

**STATISTICAL RELATIONSHIPS  
BETWEEN CONVERSION STORY AND  
EVANGELISM VARIABLES**

by Brian M. Kelly, Ph.D.,

© 2000 Brian M. Kelly

All Rights Reserved

Except as permitted by such license, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of Brian M. Kelly.

The author may be contacted at:

P.O. Box 67203

Scotts Valley, CA 95607

or by electronic mail: [bandhkelly@aol.com](mailto:bandhkelly@aol.com)

Running head: CONVERSION & EVANGELISM

Statistical Relationships  
Between Conversion Story and Evangelism Variables

Brian M. Kelly

Center for Advanced Theological Studies

School of Theology

Fuller Theological Seminary

Author Note:

Brian M, Kelly, B.A. in Biblical Studies, Trinity Bible College, M.A. in Biblical Studies, Ph.D. in Practical Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.

I wish to thank Dr. Richard Peace and Dr. Cameron Lee at Fuller Seminary for their help in formulating the instrument used, the pastors who helped administer it, and all those who participated by responding to it. This investigation was part of an empirical study I conducted for a chapter in my Ph.D. dissertation and portions of the material, in different format, are contained in that publication.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Brian M. Kelly, P.O. Box 67203, Scotts Valley, CA 95067 Tel.: (831) 440-9692, Electronic mail can be sent via the Internet to [[bandhkelly@aol.com](mailto:bandhkelly@aol.com)].

**ABSTRACT**

The relationship between unconscious, gradual, and sudden conversions and aspects of evangelism in a sample of 845 adult Christians was investigated. A questionnaire explored respondents' past evangelism involvement, dimensions of conversion experience, beliefs about conversion, and likelihood of involvement in specific evangelism methodologies. Numerous significant relationships at  $p < .05$  and  $.01$  were uncovered. The dimensions of peoples' conversion experience and beliefs about conversion varied significantly according to their conversion category. Evangelism was rated as least important of four spiritual disciplines. Those with a sudden conversion were more likely overall to be involved in evangelism, and conversion category significantly predicted participant's willingness to engage in those evangelism methodologies most congruent with their conversion experience. Implications of the data for churches are addressed.

## **Statistical Relationships**

### **Between Conversion Story and Evangelism**

Since the turn of the last century, researchers have probed the nuances of the Christian conversion process. Their curiosity has focused on developmental and emotional factors that influence the decision to convert and the religious behaviors which follow. Yet, poignant questions remain concerning the influence conversion has on the actual practice of evangelism. Is there a clear relationship between Christian conversions and variables pertaining to the practices, dimensions, theology, and potential involvement in specific evangelism methodologies? What do these relationships indicate concerning contemporary evangelism practices? Can such data be helpful to the Church in fulfilling its mission in the world?

The research discloses a gradual development in the categories of the Christian conversion story. As early as 1897, Starbuck completed an extensive three year qualitative study of conversion focusing on those who experienced a "sudden awakening" (p. 270), which set the standard in the study of conversion for nearly a half century. Starbuck assessed the factors preceding, during, and subsequent to the conversion experience. He was probably the first to chart the age of conversion illustrating the correlations between puberty and conversion, and comparing age of conversion based on sex ( $\bar{M}$  = 15.7 years for males & 13.8

for females, p. 293).

Thirty years later, Clark (1928) completed another comprehensive study of 2,174 individuals from sixty institutions of higher learning which involved some 22 open-ended questions concerning conversion. He narrowed the definition of religious conversion to those "emotional experiences of a more radical sort in which a sudden change from irreligion or non-religion to religion is involved" (p. 36).

Grappling with the ambiguities of definitions inherent to such studies, Clark expanded the categories concerning his subjects' experiences into three: (a) The "definite crisis awakening," (b) the "emotional stimulus awakening," and (c) the "gradual awakening" (p. 39f). Clark found that the more radical form of religious awakening occurs at the same age as Starbuck's study, but when "religion dawns by a more gradual process" the awakening comes  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years earlier ( $M = 12$  vs.  $15\frac{1}{2}$ , see Starbuck, 1897, pp. 64-65). Clark's analysis showed that 66.1% of his sample had a gradual conversion. Only 27.2% claimed it was the result of Emotional Stimulus, and 6.7% saw it as the result of a Definite Crisis (pp. 48, 86).

Another twenty years passed until, following World War II, Allport, Gillespie, and Young (1948) tested the religiosity of 500 postwar college students enrolled at Harvard and Radcliffe fifteen months after the war ended. Allport and his colleagues'

findings concerning the age of conversion ( $M = 16.2$  for males, 14.5 for females), and "types of subjective religious awakening" did not vary significantly from E.T. Clark's earlier findings. Approximately 14% reported a Definite Crisis 'conversion,' 15% an Emotional Stimulus Awakening, and 71% a Gradual awakening (Allport et al., 1948, p. 17).

By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, two fundamental categories had developed in determining the time of conversion: sudden and gradual. The sudden category was further divided into those conversion experiences evoked either from a crisis, or emotional stimuli over a longer period, but both earmarked by sudden and radical change. The gradual category up to this time was without nuances (see Spilka, Hood & Gorsuch, 1985 for a review of this literature).

Twenty five years later, Scobie (1975) added what he considered a third classification to the conversion process, described as the "unconscious conversion" (p. 50). This category included those brought up in a Christian home who could not think of a time in their lives when they did not accept the Christian belief. In Scobie's sample, 30% of 170 theological students claimed to have followed this pathway to religious belief. Of the remaining, only 20% claimed a sudden conversion, leaving 50% with a gradual conversion, that is, where the growth of belief extends over a period of time, days, months, or even years (see Scobie,

1975, pp. 50-51).

