A Qualitative Analysis of the Communication Strategies of University

Based Christian Ministries in the United States and England

Samuel Taylor

Radford University

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Sandra L. French

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the Degree of Master of Science in

Strategic Communication

Sandra Lynn French

Dr. Sandra L. French

Thesis Advisor

[signature]

Dr. Shuo Yao

Thesis Committee Member

Scott W. Dunn

Dr. Scott Dunn

Thesis Committee Member

Abstract

This thesis is a qualitative analysis of the communication recruitment strategies utilized by a non-denominational parachurch Christian ministry in the United States and England. The campus ministries analyzed were Cru in the United States, formerly Campus Crusade for Christ, and Agape Student Life, which is the British branch of Cru. The research was gleaned through the use of semi-structured interviews and content analysis methodology. The analysis phase of the study utilized grounded theory as the means of organizing and drawing conclusions from the data. The author interviewed 10 staff members from Cru and Agape collectively and interviews were tailored around the topics of outreach, evangelism, interpersonal communication, social media, and culture. The content analysis phase focused on the social media platforms of Instagram and Facebook and took into consideration the content and frequency of posts during a 1-month period at the beginning of the Fall semester. The Instagram and Facebook accounts analyzed corresponded with the campuses that the interview participants were involved with. The findings of the study showed similarities in the scripted outreach materials used by the ministries, a strong emphasis on utilizing interpersonal communication, and an awareness of a concept in response to culture: "Pre-evangelism."

Table of Contents

Introduction

The author's experience as a British citizen attending University in America has sparked

his interest in the role that religion, specifically Christianity, plays in both cultures. There is a

rich tradition of Christianity in America and it is prevalent in public life. Christianity's impact is

evident in politics, communities, and social justice, with its incentive to care for those in need

and the commission to communicate the Christian message on a mass scale. However, there has

in fact been a decline in the Christian religion in America in recent years, with 65% of

Americans identifying as Christian, down from 77% in 2009 (Pew Forum, 2019). Christian

symbols and institutions also play a less prominent role in American life than in the past. Results

from the Religious Landscape Studies conducted by the Pew Research Center indicate that

attendance of religious services has declined in a similar fashion to that of religious affiliation:

> Over the last decade, the share of Americans who say they attend religious
>
> services at least once or twice a month dropped by 7 percentage points, while the
>
> share who say they attend religious services less often (if at all) has risen by the
>
> same degree. (Pew Forum, 2019)

This quote shows the level of decline in the attendance of religious services comparably to the

level of decline of religious affiliation over the past decade.

This decline is somewhat comparable to that of the climate of religious affiliation in

England. Data from the British Social Attitudes Survey shows that in 2019, 38% of the

population in England and Wales identified as Christian, down from 66% in 1983. This is a

considerably different level of decline, and a drastic difference in the starting points of Christian

identity. Secular life is increasingly prominent in England and the culture is heading in a similar

direction in the United States. Christianity in England plays an extremely minor role in the life of

the average British citizen, with Christmas bringing the highest levels of religiosity throughout

the year, and Easter bringing even fewer cultural Christians out of the woodwork. This is the

author's own personal observation having grown up in England. Outside of these two major

Christian celebrations, one could argue that Christian England is slowly dying, lying dormant at

best.

Interestingly, while there is a decline in general cultural appreciation of Christianity in

both the United States and England, religious parachurch organizations on college campuses

continue to expand. Schmalzbauer (2013) illustrates the growth of Christianity on college

campuses in recent years by stating:

> In 2012, well over 120,000 students were active in the likes of Inter-Varsity
>
> Christian Fellowship, Campus Crusade for Christ, the Fellowship of Christian
>
> Athletes, and the Navigators. An additional 130,000 college students were
>
> involved in ministries sponsored by conservative Protestant denominations.
>
> (p.166)

The author's own University experience involves direct encounter with campus

parachurch organizations. It is through this that the author was inspired to combine his personal

experience and Communication education to analyze a parachurch, non-denominational campus

ministry in the United States and England comparatively. This investigation regards the

communication strategies utilized to influence the recruitment of students into parachurch

ministries, focusing on *Cru* in the United States, formerly Campus Crusade for Christ, founded

in 1951 by businessman Bill Bright, and their British counterpart, *Agape Student Life*. Through

the use of semi-structured interviews and a content analysis of the organizations' social media

accounts on varying platforms, the author can collect information that provides insight into the

difference in specific communication choices used by these parachurch ministries, with particular emphasis on how the cultural differences between the United States and England influences communicative recruitment strategies.

Statement of Question

The primary research question of this study is: What recruitment methods, marketing, and communication strategies are used by Cru and Agape? These communication strategies manifest themselves through different avenues such as the persuasive tactics used in evangelism, the role of social media, the prioritization of interpersonal relationships, and a mindfulness of their audience, specifically, the spiritual culture in which the campus ministries operate. Through this investigation into the previous question, the author hopes to gain a greater understanding of the differences and possible similarities between the twin organizations, in addition to gaining a greater understanding of how secularization in a culture affects the evangelism strategies at higher education institutions in the United States and England.

The hope for this thesis is that it will provide a deeper understanding of the communication strategies used by parachurch organizations to recruit and assist college students. As already mentioned, England is largely secular with religion playing a very small role in daily life. In the demographic the author is sampling from the United States, religiosity is much higher, especially from a cultural standpoint. The campus ministries in the United States being analyzed in this research are all from the state of Virginia, where 73% of adults identify as Christian (Pew Forum, 2014). This study will help to provide answers for this difference at the grassroots level of college and university life.

On a practical level, the findings and conclusions of this research could help those on staff with campus ministries in both cultures to be more effective in their outreach efforts, and

also to have a greater understanding of the differences and similarities between the two cultures. The goal of the campus ministries being analyzed is rooted in communication. This thesis will provide key information on what strategic communication strategies are successful given each culture and what communication strategies are less successful. The author's hope for this study is that the organizations can read the discussion and findings of the research and use the knowledge to equip them to be more effective and strategic moving forward in a spiritual climate of increasing secularization. Beyond the immediate audience, insight may also be gained into successful recruitment strategies for campus involvement in general, which has become increasingly important for student retention. This study is specifically focused on the involvement of students into Christian organizations, so despite the importance of recruitment strategies for campus involvement, this research will not explore this wider topic.

Literature Review

This literature review begins with a brief historical overview of the religious climate in the United States and England. It is important to see a scope of literature from a historical context, its development over recent years, and to review the most current literature concerning how campus ministries are proceeding in their attempts to recruit students into their organizations. The spiritual climate that these campus ministries are operating in is somewhat different in terms of secular development and religious identity. This literature review will provide a condensed portrait of the history of the Christian faith in both cultures, and most importantly, review the most current literature on the communication recruitment strategies utilized by campus ministries in both the United States and England.

Historical Context of Christianity in the United States

One of the key concerns of strategic communication is the audience. In order to better understand the audience of American and English college students, we look to the historical context of the development of religious life in these countries. In the United States, religion or religious freedom is tied to the very foundation of the nation, as the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution says: *"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances"* ("The Constitution" n.d.). Therefore, religious freedom can never be ignored. Sidney Mead, a former president of the American Society of Church History, wrote:

> If there was to be a *United States* of America, there had to be religious freedom
> on a national scale. From the first English colony in 1607, the early settlers
> brought with them their Christian beliefs from Europe. By the time that

significant colonization got underway early in the 17th century, the Reformation

movement in Europe had "shattered the once tangible unity of European

Christendom in one church." (Mead, 1988, p. 68)

From the first colonists, to the free market and freedom of religion that is so highly valued in

American society today, the underlying point here is that the Christian faith has been a

foundational part of the identity of the United States.

In a commentary discussing William Dean's essay titled "The American Spiritual

Culture: And the Invention of Jazz, Football and the Movies," Linell Cady, a professor of

religious studies and the founding Director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict

at Arizona State University, quoted Dean, noting:

This culture has guided America for one simple reason: Americans have believed

that it speaks for a truth, even a reality, greater than America. It follows that, if the

spiritual culture and the belief on which it is founded were to die – and there are

signs that they will – then so, in most important respects, will the American

nation. (Cady, 2004, p. 141)

It is undeniable that the separation of church and state is the cornerstone of what makes religion

private and freely expressed, not to mention a pervasive part of American life.

While religion as a concept is easily demonstrated as historically important to American

life, so is the specific spread of Christianity. The main communication tool for spreading the

message of Christianity is known as evangelism. Merriam-Webster defines evangelism as "the

winning of revival of personal commitments to Christ" (n.d.). For those already familiar with

Christianity, evangelism is often defined as the sharing of the "good news" of the gospel—the

story of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Evangelism has long been prevalent in American

history, particularly in the 20th century. Notably, the "President's Pastor" Evangelist Billy

Graham shook the American nation, and in fact the world, with his powerful delivery of the "Old

Gospel Message." He showed the world that God can use any person to bring salvation:

> *When God gets ready to shake America, he might not take the Ph.D. and the D.D.*
>
> *and the Th.D. God may choose a country boy! God may choose a man no one*
>
> *knows, a little nobody to shake America for Jesus Christ in this day. A hillbilly, a*
>
> *country boy! Who will sound forth in a mighty voice to America, "Thus saith the*
>
> *Lord!"* - Billy Graham, Los Angeles, 1949. (Dochuk, 2012)

The relevance of Graham's preaching is that from then on, white evangelicalism became more

than a religious subculture. It is said in literature that "it is [evangelicalism] also the primary

historical source and contemporary institutional carrier of a broader discourse about the religious

roots of citizenship and national identity" (Delehanty, Edgell, & Stewart, 2019). What is notable

about Graham's preaching is that it stirred up a revitalization in the American people. Two years

after Graham's speech in Los Angeles, businessman Bill Bright founded Campus Crusade for

Christ at the University of California, Los Angeles. Bright and Graham are known to have been

"long time" friends and therefore, the preaching of Graham is relevant to this research (Chismar,

2003). These sources demonstrate the deep roots of Christianity as a key part of the American

story.

