

The Use of Structural Arrangements and Organizational Strategies by Urban Communes

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1. Introduction

Communitarian development in the 1970's and 1980's has been primarily an urban phenomenon and religion has been the predominant ideological force among both urban and rural communes.¹

The need exists to investigate contemporary urban religious communes and to determine and describe their commitment-inducing features. Rosabeth Moss Kanter and Hugh Gardner have found that conservatively structured communes have a better chance for long-term endurance. How conservatively structured are today's urban religious communes? The present study will describe the state of commitment in contemporary urban religious communes. Commune is here defined as a minimum of three adults who share a common dwelling, household duties, meals, belief system, provide emotional support for one another, and identify themselves as a communal household or commune.

Organizational strategies and structural arrangements in communal groups, or in any organization, can either promote and sustain commitment to an objective or retard enthusiasm for obtaining it. Commitment, in sociological terms, refers to the attachment of self to the requirements or dictates of social relationships that are seen by the individual as self-expressive. Commitment, according to Kanter, connects the individual's self-interest to the requirements of the group. It forms the link between self-interest and group interest.²

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1. Benjamin Zablocki, *Alienation and Charisma: A Study of Contemporary American Communes* (New York: The Free Press, 1980), pp. 44-47. Religion is defined as a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with the ultimate problems of human life. See Milton Yinger, *The Scientific Study of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), p. 7.

2. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological*

While trying to account for the success or failure of nineteenth-century communal groups, Kanter developed a functionalist theory of commitment which she utilized to analyze and explain the structure of communal organizations. She was particularly concerned with how certain types of group structure inspire personal commitment and how others discourage and minimize it.

Continuance, cohesion, and control, according to Kanter, are three different types of commitment that bind people to organized groups and are thus necessary functions that provide consensus and stability for the community. These three types of commitment signify a group's or organization's need for members to remain within the system, carry out their daily activities, and fulfill obligations. Collectively, members must also grow in brotherhood and in respect for one another; individually, they must make an effort to draw together as a whole for the benefit of the community. Togetherness and unity strengthen the group's emotional and physical boundaries and protect them from threats and intrusions from outside forces. Organizational members must be willing to conform to the group's values and belief system, while willingly submitting to its edicts and authority system.

Kanter's main thesis states that groups possessing all three types of commitment should be more successful in their endeavors than those which do not possess all three types. If a group member can identify with each of the three types of commitment, he becomes "invested" in the community and gains a sense of belonging to it.³

2. *Commitment Mechanisms*

Kanter likewise developed a strategy for focusing upon commitment-building processes and created a listing of three pairs of negative (dissociative) and positive (associative) organizational traits which function to promote and sustain group commitment. Sacrifice and investment are cognitive-continuance commitment mechanisms. Renunciation and communion comprise a second pair of affective-cohesive commitment mechanisms. Mortification and transcendence constitute the evaluative-control commitment mechanisms. In psychological terms these three kinds of commitment could be described as compliance, identification, and internalization.⁴

Perspective (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 66-67. See also Sheldon Stryker and Richard Serpe, "Commitment, Identity Salience and Role Behavior: Theory and Research Example," in William Jckes and Eric Knowles, *Personality, Roles and Social Behavior* (New York: Springer-Verlag), p. 207.

3. Kanter, *Commitment and Community*, pp. 67, 69.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

Gardner, who researched rural communes during the late W[^]s and early 1970/s, believes Ranter's theoretical framework is a thorough, detailed, and an adequate means by which to describe and analyze the structure of communal groups. He indicates the framework could be utilized to analyze commitment in any social grouping or collectivity.⁵

On the other hand, Gordon Melton, a religion scholar, has suggested Kanter really did not deal adequately with her analysis of religion. A more thorough development of her thesis is needed, as well as expansion upon her discussion of religion. Melton comments that Kanter failed to indicate which processes are more important than others and what the dynamics of commitment are within different groups.⁶

Supporting Melton's critique of Ranter's theory, John Hall indicates the weaknesses of Ranter's use of longevity as the sole measure of success:

Subsuming divergent motives under a single criterion of success implies a basic problem of Ranter's functional analysis: its thesis of commitment mechanisms does not differentiate types of Utopian alternatives and their own paradigms of action.

Hall correctly continues his critique of Ranter's functional theory by indicating its lack of a phenomenological component:

Science's causal or functional explanations have little to offer by way of penetrating to an understanding of social realities as they are constituted by the people involved. Especially in communal groups where the scientific enterprise is already widely disdained, causal and functional research represent the worlds it would claim to understand; its account is inevitably partial, for participants act in terms of paradigms which transcend the assumptions and ideology of science.⁷

Hall reduces Ranter's one hundred measures of commitment to thirteen general factors which are correlated with success. Factor analysis of Ranter's data indicates that of the thirteen factors, nine are statistically insignificant. The four significant factors, which correlate highly with group success, are control mechanisms of confession and spiritual hierarchy and the cohesion mechanisms of homogeneity and ethnicity. Together these factors account for 67 percent of the variation in success

5. Hugh Gardner, *The Children of Prosperity: Thirteen Modern American Communes* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), p. 29.