Scobie's assertions are indicative of the historical shift occurring in the study of conversion. The focus turned from a concept of conversion as "a totally individual phenomenon, simply defined, to one showing many possible forms and expressions," and where the original focus was on "what stimulated and followed conversion," later researchers began to emphasize a process of conversion (Spilka, et al., p. 223). As time progressed, studies also focused more on the causes and results of conversion rather than the types of conversions.

Paloutzian, Jackson, and Crandall (1978) continued the use of three categories of conversion. In a composite of two studies, 49% of their sample had an "unconscious" conversion, 33% reported gradual conversion, and 18% a sudden experience (p. 270). Most recently Liu (1991) investigated the level of religious devotion based on whether the conversion decision was conscious or not, believing the decision point to be more influential than the process. Of the 107 undergraduates who responded at Stanford University, 25% reported a "non-conscious" decision, 67% a gradual, and 8% a sudden decision (p. 368). Such studies indicate general agreement among researchers concerning the three most common categories of conversion experience: sudden, gradual, and unconscious ("*I've been a Christian all my life*").

Up until this present investigation, empirical evidence has

been lacking concerning the relationship between the kinds of "Conversion Story" and the evangelism efforts of individuals polled. In fact, within the psychological literature, only a few questions pertaining to actual evangelism involvement could be found (see King, 1967, p. 184; Strommen et al., 1972, p. 369). But since no questions were asked about the types of conversion experience, no conclusions as to the relationship of these experiences with the evangelism involvement of those polled can be made.

It is the hypothesis of this study that a significant relationship exists between the kinds of conversion experience people report and the dimensions of that experience, their beliefs about conversion (theology), past involvement in evangelism, and likely future participation in specific evangelism methodologies.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The sample for this study consisted of an N of 845 adult Christians from 34 churches; 6% from rural areas (n = 48), 43% from urban cities (n = 365), and 51% from suburban areas (n = 432); representing 18 denominational backgrounds. Of 2,200 questionnaires sent to 38 different churches 1,640 were actually distributed resulting in a response rate of just over 50%. Of the sample received, 54.4% were female (n = 460) and 44.7% were male



( $n = 376$ ). Eleven churches were located on the West Coast in metropolitan areas, 4 in rural areas, and 19 in suburban areas across the upper Midwest (pop. > 25,000).

**Instrument: *Conversion and Evangelism Methods Questionnaire***

Anticipating significant relationships between dimensions of conversion experience and personal evangelism preferences, practices, and theology, a questionnaire was developed which would help explore components of the conversion process, religious thoughts concerning conversion, and potential involvement in a number of commonplace approaches to the evangelistic task (see Appendix A). The final instrument was the result of four major revisions based on a qualitative interview with small group participants, a pilot test with 50 seminary students, and faculty editing.

Two exclusion criteria were used. Respondents had to be age 18 or older, and self-identify as persons who believe "*Jesus Christ is their personal Lord and Savior and have fully committed their lives to Him.*" After obtaining standard demographic information, respondents were asked to check their responses to items in four broad categories: (a) Their evangelism involvement in the "overall" past, as well as the last year; (b) their conversion story, assessing seven different dimensions of conversion; (c) their theology of evangelism, including a ranking of the importance of spiritual disciplines; and (d) their

likely involvement in various evangelism methods. Some of the questions elicited categorical responses, but the majority asked those canvassed to rate their responses on a scale from a lesser to greater value.

### **Criterion Variable**

Respondents were offered three options (sudden, gradual, unconscious; an "other" option produced an  $\bar{n}$  of 4 and was not used) to describe their response to the question: "*Which of the following categories best describes your conversion experience?*" The answer to this question served as the main grouping variable for the statistical analyses. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

### **Procedure**

Each questionnaire was coded according to participant group while maintaining anonymity. The questionnaires were mailed or hand delivered to the pastors involved with a cover letter explaining the procedure for administration. Participants were instructed to complete the questionnaires at their local church, or were given the instrument to complete at home. Questionnaires were collected by mail or in person.

## **Results**

### **Main Grouping Variable: Conversion Story**

Of this sample, 65.1% endorsed either the gradual ( $\bar{n}$  = 340)

or unconscious ( $n = 210$ ) conversion category, versus 29.3% in the sudden ( $n = 248$ ), along with the 5.6% who did not respond to the question ( $n = 47$ ). These results affirm three earlier empirical studies (Allport et al., 1948, 66.1%; Clark, 1928, 73%; and Liu, 1991, 67%) but seem at odds with two others (Scobie, 1975, 50%; Paloutzian et al., 1978, 33%). The inconsistencies in the empirical data over time indicate the difficulty of generalizing about the conversion experience.

#### **Conversion Story, Demographics, Past Evangelism Involvement and Dimensions of the Conversion Experience**

As would be expected, significant variation in the age of conversion was found between those with an unconscious Conversion Story and all other conversion categories. A cross tabulation of Conversion Story was conducted in which the Age of Conversion variable was recoded into age groups reflective of developmental stages (Erikson, 1963; Fowler, 1995/1981; Piaget, 1950) and yielded interesting descriptive results (see Table 1).

Overall, the mean age of conversion (16.4) is just slightly higher among this sample of adults than in previous studies, ( $n = 797$ , range from 1 to 75,  $SD = 12.8$ , see Allport, 1950; Clark, 1928; Clark, 1958; Starbuck, 1897). The mean ages for the sudden and gradual categories were the same (21). Not surprisingly, the mean for the unconscious category was only 4.4. Forty-seven percent of gradual conversions and 40% of sudden conversions

report converting between the ages of 20 and 55 in this sample. While 66.6% of the total sample attested to conversion prior to age 20, adolescent conversion was not as frequently reported as in earlier studies (Liu, 1991; Scobie, 1975; Spilka et al., 1985; Starbuck, 1897).