Historical Context of Christianity in England

The history of Christianity in England is a topic that also has prolific historical literature.

In this section, the author will provide a condensed contextual background to lay the foundation

for discussion of the current spiritual climate in England. The history of Christianity in England

dates back to the 1st century AD, when the religion of Christianity that had spread from the east

was viewed as a cult, along with other religious icons associated with Pagan and Roman gods. Roman Emperor Constantine was the first to utilize Christianity in order to unite the Roman Empire and their military solidarity.

Over the following seven centuries, Christianity developed from a minor cult to a major religion in England. It was not until 871 AD, with the first invasion of the Vikings at Lindisfarne, that the Christian church was seriously threatened. The Christian King Alfred of Wessex overcame this period of Viking invasion and "set about creating a new system of Christian learning that would reach the illiterate country people. It was Alfred's hope that this would enable Christianity to begin to capture the imagination of the ordinary people" ("Religions - Christianity: Christianity in Britain," 2011).

From here we leap forward to the 16th century, for the developments of Christianity in 16th-century England are imperative for this study. The Reformation, the separation of Christian believers from the Catholic Church, was well under way in continental Europe; however, there was little influence from England's northern neighbors in terms of reformation. In fact, reformers were of a small minority in England. It was Henry VIII's decision to break from Rome. Henry wanted to divorce and re-marry in order to try and secure an heir, but the Pope would not grant him permission. Henry divorced England from the Pope instead. He was happy to endorse a few religious changes so that his decision to split from the Catholic Church did not look too blatantly driven by self-interest ("Religions - Christianity: Christianity in Britain," 2011). The separation from the Roman Catholic Church resulted in the formation of the Church of England.

The movement that became known as the Evangelical movement began within the Church of England in the 18th century, although it had many points in common with earlier Low Church attitudes and with 16th- and 17th-century Puritanism. The followers of John Wesley, the

founder of Methodism, eventually left the Church of England, but many with very similar beliefs remained within the established church. They emphasized evangelism, social welfare, and missions, and they established the Church Missionary Society (1799) and the Colonial and Continental Church Society (1838). ("Anglican Evangelical," 1988).

In the 20th century, Evangelicals were influenced by liberalism and scientific methods of studying the Bible. However, some continued to stress the verbal inspiration and accuracy of the Bible and became known as conservative Evangelicals ("Anglican Evangelical," 1988). The continuation of conservative evangelicalism is what leads us to a major evangelical figure who has also been mentioned as key to the development of evangelicalism in the United States, Billy Graham.

Billy Graham did not confine himself to the United States; he was sharing the gospel message on a global scale. His crusade upon Britain in the years of 1954-1956 stirred up quite an awakening. His preaching produced mass audiences in football stadiums and other venues across the nation. In fact, the author's grandparents heard him preach at Wembley Football ground in London. Despite the tens of thousands that were drawn to attend the Billy Graham visits to England, it turned out that few were converted, and church membership in England started its decline in the 2 years following Billy Graham's visits (Brown, 2009).

The Current Spiritual Climate in England and the United States

Religiosity, defined as "an individual's conviction, devotion, and veneration towards a divinity" (Gallagher & Tierney, 2013, p. 1), in England is a completely different playing field in comparison to the United States. Despite the irony that England is mostly responsible for laying the foundations for America's Christianity, Christianity in England is slowly dying, and secular society is substantially in the majority. In 1983, 66% of the British population identified as

Christian and results from the 2019 British Social Attitudes Survey showed that now a mere 38%

identify as Christian (2019).

> Our nation has been shaped and defined by this faith for hundreds of years. Yet in
>
> the last few decades, the nation has largely turned her back on Jesus and
>
> embraced alternative ideas such as secular liberal humanism, moral relativism and
>
> sexual license. The fruit of this can be seen in widespread family breakdown,
>
> immorality and social disintegration. (Warwick-Montgomery, 2016, p. 92)

This quote is a passionate account from the article "Christian Concern UK: Evangelicals contra

Irreligion in an Increasingly Secular Britain" by J. Warwick-Montgomery, and although his

language may seem intense, he makes several important points relevant to this study:

> In endeavoring to force biblical morality on a recalcitrant society makes genuine
>
> evangelism exceedingly difficult, since after ramming biblical morality down the
>
> throats of unbelievers it becomes very difficult to present the gospel to the
>
> secularist as a matter of free choice. (2016, p. 92)

Warwick-Montgomery's work is important for this research as it highlights the importance of the

communication used in evangelistic efforts given the spiritual climate in England. This can most

definitely be applied to the communication used by the campus ministry being researched in this

study to see whether its leaders are taking into consideration the somewhat unpopular notion of

evangelism.

> Research also demonstrates the difficulty not only of bringing individuals to the Christian

faith, but also of keeping the faith of one's family of origin. As far as upbringing is concerned in

England, those who identify as being raised as a Christian have a 45% chance of eventually

identifying as "nones" or of "no religion"; however, those who identify as being raised with "no

religion" have a 95% likelihood that they will not defer from their original identification. Thus, "no religion" is currently "sticky" in a way that Christianity is not (Woodhead, 2017, p. 252). This rise of "no religion" that Woodhead explains in her research supports the claims that Warwick-Montgomery makes in reference to the ideas of secular liberal humanism, moral relativism, and sexual license. It is in this environment that the campus ministries in England are operating. The increase of the secular life in England provides a significant challenge for Christian organizations in their attempts to recruit students into their organization.

Following the data regarding the likelihood of changing beliefs from upbringing or adults abandoning their faith, it can also be argued that the decline of Christianity and the increase of "no religion" identification can be due to lack of religious transmission from parents to children. The substantial cultural change in religiosity in England has largely come from children deciding not to follow in the footsteps of the religious commitments of their parents (Woodhead, 2017).

Another study also confirms these claims, demonstrating that church attendance for parents does not lead to church attendance for their children:

> If neither parent attends at least once a month, the chances of the child doing so are negligible: less than 3 percent. If both parents attend at least monthly, there is a 46 percent chance that the child will do so. Where just one parent attends, the likelihood is halved to 23 percent. What these results suggest is that in Britain institutional religion now has a half-life on one generation, to borrow the terminology of radioactive decay. (Voas & Crockett, 2005, p. 21)

The previous articles lead the author to explore a question in regard to religious background before becoming associated with said organization. This is directly correlated to parental transmission of faith and whether this factor plays into the communicative strategies

utilized by the campus ministries being analyzed. The increase of the secular life in England

provides a significant challenge for campus Christian organizations in their attempts to recruit

students into their organization. Given the decline of Christianity and the corresponding

transmission of faith from one generation to the next, what specific communication strategies do

English parachurch organizations use to attract and maintain membership?

In the United States, the current spiritual climate is in a similar position; however, it is

also very different. According to the Pew Forum Survey from 2019, the current percentage of the

American population that identifies as Christian sits at 65%, which is roughly an 8% decrease

since 2009. Similar to England, the U.S. is also seeing a gradual increase of secularization in the

society; however, England appears to be approximately 30 years ahead of the United States in

terms of secular development.

Due to the sheer size of the United States of America in comparison to England, the

author believes it beneficial to understand the geographical demographic of Christianity in the

United States. The Pew Forum survey from 2014 broke down the U.S. demographic into four

sections encompassing all 50 states: north-east, south, west, and mid-west. In the north-east, 65%

of the adult population identify as Christian; in the south, 76% of adults identify as Christian; in

the west, 64% of adults identify as Christian; and lastly, in the mid-west, 73% of the adult

population identify as Christian (Pew Forum, 2014).

The relevance of these statistics to this study is that the specific campus ministries being

analyzed in this research are all located in the southern region of the United States. The south has

the highest percentage of Christians, sitting at 76% in 2014. This percentage directly accounts for

the difference in religiosity or Christian identity between the two demographics being analyzed.

In the following section, the author will provide a historical background of campus ministries in both the United States and England.

History of Campus Ministries in England and the United States

Now that we have examined the historical context of religion and the current spiritual climates of the United States and England, we will explore the origins and developments of campus ministries in both countries. The history of organized religion at higher education institutions in England unsurprisingly outdates the first campus ministry in the United States. It was notably the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge where the first group of Christian scholars gathered, the association between learning and independent thinking was established, and the creation of the "ancient" universities was conceived (Guest, 2013). Oxford was founded at the end of the 12th century and clerks migrated to Cambridge to form the University of Cambridge in 1207, when the thought of the New World was merely a glimmer in the eyes of Christopher Columbus' ancestors.

In the United States, the first Christian society on record was at Harvard in 1706 followed by the first university chaplain at Yale in 1755 (Shockley, 1995). The history of traditional campus ministries is prolific in both the United States and England. A "traditional" Christian campus organization had strong denominational ties. The said denomination would allocate a chaplain to a specific university or college campus, and that chaplain would provide a certain level of pastoral care to those affiliated to the church. Organized religion on college and university campuses remained this way up until the mid-19th century (Shockley, 1995). In 1844, 22-year-old George Williams, a farmer-turned-department store worker, along with 11 friends, organized the first Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in London, a refuge of Bible study and prayer for young men seeking escape from the hazards of life on the streets ("History-

Founding," n.d). Despite the founding of the YMCA not directly having a tie to higher

education, the founding of the first American "student YMCA" was in 1856 at Cumberland

University in Lebanon, Tennessee ("History - 1800-1860s," n.d.).

