DOCUMENT RESUME

ABSTRACT

        "Thought reform" is a calculated strategy of social
action designed to convert individuals to another ideology through a
long-term process, during which threat underlies all experiences. In
this article, part of the "Freedom of Speech Newsletter," insights
from a phenomenological view of rhetoric are used to explain the
nature and impact of thought reform. The following topics are
discussed: the definition and basic process of thought reform, the
five stages in the system of thought reform developed by the Chinese
Marxist revolutionaries (prelearning, annihilation of identity,
introduction of a new identity, validation of this new identity, and
maintenance), and the implications of thought reform for the study of
human communication. (CC)

THOUGHT REFORM, COERCION,
AND PERSUASION:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

by

Sandra E. Purnell

Associate Professor
California State University
Los Angeles, California

The purpose of this paper is to examine "thought reform," using insights from a phenomenological view of rhetoric to explain the nature and impact of this profound form of coercion.

THOUGHT REFORM, COERCION, AND PERSUASION:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

The extensiveness and diversity of protest in the nineteen-sixties forced the re-examination of the scope of rhetorical theory, focusing attention in particular upon the distinction between persuasion and coercion. Is coercion, the resort to threat to achieve change, within the province of rhetoric? If coercion is a rhetorical tactic, how does it function? And can coercion ever be morally justified?[1]

While interest in coercion has continued, the nineteen-seventies have contributed a somewhat different direction to rhetorical theory by fostering renewed concern with epistemological issues. Foundations have been laid for a phenomenological approach to rhetorical theory. Reality, it is argued, gains meaning through human symbolic interaction; the definition, interpretation, evaluation, and response to even the simplest sensory events are profoundly shaped by the necessity of humans to shape their view of reality mutually, through communicative interaction.[2]

The purpose of this paper is to examine "thought reform," using insights from a phenomenological view of rhetoric to explain the nature and impact of this profound form of coercion. This analysis should demonstrate the utility of phenomenology in analyzing communication processes, clarify the coercion-persuasion issue, and reveal the dynamics of one of the most significant forms of behavior change that is in use today. After a brief initial definition of thought reform, it will be possible to place the study of this phenomenon within the on-going discussion of coercion as rhetoric and of the phenomenology of human communication, leading to an analytical description of the dynamics of the thought reform process itself. It is important to note that, although most of the examples of thought reform discussed in this paper concern inmates in Chinese thought reform prisons or "Revolutionary Colleges," analysis of the process of thought reform yields important insights about a number of Western institutions including, in particular, movements for social or cultural liberation.

Thought reform, sometimes called "brainwashing," is a calculated strategy of social action designed to create experiences of dramatic individual ideological conversion through the skillful manipulation of communicative behavior on intrapersonal, interpersonal, and public levels. The practice of thought reform was developed by the original core of the Chinese Marxist revolution, under the leadership of Mao Tse-tung. Derived from Russian Communist confession-extraction techniques, it has been elaborated into a comprehensive system that thoroughly permeates Chinese society. Since its formulation, various aspects

of thought reform have been adapted for use by the Vietnamese National Libera-
tion Front, the governments of Cuba and Algeria, and other revolutionary groups,
possibly including the Symbionese Liberation Army in the United States.[3] In
less comprehensive form, thought reform has become "consciousness raising" in
the Women's and Gay liberation movements.[4]

In the past, examination of coercion has concentrated on relatively dis-
crete instances of threat used to gain compliance with specific demands. Parke
Burgess offers the ultimatum "Your money or your life" as the paradigm instance
of coercive communication while James Andrews indentifies the limitation of
choice, often through issuance of non-negotiable demands, as coercion.[5] Others
cite "unreason" as the defining quality of coercion; coercive behavior, they
say, trades the "seat of intellect" for the "seat of the pants."[6] The core of
coercion as it has been discussed by rhetorical theorists seems to rest in the
violation of the freedom of choice of the "victim."

The Basic Process of Thought Reform

Thought reform is not a discrete, identifiable instance of threat used to
gain compliance but, rather, a relatively long-term process during which threat
underlies all experiences. The purpose is not to gain compliance but to produce
conversion. An "initiate" in thought reform may not merely comply with demands
out of fear of punishment; s/he must develop the conviction that the desired
behavior is right and become internally-motivated to perform the proper acts.