Of those who responded to the question concerning the criterion variable, males were more likely to report a gradual conversion (45.5%,  $n = 172$ ) than of the females (36.3%,  $n = 167$ ). Whereas females were more likely to indicate an unconscious conversion (27.8%,  $n = 128$ ) than males in the same sample (21.2%,  $n = 80$ ). Furthermore, similar numbers of males (28%,  $n = 106$ ) and of females (30.2%,  $n = 139$ ) reported a sudden conversion story.

Using the Conversion Story as the Independent Variable, a test of between-subject effects failed to show significant variation in age of respondents (see Table 2):  $F(3,481) = .393$ , ns; church attendance:  $F(3,481) = .988$ , ns; satisfaction level of prior evangelism:  $F(3,481) = .655$ , ns; preparation level of prior evangelism:  $F(3,481) = .587$ , ns; comfort level of prior evangelism:  $F(3,481) = 1.683$ , ns; conversion experience-number of people present:  $F(3,481) = 1.092$ , ns; and conversion experience-influence of others:  $F(3,481) = 2.287$ , ns; when a General Linear Model was used.

However, the same test resulted in significant variation in evangelism involvement:  $F(3,481) = 3.766$ ,  $p < .05$ ; conversion

experience-extent of crisis:  $F(3,481) = 15.346$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  
 conversion experience-extent of emotion involved:  $F(3,481) = 10.981$ ,  $p < .001$ ; conversion experience-extent of cognition:  $F(3,481) = 22.890$ ,  $p < .001$ ; conversion experience-extent of God's presence felt:  $F(3,481) = 13.777$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and conversion experience-extent of change:  $F(3,481) = 28.689$ ,  $p < .001$  (the scale on this variable was inadvertently reversed on the questionnaire with the lower values reflecting the most radical change).

### **Conversion Story, Theology of Conversion, and Rating of Spiritual Disciplines**

When an overall analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed (see Table 3), significant variation in ratings were detected between sharing faith and prayer:  $F(25, 796) = 12.449$ ,  $p < .001$ ; bible reading:  $F(25, 796) = 21.433$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and fellowship:  $F(25, 795) = 21.293$ ,  $p < .001$ .

A test of between-subjects effects using the General Linear Model was conducted for variables concerning the theology of conversion (see Table 4). The variables, must pray to be saved:  $F(3,581) = 1.701$ , ns; discipleship is not evangelism:  $F(3,581) = .871$ , ns; evangelism is intentional:  $F(3,581) = 1.278$ , ns; cognition is essential:  $F(3, 581) = .340$ , ns; God decides before birth:  $F(3,581) = .789$ , ns; and God's presence must be felt:  $F(3,581) = 1.206$ , ns, all failed to yield significant variation

based on Conversion Story.

Significant variation by conversion category was found for dependent variables, conversion is a life-long process:  $F(3,581) = 2.840$ ,  $p < .05$ ; converted people know it:  $F(3,581) = 6.128$ ,  $p < .001$ ; dynamic spiritual experience is necessary:  $F(3,581) = 5.357$ ,  $p < .01$ ; special grace through Eucharist:  $F(3,581) = 7.617$ ,  $p < .001$ ; church involvement is essential:  $F(3,581) = 3.189$ ,  $p < .05$ ; baptism is essential for conversion:  $F(3,581) = 4.634$ ,  $p < .01$ ; tongues assures conversion:  $F(3,581) = 2.977$ ,  $p < .05$ ; human choice is essential:  $F(3,581) = 8.337$ ,  $p < .001$ ; every believer should be involved in evangelism:  $F(3,581) = 3.608$ ,  $p < .05$ ; importance of prayer:  $F(3,581) = 3.608$ ,  $p < .05$ ; importance of bible reading:  $F(3,581) = 11.788$ ,  $p < .001$ ; importance of sharing faith:  $F(3,581) = 10.512$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and importance of fellowship:  $F(3,581) = 3.076$ ,  $p < .05$ .

### **Conversion Story and Likely Involvement in Evangelism**

#### **Methodologies**

A test of between-subjects effects using a General Linear Model was performed on the variables pertaining to likely involvement in various evangelism methodologies. Only two variables failed to yield significant variation by conversion story at  $p < .05$  (see Table 5), distribute food and clothing:  $F(3,646) = .119$ , ns; and attend apologetic training:  $F(3,646) = 2.244$ , ns.

The same test yielded significance for all other variables, distribute evangelism literature:  $F(3,646) = 3.076, p < .05$ ; help new Christians with Bible study:  $F(3,646) = 3.997, p < .01$ ; door to door to pray:  $F(3,646) = 6.880, p < .001$ ; door to door to share the Gospel:  $F(3,646) = 7.578, p < .001$ ; worship or pray in public:  $F(3,646) = 3.727, p < .05$ ; Bible study with non-Christians:  $F(3,646) = 4.303, p < .01$ ; invite to event outside the church:  $F(3,646) = 7.579, p < .001$ ; invite to event inside the church:  $F(3,646) = 4.406, p < .01$ ; promote signs and wonders:  $F(3,646) = 5.854, p < .01$ ; preach in public:  $F(3,646) = 5.532, p < .01$ ; share testimony:  $F(3,646) = 11.214, p < .001$ ; complete questionnaire in public:  $F(3,646) = 6.619, p < .001$ ; talk privately with non-Christians:  $F(3,646) = 6.818, p < .001$ ; offer to pray with non-Christians:  $F(3,646) = 5.079, p < .01$ ; invite into home:  $F(3,646) = 5.750, p < .01$ ; attend evangelism training:  $F(3,646) = 4.670, p < .01$ ; pray with others who ask:  $F(3,646) = 11.144, p < .001$ .

