a mutuality of sensitivity in which each party comes to recognize the other’s cyclical need for arousal and comfort. The equilibrium involved is never a stable one. Indeed, it involves a continual mutual testing similar to what Bowlby has called “anxious attachment.”<sup>74</sup> Smith and Stevens, with their concept of the hyperstructure, have provided us with a potential tool for understanding the increasingly addictive nature of the relationship between the charismatic leader and each disciple.<sup>75</sup> They argue,

Specifically, physiological research over the last several decades . . . has drawn attention to correlations, widespread among animal species, between endogenous opioid activities in the brain and the dynamics of attachment and separation. . . . Not only testosterone levels, that is, but also opioid fluctuations appear to be controlled through behavioral channels—through dominance and attachment, respectively.<sup>76</sup>

Although it is a stretch to extrapolate from animal to human research, it seems to me that this is a line of investigation worth pursuing. If it really is the case that opiate stimulation and inhibition are involved in the charismatic relationship, this would explain why this relationship often seems to become addicting for both the subordinate and the superordinate. For the superordinate this is manifested in the oft seen corrupting influence of authority. For the subordinate, it may be manifested in an increasing dependency upon the state of dependency.

Simmonds in his early study of the Jesus Movement argued on the basis of longitudinal psychological testing that the members of this movement were behaving in ways more consistent with our understanding of addiction than with our understanding of conversion.<sup>77</sup> My own studies of the Bruderhof have suggested a similar conclusion.<sup>78</sup> If it is the case that brainwashing can be understood as the process of becoming addicted to a charismatic relationship, we would then have the key for advancing it from a conjecture to a testable theory.

## **The Role of Brainwashing in Charismatic Restructuring**

In these terms, brainwashing can be operationalized as an influence process orchestrated toward the goal of charismatic addiction. My hypothesis is that each of the three stages of brainwashing achieves a plateau in this addictive process. The stripping stage creates the vulnerability to this sort of transformation. The identification stage creates the biochemical alignment, and the rebirth stage creates the fully addicted shadow self.

The cognitive goal of the stripping stage is to destroy prior convictions. The emotional goal of the stripping stage is to create the need for attachments. Overall, at the completion of the stripping stage, the situation is such that the individual is hungry for convictions and attachments and dependent upon the collectivity to supply them. This sort of credulity and attachment behavior is widespread among prisoners and hospital patients

The cognitive goal of the identification stage is to establish a search for conviction and to bring about the erosion of the habit of incredulity. The emotional goal of the identification stage is to instill the habit of acting out through attachment. Overall, at the completion of the identification stage, the individual begins to rely on the collectivity for beliefs and for a cyclic emotional pattern of arousal and comfort. Also at this point, however, this reliance is just one highly valued form of existence. It is not yet viewed as an existential necessity.

The cognitive goal of the rebirth stage is to establish a sense of ownership (and pride of ownership) of the new convictions. The emotional goal of the rebirth stage is to deindividuate to a sufficient extent that one no longer recognizes the emotional validity of life aside from the charismatically led collectivity. Overall, at the completion of the rebirth stage, we may say that the person has become a fully deployable agent of the charismatic leader. The brainwashing process is complete.

If the assumptions made above are correct, this theory should at some point in the future be testable at the biochemical level of the brain. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the specific directions for such interdisciplinary research, hopefully I have at least traced the outlines of a viable agenda for theory building.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

It has not been my aim in this paper to reach a definite conclusion as to whether brainwashing occurs in cult movements. Although I find the evidence convincing that it does, other scholars have found

alternative conjectures equally convincing, and my objective has not been to prove them wrong. Personally, I believe that the cult movement phenomenon is so subtle and multifaceted that all of the conjectures I have discussed in this paper—including brainwashing—eventually will be found partly true.