This process undermines the fundamental distinction that has been upheld
between persuasion and coercion, a distinction founded on the concept of "free-
dom of choice." In a statement echoed by other authors, Andrews cited politi-
cal scientist Yves Simon who observed that,

'Roughly a man is subjected to coercion when power originating out-
side himself causes him to act or be acted upon against his inclina-
tion,' . . . . 'Persuasion, on the other hand, is a moral process.
To persuade a man is to awaken in him a voluntary inclination toward
a certain course of action. Coercion conflicts with free choice;
persuasion implies the operation of free choice.'[7]

Thought reform transforms the very bases upon which choice is founded; this
transformation removes the necessity of "forcing" a person to act contrary to
his/her "free choice." It is as if the person faced with the ultimatum "Your
money or your life," responded with total honesty, "Take my money, it is as
much yours as mine." The coercion is not ad hoc, tied to particular choices.
It occurs much earlier and more deeply. It is not necessary to coerce a person
to do something if s/he can be coerced to be the sort of person who would, by
the operation of "free choice," perform the desired acts.

The key questions becomes: what do we mean by "free choice?" "Freedom
of choice" often operates as an undefined God-term in discussions of coercion
and persuasion, but its meaning is not without ambiguity. The phenomenological
approach to rhetoric offers some insight into the operation of choice and the
nature of freedom.

The choices of an individual are based upon the pattern of beliefs, atti-
tudes, values, and norms that constitute his/her "orientation" to the world.[8]
This orientation is gained through symbolic interaction with significant others
over time. The individual's relationship with "reality" is not direct but is

mediated by symbolicity; one creates meaning through interactions with others and with the environment, itself laden with symbolic significance. As Burke has observed, we perceive reality through "terministic screens" which shape not only what we value or desire, but also what we actually see and believe to constitute reality itself. We live in a universe that is fundamentally symbolic.[9]

Each individual learns to be human by learning the symbol-using of a particular social group. Becoming a member of a society consists of entering into its perspective, adopting its orientation, and consequently making choices consonant with those of other members of the society. "Society," in this sense, may be a family or clan or a larger group. A nation, such as the United States, is generally composed of many such societies which share some common "national" features but also conflict with one another in regard to other aspects of their various orientations.[10]

In this context, "Free choice" means being free to make decisions congruent with one's own orientation and not being compelled to act as if one held the orientation of another social group. This echoes Simon's distinction between persuasion and coercion: persuasion awakens a "voluntary inclincation" while coercion subjects its victim to power originating outside him/herself. The bases of free choice or voluntary inclination are, however, not entirely individual; they are an integral part of the orientation formulated by the individual in interaction with his/her social group.

Thought reform functions through systematically rooting out the initiate's previous orientation and carefully implanting and nurturing a new orientation fostered by a new social group. The new social group may be a religious sect, a political group, or an existing social institution such as a mental hospital. As Edgar Schein observed in concluding his analysis of "coercive persuasion," American prisons, mental hospitals, convents, monasteries, milieu therapy centers, boarding schools, and military training camps utilize processes similar to those of thought reform. The qualities that define these institutions include separation from previous social relations; de-personalization by removal of identifying markers such as clothing, individual hair styles, and cosmetics; attempted imposition of an institutionally sanctioned set of ideas, values, and norms; compulsion to perform certain acts and refrain from others; organization into small groups for work or therapy; presentation of institutional rewards for conformity with the official ideology.

In addition to "total institutions," the thought reform process if reflected in the religious and political conversion experiences of non-institutionalized individuals including participants in such social and cultural liberation movements as Feminism, Black Power, Gay Liberation, and Chicano Liberation. Anthony F. C. Wallace's discussion of the ritual learning process, which parallels the thought reform process, was derived from a cross-cultural examination of religious experiences.[11] Gerlach and Hine, examining instances of political and religious conversion, discovered a similar process.[12] While such religious and political conversions generally occur outside institutions and are entirely voluntary, they follow a pattern that approximates systematic thought reform and may be experienced, by the initiate, as if they were conducted within a total institution. For the zealous convert, the religious or political group becomes a totally engulfing institution which satisfies personal, social, intellectual, and spiritual needs. Though the initiate may not live with the group and may continue to work at a regular job, s/he is pre-occupied with thoughts about the group and spends all available time reading, studying, attending meetings, talking to fellow members, and engaging in other ideologically oriented activities.[13]

It is possible that an individual can <u>create</u> a total institution for him/herself intersubjectively, by focusing attention upon ideological group activities and by interpreting all phenomena in terms of the ideology or orientation of the key reference group. As Burke has made us aware, the world exists for us only in the particular way we see it. Our perspective, <u>if</u> we strive to make it complete and consistent, can become an individualized, adaptable, mobile "total institution."

Thoroughgoing Thought Reform: The Chinese System

The internal dynamics of the thought reform process, as utilized in Chinese institutions, can be divided into five sequential stages. Each stage has a relatively clear function and is achieved by specific manipulations of the initiate's communication environment.[14] Each stage will be described and explained in terms of the phenomenological perspective already outlined.