### **Discussion**

The data show significant relationships between the categories of Conversion Story (unconscious, gradual, & sudden) and variables concerning past evangelism involvement, dimensions of conversion experience, beliefs about conversion, and likely involvement in evangelism methodologies? For example, the age at time of conversion for gradual and sudden conversions are

essentially equal, and occur beyond the teen years (see Table 1). It may be that conversion is occurring in our culture at later ages than in prior generations. Empirical studies throughout this century, document a wide disparity in data over time. The mean age of conversion for Starbuck (1897) was 15.7 for males, 13.8 for females (1897); for Clark, age 12 was the overall mean (1928); and for Allport and colleagues, 16.2 for males and 14.5 for females (1948). The median age of conversion from this sample (17.1 for males, 15.8 for females) was only slightly higher than those recorded in the first half of this century, and confirm the pattern of a later age of conversion for males than females.

Those who attested to a sudden conversion were significantly more involved in evangelism in the last year (see Table 2). Furthermore, a one-way ANOVA revealed a significant positive relationship between satisfaction with past evangelism experiences and higher levels of involvement ( $F(4, 748) = 24.583, p < .001$ ). It may be that people are more satisfied with and thus more involved with methods which resonate with their personal conversion experience. The paucity of compatible methods then might explain low levels of both satisfaction and involvement in evangelism.

The dimensions of the conversion experience, such as emotion involved, sense of God's presence, and experience of a more radical change were rated significantly higher by those with a



sudden conversion than by either the unconscious or gradual converts. Surprisingly, no significant difference was detected between the sudden and gradual categories in respect to the extent of crisis involved in the conversion experience. It would seem that despite the length of time or amount of cognition involved in the conversion, both sudden and gradual converts experience some crisis in their life circumstances at the time of conversion. In particular, this data helps to affirm the validity of the conversion categories by quantifying the various dimensions involved in each conversion experience.

As might be expected, the theology of conversion variables confirmed a significant relationship between conversion story categories and beliefs about conversion. Those of the sudden category were more likely to agree that awareness of conversion, a dynamic spiritual experience, church involvement, and human choice are all essential to conversion. Accordingly, those in the unconscious or gradual categories were significantly more likely to believe that conversion is a life-long process, special grace is imparted through the Eucharist, and baptism is essential for conversion. Finally, in regards to the practice of evangelism, those in the sudden category were significantly more likely to stress that every believer should be involved in evangelism than those in the unconscious conversion category.

Overall, sharing one's faith was rated the lowest in

importance of the four spiritual disciplines offered. Christians apparently learn that evangelism is not as important as prayer, Bible reading, or fellowship. The devaluation of evangelism beneath other disciplines is reflective of the lack of credible evangelism methods which resonate with the experience of conversion as a process that nearly 2/3rds of Christians claim. In addition, the three conversion categories rated sharing faith and Bible reading differently in importance and in all four of the spiritual disciplines, those in the sudden category significantly and consistently rated their importance higher than those in the gradual or unconscious categories. Such findings are consistent with Clark's observation that religious workers are more likely to have had a crisis conversion (1928, p. 61), concurring as well with Liu's finding that those who have made a conscious decision to become a Christian are more religiously active than those who have not (1991).

Only three other variables were rated by all conversion categories with strong agreement: converted people know it, human choice is essential, and every believer should be involved in evangelism. The lowest ratings of agreement were given to the variables one must pray to be saved, discipleship is not evangelism, and tongues assures conversion. These findings confirm what one would expect, that those with sudden conversions are more likely to affirm those beliefs which reflect that kind of

conversion (i.e., cognitive awareness, dynamic experience, church involvement, etc.), whereas those with gradual and unconscious conversions are more likely to affirm the role of the sacraments and the belief in conversion as a process. The less radical variables failed to yield significant variance in responses.

In willingness to be involved in evangelism methodologies, only one variable (distributing food and clothing), lacked significant variation. For every other variable, sudden converts were most likely to be involved, gradual converts next, and unconscious converts lowest in probable involvement. The greatest differences were most often found between the sudden and unconscious categories. Similarly, the variables which reflect more intentional evangelism methods, implying the need for an immediate conversion, demonstrated the most variation between conversion categories: sharing the Gospel door to door, Bible study with non-Christians, inviting to events outside the church, promoting signs and wonders, preaching in public, sharing testimony, polling with a questionnaire. Two more variables with considerable difference between conversion categories, offering to pray with non-Christians, and praying with others who ask, are evangelism methods which reflect a more passive and process-oriented conversion. These variables, along with regular pray for non-Christians, distributing food and clothing, and helping new Christians with a Bible study, received the most likelihood of

involvement overall.

Assuming that more assertive evangelism methods implicitly reflect a view of conversion as a punctiliar event evoked by a crisis experience, then those with a sudden conversion story should be more likely to participate in those methods, which the data indicate. Conversely, these more intentional evangelism endeavors, such as "sharing a testimony in public," are the methods which both the gradual and unconscious converts are significantly less likely to practice, according to the results. In fact, those with a sudden conversion are much more likely to "pray a prayer of repentance with someone who asked them to" than those from all other categories. Such evangelism is less familiar to the more gradual conversion experience, and thus may fail to resonate with the understanding of conversion, and consequently evangelism, of 65% of the body of Christ.