It was during this time that campus ministries began to expand from the traditional or

denominational format, directly associated with a specific denomination, such as the Baptist,

Methodist, or Episcopalian church, to parachurch organizations. A parachurch campus ministry

does not have a direct link to a denomination. However, parachurch organizations seek to come

alongside the church and specialize in things that individual churches may not be able to

specialize in by themselves.

During this transitionary period, the birth of the renowned Inter-Varsity Christian

Fellowship took place at the University of Cambridge, England in 1877 ("InterVarsity and IFES

History," n.d.). There, a group of Christian students began to meet together, in spite of the

disapproval of some university officials, to pray, study the Bible, and share their faith with

fellow students. Soon similar groups sprung up on other campuses. Eventually, they formed the

British Inter-Varsity, hence, the name—inter meaning "between," and varsity, the British term

for college level students. In 1938, Stacey Woods, the Canadian InterVarsity Director, met with

students on the University of Michigan campus. As an immediate result of that visit, students

formed the first InterVarsity chapter in the United States ("InterVarsity and IFES History," n.d.).

The Student Christian Movement (SCM) was formed in 1889 and for a period until the

mid-20th century, was at the forefront of student ministry in England, claiming 80% of Christian

students ("The History of SCM," n.d.). In the 1970s and 1980s, SCM witnessed a substantial

decline in the movement that resulted in comprehensive restructuring. In 1975, there were only a

handful of local groups; however, by the 90s, SCM had grown to roughly 70 movements

nationwide ("The History of SCM," n.d.).

In 1919, the Universities and Colleges Christian Union (UCCF) was formed by Norman

Grubb ("Our Story," n.d.). Grubb believed in the inerrancy of the Bible and the importance of

evangelism. In layman's terms, Grubb and his friends held the Bible as the central source of

truth, which is what caused their split from SCM in 1910. Grubb had a vision for evangelical

witnessing and community that would spread to every university and college campus ("Our

Story," n.d.).

In 1951, a Fuller Theological Seminary student, Bill Bright, founded Campus Crusade for

Christ (now known as Cru) in the United States, at the University of California, Los Angeles

("History of Cru," n.d.). Bright received a unique impression from God to invest his life in

helping reach the entire world, starting with college students. Today Cru has 5,300 ministries

worldwide. Cru has communities focused on college and university students, inner city

communities, athletes, military, and high school students. The substantial reach of Cru as a

parachurch ministry is one of the reasons it was chosen as an object of this study ("Cru:

Communities," n.d.)

In 1967, Bill Bright sent a team of 55 men and women to England to help build spiritual

movements on university campuses ("Our History," n.d.). Soon, working in partnership with

others who shared the vision, student movements were flourishing in five universities across the

country, and by the early 1970s, thousands had been trained to share their faith. The movement

in England was given the name Agape, which is a Greco-Christian term in reference to a

particular kind of love: unconditional love that transcends and persists regardless of

circumstance. Agape continues with the same vision and values that began the movement so

many years ago. Though the university remains a central focus, Agape now works with people of

influence in most areas of life and has sent British staff to help build spiritual movements on

every continent ("Our History," n.d.).

Campus Ministries' Communication Recruitment Strategies

With a basic understanding of the development of these college Christian parachurch

ministries, we now turn our attention to the communication practices of these organizations.

Comparatively, little research has focused on communication recruitment strategies used by

campus ministries. However, research about how parachurch organizations on campus play a

social function for college students can provide insights of what communication strategies work

best in a higher education setting.

First, campus ministries typically use both generalized and specialized outreach

strategies. Generalized outreach strategies refer to open communication to the entire campus and

specialized strategies tend to focus on specific subsets or campus communities. In an article

titled "Campus Religious Life in America: Revitalization and Renewal," religious studies

professor at Missouri State University John Schmalzbauer (2013) explained that parachurch

organizations such as Cru (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ) and InterVarsity have both

generalized outreach to an entire campus, and specialized outreach to the realm of fraternities

and sports teams. For example, Greek InterVarsity ministers to 2,900 undergraduates and Cru's

Athletes in Action has developed a network of 15,000 students and alumni (Schmalzbauer,

2013). The most staggering statistic is in relation to another specialized parachurch group, the

Fellowship of Christian Athletes, which reaches over 340,000 young people (Schmalzbauer,

2013). Although this research does not specifically speak to the communication strategies

utilized by the ministries in order to recruit new students, it provides insights of how parachurch

ministries on campus in the U.S. segmented their target audience in their outreach efforts.

Second, research has been conducted that demonstrates that parachurch organizations

often focus on connectivity and a sense of belonging. Perry and Armstrong (2010) took a

sociological standpoint in their research and focused on how parachurch organizations "make

participation meaningful and satisfying for young people" (p. 2). The authors of "Evangelicals

on Campus" argued that the success of campus ministries largely comes down to issues of

meaning, helping students find a sense of belonging, and figuring out one's identity. According

to Perry and Armstrong's work, Christian parachurch organizations on college campuses do put

on a number of events for students to attend to the point that students could attend a faith-

affirming event every night of the week if they so desired; however, the article does not

demonstrate how the organizations get students to attend. Clearly, there is a lack of research in

this area of what specific communication strategies parachurch ministries use to attract and retain

members.

The author of an article titled "Predicting Reaction to a Message of Ministry: An

Audience Analysis" wrote: "Personal relationships are a central part of the human experience,

and there are psychologists who argue that the desire to be intimately involved with others is a

deep-seated human drive" (Wright, 2008, p. 64). A lack of personal relationships is often

common when embarking on a college career. This lack of connection can result in feelings of

loneliness, especially if students have moved far from home: "Indeed, most research indicates

that lonely persons are more likely than socially satisfied persons to express interest in, become

involved with, and join a new religious group or organization" (Wright, 2008, p. 64).

This idea that campus ministries may play a role in serving a social function for college students is reinforced in a study of a campus ministry called Canterbury Downtown, which operates in New York City. Young (2017) noted that the "the core values of ministry, in all its forms, are hospitality, building relationships, sharing the gospel story, and the enactment of faith in our everyday lives" (p. 72). Young makes the point that these values are extremely applicable to higher education; however, the emphasis must remain on the specific target audience.

A book written in 2013 titled "Christianity and the University Experience: Understanding Student Faith" takes a deep look at the lives of Christian students on university campuses in England. The authors of the book undertook a 3-year study with the purpose of discovering what distinguishes university students who identify as Christian and how their experience of university affirms or undermines their Christian faith. Whilst this book primarily looks at Christian students at English universities through a sociological lens, there are sections that directly relate to communication.

Chapter six titled "Organized Christianity on the university campus" gives us insight into how campus ministries operate in England. The chapter introduces SCM, which is one of the oldest campus ministries in England, and the UCCF, which is the national body of Christian Unions (CUs). CUs are the largest and most visible Christian group at universities in England and are self-governing under UCCF. Christian Unions are highly evangelistic in their beliefs; notably, UCCF has an official policy that "CUs should prioritize evangelizing fellow students" (Guest, 2013, p. 153). An example of such evangelism is illustrated in this chapter through a quote from a student involved with a CU at the University of Durham:

> *So, we're there to serve our campus, so we do things like last week we did*
>
> *something called "Hot dog hotline". So when everybody is coming back from the*

clubs, from about 12 until three in the morning, we'll give away free hot dogs. So

you can text in for it along with a question about Christianity. (Guest, 2013, p.

153)

This provides brilliant insight into not only strategies of evangelism in England, but also the

culture in which this campus ministry is operating. Further, all the studies mentioned in this

section demonstrate the focus of creating community and belonging that parachurch ministries

try to cultivate.

Third, it appears that participation in campus ministries is multiplying rapidly as can be

seen by the reach of the likes of Cru and Inter-Varsity. An argument made by some evangelicals

is that higher education is a threat to religious faith (Alger, 2018). However, Schmalzbauer's

research counters this argument:

Far from destructive to evangelical faith, colleges and universities may actually

strengthen it. Student participation in campus religion has remained remarkably

stable over the course of the last century. Far from secular, the campus may

actually intensify religious and spiritual seeking, a trait already associated with

today's emerging adults. (Schmalzbauer, 2013, p. 117)

Schmalzbauer's research focuses on the United States, and thus, may be true of the spiritual

climate in the United States, but cannot be assumed for campus ministries in England, where the

campus ministries are operating in a considerably different spiritual cultural environment. The

author's research revolves around the notion of whether the spiritual climate in the given culture

has an effect on the success of recruitment strategies and whether the means of recruiting

students is different in response to such cultural differences. In the analysis and discussion

chapters of this thesis, interview participants address this issue in thorough detail. The literature

reviewed here highlights that there have been investigatory studies into campus ministries in the

United States and England from both sociological and historical perspectives. Some of the

sociological studies do cross over into the field of communication; however, there is not any

explicit research looking at recruitment strategies in terms of communication at campus

ministries in the United States and England comparatively. This study is an attempt to begin

filling that gap.

Methods

The primary question "What recruitment methods and communication strategies are used

by Cru and Agape?" resulted in the formulation of four secondary research questions that guided

this research:

RQ 1: What are the general strategies used in the recruitment of students?

RQ 2: Is interpersonal communication important in the recruitment process?

RQ 3: Does culture have an effect on the strategies used in recruitment of students?

RQ 4: Does social media play a role in the recruitment process?

This study has two components: an interview component and a content analysis

component. In order to begin the interview component, the author submitted a detailed protocol

to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Radford University. The IRB protocol was necessary

due to the use of human subjects in the study. IRB analyzed and eventually approved the

protocol in order to protect the rights and welfare of the human research subjects that would be

recruited to participate in the study. Once the IRB approved the study, the author began the

recruitment phase, utilizing the snowball sampling method and recruitment through email.