The first stage in thought reform is <u>pre-learning</u>; it consists of the individual's accumulation of information about the institution <u>before</u> becoming a part of it. If the individual is interested in becoming a Communist or a Pentecostal, for example, and already has contacts with members of the group, the collection of information may be relatively intentional. On the other hand, pre-learning may be entirely incidental, even systematically negative, as in the case of American servicemen taken prisoner by the Chinese during the Korean war or Christian missionaries imprisoned for thought reform in China.

Ethical evaluation of thought reform depends on the nature of the <u>pre-learning</u> stage. It seems clear that arresting and imprisoning a person in order to produce an involuntary conversion experience is unethical, if we assume agreement about the nature of individual "choice" and the use of "force" in the conversion experience. It is a different matter, however, for an individual to choose, on the basis of reasonably complete and accurate information, to subject him/herself to a potential conversion experience. This would appear to be a matter of free "choice" and quite ethical, even though the conversion experience, once begun, may be extremely coercive. Such voluntary coercive experiences are condoned even in a democratic society such as ours, attested by the existence of convents and monasteries, military academies and, although much weakened today, various "secret" societies.

Thought reform becomes more intensive with stage two, the <u>annihilation of identity</u>, the first process that occurs within the confines of the institution itself.

Separation consists of physical removal from the old environment and total immersion in the new one, as, for instance, in the case of an individual arrested and placed in prison with no visitors, no mail, and no access to the mass media. Separation resides in the limitation of channels of communication and control of the nature of communication within the available channels. Communication outside the institution is either not permitted or heavily censored and communication inside must serve the goals of the institution, not the individual.

During stage two the individual participates in a variety of significant communication processes, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, small group, and speaker-audience forms. On an intrapersonal level, the initiate is required to write autobiographies or confessions, including an in-depth analysis of the motives for previous behavior, and "ideological life histories," which might begin two generations before the individual's birth. This process of thought and writing makes the individual increasingly self-aware, particularly by

learning to examine previous life experiences from a new "standpoint." The questioning might explore the autobiography, ideological commitments, or every-day activities.

Small group communication is particularly significant in the thought reform process as it is conducted in China. Every initiate is assigned to a Hsueh Hsi, or "study group," which will become the primary reference group for all indivi-dual behavior and will provide co-participants for nearly all activities. Any behavior, however trivial, is subject to tou cheng, "struggle," or "criticism" by all members of the group, including heavy emphasis upon self-criticism. This criticism must be based upon the standards of the institution: in a monastery one might be criticized for speaking too frequently or too loudly; in a Chinese prison, for using too much space while sleeping as this reveals "imperialist tendencies." This study group might read and discuss relevant literature, in-cluding statements of party officials or revered leaders, Biblical excerpts, or other material depending on the nature of the group. The individual, in group discussions, must reveal all thoughts to the study group and retain no private views if thought reform is to succeed.

In addition to intrapersonal, dyadic, and small group communication each initiate participates in some large group communication. These large sessions often consist of lengthy lectures which form the basis for subsequent sessions of group study.

These forms of communication persist throughout the thought reform process, but are especially significant during the annihilation of identity stage. The effects seem to be threefold: First, the process effectively removes previous interpersonal support upon which the indivudal's identity has depended. As Schein observes, "We know ourself primarily through others, hence attitudes toward self must be shared by at least those others who are most important to us."[15]

For example, an individual thinks of herself as generous; her friends agree that she is generous and treat her as they would a generous person, expecting her to behave generously with them and with others; their expectation validates her own impression that she is generous. The cycle in confirmatory and satis-fying. Removed from friends and family and given no opportunity to behave gen-erously, however, the segment of identity based on generosity must begin to dis-integrate. She begins to doubt her own generosity. The initiate can be deprived of the normal social interaction necessary for his/her sense of him/herself and can thereby be gradually deprived of any strong awareness of his/her own identity.

Second, the limitations upon communication serve annihilation of identity by removing previous conceptual support. Besides depriving the trainee of friends who would support his/her old identity, the institution also deprives its new member of any outside news, information, interpretation, or explanation of pub-lic events that might confirm his/her old pattern of thought. The individual is totally immersed in the information and interpretation provided by the in-stitution.

Since confirmation is not available for old ideas, they become vague, are supported with less confidence, and gradually atrophy. In contrast, strong support is offered for the new orientation from the study group members as well as institutional functionaries and, eventually, by the initiate through counter-attitudinal advocacy. As numerous studies of attitude change have shown, social pressure is effective in undermining the deviant beliefs of an isolated indivi-dual.[16] And social pressure is multiplied many times by the engulfing nature of the total institution.