What I have tried to do in this paper instead is to provide a fair and scientifically grounded set of rules by which all of the conjectures that have been proposed to explain how cult movements retain their members may be comparatively evaluated. This has involved a fair amount of epistemological housekeeping, a kind of sweeping away of stereotypes so that brainwashing can be considered on an equal basis with such conjectures as labeling, seekership/spite, role theory, and theories of mental and physical impairment.

Establishing the need for exit cost analysis, particularly with regard to charismatic religious groups, has been the major goal of this paper. The need for such analysis seems obvious to me. Hopefully even those readers who remain unconvinced that brainwashing contributes significantly to the costs of leaving cult movements will agree that the costs themselves are frequently not negligible. Too often in sociology, especially in rational choice treatments, we have assumed that they are and that one can change religions almost as easily as one changes hats. I invite all who agree with me that the analysis of exit costs is an important line of research to participate in testing the brainwashing conjecture.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Janja Lalich, Phillip Lucas, Thomas Robbins, and two anonymous reviewers for helpful suggestions. The author welcomes comments from readers. These may be sent to him at the Department of Sociology, Rutgers University, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854-8045 or by e-mail to zablocki@durkheim.rutgers.edu

<sup>2</sup> I am using the term “brainwashing” here as generally equivalent to what Lifton has called “thought reform” (Robert Jay Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989]) and Schein has called “coercive persuasion” (Edgar Schein and C.H. Barker, *Coercive Persuasion* [New York: Norton, 1961]). There are subtle connotative differences among these terms, but a debate over terminology is beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Agassi, “Brainwashing,” *Methodology and Science* 23 (1990): 117.

<sup>4</sup> James T. Richardson and Brock Kilbourne, “Classical and Contemporary Applications of Brainwashing Models: A Comparison and Critique,” in *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy: Sociological, Psychological, Legal, and Historical Perspectives*, eds. David G. Bromley and James T. Richardson (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1983), 29-46, and Stuart A. Wright, “Defection from New Religious Movements: A Test of Some Theoretical Propositions,” in *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy*, eds. Bromley and Richardson, 106-21.

<sup>5</sup> John G. Clark, "Cults," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 242 (1979); Bijan Etamad, "Extrication from Cultism," *Current Psychiatric Therapies* 18 (1979): 217-23; David Halperin, *Psychodynamic Perspectives on Religion, Sect, and Cult* (New York: John Wright, 1983); John Hochman, "Intragenic Symptoms Associated With A Therapy Cult: Examination of an Extinct New Psychotherapy with Respect to Psychiatric Deterioration and Brainwashing," *Psychiatry* 47 (1984): 366-77.

<sup>6</sup> The use of the term "cult" in this paper is not meant to be evaluative. I am using it in the by now standard sense as defined by Stark and Bainbridge: "A cult . . . is a deviant religious organization with novel beliefs and practices. Deviance is departure from the norms of a culture in such a way as to incur the imposition of extraordinary costs from those who maintain the culture" (Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion* [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996], 124). The term "cult movement," also used in this paper, denotes a religious organization that is not the offshoot of a church or denomination (a sect movement), but rather one that has started independently of any normative religious body (Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985], 25).

<sup>7</sup> Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism*.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Kent, "Methodological Problems Studying Brainwashing in Scientology's Rehabilitation Project Force" (paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, San Diego, CA, November 1997). Cited with permission of the author.

<sup>9</sup> Not all cult movements, of course, choose to make use of any of these tools. Hopefully only a small minority make use of the hammer.

<sup>10</sup> James S. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

<sup>11</sup> Lawrence R. Iannaccone, "Sacrifice and Stigma: Reducing Free-Riding in Cults, Communes, and Other Collectives," *Journal of Political Economy* 100 (1992): 271-91.

<sup>12</sup> Stark and Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion*.

<sup>13</sup> Christopher Ellison and Darren Sherkat, "The 'Semi-Involuntary Institution' Revisited: Regional Variations in Church Participation among Black Americans," *Social Forces* 73 (1995): 1415-437.