The author conducted 10 semi-structured interviews with staff members from Cru in the

United States and Agape Student Life in England. Six of the interviews were with staff members

at Agape movements at the University of Birmingham, Birmingham City University, Oxford

University, Oxford Brooks University, Cambridge University, Anglia Ruskin University,

University College London, and St. Mary's University. The four Cru staff members in the United

States that were interviewed are on staff at Virginia Tech, Radford University, Virginia

Commonwealth University, and American University located in Washington, D.C. The interview

participants consisted of six males and four females with differing amounts of time spent with

the campus ministries. Three of the Agape interviewees were in fact American, two of which

now live permanently in England, and the other who is there for a "stint" of 2 years. The age

bracket of the interviewees ranged from early 20s to mid-40s.

  The interviews were conducted face to face and using the video conferencing platform

Zoom, and the audio was recorded. On average, the interviews lasted between 30 to 45 minutes

and followed a set of interview questions that can be found in the appendix. The questions were

tailored towards the specific use of outreach methods, evangelism, social media, interpersonal

communication, and culture. These topics proceeded to be the color-coded categories in the

analysis phase. Once the interviews were completed, the author transcribed the audio files and

removed any personal information to maintain confidentiality of the participants.

  The interview transcripts were analyzed using grounded theory. "Grounded Theory is

particularly well suited for investigating social processes that have attracted little prior research

attention, where the previous research is lacking in breadth and/or depth, or where a new point of

view on familiar topics appears promising" ("Grounded Theory," n.d.). Due to the lack of prior

research in this specific area and the qualitative nature of the interviews, the author found

grounded theory to be the most appropriate method.

In the analysis of the interview transcripts, the author searched for words, statements, and scenarios that were reoccurring among the interview participants, highlighting them using a color code. For example, if an interview participant mentioned meeting one-on-one with a student, the researcher highlighted this statement in blue. When an interviewee used the word "secular," the researcher highlighted it in yellow. This color-coding process led to the creation of common themes that assisted in the formation of the analysis and discussion chapters. It was through this process that the author was able to draw conclusions, address the limitations of the research, and make suggestions for future research.

The content analysis component of the research focused on the Facebook and Instagram accounts of the Cru and Agape movements that the interview participants are associated with. A total of nine Facebook accounts and 10 Instagram accounts were analyzed. The author looked at the frequency and content of the posts on both platforms during a 1-month period at the start of the academic year. The dates of the 1-month period were slightly different between Cru and Agape due to the fact that the academic year starts slightly later in England than the United States. In the United States, the 1-month period spanned from August 22, 2019 to September 22, 2019, and in England, from September 15, 2019 to October 15, 2019.

For the content analysis of the social media accounts, the author used the concepts of informativeness and social presence, derived from uses and gratifications theory, to help evaluate and form conclusions regarding the effectiveness of each ministry's communication efforts. Informativeness in a recruitment context is defined as the extent to which relevant, useful, and adequate information is provided for potential applicants (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2005). This characteristic was applied to the content and frequency of the campus ministries' posts on Facebook and Instagram where the posting related to informing students of events that Cru or

Agape were facilitating. The second concept used for analysis, social presence, is defined as the extent to which it feels as if you are communicating with another person. Social presence is the perception that communication is personal, friendly, and warm (Short et al, 1976). This characteristic was beneficial in the analysis of the social media platforms, as it helped the researcher evaluate whether the post was attempting to communicate personable messages to influence the recruitment of students. The author could not take into consideration the Facebook and Instagram "story" aspect as these "stories" only last 24 hours and as the analysis was looking back to August and September of 2019, all "stories" had expired. Thus, the content analysis is strictly limited to regular posts.

Interview and Content Analysis

In this section, the author will provide a detailed account of the interview process, addressing each of the themes that were identified in the analysis of the interview transcripts. The first section will address the general outreach strategies that includes the rhetorical framework "win, build, send," various evangelism tactics, and the organization of events. The second section highlights the importance of interpersonal communication. The third speaks to how culture affects the recruitment process. Lastly, the author discusses the social media content analysis.

Outreach Strategies

During the interviews, after the formalities, the first question that the author asked was in regard to **RQ 1**. The first question had two sub points that inquired about how social media affects this process and whether they are using any specific "scripts" as such. When referencing scripts, the author means specific communication that is being "rolled out" or certain materials that help in the recruitment process.

Club and Freshers' Fair

A common theme that arose among the transcripts was that both organizations recognize the importance of meeting new students. One common way to do this was that most of the movements were setting up tables at a "freshers' fair" or "club fair." Freshers' fair takes place during the first week of university term in England and is an event where most student societies set up tables to recruit incoming students into their various organizations. It is the same as the "club fair" in the United States.

How these tables at the comparable club and freshers' fairs operated differed slightly between the two organizations. With Agape, the table revolved around a poll that asks, "Is God

Real?" or at the Oxford campuses, it was "Is God Relevant?" The staff and students involved at

the table would ask passing freshers whether they would participate in the poll by dropping a

marble into a specific pint glass. The pint glasses were labeled in a Likert scale fashion ranging

from "definitely yes" to "definitely no." The student leaders or staff members would then ask

participants to fill out a quick and short contact card. At club fairs in the United States, a

common strategy was the use of ice-pops to entice freshman to the table during a usually warm

late August day. In order to receive the artificially flavored, colored, and sugary frozen pop of

joy, the students had to fill out a short survey that asked questions about contact information,

whether they identified with a certain religion, and lastly, whether they were interested in

becoming involved with a religious organization at college. At some of the Cru club fair tables,

they had a giveaway and filling out a survey entered students into a raffle to win a gift card. At

one of the Agape freshers' fair tables, they also had a raffle that could be entered by filling out a

contact card.

Win, Build, Send

The main rhetorical framework that explains what these tables at the beginning of the

academic year are trying to accomplish pertains to Cru's foundational framework: "Win, Build,

Send." This framework is used as the basis of everything that Cru and Agape do, and is

summarized perfectly by an interviewee from the Birmingham campuses:

> *So that's Cru globally, the kind of base of Cru in a sense. We want to "win"*
>
> *people, you know do evangelism and "win" people to Christ, you want to "build"*
>
> *people in their faith, help them grow, and we want to "send" people out to do the*
>
> *same. So wherever someone goes, out of university, whether it's into ministry, into*

> *the business world, whatever they do they are "sent" as lifetime laborers, they*
>
> *will seek to make Jesus known wherever they go.*

The importance of "win, build send" is that every strategy used by Cru and Agape has this as the central focus. The "win" aspect of the framework pertains to converting non-Christians, or those that don't believe, to start a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. The "build" aspect revolves around building or growing a person's faith, through studying the Bible and mentoring relationships, often called discipleships. Lastly, the "send" part of the framework refers to sending the student out after university having established a relationship with God and having grown in his or her faith. As the interviews went on, it became apparent that the main difference between the two organizations is how they proceed through each stage of the "win, build, send" framework.

Evangelism Tools

During the analysis, one of the central issues was what strategies the organizations are utilizing in their attempts to "win" people to Christ. Several evangelism tactics that were common among both organizations were that of "Soularium," "Perspective Cards," "Knowing God Personally" booklets, and "natural" or "friendship" evangelism. A great explanation of Soularium was given by a staff member at Radford University:

> *All of these pictures I think from around New York City and they put them on*
>
> *notecards and started asking questions and so I think it's a pack of 50 cards with*
>
> *all different types of pictures... so a student would approach or a staff member*
>
> *would approach another student and say, "Hey we're doing this picture survey.*
>
> *Would you be interested in doing it with me?" And the main purpose is to get*
>
> *someone talking and so I think the first question is take out three cards that you*

feel represent your life right now and then pick out three cards that you wish

represented your life, then it works down so that the student can decide to pick out

a card that represents what they think or who they think God is to them and so it's

just disarming you know pictures of that beautiful opportunity for us to see

something different than every other person and so it's disarming and it's kind of

cool to sit down and hear someone else's perspective on this picture that maybe

you've looked at 50 times but they've only seen it that one time.

Soularium is a tool made specifically by Cru and therefore would count as a form of script used to engage in spiritual conversations and "win" students. Regarding the success of Soularium, the author found from the interviews that students were happy to participate in the picture survey; however, the transition to becoming involved in the organization was limited, bringing the effectiveness of this strategy to "win" students into question.

A second tool, used by both Cru and Agape, and similar to Soularium, were perspective cards and perspective banners. The cards work in a similar way to Soularium as it requires a student or staff member to approach another student to engage in a conversation. Perspective banners yield similar results to Soularium as far as recruitment is concerned. Students are happy to engage in conversations; however, few become associated with the ministry because of the conversation. The banners are large vertical posters that both Cru and Agape use occasionally at club or freshers' fairs. Perspective cards take a different approach to Soularium as they are less artistic and focus more on a theoretical and worldview stance. The intention is similar to Soularium as the goal is to try and get students talking and provide an opportunity to enter into a spiritual conversation. Perspective cards address six worldviews that encompass atheism,

agnosticism, deism, monotheism, pantheism, and polytheism. Again, this is a tool made by Cru and therefore explains the use of this strategy on campuses in the United States and England.

Thirdly, the author found a common strategy in the use of the "Knowing God Personally" booklet. This is a small paper booklet that presents four spiritual principles for developing a personal relationship with God. This booklet is the most widely used tool that Cru has developed and helps students feel more confident sharing their faith. Again, this is a script created by Cru and is used in both the United States and England. The interviewees made no mention of the success of this tool in terms of "winning" students. Examples of Soularium, Perspective cards, and the "Knowing God Personally" booklet can be found in the appendix.