6. J. Gordon Melton, "The History and Function of Communes in America," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Historic Communal Societies Association, New Harmony, Indiana, 1983.

7. John R. Hall, *The Ways Out: Utopian Communal Groups in an Age of Babylon* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1978), pp. 225-226.

among the groups in Kanter's sample. Communal groups thus depend largely on ethnicity for stability.⁸

Melton's and Hall's critiques of Kanter's theory concur with work done by David Bromley and Anson Shupe, as well as John McCarthy and Mayer Zald concerning resource mobilization theory.⁹ Unlike Kanter, who contends that viability depends on the ability of the group to elicit commitment, sociologists of religion have recently been paying attention to resource mobilization theory which demonstrates that the viability of a group is contingent on more than the implementation of commitment mechanisms and processes of routinization. The ability of a group to achieve its goals is constricted by the self-interests of other groups and other change-resistant forces. For example, decisions concerning the group's internal organization or methods of recruitment are affected by societal response. The group must organize and implement resources on their own behalf in order to achieve viability. The group's belief system and world-view are formed by interaction with the surrounding culture, therefore increasing the importance of plausibility structures—social interactions and processes within a group which serve to protect and sacralize the shared meanings and outlooks of the group—within the group.¹⁰

The critiques by Melton and Hall, as well as the viewpoints of those who utilize resource mobilization theory, clearly call for a refinement of Kanter's theory. These constructive criticisms, however, do not outweigh the valuable contributions her theory has made to the field of sociology and the study of collective behavior.

Gardner modeled his research project, on rural communes, in accordance with Kanter's framework for nineteenth-century communes, making minor modifications to fit the conditions of modern rural communes and provides a model for the present study of urban communes. He designed his data protocol based upon the six categories of commitment mechanisms. The protocol has specific structural indicators for each of the six categories of commitment mechanisms. Gardner then produced a summary table of the commitment scores which indicated an overall index of the strength of the thirteen communal groups' commitment-producing features.¹¹

8. John Hall, "Factors of Commitment in 19th-century Communal Groups: A Re-evaluation of Kanter's Thesis," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Historic Communal Societies Association, New Harmony, Indiana, 1983.

9. David Bromley and Anson Shupe, *Moonies in America: Cult, Church and Crusade* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1979), pp. 19-24; John McCarthy and Mayer Zald, "Resource Mobilization in Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* (May 1977): 1212-1239.

10. Keith Roberts, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1984), p. 209.

11. Gardner, *The Children of Prosperity*, pp. 29, 259-265.

I have also adopted Ranter's theoretical scheme for describing and analyzing the structure of communal groups. She dealt with nineteenth-century Utopian communal groups, of which a large number were religiously oriented, while Gardner's sample of thirteen contemporary rural communes consisted primarily of nonreligious anarchist communities. The seven contemporary urban communal groups in Chicago which I have investigated are:

1. Austin Community Fellowship
2. Mennonite Volunteer Services: North of Howard Unit
3. Gospel Outreach
4. The Olive Branch
5. The Emissaries of Divine Light
6. Jesus People USA
7. The Institute of Cultural Affairs

The remainder of my study will focus on these seven groups.

3. Seven Chicago Communes Described

Austin Community Fellowship was founded in 1973 on the west side of Chicago at the time when urban communitarianism was at its peak in the United States. The community was established in response to biblical descriptions of the early communal church as provided by the evangelist Luke and others. Members share a commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and a lifestyle of simplicity, moderation, nonconsumerism, and service to others. Within ten years the Austin Community Fellowship evolved from a strictly communal group to a church community. Church members are not required to live communally, although several families and singles do share a communal lifestyle.

Mennonite Volunteer Services: North of Howard Unit is only one of several groups that is involved in a Chicago-area ecumenical network of urban ministries, called Good News North of Howard, located in the far northeast corner of Chicago. The Mennonite Volunteer Services became involved with the Good News North of Howard ministries in August of 1982. The Evanston Mennonite Fellowship recognized the need for human services such as food, housing, counseling, and social support in this neighborhood and therefore requested that the Mennonite Volunteer Services dispatch a unit to help with the social services needed in the area north of Howard Street. The values of justice, equality, happiness, and serving others are shared by the community members and are considered fundamental. The Mennonite Church provides opportunities for interested people to do volunteer work while witnessing for Christ and His gospel.