<sup>14</sup> Jack Douglas Shand, "A Forty-Year Follow-Up of the Religious Beliefs and Attitudes of a Group of Amherst College Graduates," in *Research in The Social Scientific Study of Religion*, eds. Monty L. Lynn and David O. Moberg (Greenwich, CT: Jai Press, 1990), 117-36.

<sup>15</sup> Dean R. Hoge, "Why Catholics Drop Out," in *Falling From the Faith: Causes and Consequences of Religious Apostasy*, ed. David G. Bromley (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1988), 81-99, and C. Kirk Hadaway and Wade Clark Roof, "Apostasy in American Churches: Evidence from National Survey Data," in *Falling From the Faith*, ed. Bromley, 29-46.

<sup>16</sup> Stark and Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion*; Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *Religion, Deviance, and Social Control* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994); and Iannaccone, "Sacrifice and Stigma."

<sup>17</sup> Ellison and Sherkat, "The 'Semi-Involuntary Institution' Revisited."

<sup>18</sup> For example most of the essays in Bromley and Richardson, *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy*.

<sup>19</sup> John Lofland, *Doomsday Cult: A Study of Conversion, Proselytization and Maintenance of Faith* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966); James T. Richardson, *Conversion Careers: In and Out of the New Religions* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1978); Benjamin D. Zablocki, *Alienation and Charisma: A Study of Contemporary American Communes* (New York: Free Press, 1980); Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie: Choice or Brainwashing* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984); Marc Galanter, *Cults: Faith, Healing, and Coercion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>20</sup> Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism*. These eight characteristics are described more fully in chapter 22 (especially p. 420).

<sup>21</sup> Benjamin D. Zablocki, *The Joyful Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Richard Ofshe and Margaret Singer, "Attacks on Peripheral versus Central Elements of Self and the Impact of Thought Reform Techniques," *Cultic Studies* 3, no. 1 (1986): 3-24.

<sup>22</sup> In calling the process manipulative, I am stating nothing more than that the goal of the collectivity is to change the target individual according to its own preconceived plan. I am not implying that the collectivity is always deceptive as to its plan nor that the target individual is always guided through the process involuntarily.

<sup>23</sup> The terms used here are my own modifications of Lifton's as developed in Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism*. Cf. Zablocki, *The Joyful Community*.

<sup>24</sup> Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism*.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Jay Lifton, "Cult Formation," *The Harvard Mental Health Letter* 7, no. 8 (February 1991): 2.

<sup>26</sup> See for example D. C. Phillips, *The Social Scientist's Bestiary* (New York: Pergamon, 1992), 52-53, 57 for a fuller discussion of the history of this concept.

<sup>27</sup> Irka Kuleshnyk, "The Stockholm Syndrome: Toward an Understanding," *Social Action and the Law* 10 (1984): 37-42; and Joel O. Powell, "Notes on the Stockholm Syndrome," *Studies in Symbolic Interaction* 7 (1986): 353-65.

<sup>28</sup> Jerome D. Frank, *Persuasion and Healing* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1961).

<sup>29</sup> Ola W. Barnett and Alyce D. LaViolette, *It Could Happen to Anyone: Why Battered Women Stay* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993).

<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth Loftus and Katherine Ketcham, *The Myth of Repressed Memory: False Memories and Allegations of Sexual Abuse* (New York: St. Martin's, 1994). It should be noted that research into false recovered memories cuts two ways with regard to the brainwashing conjecture. Although it does help us understand something of the malleability of memory under stressful influence, this same research suggests that false memories of being brainwashed can be implanted in the minds of religious apostates and that we should therefore proceed cautiously when interpreting apostate accounts.

<sup>31</sup> Solomon Asch, "Effects of Group Pressure upon the Modification and Distortion of Judgements," in *Groups, Leadership, and Men*, ed. Harold Guetzknow (Pittsburgh: Carnegie, 1951); Philip Zimbardo and Susan Anderson, "Understanding Mind Control: Exotic and Mundane Mental Manipulations," in *Recovery From Cults: Help for Victims of Psychological and Spiritual Abuse*, ed. Michael D. Langone (New York: Norton, 1993); and Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975).