In addition to these scripted events, another common outreach strategy the interviewees mentioned was the concept of "natural" or "friendship" evangelism. This has been a commonality between the interviews, in that staff members want to help equip and "build" up students that are committed to Cru or Agape to share their faith in their natural environments. This equipping or building up of students is to enable them to feel comfortable and confident when entering into spiritual conversations with roommates, family members, people in their classes, on sports teams, and in other extracurricular environments. Two specific examples of this came from an interviewee in Birmingham:

> *We do this thing called five and focus, so students are challenged to think about five friends or family members that they want to be intentionally praying for and then thinking intentionally what it may be, what's a good question that they can ask to spark a conversation or it could be like, I want to spark a conversation to where I find out more about what they believe or something... I think it's like 20 in 2020, so having 20 spiritual engagements in the next year, whether that's through*

Soularium, whether that's maybe talking with a roommate, whether that's talking

with a family member, but throughout the course of the year, we're having 20

spiritual engagements.

From the interviews, it was apparent that cultivating friendships with students is intended

not only to help them join the organization, but to "build" them to talk to others about

their faith.

Outreach Events

The last aspect of this section that provides a deeper understanding of how these

organizations function and also gives us a glimpse into the difference in culture that the

ministries are operating in are the specific outreach events that Cru and Agape are organizing to

involve students. With Cru in the United States, there is a strong emphasis on a weekly large

group meeting. A quote from a staff member at Virginia Tech provides a good picture of what

this looks like for their movement:

And then we have the large meetings, on a Thursday night, which is also a form of

evangelism. They're hearing the truth of who Jesus is. And so it's more from a,

it's not individual, it's from up front, kind of way. And there's big numbers? Yeah

at Virginia Tech we have maybe 350 to 400 that come to our Thursday night

meetings but there's more than that that come to Bible studies or through

mentoring relationships and different events that people come out to.

These large group meetings are usually well attended and are a focus of the U.S. campus

ministry.

With Agape, the idea of a large group meeting is just not a reality at this point in time.

Instead, there is a strong emphasis on recruiting non-Christians as well as Christians to become

involved with the organization: *"I would say a lot of our outreach things that we do, the hope is to get people to show up and just kind of get people in the door."* The author found that Agape provides weekly Bible studies for Christian students to engage with; however, more focus goes into events such as "Night Reach," "Hub in the Pub," "Women Speak Out," and involvement with the Global Aid Network.

Night Reach originated in Birmingham and is an Agape event that engages both Christians and non-Christians as they take to the streets to serve tea, coffee, and biscuits to intoxicated students as they stumble out of nightclubs in the early hours of the morning. This event is an example of a successful outreach for Agape due to the number of conversations that the involved students or staff members manage to engage in. The following is an amusing quote from a staff member in Birmingham in regard to the Night Reach event:

> *People are obviously a little more spiritually lucid when they've had a few drinks.*
> *One of our students last year... he was sitting in the library and he overheard a*
> *conversation, the next table in the Birmingham library, some guys were chatting*
> *and they were like "yeah, the best thing about a night out in Birmingham is the*
> *free tea and coffee from the Christians afterwards."*

We can see from this interaction that while the event may be successful in terms of handing out the free food and drink, it does not necessarily translate to "winning" students to participate in Agape.

Agape focuses on organizing a weekly discussion of some description. In a sense, it is a gathering, however not like the large group meeting that takes place at Cru in the United States. Occasionally there will be a Christian speaker who will speak on a specific issue, sometimes the weekly gathering will show a short film, followed by a discussion. A specific weekly event

mentioned in the interviews was "hub in the pub" that took place at Birmingham and Cambridge campuses, where students and staff would meet in a local public house and discuss a certain topic. "Hub in the Pub" was not received particularly well by non-Christian students, specifically students who were Muslim, as they felt hesitant to enter into an environment with alcohol. The intention of the "Hub in the Pub" event or weekly discussions in general is summed up brilliantly in this quote from an Agape staff member:

We don't share our faith in those times. We just have five questions and they're usually really deep, engaging questions and we just start a conversation and we usually ask a question like "How does your worldview or your faith influence how you think about this topic?" So faith comes up, but we're not using it as a platform to try to share the gospel. We're using it as a platform to cultivate trust and friendship and relationships and that hopefully if people start to show up to this thing we can say, "Can we meet for coffee? We'd love to talk more kind of outside this time."

This quote provides an example of an outreach event organized by Agape that attempts to engage students to enter into deeper conversations in an intimate setting. This would be an example of a "win" strategy. Agape is not using explicitly Christian questions, however asking questions that elicit thought and conversation around spiritual topics. The next event described focuses on engaging students on a larger scale.

"Women Speak Out" is a photograph project that has been going on at Oxford and Birmingham Agape movements the last few years. This project sought to empower and encourage women through the sharing of photos. Women would write positive, encouraging messages on their bodies and then share the photos on Instagram. This project, at the front end,

was very successful as it created significant interest and raised awareness of who Agape is, not to mention the substantial number of contacts created through the project. However, the hope behind this event was that it would lead to establishing discussion groups that delve deeper and lead to discussions with greater spiritual content. This campaign would be another example of a "win" strategy. According to interviewees, making this transition has been difficult. The author will discuss this in more depth in the section focused on culture.

The last outreach strategy that Agape has utilized in their attempt to "win" students has been through involvement with GAIN (Global Aid Network). GAIN is a worldwide humanitarian and development network that provides relief to people living in crisis or injustice. In England over recent years, the work of GAIN has focused on the refugee crisis and has been working to provide relief to countries that need supplies. Agape has found that Christians and non-Christians are keen to volunteer with GAIN, which has proved fruitful in terms of spiritual conversations and relationships built. In addition to the different outreach strategies, another theme emerged in the interviews, and that is the importance of interpersonal, or one-on-one, communication with potential recruits.

To summarize this section, the general outreach strategies used to recruit students revolve around the "win, build, send" framework, evangelism tools, and lastly, the ministries utilize specific outreach events such as large group meetings, "Hub in the Pub," "Night Reach," "Women Speak Out," and collaboration with GAIN.

Interpersonal Communication

This section is in response to an interview question directly looking to answer **RQ 2.** The importance of establishing and growing interpersonal relationships is a concept that has been fundamental to the success of Cru and Agape and was mentioned by several of the interviewees.

It is relevant to every stage of the "win, build, send" framework and the author has found from the interview process that interpersonal communication is arguably the most successful form of communication that these campus ministries attempt to utilize. In the following section, the author will provide a thorough account of how the various movements of Cru and Agape are approaching and channeling their interpersonal communication efforts.

Conversational Texting

The emphasis on building interpersonal relationships commences at the very beginning of the recruitment process. At both the club and freshers' fairs, Cru and Agape students and staff members are intentionally trying to engage in meaningful conversations with students passing their tables. The hope is that a conversation will lead to a student participating in the poll, entering a raffle, and filling out a survey or contact card. Once the club and freshers' fairs come to an end, it is then the responsibility of the staff members and student leaders to follow up with the contacts generated. This follow-up takes the form of a personal text message or email. A Cru staff member from Richmond, Virginia explained the process brilliantly and also gave an insight of how the process could be improved:

> *We reach out to the yeses and maybes, the people who said yes, they were*
>
> *interested in a Christian organization, a Bible study, spiritual things, and we*
>
> *follow up with them. We buy them a cup of coffee, buy them lunch, and get to*
>
> *know them, hear their story, and tell them what Cru's about. Share the gospel*
>
> *with them and invite them to one of the events that we have that week... the text*
>
> *message is a lot like "Hey my name is _____. I'm with Cru, you stopped by our*
>
> *table earlier today or earlier this week. We gave you a free ice pop. Thanks so*
>
> *much for filling out our survey, You said that you were interested in a Bible study*

while at VCU. I would love to tell you more about our organization and how you

can get connected to a bible study. Would you be up for grabbing coffee to hear

more?"

This account describes how this particular movement generally approaches the follow-up stage

of the recruitment process. However, the Cru staff member made an interesting statement in

regard to how standardized and in a sense, how impersonal, the text message or email is. Cru has

an internal social media platform called "the workplace" that Cru staff members globally stay

connected through, and this Cru movement recently reached out to inquire if there might be a

way to improve this somewhat impersonal text message:

And one person said, when we text, we try to go about it by doing conversational

texting. So instead of sending one big paragraph about all this information, just

texting, "Hey, is this John?" And they text back and say, "Yeah this is John,

who's this?" "Oh hey, my name's _____. I'm with Cru, you got an ice pop from

me earlier today," and they respond and say, "Oh yeah, I remember," and then

you go on and you have a conversation more so than just here's all this

information you need to know up front. That's the most successful. Yeah, they said

that there's a better response rate. When you send a big message it just seems

really spammy and people see it as impersonal and it's like, oh it seems computer

generated, it's not a real person.

Importance of Interpersonal Communication

With Agape, interpersonal connection is essentially the pinnacle of everything they do.