In May of 1975, the Gospel Outreach Church was organized in Chicago on the northwest side of the city. Gospel Outreach is a network of Christian churches committed to practicing the teaching of God's word, as put forth in the Bible. The community ministers to the needy and provides shelter and, from time to time, financial support for the homeless and distressed. Living in community, according to Gospel Outreach members, provides the opportunity for encouragement and mutual support, as well as for the enjoyment of sharing life together within a Christian atmosphere. Members consider the Bible to be the word of God, and all of their values and beliefs stem from the Bible.

The Emissaries of Divine Light, a fourth urban commune, is concerned with the spiritual regeneration of mankind under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. Those who come together as Emissaries are seeking healing and wholeness in their personal lives. They also seek the joy that sharing their accomplishments brings to further the healing of nations and the furthering pursuit of a whole and healed body of mankind. Honor, integrity, giving, and, most of all, personal responsibility are values that are shared by the community. One communal household exists in a western suburb of Chicago.

The Olive Branch has ministered to needy persons on Chicago's westside Madison Avenue Skid Row for well over one hundred years and is one of the oldest rescue missions in the United States. Ministering, caring, and sharing the good news of the gospel serve as the major guidelines for the Olive Branch's existence. Members are active in programs which provide religious-oriented material, meals, clothing, work-study programs, alcohol rehabilitation, as well as emergency housing and support services. The mission has recently reaffirmed the need for spiritual community and the need for staff members to live in common and share day-to-day life with those they serve. Ultimately, members of the Olive Branch strive to live a Christian lifestyle and pursue the path toward human dignity and personal worthiness for all.

Jesus People USA was established in June of 1972 in the Uptown area of Chicago, not far from the Institute of Cultural Affairs. Members believe they are a community of believers joined together in response to God's calling. They are a nonprofit evangelical charismatic Christian fellowship who live a communal lifestyle. The community attempts to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with anyone who is interested, but especially with those who are alienated from the more traditional and conservatively structured churches. Love and forgiveness are important qualities that members and the community, as a whole, strive to achieve.

The Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) is an international ecumenical service organization concerned with the human factor in world development. Alleviation of hunger, suffering, illness, and a movement toward

social justice for all are important issues being dealt with by ICA members. Currently the Institute has over one hundred offices throughout the world, and Chicago is one of five coordinating centers. The Institute of Cultural Affairs is a catalyst for constructively aiding local communities to achieve positive social and economic change as well as improving the working environment of corporations and other organizations. The Institute of Cultural Affairs was originally a division of the Ecumenical Institute which was formed by a movement within the World Council of Churches. In 1973 the Institute was established as a separate entity, and the community is located at the corner of Sheridan and Lawrence in the Uptown area.

4. Data Collection

Two questionnaires were distributed to the communalists in the fall of 1983. The questionnaires were designed to measure the use of commitment mechanisms within each communal setting. Specific structural indicators were designed for each of the commitment categories (see Table one). The second questionnaire was primarily concerned with the individual member and his connection to the community, while the first one was distributed to communal representatives, and dealt with questions expressly designed to measure the community's organizational strategies and structural arrangements. Qualitative and quantitative methods were utilized to gather data. Due to financial considerations, semistructured survey methods played more of a crucial role in the data gathering phase than personal interviews.

The first questionnaire was administered to a communal representative. This representative was either chosen by the community, or in some cases was an elder or leader within the community who assumed the responsibility of being a liaison or gatekeeper. The questionnaire was developed to gather biographical information about the communal household, and also to discover how commitment mechanisms were structured into the everyday life of the community. Open and closed-ended questions were constructed to measure each of Ranter's six commitment mechanisms.

The second questionnaire was administered by the communal representatives to individuals within each communal household. This questionnaire was devised to gather biographical information about the individual and his family. Open- and closed-ended questions were also utilized in this questionnaire. Specific questions were constructed to obtain data about how individuals interacted on a day-to-day basis within the community. Questions were included which probed for information concerning individual identity and connection to the group.

TABLE ONE Measures of Commitment

Sacrifice

1. Abstinence
 - A. from certain foods
 - B. from social customs and personal habits
 - C. sexual abstinence for single members
 - D. sexual abstinence for married couples
2. Austerity
 - A. austere living conditions

Investment

1. Physical Participation
 - A. nonresident members prohibited
2. Financial Investment
 - A. prospective members required to make financial contribution
 - B. personal property of the new member becomes common property of the community
3. Irreversibility of Investment
 - A. members who break ties with the community are not reimbursed for their labor, property, and/or financial investment

Renunciation

1. Insulation
 - A. ecological separateness
2. Cross-boundary Control
 - A. Average member rarely leaving the community
3. Renunciation of Couple
 - A. free love or celibacy
 - B. controls on sexual relations
4. Renunciation of Family
 - A. parent-child separation
 - B. single family does not share the same dwelling