<sup>32</sup> For reasons of space, I don't discuss other potential sources of discriminant confusion such as sunk investments (Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*) and attachment anxiety (John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, vol. 2, *Separation* [New York: Basic Books, 1973]) although both should be a part of any systematic study of exit costs.

<sup>33</sup> I will mention here only six of the best of the many excellent ethnographic studies that have been published in recent years: David E. Van Zandt, "The Children of God," in *America's Alternative Religions*, ed. Timothy Miller (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 127-32; Roy Wallis, *The Road to Total Freedom: A Sociological Analysis of Scientology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); Phillip Charles Lucas, *The Odyssey of a New Religion: The Holy Order of MANS from New Age to Orthodoxy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995); John A. Hostetler, *The Hutterite Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1974); George A. Hillery Jr., *The Monastery: A Study in Freedom, Love, and Community* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 1992); Lewis F. Carter, *Charisma and Control in Rajneeshpuram: The Role of Shared Values in the Creation of a Community* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>34</sup> For example, Stuart A. Wright, *Leaving Cults: The Dynamics of Defection*, ed. S. D. Gaede, vol. 7, *SSRC Monograph Series* (Washington, DC: Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1987).

- <sup>35</sup> Barker, *The Making of a Moonie*.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid. and Zablocki, *Alienation and Charisma*.
- <sup>37</sup> William Sims Bainbridge, *The Sociology of Religious Movements* (New York: Routledge, 1997).
- <sup>38</sup> Zablocki, *Alienation and Charisma* and *The Joyful Community*.
- <sup>39</sup> Zablocki, *The Joyful Community*, ch. 6.
- <sup>40</sup> Galanter, *Cults: Faith, Healing, and Coercion*; J. Thomas Ungerleider and David K. Wellisch, "Coercive Persuasion (Brainwashing), Religious Cults, and Deprogramming," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 136 (1979): 279-82.
- <sup>41</sup> Rosabeth M. Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).
- <sup>42</sup> John Lofland and Rodney Stark, "Becoming a World Saver: A Theory of Conversion to a Deviant Perspective," *American Sociological Review* 30 (1965): 862-75.
- <sup>43</sup> Arthur L. Greil, "Previous Dispositions and Conversion to Perspectives of Social and Religious Movements," *Sociological Analysis* 38 (1977): 115-25; Robert Jay Lifton, "Protean Man," *Partisan Review* 35 (1968): 13-27; Lofland and Stark, "Becoming a World Saver"; Tommy H. Poling and J. Frank Kenney, *The Hare Krishna Character Type: A Study of the Sensitive Personality* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1986); A. Tellegen, "Openness to Absorbing and Self-altering Experiences (absorption), a Trait related to Hypnotic Susceptibility," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 83 (1974): 268; Arnold Weiss and Andrew Comrey, "Personality Characteristics of Hare Krishnas," *Journal of Personality Assessment* 51 (1987): 399-413.
- <sup>44</sup> Thomas Pilarzyk, "Conversion and Alternation Processes in the Youth Culture: A Comparative Analysis of Religious Transformations," *Pacific Sociological Review* 21 (1978): 379-405.
- <sup>45</sup> R. G. Jehenson, "The Dynamics of Role Leaving: A Role Theoretical Approach to the Leaving of Religious Organizations," *Journal of Applied Behavioral Analysis* 5, no. 3 (1969): 287-308.
- <sup>46</sup> David G. Bromley and Anson Shupe, "Affiliation and Disaffiliation: A Role-Theory Interpretation of Joining and Leaving New Religious Movements," *Thought* 61, no. 241 (1986): 197-211.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid., 209.
- <sup>48</sup> Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *Despair and Deliverance: Private Salvation in Contemporary Israel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 173-83.
- <sup>49</sup> Galanter, *Cults: Faith, Healing, and Coercion*.
- <sup>50</sup> Silvano Arieti, *Understanding and Helping the Schizophrenic* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975).
- <sup>51</sup> Robert B. Simmonds, "Conversion or Addiction: Consequences of Joining a Jesus Movement Group," *American Behavioral Scientist* 20 (1977): 909-24.
- <sup>52</sup> Martin Orne, "Demand Characteristics and the Concept of Quasi-Controls," in *Artifact in Behavioral Research*, eds. Robert Rosenthal and Ralph Rosnow (New York: Academic Press, 1969), 143-79; Martin Orne, "Can a Hypnotized Subject be Compelled to Carry Out Otherwise Unacceptable Behavior," *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* 20 (1972): 101.
- <sup>53</sup> Martin Katchen, "Brainwashing, Hypnosis, and the Cults," *Australian Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* 20 (1992): 79-88.
- <sup>54</sup> Alice B. Kehoe and Dody H. Giletti, "Women's Preponderance in Possession Cults: The Calcium Deficiency Hypothesis Extended," *American Anthropologist* 83 (1981): 549-61.
- <sup>55</sup> Douglas Raybeck, Judy Shoobe, and James Grauberger, "Women, Stress, and Participation in Possession Cults: A Reexamination of the Calcium Deficiency Hypothesis," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 11 (1991): 139-61.