Third, annihilation of identity is furthered by intensification of guilt

as a motive for change. The individual's autobiographies may form the basis of this process as study group members and interrogators seek out inconsistencies in the initiate's story. An illustrative case is provided by the missionaries held in Chinese prisons; these individuals were committed to the highest Christian principles yet, when examined closely, they often found that their lives had been riddled with contradictions. An example of the process of "personal dishonoring" leading to guilt is provided by Lifton:

Instructor: "Do you believe man should serve others?"

Priest: "Yes, of course I do."

Instructor: "Did you have a servant in your mission?"

Priest: "Yes, I did."

Instructor: "Who made your bed in the morning and swept the floor?"

Priest: "My servant did this."

Instructor: "You did not live up to your doctrine very well, did you, Father?"[17]

Clergymen, of course, are not alone in susceptibility to guilt. Any system, whether a social system, symbol system, or system of ethics, implies a notion of "perfection" or "order." Since humans are symbol-using animals, they are, in Burke's terms, "rotten with perfection", and condemned to guilt:

> . . . a dramatistic analysis shows how the negativistic principle of guilt implicit in the nature of order combines with the principles of thoroughness (or "perfection") and substitution that are characteristic of symbol systems in such a way that the sacrificial principle of victimage (the "scapegoat") is intrinsic to human congregation. The intricate line of exposition might be summed up thus: If order, then guilt; if guilt, then need for redemption; but any such 'payment' is victimage. Or: If action, then drama; if drama, then conflict; if conflict, then victimage.[18]

Guilt can be handled in a variety of ways. Some societies are permeated with rituals of expiation for hunting, fishing, cutting trees, breaking taboos, and other symbolic offenses.[19] The Catholic Church offers relief from guilt through confession and penance. Burke divides the basic methods of purification into mortification and victimage.

In victimage, guilt is symbolically or legalistically laden upon an "ideal" victim who is then ritually expelled from society or slaughtered. Mortification is a reverse process. The guilty person blames him/herself, or some part of him/herself; the method of penance is to destroy, symbolically or literally, the offending part or tendency. This symbolic destruction might take the form of fasting, prayer, meditation, abstention from sex, a pilgrimmage, or other voluntary hardship. Biblical illustrations include "cutting off the hand that offends" and offering to sacrifice a beloved child in self-punishment.[20]

In thought reform, guilt may be expiated by only one process: mortification of the old identity. The individual can gain release from tension and in-

ternal conflict only by fully confessing his/her sins, destroying the orientation that was the source of sin, deeply repenting, and committing him/herself to a life of purity in accordance with the personal identity and orientation promulgated by the institution.

There is often an emotional crisis during the <u>annihilation of identity</u> which ushers in the next stage in reform. The individual might break down totally under the weight of guilt. Walker's informants described an outbreak of hysteria and sobbing which often resulted in a chain reaction among members of a study group.[21] Similar behavior has been described in the course of dramatic religious conversion experiences.[22] Depending upon the cultural context, this emotional crisis might be enacted in hysteria, sobbing, speaking in tongues, trance, ecstatic dancing, sexual license, or other unusual behavior.[23]

The next stage in thought reform is the <u>introduction of a new identity</u> or, more accurately, introduction of the bases for a new organization of beliefs, attitudes, and values leading to new patterns of social behavior.

The introduction of a new identity has been called "suggestion," "Re-Birth," and "changing."[24] The individual now takes on a new orientation based on the guidance of the institution. This stage has two important components: The first is the internalization of the ideas which the initiate must accept and the second is personal identification with an appropriate role model. The relevant ideas have been hinted or implied during <u>pre-learning</u> and <u>annihilation</u> stages, but they become more explicit and more meaningful during this third stage. The principles of Marxism, for example, may have been learned by rote during the <u>annihilation</u> stage in a Chinese prison. After the emotional crisis, the same ideas begin to take on genuine social and personal significance.[25]

Besides being constantly criticized, the initiate now finds help from group members and interrogators in achieving the new identity. Acceptance of the new orientation results in a period of release, leniency, harmony, and growth.[26]

Internalization of the new concepts involves mastering appropriate linguistic forms and adopting the "standpoint" of the institution.[27] The institutional symbol system gradually invades the subconscious mind, shaping what may be thought as well as spoken.[28] Those who pass through the program successfully achieve a "great sense of relief" and a feeling that "a closer bond had been established between themselves and the government."[29]