Communion

1. Homogeneity
 - A. common religious background
 - B. similar economic background
 - C. common ethnic background
 - D. similar educational background
 - E. prior acquaintance
2. Communal Sharing
 - A. common purse
 - B. buildings owned
 - C. community incorporated
3. Communal Labor
 - A. no compensation for labor
 - B. household duties and responsibilities shared

(continued)

4. Regularized Group Contact
 - A. two-thirds of a day spent with others
 - B. shared meals
 - C. group meetings
5. Ritual
 - A. special community celebrations
6. Persecution Experience
 - A. has community been the victim of violent acts and discrimination

Mortification

1. Confession and Mutual Criticism
 - A. regularly confess and admit errors
2. Sanctions
 - A. members asked to leave or expelled from community
 - B. procedures for reprimanding
 - C. formal or informal rules
3. Spiritual Differentiation
 - A. prospective members required to go through a novice or trial membership period before becoming full member
 - B. instruction in community doctrines
 - C. members distinguished on moral and spiritual grounds
4. Deindividuation
 - A. uniform worn

Transcendence

1. Institutionalized Awe (Ideology)
 - A. community belief system tied to a belief in the lives and actions of figures of historical importance
 - B. certain members within community endowed with special qualities and powers
 2. Institutionalized Awe (Power and Authority)
 - A. authority hierarchy
 3. Guidance
 - A. fixed daily routine
 4. Ideological Conversion
 - A. prospective members denied permanent membership
 - B. required to participate in certain community functions
 5. Tradition
 - A. community in existence at least ten years
 - B. preserve tradition and history of group
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All of the members in the five smallest communes were surveyed, while a representative sample of communalists participated from each of the two largest groups. The communal representatives of Jesus People USA and the Institute of Cultural Affairs were responsible for selecting a sample from the sampling frame, which was the membership listing. I instructed the communal representatives concerning the proper

sampling procedure and the characteristics of members to be selected. Members were selected according to sex, age, and length of membership. The samples were representative of these two communities.

Approximately twenty-five percent of the adult population was sampled in each of the two largest communities. These communities contain one hundred and two hundred adults respectively. The questionnaires were distributed to the groups in early November and were retrieved during the Thanksgiving holiday break. Several individual-level questionnaires were returned by mail. The retrieval rate for the seven communal level questionnaires was one hundred percent, while the retrieval rate for the individual level questionnaires was eighty eight percent.¹²

The commune-level questionnaire was organized to gather data concerning the six categories of commitment mechanisms: sacrifice, investment, renunciation, communion, mortification, and transcendence. Each of the categories contains a number of specific structural and organizational indicators which together produce an additive scale for each category of commitment. The subtotals of each category of commitment was then added together to produce an overall index of a commune's commitment-producing features.

A score of zero was given to a group which does not practice or possess the questioned structural indicator, while a score of one is given to a group which does practice or possess the structural indicator. These scores were added together to produce a total for the particular category of commitment it was measuring.

5. Analysis and Interpretation

Table Two displays the commitment scores of the seven communes, as well as the mean score for each commitment mechanism and the means found by Kanter and Gardner in their respective studies. In light of the current findings of this project, a comparison will be made with Kanter's and Gardner's results on the utilization of commitment mechanisms. An attempt will be made to account for the differences in the utilization of these mechanisms.

12. A pretest, of the instruments, was not conducted because the majority of questions were, in one form or another, adopted from previously tested questionnaires. Face validity was assessed by evaluating the concept of commitment, and it was concluded the instruments did properly measure commitment as defined by Kanter. Simple measures for each of Kanter's six commitment mechanisms were constructed. Criterion validity was assessed through multiple measurement of the concept in question. See Kenneth Bailey, *Methods of Social Research* (New York: The Free Press, 1978), p. 58.

	2	2	2	3	2	3	1						
	0	1	1	1	1	1	1						
	0	0	0	1	0	1	0						
<i>Mortification</i>	4	2	6	4	5	7	6	4.8	2.38	5.43		2.62	1.61
Confession and Mutual Criticism	1	0	1	0	0	1	1						
Sanctions	2	1	3	3	2	3	2						
Spiritual Differentiation	1	1	2	1	3	3	3						
Deindividuation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0						
<i>Transcendence</i>	4	4	6	6	5	6	7	5.4	1.04	10.93		7.31	6.33
Institutionalized Awe (Ideology)	1	1	2	2	2	1	2						
Institutionalized Awe (Power and Authority)	1	1	1	0	1	1	1						
Guidance	0	1	1	1	0	1	1						
Ideological Conversion	0	1	1	2	1	2	1						
Tradition	2	0	1	1	1	1	2						
Totals	19	16	23	22	24	29	2	21.86	3.82			57.39	15.3

*A standard deviation score cannot be derived from Kanter's report. She does not report the scores attained by each of the thirty groups studied. The only information given concerns the percentage of those successful and unsuccessful communities utilizing a specific mechanism and I have combined the results from her successful and unsuccessful communes.