- <sup>56</sup> Margaret Thaler Singer, *Cults in Our Midst* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995), xxiii, 17, 93.
- <sup>57</sup> Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman, *Snapping: America's Epidemic of Sudden Personality Change* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1978).
- <sup>58</sup> The essential feature of Shared Psychotic Disorder (*Jolie à deux*) is a delusion that develops in an individual who is involved in a close relationship with another person (sometimes termed the "inducer" or "the primary case") who already has a Psychotic Disorder with prominent delusions (Criterion A). The individual comes to share the delusional beliefs of the primary case in whole or in part. American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1994), 306.
- <sup>59</sup> Mark Sirkin and Lyman Wynne, "Cult Involvement as a Relational Disorder," *Psychiatric Annals* 20 (1990): 199-203.
- <sup>60</sup> Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, 311.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 75ff.
- <sup>62</sup> Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: Free Press, 1947), 362.
- <sup>63</sup> Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, 947-48.
- <sup>64</sup> Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 106.
- <sup>65</sup> Michael Gazzaniga, *The Social Brain: Discovering the Networks of the Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).
- <sup>66</sup> Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Evanston, IL: Row Peterson, 1957).
- <sup>67</sup> Norman Geschwind, "Behavioral Change in Temporal Epilepsy," *Archives of Neurology* 34 (1977): 453.
- <sup>68</sup> Gazzaniga, *The Social Brain*, 167.
- <sup>69</sup> Robert Abelson, "Beliefs are Like Possessions," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 16 (1986): 229.
- <sup>70</sup> James S. Coleman, *Community Conflict* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1957).
- <sup>71</sup> Arthur Greenwald, "Cognitive Learning, Cognitive Response to Persuasion, and Attitude Change," in *Psychological Foundations of Attitudes*, eds. Arthur Greenwald, Timothy Brock, and Thomas Ostrom (New York: Academic Press, 1968), 115-31.
- <sup>72</sup> Abelson, "Beliefs are Like Possessions," 230.
- <sup>73</sup> Thomas Spence Smith, *Strong Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 164.
- <sup>74</sup> Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, 213.
- <sup>75</sup> Thomas S. Smith and Gregory T. Stevens, "Comfort Regulation as a Morphogenic Principle: Local Dynamics of Dominance, Competition, and Attachment," *Advances in Group Processes* 14 (1997): 113-55.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.
- <sup>77</sup> Simmonds, "Conversion or Addiction."
- <sup>78</sup> Zablocki, *The Joyful Community*.