The history of campus ministries in England provides a stumbling block for Agape. The

prevalence and reputation of Christian Unions on university campuses in England places a

greater importance on interpersonal relationship:

> *The vast majority of people, if they're looking, as a Christian to get involved with*
>
> *something on campus, they're not going to come to Agape, aren't going to come*
>
> *to Cru, by default, they will default to the CU because that's what everyone knows*
>
> *exists and knows is out there... so I would say personal conversation and personal*
>
> *relationships are the single most important things. That's true for non-Christians*
>
> *as well, I think in many ways it's more important for non-Christians because non-*
>
> *Christians are generally not looking to get involved with a faith-based group.*

Since Agape lacks the name recognition of CU, interviewees placed an even greater emphasis on

one-on-one communication. For an Agape staff member in London, interpersonal relationship is

"really all we have." The context for the previous statement is in regard to the lack of

advertising that Agape utilizes and due to the reputation of Christian Unions in England. The

criticalness of interpersonal relationship cannot be emphasized enough; however, could there be

a tendency to rely too heavily on someone's interpersonal skills? For a certain Agape movement,

interpersonal connectedness was key to a considerable number of students involved and when

particular staff members or students moved on, relationships were lost:

> *I think it's massive, that is often the primary reason why people stay with us*
>
> *whilst at uni, because they've built up a good relationship with one of the staff*
>
> *members or one of the other key students that's involved. That becomes like the*
>
> *main connection point. So we've noticed that when staff or students have moved*
>
> *on, then the relationships with the people they were connected to tend to die off as*
>
> *well because that was where they had the strongest buy in, was with that*

individual person. They were quite happy to come along to some of the wider

aspects of the group, but they were maybe being discipled by that particular

person and were doing activities with them. So once that was gone, there was less

holding them to the group. So we found that quite a lot for us in our group at the

moment.

As a result of intentionally contacting students and establishing a relationship with them, the next step for both Cru and Agape students and staff members is typically an invitation to meet up with students face to face, usually over a coffee. Why is this face to face conversation or "coffee date" so important? A Cru staff member explained how the one-to-one meet-up can change everything:

I mean sitting down having one-to-one conversation with someone changes

someone's perspective on anything and so I think putting it in terms of a religious

organization, they start to break down barriers and walls that they would maybe

naturally put up because it feels awkward or they don't know God, but sitting

down and having one-on-one conversations allows for that person to see that the

person sitting with them is real, that maybe their relationship with God is real...

It's a little bit disarming to have that hot beverage in front of you, to know that

this could last 30 minutes or an hour, which would be great.

It is interesting to see how important interpersonal relationships are to both Cru and Agape; however, caution needs to be taken when utilizing this communication tactic. From the interviews, it is apparent that an over-dependence on interpersonal connectedness can also lead to the breakdown of relationships. The challenge for the organizations seems to regard how they approach the initiation of interpersonal relationships and then the building or maintenance of the

created relationships. A Cru staff member from the Washington, D.C. area gives an insight into

striking this balance:

> *I think as we've gone more to like Facebook and media, social media, I think*
>
> *people still long for like face to face, but they want it to be meaningful. And so if*
>
> *you can make it more meaningful, which I think Christians always want to do, but*
>
> *it's a little more work upfront to like know things and then be willing to not know*
>
> *things.*

The point that this Cru staff member is trying to get across is that student leaders or staff

members need to be willing to be vulnerable when entering into interpersonal relationships. It is

okay not to have all the answers that a student might want. The emphasis needs to be on

accepting that relationships and communication will be imperfect, but the fact that the

communication is face to face or one to one through a specific medium will result in something

that will be meaningful and lead to a sense of belonging and connectedness.

Culture

In the following section, the author will address the third theme to emerge from the

interviews, the topic of culture, which directly relates to **RQ 3**. While there have been some

subtle differences in the data from the previous sections, there have been more similarities in Cru

and Agape's utilization of outreach, evangelism, and interpersonal recruitment strategies. This is

largely due to the fact that Agape is under the corporate umbrella of Cru and therefore their

mission is symmetrical. As discussed previously, the framework of "win, build, send" is central

to both ministries. Much of the rhetoric used in the outreach and evangelism portions of the

ministries is also very similar. In this section, the author will highlight some significant

differences that the ministries face in terms of the culture in the United States and England and how this impacts their communication strategies.

England's Spiritual Culture

Agape Student Life has several factors that it has to be mindful of when recruiting students. The prominence of Christian Unions puts Agape at a slight disadvantage in comparison to Cru. From the interviews, the author has found that CUs are comparable to Cru movements in the United States in terms of reputation, outreach, and large weekly meetings. Most Christian students that are attending university in England have most likely heard of Christian Unions and are aware that it is *"primarily a group of Christians."* For Agape, their focus is still on trying to recruit Christians; however, because of the CUs, their focus is also heavily on non-Christians. This quote from a Birmingham Agape staff member provides a great example and explains this reality in more depth:

> *So obviously we have Christians, we are looking to recruit Christians who want to*
>
> *multiply their life and share their faith, want to be, you know, want to be lifetime*
>
> *laborers. But we're not looking just to kind of gather a group of Christians, as*
>
> *such. We're actually looking to be movements on campus that are actually*
>
> *engaging for non-Christians and that non-Christians feel they can be a part of. So*
>
> *for example, BCU this term, one of the main people who's been involved is a*
>
> *Muslim guy he's an international student from Bahrain. But he really likes what's*
>
> *going on, likes coming along, likes the discussions. Obviously, the group is very*
>
> *clearly run by Christians and it's spiritual things, but he really enjoys coming and*
>
> *they engage in conversation even though he's not a Christian.*

This is not to say that this example of the international student from Bahrain could not happen at a Cru movement in the United States; however, the demographic and diversity of students in England is somewhat different to that of the demographic of Cru movements researched in this study and may help explain Agape's focus on students from varying faith backgrounds.

During the interview process, six Agape staff members were interviewed. What was interesting about the Agape interviewees was that three of them were in fact American, living in and working for Agape in England, and one of them was English but had spent a period of time living and working for Cru in the United States. This finding is interesting in and of itself, the fact that three of the Agape staff members were not of British citizenship speaks into the demographic of religious workers in England. Additionally, these interviewees provided a brilliant insight into the two cultures from their experiences in both cultures. An American Agape staff member that now lives permanently in London provided an insight that reinforces how the more varied culture in England influences Agape's recruitment strategies:

> *Probably the main difference actually between the U.S. Cru and Agape in the UK*
>
> *is that, um, Agape is probably like more geared towards non-Christians and most*
>
> *of our interactions just because there's a lot less Christians and so our*
>
> *movements are pretty split between Christians and non-Christians. Whereas in*
>
> *the States they do a lot of like engagement with non-Christians, but like, like they*
>
> *do the same things as far as going out and speaking to people and sharing with*
>
> *their friends. But I think they're big groups and mostly get at Christians. So if*
>
> *you're Cru, you'd probably say, Oh, it's a place where Christians go, or it's a*
>
> *place to learn more about Jesus or grow in your faith or like, yeah, it might be*
>
> *geared more that way.*

Attitude of Apathy

The prominence of secular life in the United Kingdom is another challenging factor that Agape has to be aware of in their recruiting. As already discussed in the literature review, both the United States and United Kingdom are becoming increasingly secular; however, the fact the United Kingdom is significantly more secular provides more of a challenge in the recruitment process than it does for Cru in the United States. The following quote from a London Agape staff member portrays the culture in great detail:

> *It's very secular in London, meaning, um, not only is it non-religious, it's apathetic towards religion. Um, so a bigger problem that we have with a lot of students is not just that they don't believe in Christ. That's fine. We want to talk about that. They don't think it's important whether God's real. I had a conversation with a girl today actually who, we were talking about how she didn't know if God was real and she would say, "Well, it doesn't really matter if God's real or not because he doesn't really have a plan for our lives"… I think that's the biggest issue is the lack of caring about God whether or not he's real or not.*

The definition of apathy is best summarized by "a lack of feeling, emotion, interest, or concern about something. Apathy is a state of indifference, or the suppression of emotions such as concern, excitement, motivation, or passion" ("Apathy," 2020.). The finding of an apathetic attitude was a common theme that arose out of several of the interviews with Agape staff members and interestingly did not appear in any of the interviews with Cru staff members.

Nominal Christianity

A concept that did appear in interviews with both Cru and Agape staff members was that of nominal faith or cultural Christianity. These terms arose in response to an interview question

tailored towards the spiritual background of students that become associated with said

organization. When referencing nominal or cultural Christianity, caution must be taken. The term

"nominal" in layman's terms refers to "in name only," which can be associated with people "who

identify as Christians in surveys or in conversations, without having a link with a Christian

community or institution" (Van De Poll, 2018). A quote from an Agape staff member gives

insight into nominal Christians in this individual's environment:

> *I think I've met a lot of people doing Soularium who would say that they've grown*
>
> *up, maybe going to church on Christmas and Easter, but don't really have any*
>
> *real concept of like relationship with God pretty nominal and pretty kind of*
>
> *apathetic, not really opposed to it, but kinda like why, who cares? Like a lot of*
>
> *people would say I'm a spiritual person, you know, I consider myself to be*
>
> *spiritual and maybe practice yoga or into some different conglomeration of*
>
> *different religions. So yeah, but all the student leaders have predominantly come*
>
> *from Christian backgrounds.*

Pre-Evangelism

Another term that arose from an interview with a staff member from the Oxford Agape

movements that specifically targets the culture in England is that of "pre-evangelism." This term

is explained in the following quote:

> *I think in our culture we're recognizing that there needs to be a space for people*
>
> *who don't necessarily want to go along to really explicit Christian events and*
>
> *hear an explicit gospel message and just be asked, "What do you think about*
>
> *that?" There needs to be a space where people can grapple with maybe broader*
>
> *questions about identity, satisfaction, purpose, and within that context, be able to*

present what the gospel says and how the gospel relates to that, which some

people would call pre-evangelism. So it's kinda like if evangelism in its purest

sense is sharing the gospel, the full gospel with someone and inviting them to

respond to that. Pre-evangelism, people would argue is, I don't necessarily like

the word pre-evangelism but it's often what I hear people say... Because people

are starting from, I guess a lot further back than they were maybe 20, 30 years

ago. In terms of the awareness of what the gospel is, their background within the

church or within religion. A lot of the time they're from very secular families and

they've heard little pieces of Bible stories. But they didn't go to church growing

up. They didn't go to a C of E [Church of England] school where there were

assemblies where you sung hymns. So, um, yeah, pre-evangelism being the step

backwards. Yeah. It just helped me see the relevance of God to their lives. You're

not necessarily going to explain the full gospel to them. They're not in a position

to respond to that. Laying the foundation, laying some groundwork and then you

kind of buildup. So, I feel like that's quite a lot of what we end up doing.