**My questionnaires were designed to measure the presence and the use of commitment mechanisms. The measures of commitment located in table one are modifications from Kanter's original Data Summary Form and Gardner's Ethnographic Protocols. I modified the original measures to fit the conditions in urban religious communes of the

Table Two utilizes data gathered by the communal level questionnaire which was administered to the communal representative.

Sacrifice is the third least utilized commitment mechanism, with a mean score of (1.4). Jesus People USA and the Mennonite Volunteer Services groups view their living arrangements as austere. Most of the communities do not require their members to abstain from certain foods, social customs, or habits. Single members are advised to remain chaste, although three communities do not have such a requirement. Married couples are not required to abstain from sexual relations with their spouse. Sacrifice is not utilized to a great extent by these communities.

The Institute of Cultural Affairs does not utilize any form of sacrifice, while Gospel Outreach and Jesus People USA utilize three forms of sacrifice. Members of Jesus People USA are required to abstain from smoking, alcoholic beverages, and recreational drugs. Sexual abstinence is expected of single members until they marry. Extramarital sex is not condoned. Members of Gospel Outreach are required to abstain from the meat of strangled animals following ancient and contemporary Jewish customs. They may also be asked or required to abstain from any habit. Sexual abstinence of single members is expected under any condition as stated in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Chapter 13, Verse 4: "Let marriage be honored in every way and the marriage bed be kept undefiled, for God will judge fornicators and adulterers."

Investment is the second least utilized commitment mechanism, with a mean score of (.6). Austin Community Fellowship and the Emissaries of Divine Light restrict nonresident participation in certain functions of communal life. Financial investment, such as contributions of money, is encouraged by Austin Community Fellowship and Jesus People USA. Not one of the groups return to the individual all of his property or financial investment upon leaving or breaking ties with the community, although arrangements are made to help those in need with cash assistance, furniture, or whatever is reasonably required. Investment is not utilized by these communities. Austin Community Fellowship received a score of (2.0), the highest reported score.

Renunciation is the least utilized commitment mechanism. No community received a score of one or higher on any indicator. Not one of the communal households are geographically isolated, couples and families are not renounced, and members are not restricted to the communal household, but are free to come and go as they please. Renunciation is virtually nonexistent in these communities, at least as it is defined following the guidelines of Ranter's theory.

6. The Most Utilized Mechanisms

Communion is the most utilized commitment mechanism with a mean score of (9.6). Only the Olive Branch and Jesus People USA have been

victims of violent acts or discrimination and have a history of persecution. But other elements of our definition of communion appear to be quite important. The Austin Community Fellowship is the only group which does not have special community celebrations or some form of communal labor. Homogeneity, communal sharing, communal labor, and regularized group-contact measures are frequently utilized among the groups, with homogeneity receiving the highest score overall. Jesus People USA and the Emissaries of Divine Light received scores of (12.0) followed by the Olive Branch with (11.0). The lowest score of (7.0) was attained by the Institute of Cultural Affairs.

Members of the Emissaries of Divine Light and the Olive Branch share for the most part, a middle-class economic background, as well as a white ethnic background. These traits and characteristics contribute to the homogeneity of the groups. Jesus People USA, the Emissaries of Divine Light, the Mennonite Volunteer Services, and the Austin Community Fellowship practice, within their own communities, the phenomenon of the common purse, which is an indicator of communal sharing. Jesus People USA is primarily financed through communal business enterprises operated by community members who are employed as painters, carpenters, roofers, electricians, laborers, movers, and in other construction-related trades. Household duties and responsibilities are shared by the other members. For example, the kitchen manager organizes and rotates work assignments for his crew. These are indicators of communal labor. Meals, especially the evening meal, are shared in the communal dining room by all members. This is characteristic of most of the groups and is an indicator of regularized group contact. Jesus People USA, the Olive Branch, and the Emissaries have community celebrations such as picnics, bachelor and bachelorette parties, weddings, and Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations. These are indicators of ritual. Communion mechanisms thus play an important role in the building of cohesive communities.