This data can be helpful to churches, ministers, and teachers. The evidence reveals that a definite relationship exists between one's own conversion experience and the kinds of evangelism methods that a Christian is likely to embrace. People are more likely to get involved in those methods that mirror their Conversion Story. Methodologies, then, which incorporate the view of conversion as a gradual process are most likely to garner the greatest participation by the majority of Christians who have experienced conversion as a process in their own lives. A

practical and theological discussion, within the congregation, concerning the ways evangelism mirrors beliefs about conversion, could help pastors and leaders to increase participation in evangelism efforts.

Finally, the difficulty of measuring (empirically) the various aspects of Christian conversion should be appreciated. Conversion is a highly personal, spiritual experience not easily quantified or characterized apart from subjective self-disclosure of the phenomenon. In addition to the paucity of actual scientific data concerning evangelism, the wide disparity in nomenclature regarding conversion makes its measurement difficult.

### References

Allport, G. W. (1950). The Individual and His Religion: A Psychological Interpretation. New York: Macmillan Company.

Allport, G. W., Gillespie, J. & Young, J.(1948). The Religion of the Post-War College Student. The Journal of Psychology, 25, 3-33.

Clark, E.T. (1928). The Psychology of Religious Awakening. New York: Macmillan Press.

Clark, W.H. (1958). The Psychology of Religion. New York: Macmillan Press.

Erikson, E. H.(1963). Childhood and Society. New York: Norton Books.

Fowler, J.W. (1995). Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning. San Francisco: Harper.  
(Original work published 1981)

King, M. (1967). Measuring the Religious Variable: Nine Proposed Dimensions. The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 173-190.

Liu, Christine. (1991). Becoming a Christian Consciously Versus Nonconsciously. Journal of Psychology and Theology, 19:4,

364-375.

Paloutzian, R. F., Jackson S.L. & Crandall, J.E.. (1978). Conversion Experience, Belief System, and Personal and Ethical Attitudes. Journal of Psychology and Theology, 6, 266-275.

Piaget, J. (1950). The Moral Judgment of the Child. (M. Gabain, Trans.). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd.

Scobie, G. E. W. (1975). Psychology of Religion. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Spilka, B., Hood R. & Gorsuch, R. (1985). The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc.

Starbuck, E.D. (1897). A Study of Conversion. The American Journal of Psychology, 8, 268-308.

Strommen, M., et al. (1972). A Study of Generations: Report of a Two-Year Study of 5,000 Lutherans Between the Ages of 15-65: Their Beliefs, Values, Attitudes, and Behavior. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House.

**Conversion Age Category & Conversion Story Crosstabulation**

			Conversion Story			Total
			Gradual	Sudden	Unconscious	
Conversion Age Category	1-3 yrs. old	Count	11	6	130	149
		% within Conversion Story	3.3%	2.5%	63.4%	18.7%
	4-12 yrs. old	Count	74	61	62	202
		% within Conversion Story	22.5%	25.0%	30.2%	25.4%
	13-19 yrs. old	Count	90	75	9	179
		% within Conversion Story	27.4%	30.7%	4.4%	22.5%
	20-35 yrs. old	Count	117	70	3	194
		% within Conversion Story	35.6%	28.7%	1.5%	24.4%
	36-55 yrs. old	Count	36	28	1	67
		% within Conversion Story	10.9%	11.5%	.5%	8.4%
	65+	Count	1	4		5
		% within Conversion Story	.3%	1.6%		.6%
	Total	Count	329	244	205	796
		% within Conversion Story	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

**Table 1**



Table 2

Gradual Versus Sudden Versus Unconscious Conversion Story: Scores on Demographics, Past Evangelism Involvement and Dimension of Conversion Experience Dependent Variables

	Conversion Story	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Age of Respondents	Unconscious	43.55	16.80	80
	Gradual	44.91	16.19	240
	Sudden	45.16	15.22	164
Education Levels	Unconscious	14.86 (a*)	2.30	80
	Gradual	13.96 (b*)	2.51	240
	Sudden	13.88 (b*)	2.55	164
Church Attendance	Unconscious	14.64	14.327	80
	Gradual	12.29	14.619	240
	Sudden	12.64	13.004	164
Evangelism Involvement	Unconscious	6.95 (a)	12.03	80
	Gradual	6.87 (a*)	9.57	240
	Sudden	9.99 (b*)	12.40	164
Satisfaction Level of Prior Evang.	Unconscious	4.54	1.556	80
	Gradual	4.58	1.492	240
	Sudden	4.76	1.472	164
Preparation Level of Prior Evang.	Unconscious	4.27	1.518	80
	Gradual	4.30	1.412	240
	Sudden	4.47	1.488	164
Comfort Level of Prior Evang.	Unconscious	4.22 (a)	1.692	80
	Gradual	4.37 (a,b)	1.439	240
	Sudden	4.63 (b)	1.478	164
Conv. Exp. Number of People Present	Unconscious	3.12	1.245	80
	Gradual	2.82	1.295	240
	Sudden	2.90	1.365	164
Conv. Exp. Extent of Crisis	Unconscious	2.48 (a*)	1.648	80
	Gradual	4.03 (b*)	1.792	240
	Sudden	4.01 (b*)	2.030	164
Conv. Exp. Influence of Others	Unconscious	3.88	1.740	80
	Gradual	3.97	1.650	240
	Sudden	4.05	1.899	164
Conv. Exp. Extent of Emotion Involved	Unconscious	4.10 (a*)	1.883	80
	Gradual	4.41 (a)	1.762	240
	Sudden	5.26 (b*)	1.754	164
Conv. Exp. Extent of Cognition	Unconscious	3.04 (a*)	1.916	80
	Gradual	4.07 (b*)	1.614	240
	Sudden	2.74 (a*)	1.726	164
Conv. Exp. Extent of God's Presence Felt	Unconscious	4.35 (a*)	1.348	80
	Gradual	4.17 (a*)	1.268	240
	Sudden	4.95 (b*)	1.274	164
Conv. Exp. Extent of Change	Unconscious	3.68 (a*)	1.527	80
	Gradual	2.72 (b*)	1.419	240
	Sudden	1.95 (c*)	1.272	164

Note. Compared within rows, means with different parenthetical letters differ significantly at  $p < .05$  and those with an \* differ significantly at  $p < .01$ .