This concept of "pre-evangelism" was unique to a single interview with an Agape staff member; however, this concept was evident in many of the tactics that Agape is implementing. The focus on engaging non-Christians and attempting to embark in conversations that explore *"the deeper questions of life"* is pre-evangelism without explicitly stating this concept. It seems that culturally, students at English universities have gone past the point of being able to receive traditional evangelism in its "purest form." The concept of "pre-evangelism" is a notion of laying a foundation through relationships, discussions, and events that enable students to eventually comprehend the gospel message and potentially apply it to their lives.

Cultural Reality of Outreach Events

The last aspect of culture that affects the recruitment strategies that Agape utilizes concerns the events that Agape organizes. The struggle that Agape movements have is getting students to attend the events. There is a general lack of interest in attending Christian events from the English student population. This relates to the concept of "pre-evangelism" that was discussed previously. Agape has to think creatively in terms of the types of event that will be not only appealing to English students, but also engaging with the hope that they might come to future events, discussions, and outreaches.

An example of this difficulty was highlighted in one of the Agape interviews. The interviewee explained that the specific movement had organized an event with a musician who had previously been on staff with Agape, but had moved on to follow his music career. The event was a collaboration with GAIN as this musician had recently released an album in response to the refugee crisis. The event had been advertised on Facebook and looked hopeful as 60 people had shown interest or said that they were going to attend. When the day of the event came around, only four people showed up. *"I think the most challenging thing I think we find is, you know, you're trying, we've done this so many times when you put together what looks like a really good gathering event and no one comes, yeah and I think that's, that's actually pretty common in the UK."* This cultural reality is something that Agape really needs to be strategic with in their planning. Embracing the concept of "pre-evangelism" and meeting students where they are at spiritually is necessary in order to execute successful events.

A final example of the challenge that Agape faces when it comes to events has already been mentioned in the first section of this chapter. The event to be discussed is the "Women Speak Out" campaign. As already discussed, this project started on Birmingham campuses and

spread to several others. The Agape interviewee from Oxford expressed that this campaign had

gained significant momentum over the previous years and at the front end had been successful:

> *We basically had very low spiritual content, but a space, giving women a space to*
>
> *encourage and build up each other. Then create a platform where they can kind*
>
> *of deepen a relationship or a friendship, have deeper conversations about life*
>
> *and, and hopefully faith in God. Um, and the idea was that, Oh yeah, we've got*
>
> *like 400 women involved in this campaign.*

Despite the initial success, Agape found that this campaign did not follow through with the depth

that it had hoped for. At the outset, hundreds of women were interested in participating in the

campaign; however, the transition into deeper conversations and an increase in spiritual content

did not really take place:

> *People are really happy to get involved, because I guess it kind of got seen as like*
>
> *a feminist campaign, which it kind of is and isn't, not like feminist in the way*
>
> *some people would think of it, just like a chance to encourage women. But people*
>
> *loved that, that side of it. Really happy to get on board with championing change*
>
> *and justice and social justice, that sort of thing. So you can have great*
>
> *conversations around that, but it was just, it's really hard to, so then get them to*
>
> *think about, okay, how might spirituality relate to this and how might God be*
>
> *relevant?*

This scenario speaks into the culture in England in a way that highlights a very important aspect

of the culture that Agape is already aware of; however, it needs to be addressed with intentional

communication strategy. England is socially very progressive, especially among the student

population; however, how can social activism be utilized to the benefit of Agape? How could

Agape create more events that engage students on an activist level, and incorporate a

corresponding level of spiritual content? The problem that arose from the "Women Speak Out"

campaign was not being able to bridge the gap between the excitement of being involved in an

empowering women's campaign and the same level of interest in delving into the deeper and

more spiritual questions. In the remainder of this section, the author will address the topic of

culture from the perspective of Cru in the United States.

United States' Spiritual Culture

The demographic of the Cru movements that were analyzed in the United States does

differ in terms of religiosity in comparison to the Agape movements in England. The Cru

movements investigated were all from the state of Virginia located on the east coast of the

United States. Although one of the participants was a Cru staff member in the Washington, D.C.

area, which is a metropolitan area similar to London or Birmingham, the rest of the participants

were at campuses throughout the state of Virginia that are typically more rural. The state of

Virginia, most people would agree, is the start of the "south," which also correlates to what some

would refer to as the "Bible Belt." A Cru staff member from Radford University spoke into the

culture in terms of the spiritual background of students:

> *I would say probably 50-60% of students have been exposed to Christianity at*
>
> *some level, so either they went to a Catholic school or a Christian school or they*
>
> *went to church on the holidays with their family. I mean of course we're in the*
>
> *Bible Belt here at Radford so a decent amount of people come in having gone to*
>
> *church most of their lives... around here definitely the culture and upbringing, I*
>
> *don't think it's that way everywhere by any means, but I think around here it's a*
>
> *little bit more and often those are the students looking for something to get*

> *involved with because they either come from youth groups or they've come from*
>
> *organizations in high school like Young Life that they went to at some point and*
>
> *so they want to get involved somewhere, so sometimes they're the ones looking*
>
> *and we kind of catch their eye and say, "Hey, would you do a survey with me?"*

Thus, we can see that the Cru staff members are working in an environment very different from that of Agape.

The weekly large group meetings that take place at Cru movements reinforces this culture of spiritual background and religiosity at the campuses investigated in this study. Specifically, the Cru movement at Virginia Tech has on average 350-400 students that attend their Thursday night large group meeting. In addition to this statistic, the Cru staff member at Virginia Tech made the following point:

> *The ones that find Cru on their own are usually coming from a religious*
>
> *background. They either grew up in it or they wanted to make it their own when*
>
> *they got to college, but they're out from under their parents. I would say 80%*
>
> *come in with some religious background, but then the other 20% are through*
>
> *natural connections on campus or maybe someone had something happen and*
>
> *they want to check out Christianity. Very few non-believers that want to come*
>
> *check Cru out.*

This quote identifies the nature of a student that is becoming involved with Cru at Virginia Tech in terms of spiritual background. This finding cannot be generalized for all Cru movements in the United States; however, the number of students that are involved with Cru at Virginia Tech and how they came to be involved does speak into the culture that this Cru campus is operating in. The cultural difference here in terms of religious background, and "transmission" of faith from

parents to children, is much different than what is found in England. The next topic to be

discussed is a sub-culture at many American universities and colleges.

Greek Cru

A unique aspect of the culture at American universities is the community of students that

are associated with Greek Life. Greek Life is best described as a "community of students broken

down into fraternities, which typically are made up of men, and sororities which are made up of

women. These social organizations have national charters and are overseen by a Greek Life

office at each campus" ("What to Know Before Joining Greek Life," 2015). Due to the large

numbers of students involved at some universities in the United States, Cru has used this

opportunity to establish another arm of Cru that specifically reaches the Greek Life students.

Two of the interviewees were involved with the Greek Cru branch at their specific campuses.

Greek Cru puts on their own events, has weekly Bible studies, and is present on social media

platforms. In the following section, the author will analyze the frequency and content of the

social media accounts of the Agape and Cru movements investigated in this study, including the

Greek Cru social media accounts at those universities that have branched out to that demographic

of the student population.

Social Media

The interview participants gave an insight into whether social media played a role in the

recruitment process, which looked to answer **RQ 4.** Information from the interviews,

interestingly, placed great value in the use of social media; however, this was not complementary

to the results of the content analysis, which we will attend to in the following section.

An Agape staff member from Birmingham made the point that they focus much of their

public social media on "non-Christians," not advertising explicitly Christian events such as Bible

studies, on public social media pages. Instead, they use private groups, run by student leaders, to

organize Bible studies, outreaches, and evangelism events. This finding relates to the concept of

"pre-evangelism" mentioned previously.

The majority of the interviewees from both Cru and Agape noted that Instagram was the

leading platform used by their movements, with Facebook close behind. Some interviewees

mentioned the social media platform Snap Chat; however, they were not clear on a way that it

could be utilized efficiently. A Cru staff member from Radford University noted that the

Instagram "story" aspect of their page was the most widely viewed part of their social media,

more so than their actual posts. Unfortunately, this study was unable to incorporate the Instagram

"story" aspect into the analysis, as the author was looking back to the fall semester and the

stories are only available for 24 hours.

An Agape staff member from London noted that they had not been very active on social

media. This individual explained that this inactivity was largely down to lack of full-time staff

and an inability to utilize the platforms well. Another Agape staff member made an interesting

point in regard to credibility:

> *If you want credibility, you need to be on these sorts of social media platforms. I*
>
> *wouldn't say it gets us loads of engagements at the moment. I think it might be*
>
> *that there's so much going on Instagram or Facebook that it's easy to get lost in*
>
> *the midst of activity. But if someone comes across you and you don't have an*
>
> *Instagram page or a Facebook page that's like a big warning flag. People like*
>
> *who are these people? Why aren't they on these sorts of things? We're trying to*
>
> *think how to use it better. That's something that you just have to devote lots of*
>
> *time to. Because it becomes like in a way like it can be all consuming, you're*

trying to figure out content to put up and sort of engaging, you want to be

interacting with different accounts, so you want to build up a bit of an audience.