Mortification is the third most utilized form of commitment with a mean score of (4.8). Deindividuation is not utilized by any group, nor integrated into the daily life of the communards. Uniforms are not worn, and individuals are encouraged to be themselves and to live to their fullest capacities. Confession and mutual criticism are utilized by the Austin Community Fellowship, Gospel Outreach, Jesus People USA, and the Institute of Cultural Affairs. Sanctions and spiritual differentiation are the two most popular forms of mortification commitment. For example, several members of Jesus People USA and the Institute of Cultural Affairs have been expelled permanently from the community. Most of the rules governing behavior at Jesus People USA are informal, but formal rules such as adherence to the statement of faith are strictly enforced. Concerning

spiritual differentiation, Jesus People USA requires prospective members to go through a trial membership period. Members of Gospel Outreach attend teaching and training seminars dealing with the study of scripture. Jesus People members are required to learn and practice a professed creed and are differentiated based upon their moral qualities. Natural leaders emerge based on their maturity and vocation. Members of Gospel Outreach are told to seek faith and profess it before witnesses, for this is mandatory for followers of Jesus Christ.

Transcendence is the second most utilized commitment mechanism with a mean score of (5.4). Guidance was the least utilized indicator of transcendence. Five of the communities have fixed daily routines. The Institute of Cultural Affairs follows a rigid fixed daily routine. They rise at 5:00 A.M. for prayer, breakfast, and collegium. Adults work either for the institute or outside of the community from 8:30 A.M. to 5:00 p.m. From 6:30 P.M. to 9:30 P.M. members gather to do communal household work.

Six of the communities have a hierarchy of authority, Jesus People USA is governed by a council of elders which consists of nine men and one woman. The Emissaries of Divine Light are governed by a board of directors. All of the groups report that the community belief system is tied to some belief in the lives and actions of important historical figures. For example, Jesus People USA's belief system is tied to a belief in the life and actions of Jesus Christ. The Emissaries of Divine Light look to historical people of integrity and to their lives and actions for example. Jesus, Buddha, and Moses are a few of the historical figures who are important to the community.

It is those who possess important qualities of maturity, understanding, love, and integrity who assume positions of authority and responsibility within the Emissaries. Certain members of Gospel Outreach are endowed with special spiritual qualities, such as speaking in tongues and understanding of scripture, and usually occupy positions of authority within the community.

Institutionalized awe (ideology) is the most reported category. Ideological conversion is utilized by six of the groups, primarily in the sense that some prospective members have been denied permanent membership. Six of the groups report use of tradition. The Olive Branch makes special efforts, as does Austin Community Fellowship, to preserve the tradition and history of the community. Photos and journals are kept. Articles relating to the history of the Olive Branch have also been published and newsletters, dating back to 1894, have been bound and stored. Other groups draw upon the community's experience over the course of its lifetime. According to Kanter, a community must be in existence for at least ten years in order to justify reliance upon the group's history as a measure of transcendence.

Continuance commitment mechanisms (sacrifice and investment) appear to be less of a necessity than control mechanisms for today's communalists. There appears to be no differences between large and small groups in the utilization of these commitment mechanisms. The social class backgrounds and social economic statuses of the communalists do not appear to influence the significance of sacrifice and investment. Particularly, young people entering these groups do not have property, savings accounts, or other tangible assets which can be contributed to the community. They generally have nothing to invest but their labor.

Renunciation plays no strategic part in building cohesiveness, while communion absorbs the void left by renunciation. There appears to be no difference in the utilization of communion mechanisms between large groups such as Jesus People USA and the Institute of Cultural Affairs, and small groups such as Austin Community Fellowship and the Mennonite Volunteer Services. Communion is important to today's communalists because it attaches or bonds the individual to the whole. Contemporary communalists appear to comprehend the significance of noncommunity relationships as well and have not detached their bonds or relationships outside of the community. They draw upon both community and non-community relationships for emotional and personal gratification and reinforcement. Today's communalists are not seeking to break ties or renounce prior commitments and relationships, as did communalists of the 1960's.

The larger groups utilize more mortification mechanisms, but the difference between them and the smaller groups is not large. Jesus People USA utilize five more mortification mechanisms than the Mennonite Volunteer Services: North of Howard Unit. This particular phenomenon is probably due to the nature of the temporary membership of the Mennonite Volunteer Services members. Overall mortification mechanisms play an important part in building commitment within these groups. Mortification increases as permanence of involvement increases in importance.

Control commitments appear to play an important role in binding the individual to the community. The Institute of Cultural Affairs had the highest score of seven on transcendence, followed by Gospel Outreach, Jesus People USA, and the Olive Branch with scores of six. The lowest scores, five and two fours, were attained by the Emissaries, Austin Community Fellowship, and the Mennonite Volunteer Services: North of Howard Unit, respectively. Transcendence is utilized by urban religious communes, to a much greater extent than sacrifice, investment, and renunciation, and slightly more than mortification to build and reinforce commitment to the community. There appear to be no major differences between large and small groups in the utilization of mortification or

transcendence commitment, although both Austin Community Fellowship and the Mennonite Volunteer Services use fewer mechanisms than Jesus People USA and the Institute of Cultural Affairs.