**Mean, Median, and Standard Deviation for Rating of Spiritual Disciplines  
Independent Variables**

	N		Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
	Valid	Missing			
Prayer	834	11	6.118	7.000	1.252
Bible Reading	832	13	5.861	6.500	1.426
Sharing Faith	822	23	5.082	5.000	1.665
Fellowship	826	19	5.828	6.000	1.304

**Table 3**

Gradual Versus Sudden Versus Unconscious Conversion Story: Scores on Theology of Conversion and Rating of Spiritual Disciplines Dependent Variables

	Conversion Story	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Must Pray to be saved	Unconscious	1.71	.97	144
	Gradual	1.90	.94	261
	Sudden	1.94	1.06	179
Conversion a Life-long Process	Unconscious	2.92 (a)	1.24	144
	Gradual	2.80 (a,b)	1.22	261
	Sudden	2.56 (b)	1.36	179
Converted People Know it	Unconscious	3.30 (a*)	.81	144
	Gradual	3.45 (a)	.82	261
	Sudden	3.63 (b*)	.64	179
Discipleship not Evang.	Unconscious	1.53	.82	144
	Gradual	1.64	.92	261
	Sudden	1.70	.99	179
Evang. is intentional	Unconscious	2.37	.94	144
	Gradual	2.51	.87	261
	Sudden	2.56	.87	179
Dynamic Sp. Exp. necessary	Unconscious	1.69 (a*)	.88	144
	Gradual	1.80 (b*)	.95	261
	Sudden	2.08 (c*)	1.04	179
Cognition Essential	Unconscious	2.84	1.03	144
	Gradual	2.92	1.02	261
	Sudden	2.84	1.15	179
God decides before birth	Unconscious	2.51	1.19	144
	Gradual	2.65	1.25	261
	Sudden	2.66	1.24	179
God's presence must be felt	Unconscious	2.31	1.03	144
	Gradual	2.36	1.07	261
	Sudden	2.41	1.11	179
Special Grace thru Eucharist	Unconscious	2.46 (a)	1.08	144
	Gradual	2.28 (a, b)	1.10	261
	Sudden	2.15 (b)	1.17	179
Church Involvement Essential	Unconscious	2.67 (a*)	.97	144
	Gradual	2.74 (a)	1.06	261
	Sudden	2.97 (b*)	.99	179
Baptism Essential for Conv.	Unconscious	2.99 (a*)	1.08	144
	Gradual	2.83 (a)	1.15	261
	Sudden	2.60 (b*)	1.22	179
Tongues Assures Conv.	Unconscious	1.58 (a)	.73	144
	Gradual	1.78 (b)	.94	261
	Sudden	1.79 (b)	.98	179
Human choice essential	Unconscious	3.51 (a)	.95	144
	Gradual	3.65 (a, b)	.72	261
	Sudden	3.73 (b)	.69	179
Every believer involved in Evang.	Unconscious	3.32 (a*)	.78	144
	Gradual	3.44 (a, b)	.70	261
	Sudden	3.55 (b*)	.61	179
Prayer	Unconscious	5.94 (a*)	1.337	144
	Gradual	6.09 (a*)	1.302	261
	Sudden	6.44 (b*)	1.040	179
Bible Reading	Unconscious	5.39 (a*)	1.539	144
	Gradual	5.90 (b*)	1.418	261
	Sudden	6.30 (c*)	1.129	179
Sharing Faith <sup>a</sup>	Unconscious	4.58 (a*)	1.607	144
	Gradual	4.50 (b*)	1.706	261
	Sudden	5.58 (c*)	1.483	179
Fellowship	Unconscious	5.81 (a)	1.181	144
	Gradual	5.78 (a*)	1.325	261
	Sudden	6.08 (b*)	1.253	179

Table 4

Note: Compared within rows, means with different parenthetical letters differ significantly at p < .05 and those with an \* differ significantly at p < .01 unless noted otherwise.

a. In this variable Unconscious and Gradual differ significantly at p < .05.

Table 5

Gradual Versus Sudden Versus Unconscious Conversion Story: Scores on Likely Involvement in Evangelism Methodologies Dependent Variables