Adopting the "standpoint" of the institution means that the initiate must analyze every situation, even the most mundane, using the basic principles inculcated by the institution. In Chinese thought reform the initiates must adopt the "people's standpoint," a Chinese version of Marxism-Leninism, in criticizing his/her own previous, "unreformed" behavior. This part of the process is intertwined with the guilt and mortification developed in the previous stage.[30] The generalized loss of identity and sense of guilt are given precise form and substance by application of the "people's standpoint" as a complex, detailed, thorough, and harsh ethical system. Every aspect of life is changed simply by changing the perspective from which it is viewed and this change in perspective is, it seems to me, the conceptual core of persuasion that involves dramatic change in belief and behavior. Kenneth Burke offers a useful explanation in describing "orientation" as the basis of "motivation." Behavior, as he observes, is logically related to the context in which it occurs. But the context itself is problematic. If the individual's perception of the environment can be reshaped by a process of coercive persuasion, then his/her behavior will be altered to fit the new scene. Thought reform has struck upon the same understanding of motivation. Rather than attempting to change or re-direct the motives of an individual in a piecemeal fashion, the institution rather pursues a total re-

definition of the scene. Such dramatic re-orientation necessarily leads to a total alteration of motivation.

The second part of the <u>introduction of a new identity</u> stage serves to personalize further the new conceptual system, linguistic system, and "standpoint" through a process of interpersonal identification. At this point the initiate often selects a relatively advanced study group member or an interrogator as a model for him/herself. The identification "psychologically transforms these individuals into highly credible information sources."[31] This identification gradually extends to all of the institutional functionaries, as the prisoner "identifies himself fully with his captors. [At this point] he is happy in his faith. He has been reborn."[32] The initiate finally comes to identify with the institution itself, to anchor his/her concepts of self, others, and society in the institutional system of thought, and to find great solace in this personal identification with a powerful and seemingly heroic force.[33] The graduate is transformed from engagement in private ideas and acts to total fusion with a transcendent ideal embodied in a powerful institution. This conversion may be experienced as a deeply religious event, a peak experience, a mystic transcendence, or a state of momentary possession by a supernatural power, depending upon the cultural context of the initiate.[34] It is an instance of profound persuasion.

The final institutional stage of thought reform is the <u>validation of new identity</u>. Expurgation of the previous sense of self and the introduction of a new identity are insufficient to congeal the new personality structure; it must be endorsed in a variety of social actions engaged in by the initiate.

As Mao Tse-tung wrote in 1937 in an extremely influential statement entitled "On Practice,"

> Discover the truth through practice, and again through practice verify and develop the truth. Start from perceptual knowledge and actively develop it into rational knowledge then start from rational knowledge and actively guide revolutionary practice to change both the subjective and the objective world. Practice, knowledge, again practice, and again knowledge. This form repeats itself in endless cycles, and with each cycle the content of practice and knowledge rises to a higher level. Such is the whole of the dialectical-materialist theory of the unity of knowing and doing.[35]

The study of "On Practice" and the fervent attempt to fulfill its precepts result in participation in national campaigns and in competitions among the study groups to read more, study longer, work harder in the fields, or excell in other activities.

Practice is, of course, accompanied by continued criticism so that the learning situation continues to be thorough and intense. "Correct" behavior is rewarded with personal pride and reinforced by social approval.

Besides enacting the new ideology, initiates also find validation of new identity in the renewal of positive social relations. Because of their mastery of the new terminology and "standpoint," the initiates have a communication code linked to a "world view" which opens avenues for sharing friendship, companionship, telling jokes, planning for the future, and, in general resuming a normal social exchange.[36]

The final phase of thought reform, <u>maintenance</u>, continues as long as the initiate remains a member of the flock. In China, the reformed individual will be placed in a job, will participate in a stable social support system, and will

join a new study group which will continue indefinitely to reinforce the "correct" orientation.

Maintenance is achieved both by successful repetition of routine activities conducted in a "correct" manner and by participation in occasional dramatic episodes of ideologically significant activity such as national movements (e.g. the "Three Anti," "Hate America," "Sanitation.")37

A number of significant variables influence the probability of permanent conversion during thought reform. Some of them are:

*whether thought reform was voluntary;
*whether the initiate was especially prone to guilt;
*how thorough and well-administered the thought reform process was;
*whether the initiate maintained any illicit contact with the outside world; and
*whether there were significant provisions for maintenance after release.38

It is certain that thought reform is an extremely powerful technique on at least a temporary basis. If suitable circumstances, including appropriate maintenance are provided, thought reform has profound, long-term effects on the Beliefs, attitudes, values, and behavior of the individual subjected to it. On a national scale, thought reform can contribute significantly to large-scale social reorganization.

Implications of Thought Reform
for the Study of Human Communication

The study of thought reform is important to scholars interested in communication and social influence not simply because of it undoubted international political significance but because understanding of thought reform can contribute to our understanding of the creation and re-creation of identity, whether within the "normal" confines of the family or in instances of conversion to religious and political movements.