The mean score for the total commitment mechanisms utilized by each community is twenty-two. Jesus People USA received twenty-nine, the highest score. The Mennonite Volunteer Services: North of Howard Unit received sixteen, the lowest score. Jesus People USA utilized thirteen more commitment-inducing structural features and organizational strategies than did the Mennonite Volunteer Services: North of Howard Unit. This large difference can be accounted for by the short-term residency of the members who live within the North of Howard Mennonite Unit. Members agree to work for a one-year term, renewable if mutually agreeable, and therefore do not intend to live a communal lifestyle for an extended period of time, thus reducing the necessity for building strong commitment-reinforcing structures and strategies. Members of Jesus People USA, however, come with the intention of making a home for themselves within the community and therefore are more inclined to accept commitment-inducing strategies and structures.

The number of commitment mechanisms utilized does not appear to be affected by the longevity of the group. Jesus People USA has been in existence since 1972 and has utilized twenty-nine commitment-inducing structures and strategies. The Olive Branch, originally begun in 1876, received a score of twenty-two. Communal living has always been an aspect of everyday life at the Olive Branch, but in 1979 a concerted effort was instituted to broaden and enhance the communal atmosphere. One might say then that 1979 was the start of a new era for the Olive Branch. The Emissaries of Divine Light and the Mennonite Volunteer Services: North of Howard Unit, begun in 1977, have received scores of twenty-four and sixteen, respectively. The scores achieved by these newer groups are not dramatically lower than they are for the other groups.

The two smallest groups, the Austin Community Fellowship and the Mennonite Volunteer Services, also had the lowest commitment scores. These low scores can be accounted for by the temporary nature of the communities. Jesus People USA is the largest group with over 225 adults and attained the highest commitment score. This phenomenon is due to the fact that organization is more of a necessity for a commune dealing with such a large number of people. The Institute of Cultural Affairs, the second largest group with close to 100 adults, utilizes nine fewer mechanisms than Jesus People USA. Its relatively low number of mechanisms is due to the fact that a significant number of the members are there for training or reassignment and are temporary members. Thus the focus on long-term commitment is not present. The Order Ecumenical, which staffs the Institute, is self-supporting, therefore

reducing the community's control over their personal finances and expenditures and thus allowing more personal discretion concerning one's needs and wants.

Gospel Outreach, the Emissaries of Divine Light, and the Olive Branch have a similar number of members, seven-fourteen, and received fairly close commitment scores, twenty-three, twenty-two, and twenty-four, respectively. Size is therefore not necessarily always an indicator of the number of mechanisms utilized.

Several of the groups, in particular Jesus People USA and the Gospel Outreach, tend to be more traditional in the delegation of work and leadership roles. Work roles are usually regulated along traditional sex role lines. Women usually care for the younger children and perform household duties, while men are involved with the construction crews and businesses of the community. These two groups attempt to model and emulate their daily lives along the guidelines set forth in the Bible. The size of the community does not necessarily dictate how roles will be delegated. The only distinctive feature of the two most traditional groups, in comparison with the rest, is their relatively greater emphasis on sacrifice (especially abstinence). In other respects, traditionalism does not seem to be associated with the use of any commitment mechanism or indication of one.

7. Commitment Mechanisms as Reported by Kanter, Gardner, And The Present Study

Kanter reported that continuance, cohesion, and control-commitment mechanisms were related to the length of survival for nineteenth-century communal groups. Transcendence and communion were the most utilized mechanisms, followed by sacrifice, renunciation, investment, and mortification, respectively. All of the mechanisms had a bearing on the longevity of communal groups, especially the successful groups, which were all religiously oriented. Successful nineteenth-century communities used most, but not always all, of the commitment mechanisms. Kanter concluded that religious communes tend to survive longer than nonreligious ones, because they utilize more commitment mechanisms and therefore are more structured.

Following Kanter's lead, Gardner found that the modern rural communes he studied used fewer commitment mechanisms of all types than did nineteenth-century groups. He found that investment, renunciation, and mortification were as strongly related to communal survival in the 1960's and 1970's as they were during the nineteenth century. Sacrifice, communion, and transcendence were likewise found to be weakly or

negatively related to communal survival in the 1960's and 1970's. Gardner thus concluded that more conservatively structured communes appeared to have a much better chance for long-term survival during the 1960's and 1970's. He found that Ranter's theory of commitment did not work very well in predicting success as defined by longevity in years through 1973. Only sacrifice and renunciation were widely used in longer-lived groups.