	Conversion Story	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Dist. of Ev. Lit.	Unconscious	2.57 (a*)	.85	163
	Gradual	2.71 (a, b)	.91	282
	Sudden	2.88 (b*)	.90	204
Help New Christ. w/Bible Study	Unconscious	3.33 (a*)	.68	163
	Gradual	3.47 (b)	.62	282
	Sudden	3.58 (b*)	.53	204
Dr.- Dr. to Pray	Unconscious	2.26 (a*)	.74	163
	Gradual	2.45 (b*)	.84	282
	Sudden	2.66 (c*)	.92	204
Dist. Food/Clothe	Unconscious	3.49	.66	163
	Gradual	3.49	.63	282
	Sudden	3.47	.69	204
Dr.-Dr. to Share Gospel <sup>a</sup>	Unconscious	2.22 (a*)	.78	163
	Gradual	2.40 (b*)	.86	282
	Sudden	2.65 (c*)	.89	204
Worship/Prayer in public	Unconscious	3.07 (a*)	.86	163
	Gradual	3.23 (a, b)	.79	282
	Sudden	3.35 (b*)	.74	204
Bible Study w/non-Christ. <sup>b</sup>	Unconscious	2.80 (a*)	.83	163
	Gradual	2.97 (b*)	.80	282
	Sudden	3.19 (c*)	.75	204
Regular Prayer for non-Christ.	Unconscious	3.44 (a*)	.69	163
	Gradual	3.52 (a)	.62	282
	Sudden	3.65 (b*)	.54	204
Invite to event outside church <sup>c</sup>	Unconscious	3.17 (a*)	.77	163
	Gradual	3.34 (b)	.67	282
	Sudden	3.45 (c*)	.64	204
Invite to event inside church	Unconscious	3.37 (a*)	.71	163
	Gradual	3.47 (a)	.61	282
	Sudden	3.60 (b*)	.60	204
Promote Signs & Wonders	Unconscious	2.16 (a*)	.92	163
	Gradual	2.41 (b*)	.88	282
	Sudden	2.57 (b*)	.97	204
Preach in public	Unconscious	2.03 (a*)	.95	163
	Gradual	2.31 (b*)	1.03	282
	Sudden	2.46 (b*)	1.06	204
Share testimony	Unconscious	2.75 (a*)	.91	163
	Gradual	3.00 (b*)	.85	282
	Sudden	3.23 (c*)	.77	204
Qstnre in public	Unconscious	2.31 (a*)	.90	163
	Gradual	2.46 (a*)	.92	282
	Sudden	2.73 (b*)	.93	204
Talk privately w/non-Christ.	Unconscious	3.22 (a*)	.78	163
	Gradual	3.34 (a*)	.70	282
	Sudden	3.53 (b*)	.56	204
Offer to Pray w/non-Christ.	Unconscious	3.32 (a*)	.76	163
	Gradual	3.49 (b)	.67	282
	Sudden	3.59 (b*)	.59	204
Invite into home	Unconscious	2.80 (ac*)	.83	163
	Gradual	2.99 (b)	.81	282
	Sudden	3.16 (c*)	.78	204
Attend Apologetic Training	Unconscious	3.21 (a)	.73	163
	Gradual	3.33 (a, b)	.73	282
	Sudden	3.39 (b)	.72	204
Attend Ev. Training	Unconscious	3.23 (a*)	.74	163
	Gradual	3.39 (b)	.69	282
	Sudden	3.48 (b*)	.68	204
Pray w/others who ask <sup>d</sup>	Unconscious	3.57 (a*)	.69	163
	Gradual	3.72 (b*)	.51	282
	Sudden	3.84 (c*)	.44	204

Note. Compared within rows, means with different parenthetical letters differ significantly at  $p < .05$  and those with an \* differ significantly at  $p < .01$  unless noted otherwise..

- a. In this variable Sudden and Gradual differ significantly at  $p < .05$ .
- b. In this variable Unconscious and Gradual differ significantly at  $p < .05$ .
- c. In this variable Sudden and Gradual differ significantly at  $p < .05$ .
- d. In this variable Sudden and Gradual differ significantly at  $p < .05$ .

## APPENDIX A - CONVERSION AND EVANGELISM METHODS QUESTIONNAIRE

---

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Thank you beforehand for taking the time to help us in this significant research project. Before answering the questionnaire, please note that in order to participate you must be:

1. At least 18 years old.
2. A Christian believer - that is, you believe Jesus Christ is your personal Lord and Savior and you have fully committed your life to Him.

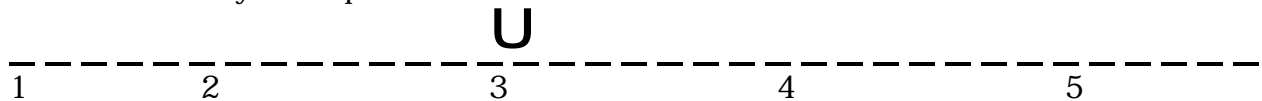
If either one of these is not the case in your life please return the questionnaire to the person who gave it to you. Thank you!

There are several questions on the following pages.

Most of the questions request that you check a box for your answer. You may skip any question that you do not want to answer.

Some of them will provide either a space or a line where you can write your answer.

Some will ask you to place a mark on a numbered line, like this:



Instructions will be given for each question. Please answer to the best of your ability each question if you can. It should take approximately 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Please return the questionnaire to the person you received it from when completed.

Thanks again for your kind cooperation in completing this research project!

Together with you in the Harvest,

Brian Kelly, Ph.D. (Cand.)

Questionnaires may be returned to:

Rev. Brian Kelly  
Unit #537

Please turn the page to begin . . .

Fuller Theological Seminary  
Pasadena, California

3712 S.W. 29<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, KS 66614

---

In order to help us better understand the role evangelism plays in the life of the local church we ask you to answer as honestly as possible the following questions. All of the answers are valid; there are no right or wrong answers. Please answer as thoughtfully and completely as possible. Remember all answers are strictly confidential.

**PART ONE. Personal Information.**

*Please answer each question, by either checking the appropriate response box or writing the information on the line provided.*

Male '                  Female '                  Age \_\_\_\_\_

Educational Level:

Grade completed \_\_\_\_\_ College Degrees \_\_\_\_\_ Graduate Degrees \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnic background: (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Denominational Background: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been attending your church?

State the time period (months, years, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

**PART TWO. Your Evangelism Involvement.**

1. In the last year, about how many times have you personally tried to share your faith with someone who was not a Christian?

' None ' Once ' Twice " Three times ' About 1/mo.