In regard to the definition and ethics of coercion, the study of thought reform suggests that the most profound form of coercion is not that which requires specific, ad hoc threats of force but, rather, the thorough transformation of an individual, through long-term coercion, which changes all of his/her subsequent behavior. The thought reform process must be considered a coercive effort to alter identity, though the threat employed is more subtle than "Your money or your life." The threat is that the initiate will so totally lose his/her identity that s/he will, on a psychological level, no longer exist. As Lifton observes,

the initiate is totally cut off from the essential succor of affectionate communication and relatedness, without which he cannot survive. And at the same time, his increasing self-betrayal, sense of guilt, and his loss of identity all join to estrange him from himself -- or at least from the self which he has known. He can contemplate the future with only hopelessness and dread. Literally and emotionally, there seems to be no escape from this hermetically-sealed antagonism.39

The process of annihilation of identity results in "one of the most primitive

and painful emotions known to man, the fear of total annihilation."[40] This threat, which is not to the mortal life but to the psychological life, is the coercive force behind thought reform.

Thought reform adds further complexities to the ethical questions already surrounding coercive communication. First thought reform makes clear that individuals often voluntarily submit themselves to coercive processes. This was true of many Chinese who voluntarily entered "Revolutionary Colleges" and many Americans who enter convents or monastaries.

Second, analysis of thought reform raises speculation that we are all coerced to some degree by family, schools, institutional rewards and sanctions, and other social forces. We accept these systems, barely recognize their coercive elements, and, if we give them thought, consider them ethical because we believe that their requirements are "for our own good" as well as for the "good of society." Because institutional coercion is all-pervasive and is endorsed by the orientations of many social groups, most citizens are not conscious of alternatives to that which exists. Without some familiarity with alternatives there is little reason to question the propriety of the manifest "rules of the game." Our chariness about these coercive processes, however, is often revealed indirectly, as in the parent-to-child maxim before a spanking: "This is going to hurt me more than it is you."

Third, while our society is permeated with subtle forms of coercion, we disapprove only of coercion that is blatant in its overt threat of force. The hoodlum with a knife engages in coercion and is "wrong" while the employer with power of livelihood over his/her employees engages in coercion and is "right." The difference between these two cases resides, fundamentally, in the concept of "freedom of choice." One may say "no" to an employer more easily than one may say "no" to a potential murderer. Perhaps. As this analysis of thought reform has indicated, choices are not made "freely" by individuals alone; they are constrained by the orientation maintained by a social group. The employer's coercion operates within and reinforces the orientation of the existing society while the hoodlum's behavior challenges it. Depending upon this orientation, the loss of income and the resulting loss of social standing might be tantamount to the loss of life. The ultimate threat to human beings, routinely wielded by families, friends, and employers, is the threat of estrangement from social contact. The loss of relatedness is experienced, in extreme instances, as psychological or even physical death.

It would seem that human relations, including those between employer and employee or teacher and student, may be non-coercive only when both parties are open to discussion, can mutually create values, and can jointly make choices which affect them both.[41] This sort of egalitarian interaction is extremely rare; most communication includes the overt or covert reliance upon power to reach decisions.

Beyond the global considerations just outlined, the analysis of coercive persuasion in thought reform makes three specific contributions to rhetorical and communication theory. First, the process of thought reform provides a test case of the usefulness of a perspective in the study of interpersonal influence. Traditional concepts of persuasion, such as the use of reasoned argument and the impact of source credibility, contribute to understanding of this instance of persuasion. Examination of the function of communication in the creation of identity and social orientation, however, offers a more thorough and satisfactory explanation.

Second, examination of thought reform from a phenomenological perspective transcends the traditional divisions between the analysis of interpersonal and

public communication. One of the functions of face-to-face communication may be to persuade, when accumulated across a large number of people, this becomes an instance of mass persuasion. More importantly, concepts of orientation, motivation, and identity contribute to the understanding of communication processes, regardless of setting or purpose. Kenneth Burke's rhetorical theory offers as much insight into interpersonal relations as into public communication.

Third, and perhaps most important, this analysis suggests that those who are interested in rhetorical study of social movements might well begin to examine movements from the "bottom up" as well as from the "top down;" a movement occurs when many people become converted to a new orientation. Writers have sought the causes of this conversion, or at least a description of its progress, in the communication behavior of leaders; this has involved studying speeches, editorials, pamphlets, and other "official" documents. While this offers useful information about one aspect of movement communication, one might get closer to the human dynamics of social change by studying the individual conversion experiences of members, the functions of small groups in social movements, and movement groups as "total institutions."