The rural communes which survived the 1970-1973 period utilized more definitive commitment structures basically due to the economic recession of the early 1970's. Gardner has stated that the modern communards were individualists rather than communalists, and this fact contributed to the decrease in use of commitment mechanisms. Philip Slater supports Gardner by indicating that Americans still cling to competitive motivational patterns passed on from earlier generations who lived through the great depression and the era of scarcity, thus resulting in the self-actualizing individual rather than the concerned communitarian.¹³ Gardner also found that communal sharing was not related to survival and that the only communistic characteristic or trait of modern rural communes was owning or sharing land and housing in common.

The present study on urban religious communes has found that communion, mortification, and transcendence are utilized by these communities at moderate levels or more, while sacrifice, investment, and renunciation do not appear to be widely present or utilized. Modern communes, in particular urban religious communes, appear not to use as many types of commitment mechanisms as did nineteenth-century groups. Transcendence and communion were the most utilized mechanisms for nineteenth-century groups, as well as for the modern urban religious communes in this study. Mortification was utilized by both nineteenth-century groups and the rural communes of the 1960's and 1970's, as well as by urban communes of the 1980's.

Sacrifice and investment likewise do not play strategic roles in urban religious communes of the 1980's because these groups, first of all, appear to be more financially sound and therefore are able to function without subsidies, which were important to the rural communes of the 1960's and 1970's. Members either hold employment in income-producing jobs outside the community or contribute to the labor force of community-operated enterprises which generate revenue for the group. Sacrifice is thus not a strong factor in building commitment because the individualism of the 1960's and 1970's still lives on today within urban religious communes. The movement toward individual need for fulfillment has permeated the objectives of the group, and one no longer needs to

13. Philip Slater, *The Pursuit of Loneliness* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).

abandon or reduce personal attributes, needs, or wants in order to be committed to communal objectives. Therefore, continuance-commitment mechanisms today do not appear to be as functional as they once were for earlier communalists.

Communion-commitment mechanisms seem to be the mortar which binds these urban religious communes together, as they did for the nineteenth-century groups. Sharing meals, labor, time, and talk create a bonding process which enhances everyday life in these communities. Individuals today are, of course, concerned with their own personal well-being, but they realize and covet the benefits that result from mutual support, empathy, direction, intimacy, and concern. A significant number of the communalists who participated in this study have indicated that living in community provides the needed network of interpersonal relationships that so often are either flawed or nonexistent in today's rapidly paced and changing society. This realization presents a paradox. On the one hand, there is no renunciation of monogamy or nuclear families or of ties to relatives who are not community members. On the other hand, community members seek the satisfaction that stems from relationships with fellow members. Today's communalists thus search for gratification from both traditional sources, such as family and relatives, and also from one's so-called adopted family, the communal household.

Gardner has commented that one of the most peculiar findings of his study was that communal sharing was not prevalent among rural communes. The "Me Generation" of the 1960's and 1970's was blossoming during this time period and probably was the greatest deterrent to a fruitful communal experience. Renunciation was not utilized by the urban communes in this study, but Jesus People USA and Gospel Outreach have responded and grown in response to the alienating aspects of modern religious institutions, in particular from traditionally structured Protestant denominations. In a very viable and purposeful manner, Jesus People USA and the Gospel Outreach have renounced and challenged mainline denominations to live the gospel, not just preach about it. In this way, Jesus People USA and the Gospel Outreach have renounced traditionally structured churches to create their own action-oriented religious life.

Renunciation is not utilized, by these communal groups, for another reason. Families and couples are welcome and are viewed as a stable, contributing force to the household. Several of the groups, especially the Gospel Outreach, build their households around married couples. Singles are assigned to live in these households to foster an extended family atmosphere. Many of the rural communards of the 1960's and 1970's were renouncing ties with American society for numerous reasons. This is the primary reason why Gardner has noted that renunciation

was one of the top three mechanisms utilized by the communalists. Urban communalists in the 1980's are not, however, attempting to disassociate themselves from society. The majority of communards work in the labor force and view themselves as both communalists and active participants in mainstream society. In just less than a decade, communards have shifted in the utilization of renunciation mechanisms. How successful are the groups in institutionalizing commitment? This is a difficult question to answer and in itself requires a major research effort. These seven urban communes did not utilize all of the mechanisms, and those mechanisms utilized were not pervasive. It remains possible, therefore, that other factors not explained by commitment-building mechanisms are partly responsible for the endurance of these groups. However, a systematic study, with a much larger sample of communes, would be necessary to isolate the most important factors contributing to the endurance of these groups. Jon Wagner has commented trenchantly on a nonexhaustive list of seven criteria of communal success which could be utilized as factors in such a future study.¹⁴

14. Jon Wagner, "Success in Intentional Communities: The Problem of Evaluation," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Historic Communal Societies Association, New Harmony, Indiana, 1983. A revised version of Wagner's paper is published in this issue of *Communal Societies*.