" Other, please explain \_\_\_\_\_

2. On a scale of one to seven place a "U" to show how you would generally characterize your overall past experiences in evangelism.

A. The experience was:

-----  
1                  2                  3                  4                  5                  6                  7  
Very                  Somewhat                  Somewhat                  Very  
Unsatisfying                  Unsatisfying                  Satisfying                  Satisfying

B. Felt you were:

Thank You! Please turn the page . . .

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Unprepared		Somewhat Unprepared		Somewhat Prepared		Very Prepared

C. At the time you felt:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Uncomfortable		Somewhat Uncomfortable		Somewhat Comfortable		Very Comfortable

### PART THREE. Your Conversion Story.

**3. How would you best describe your conversion experience?** On a scale of one to seven place a "U" to show how you would generally characterize your conversion experience for each question.

A. How many other people were present when the conversion experience took place?

1	2	3	4	5
Zero	One or two other people	A small group (3-15)	A moderate group(16-100)	A large group (more than 100)

B. How would you describe the external circumstances of your life at the time?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No Crisis		Very little Crisis		Some Crisis		Intense Crisis

C. How much did others influence your decision to convert?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all		Somewhat		Considerably		Tremendously

D. How much emotion was involved in your conversion experience?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Hardly any emotion			Some emotion			A lot of emotion

E. How long did you think about your conversion before it occurred?

1	2	3	4	5	6
A Few Minutes	A Few Hours	A few Days	A few Weeks	A Few Months	A Few Years

F. How would you describe your sense of God's presence at the time?

1	2	3	4	5
None		Some		Strong

G. How much change occurred in your life as a result of the experience?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Radically		Changed		Not Changed		No change

Thank You! Please turn the page . . .

Changed                                      Somewhat                                      Very much                                      at all

H. Which of the following categories best describes your conversion experience?

" It happened suddenly at one point in time.                      " It took place gradually over a period of time.                      " I've been a Christian all my life.                      " Other, explain:

**4. At what age do you think you became a Christian?**

" I've always been a Christian.                      " I became a Christian at age:\_\_\_\_\_.

L

**PART FOUR. Your View of Conversion.**

*Please check one box that most accurately reflects your thinking for each statement:*

**5. How strongly do you agree or disagree?**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
People should pray a public prayer to be truly saved	"	"	"	"
Becoming a Christian is a life-long process . . . . .	"	"	"	"
People who are truly converted know it . . . . .	"	"	"	"
Discipleship is not really part of evangelism . . . . .	"	"	"	"
Evangelism should be more intentional than spontaneous	"	"	"	"
A clear testimony of a dynamic spiritual experience is essential to be converted . . . . .	"	"	"	"
People need to know the essence of the Gospel story before conversion . . . . .	"	"	"	"
Conversion is decided by God long before we are born	"	"	"	"
People need to feel the presence of God at their conversion in order to be sure of salvation . . . . .	"	"	"	"
Special grace (saving or keeping) is imparted through the act of communion . . . . .	"	"	"	"
True believers are always a part of a church community	"	"	"	"
Baptism is an essential part of the salvation process	"	"	"	"
People who speak in tongues are surely saved . . . . .	"	"	"	"
While God is the author of salvation humans must choose to be saved . . . . .	"	"	"	"

Thank You! Please turn the page . . .



	Disagree	Somewhat	Somewhat	Agree
Every believer should be involved in some evangelism	"	"	"	"

**6. Place a "U" where you rank the importance of the following in the life of believers?**

Essential	Somewhat Important	Very Absolutely Important		
		Important	Important	Important
Praying everyday, or as often as possible . . . . .	-1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-			
Reading the Bible everyday, or as often as possible.	-1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-			
Routinely sharing their faith with unbelievers . . .	-1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-			
Participating in wholesome Christian fellowship . . .	-1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-			

L

**PART FIVE. Your View on Evangelism.**

**7. How likely would you be to get involved in the following evangelism m  
(Check the box that best explains your feelings today):**

	Never	Not Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely
Help hand out evangelism literature in public places . . .	"	"	"	"
Help a new Christian learn more about the Bible . . . . .	"	"	"	"
Door to door canvassing to pray with needy people . . . . .	"	"	"	"
Help distribute food and clothing from the church . . . . .	"	"	"	"
Door to door canvassing to share the Gospel message . . . . .	"	"	"	"
Be part of a worship and prayer service in public places.	"	"	"	"
Do an evangelistic Bible study with non-Christians . . . . .	"	"	"	"
Pray regularly for a list of non-Christians of my choice.	"	"	"	"
Invite a non-Christian to a special evangelistic event <u>outside</u> the church . . . . .	"	"	"	"
Invite non-Christians to an evangelistic event or production (drama or music) to be held <u>inside</u> the church.	"	"	"	"
Promote a meeting where signs and wonders are primary . . . . .	"	"	"	"
Preach the gospel from a stage in public . . . . .	"	"	"	"
Share my testimony in public . . . . .	"	"	"	"
Poll non-Christians about their religious beliefs with a <u>questionnaire</u> in public places . . . . .	"	"	"	"

	Never	Not Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely
Talk privately with non-Christians about your faith . . .	"	"	"	"
Offer to pray with non-Christians who are struggling . . .	"	"	"	"
Invite non-Christians and others from my church into my home to discuss Christianity . . . . .	"	"	"	"
Attend training sessions in how to answer difficult questions about Christianity . . . . .	"	"	"	"
Attend training sessions that would better prepare me to share my faith . . . . .	"	"	"	"
Pray a prayer of repentance with someone who asked me to	"	"	"	"

This is the end of the questionnaire. **Thanks so much** for taking your valuable time to share your thoughts with us! (

For Office Use Only