place of coercion in rhetorical theory has been taken up by a number of
...ters. Among the most significant are these: James R. Andrews, "Confron-
...ion at Columbia: A Case Study in Coercive Rhetoric," Quarterly Journal
...Speech, 55 (1969), 9-16; Robert M. Browne, "Response to Edward P. J.
...bett, 'The Rhetoric of the Open Hand and the Rhetoric of the Closed Fist,'"
...Contemporary Rhetoric, ed. Douglas Ehninger (Glenview, Ill: Scott Fores-
..., 1972); 211-215; Parke G. Burgess, "Crisis Rhetoric: Coercion vs.
...ce," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 59 (1973), 61-73; Richard Burke, "Rhe-
...ic, Dialectic, and Force," Philosophy and Rhetoric, 7 (1974), 154-165;
...ard P. J. Corbett, "The Rhetoric of the Open Hand and the Rhetoric of
...Closed Fist," in Contemporary Rhetoric, ed. Douglas Ehninger, 202-210;
...and Griffin, "The Rhetorical Structure of the 'New Left' Movement; Part
...Quarterly Journal of Speech, 50 (1964), 113-135; and Franklyn S. Haiman,
...e Rhetoric of the Streets: Some Legal and Ethical Considerations,"
...arterly Journal of Speech, 53 (1967), 99-114.

...phenomenological view of rhetorical theory has received its most exten-
...ve treatment in the following works: Barry Brummett, "Some Implications
...'Process' or 'Intersubjectivity': Postmodern Rhetoric," Philosophy and
...etoric, 9 (1976), 21-51; Walter R. Fisher, "A Phenomenological Theory of
...etoric," unpublished manuscript; Richard B. Gregg, "A Phenomenologically
...iented Approach to Rhetorical Criticism," Central States Speech Journal,
...(1966), 83-90; Robert L. Scott, "On Not Defining 'Rhetoric,'" Philosophy
...Rhetoric, 6 (1973), 81-96; and Robert L. Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric as
...istemic," Central States Speech Journal, 18 (1967), 9-17.

...n T. McAlister, Jr. and Paul Mus, The Vietnamese and their Revolution
...ew York: Harper and Row, 1970); Franz Schurmann, Ideology and Organiza-
...n in Communist China, 2nd ed., enl. (1966; Berkeley: Univ. of California
...ess, 1968), p. 1; concerning the attempt by the Symbionese Liberation Army
..."brainwash" Patricia Hearst, see Los Angeles Times, February 25, 1976,
...1 ff; Los Angeles Time, "Opinion," March 7, 1976, p. 1; and New York Times,
...ril 16, 1976, p. 27.

...James W. Chesebro, John F. Cargan, and Patricia McCullough, "The Small
...oup Technique of the Radical Revolutionary: A Synthetic Study of Conscious-
...ss Raising," Speech Monographs, 40 (1973), 136-146; Warren Farrell, "Men:
...idelines for Consciousness-Raising," Ms (February, 1973), 12-15 ff; Louise
...Pherson, "Communication Techniques of the Women's Liberation Front,"
...day's Speech, 21 (1973), 33-38; and Letty C. Pogrebin, "Rap Groups: The
...minist Connection," Ms (March, 1973), 80-83 ff.

...rgess, 63; Andrews, 10.

...rbett, Griffin, Haiman.

...drews, 10; Yves Simon, Philosophy of Democratic Government (Chicago, 1951),
...9.

...e term "orientation" is employed in this paper as interpreted by Kenneth
...rke, Permanence and Change, 2nd rev. ed. (1954; Indianapolis: Bobbs-
...rrill, 1965), particularly Chs. I and II. Burke offers this definitions
..."orientation:" "In a general way, we might say that events take charac-
...r by a 'linkage of outstanding with outstanding' (as the outstanding sound
...the bell, in linkage with the outstanding experience of the food, imparted
...the bell a food-character for Pavlov's dogs). The accumulation and inter-
...rking of such characters is an orientation. It forms the basis of expec-
...ncy -- for character telescopes the past, present, and future. A sign,

ich is here now, may have got a significance out of the past that makes
a promise of the future. Orientation is thus a bundle of judgments as
how things were, how they are, and how they may be. The act of response,
implicated in the character which an event has for us, shows clearly the
tegral relationship between our metaphysics and our conduct. For in a
atement as to how the world is, we have implicit judgments not only as
how the world may become but also as to what means we should employ to
ke it so." (p. 14).

erministic Screens," Language as Symbolic Action (Berkeley: Univ. of
lifornia Press, 1966), 44-62.

. Walter R. Fisher, "Reaffirmation and Subversion of the American Dream,"
arterly Journal of Speech, 57 (April 1973), 160-167.

thony F. C. Wallace, Religion: An Anthropological View (New York: Random
use, 1966), 239-242.

ther P. Gerlach and Virginia H. Hine, People, Power, Change: Movements
Social Transformation (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), 110-137.

rlach and Hine, 102-109.

ile there are innumerable works concerning aspects of "thought reform"
"brainwashing," the following were the primary resources for this project:
llard Gaylin, "On the Borders of Persuasion: A Psycho-analytic Look at
ercion," Psychiatry, 37 (1974), 1-9; Robert J. Lifton, "'Thought Reform'
Western Civilians in Chinese Communist Prisons," Psychiatry, 19 (1956),
3-195 (hereafter "Thought Reform . . ."); Robert J. Lifton, Thought Reform
d the Psychology of Totalism (New York: W. W. Norton, 1961) (hereafter
ought Reform . . .); Edgar H. Schein, "The Chinese Indoctrination Program
r Prisoners of War," Psychiatry, 19 (1956), 149-172; Edgar H. Schein,
ercive Persuasion; Schurmann, Ideology and Organization in Communist
ina; and Richard L. Walker, China Under Communism (New Haven: Yale Uni-
rsity Press, 1955).

is observation reflects the views of symbolic interactionists such as
ad, Cooley, and Blumer who have described the development of identity
rough the interaction of self and other. See George Herbert Mead, Mind,
lf, and Society (1934; Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1962); Charles
rton Cooley, Human Nature and the Social Order (New York: Charles Scrib-
r's Sons, 1922); and Herbert Blumer, Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective
d Method (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1969).

oneering work in this area was done by Solomon E. Asch, "Effects of Group
essure upon the Modification and Distortion of Judgments," in Groups,
adership and Men, ed. Harold Guetzkow (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Press, 1951),
7-190; Social Psychology (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall,
52), 450-501; and "Studies of Independence and Conformity: I. A Minority
One Against a Unanimous Majority," Psychological Monographs, 70 (9, Whole
. 416; 1956).

fton, Thought Reform, 77.

nneth Burke, "On Human Behavior Considered 'Dramatistically,'" Permanence
d Change, 274-294; "Definition of Man," Language as Symbolic Action, 3-24;
ramatism," International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 7 (New
rk: Macmillan and Free Press, 1968), 450.

he Range of Piety," Permanence and Change, 71-79; Wallace, 52, 101, 106.
nesis 22; Matthew 5:29-30. See also John L. McKenzie, S. J., "Sacrifice,"
ctionary of the Bible (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1965) and Kenneth
rke, A Rhetoric of Motives (1950; Berkeley: Univ. of California Press,
969), 252-267.

21. Walker, 70.
22. Gerlach and Hine, 118-124.
23. Cf. Gananath Obeyesekere, "Psycho-Cultural Exegesis of a Case of Spirit Possession from Sri Lanak," Contributions to Asian Studies, 8, 42-89.
24. By Wallace, Lifton, and Schein respectively.
25. Lifton, "Thought Reform," 191.
26. Lifton, Thought Reform, 79-80.
27. It should be clear that in a different sort of institution, this might be the "Christian standpoint," the "mentally healthy standpoint," or the "Marine Corps standpoint."
28. The relation between language and thought has been a topic of some controversy in anthropology and linguistics. See, for example, Benjamin Lee Whorf, "The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language," in Language, Culture and Society, ed. Ben G. Blount (Cambridge, Mass: Winthrop, 1974) and Harry Hoijer, "The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis," in Language, Culture and Society, ed. Ben G. Blount, 120-131. In discussing the acquisition of institutional terminology by the thought reform initiate, Lifton concluded that ". . . through his interminable 'group therapy' he eventually finds himself thinking and feeling in terms of these 'truths.'" ("Thought Reform," 191; original emphasis.)
29. Lifton, Thought Reform, 270.
30. Lifton, Thought Reform, 75.
31. Schein, Coercive Persuasion, 131-2.
32. Lifton, "Thought Reform," 191.
33. Lifton, "Thought Reform," 190.
34. Cf. Wallace, Obeyesekere, and Abraham H. Maslow, Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences (New York: Viking, 1964).
35. "On Practice," Four Essays on Philosophy (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1969), 20.
36. Schein, Coercive Persuasion, 138.
37. Walker, 77-100.
38. A somewhat similar list of conditions is offered by Schein, Coercive Persuasion, 192-193.
39. Lifton, Thought Reform, 70.
40. Lifton, Thought Reform, 70.
41. For approaches to human communication based on "dialogue," see Martin Buber, Between Man and Man (Boston: Beacon, 1955); Georges Gusdorf, Speaking, trans. Paul T. Borckelman (1953; n.p.: Northwestern University Press, 1965); and Floyd W. Matson and Ashley Montagu, eds. The Human Dialogue: Perspectives on Communication (New York: Free Press, 1967).