From the previous quote, it seems that a presence on social media is definitely necessary

in terms of credibility;, however, it is apparent that utilizing social media effectively

requires not only a significant amount of time, but also a specific skill set. Now that we

have an understanding of the role that social media plays from the interview participants

perspective, we will now proceed to the content analysis of the Instagram and Facebook

accounts that correlate to the Cru and Agape movements in this study.

Social Media Content Analysis

Alongside the 10 semi-structured interviews with Cru and Agape staff members, the

author analyzed the Facebook and Instagram accounts of the corresponding campuses including

the Cru campuses that have Greek Cru social media accounts. The author looked at the frequency

and content of posts during a 1-month period at the beginning of the fall semester. For the Cru

accounts, the time frame was between August 22, 2019 and September 22, 2019. The time frame

for the Agape social media accounts was slightly later in the season due to the later start date of

British universities. The time frame for the Agape accounts was from September 15 to October

15, 2019. Overall, 17 U.S. Cru Facebook posts were analyzed, along with 32 Instagram posts.

For the English Agape social media, eight Facebook and 13 Instagram posts were analyzed. The

statistics and discussion of the 1-month social media analysis are found on the following pages.

Table 1 – U.S. Cru Social Media

8/22/19 - 9/22/19	Virginia Tech Cru	Virginia Tech Greek Cru	DC Cru	Richmond Cru	Richmond Greek Cru	Radford University Cru
Facebook	13 posts	0 posts	0 Posts	4 posts	N/A	0 posts
Instagram	11 posts	9 posts	0 Posts	7 posts	2 posts	3 posts

Table 2 – England Agape Social Media

9/15/19 - 10/15/19	Agape Anglia Ruskin	Agape Birmingham	Agape London	Agape Oxford
Facebook	5 posts	0 posts	0 posts	3 posts
Instagram	3 posts	8 posts	0 posts	2 posts

As we can see from the frequency of posts during the specific time frame, the activity of both the Cru and Agape social media accounts at the given campuses was varied. It is interesting to note that perhaps the most metropolitan areas of London and Washington, D.C. had in fact the least number of posts. The author would like to note that Agape London had posted sporadically throughout 2019; however, they did not post during the time frame being analyzed. It is evident that the Virginia Tech Cru movement was by far the most active on their social media accounts. Whether this correlates to the size of the movement at Virginia Tech is hard to say. However, their continual activity raises their social presence and the informativeness of their posts leaves no student uninformed as to the events that have been organized and that are upcoming.

The nature of the posts from the social media accounts of Cru and Agape were relatively similar. Most of the posts were informative, posting dates and locations of upcoming events, and advertising discussions or different types of outreaches. For example, a post from Agape Student Life Anglia Ruskin's Facebook page posted on September 20, 2019 read, *"We are cooking dinner for you! Join us tonight at the Crypt: Zion Baptist Church! 6-8pm."* A post from Virginia Tech Cru's Facebook from August 26, 2019 read, *"Heyo Freshman and Sophomores!!! Pancakes 8-9pm tonight and worship 9-10pm at War Memorial Chapel."*

One considerable difference between the two organizations in terms of the content of their posts was how explicitly Christian the content of Cru's posts were. On the other hand, the Agape posts were less explicitly Christian and were more broadly advertising events that at a

first glance, were not explicitly portraying a Christian organization. For example, a post from

Virginia Tech's Facebook page on September 11, 2019 read, *"24 Hour Prayer Starts Today!*

Join us as we pray for friends, family, the world and more." Now the date of this event is an

anniversary of one of the most tragic events in American world history, which helps explains the

call to prayer. However, the invitation is explicitly for those who have faith of some description.

In contrast, an event posted on Agape staff member Anglia Ruskin's Facebook page on

September 25, 2019 read, *"Agape Student Life Discussion Thursday 9/26/2019: Is it okay not to*

be okay? Working through common pressures of uni life." Here we can see that this event

advertisement is not expressing any information that is explicitly Christian and therefore links to

the previously discussed topic of "pre-evangelism."

An aspect of the Instagram posts from Cru campuses that really raised their level of

social presence were video posts from students involved with the ministry, sharing their

experiences of being involved with the Cru community at their campus. The concept of social

presence is defined as "the extent to which it feels as if you are communicating with another

person. It is also described as the perception that communication is personal, friendly and warm"

(Carpentier, Van Hoye, & Weng, 2019). The Instagram video posts from Cru students really

focus in on the concept of social presence as the videos are personable, friendly, and relatable.

Agape have not used this strategy on their social media platforms, and it can be concluded that

the incorporation of such posts could positively impact their level of social presence in their

attempts to recruit students.

Comparing the information from the interviews and the data from the content analysis,

we can see that Instagram was the leading social media platform. What is not comparable

between the interviews and the content analysis is the emphasis of being present on social media

vocalized by the interviewees, and the inconsistency of posts during the period that the content analysis focused on. Whether this discrepancy was due to the lack of resources or inadequate skill sets is left unsaid. However, both Cru and Agape are missing a large opportunity by not being more present on their social media platforms.

Now that the author has given a detailed account of the research effort, the following chapter will provide a discussion of the findings of the research.

Discussion

At the outset of this thesis, the author's focus was on analyzing the recruitment strategies utilized by non-denominational parachurch campus ministries in the United States and England. Throughout the research process, the author was able to obtain in-depth qualitative data using semi-structured interviews with staff members from the campus ministries of Cru and Agape Student Life and glean data through the analysis of the Facebook and Instagram accounts of the corresponding organizations over a specific time period. In this chapter, the author will discuss the main findings from the research in regard to the commonalities and differences between Cru and Agape Student life in terms of their communication choices in their attempt to recruit students.

As outlined in the previous chapter, the analysis of the data was broken down into four main sections. The first three emerged from the interviews through coding and analysis. The first section pertained to the general outreach strategies utilized by the ministries, the second section highlighted the use of interpersonal communication, and the third section spoke to how the ministries operate in their given cultures. Finally, an analysis of the corresponding social media platforms that Cru and Agape utilize was conducted. In this chapter, the author will discuss each section, commenting on aspects that the data has proved to be most important in terms of how the campus ministries could be more effective in their strategic communication attempts to recruit students.

Club, Freshers' Fair, and Evangelism Tools

At the beginning of the recruitment process for both Cru and Agape, the strategies are very similar: tables at the club and freshers' fairs, surveys, contact cards, Soularium, perspective cards and banners, and the use of "Knowing God Personally" booklets. This is largely down to

the fact that Cru and Agape are essentially the same organization, functioning under different

names and in different countries. This explains the use of identical scripts and strategies at the

outset of the academic year.

Win, Build, Send

These outreach strategies are all presented within the foundational framework of "win,

build, send," which is the central mission for Cru globally and is evident among everything that

both ministries do. However, differences are apparent in the ministries' ability to carry out the

"win, build, send" mission. For Cru, the data has proved their success in the "win" and "build"

components of the framework; however, the interviews did not speak to the "send" component

explicitly. For Agape, due to several factors, this reality is not comparable to the success of Cru

in the United States. The reputation of other leading campus ministries makes it difficult for

Agape. Christian Unions are the most recognizable campus ministry in England, resulting in

incoming Christian students gravitating towards the CUs without considering Agape.

Cultural Reality of Outreach Events in England

Lastly, the more developed secular culture in England provides an increasing challenge

for Agape, especially in regard to getting students to attend weekly gatherings and organized

events. The large weekly group meetings that most Cru campuses base their week around is not a

reality for Agape movements in England. Agape's focus in on advertising gatherings and events

that promote the asking of big questions that stimulate thought and conversation for both the

Christian and the non-Christian that will hopefully lead to greater spiritual content. This is

evident in events such as "Hub in the Pub" or notable campaigns such as "Women Speak Out."

The results of these events are of debatable success. Agape needs to be incredibly strategic when

it comes to creating and planning these events. The diversity of the spiritual backgrounds among

most English university students must be taken into consideration. Given that Agape is

consistently trying to appeal to a much more secular audience and to those with a wider range of

faith backgrounds, they should reconsider holding events in places like pubs.

Social Penetration Theory

The prevalence of interpersonal communication as a main strategy was very apparent

among both Cru and Agape movements. Both campus ministries try to recruit students by first

entering into relationships through the club and freshers' fairs, and then through the "follow-up"

message and invitation to meet up one-on-one for coffee or lunch. This process provides a setting

where the students can become more comfortable with a staff member and slowly share more

personal information about themselves with the hope that spiritual beliefs will eventually be

disclosed. Unknowingly, both ministries are following the basics tenants of social penetration

theory (SPT). SPT uses the metaphor of an onion to explain that relationships develop as we peel

back layers when we reveal information about ourselves (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Perhaps

training in SPT in these ministries would assist staff members in making deeper interpersonal

connections.

Importance of Interpersonal Communication

Both ministries placed interpersonal communication as a leading priority in the

recruitment process. However, the data shows that it is in fact of more importance for Agape

than for Cru. This is not to say that Cru values this form of communication less than Agape;

however, due to factors already discussed, namely reputation and culture, Agape relies on

interpersonal relationships more so than Cru. This is necessary for Agape given their situation;

however, caution must be taken regarding the level of dependence on their interpersonal

connectedness. A finding from the interviews revealed that in some cases, student leaders or staff

members were overly connected to students, which resulted in students losing connection to the ministry once the staff member or student moved on.

Conversational Texting

Another finding from the interviews directly related to interpersonal communication that would be useful for both Cru and Agape movements is that of "conversational texting." In the "follow-up" stage of the recruitment process, after contacts from the freshers' and club fairs have been selected and organized, instead of sending a mass text message or email to the generated contacts, the student or staff member from the ministry would embark on a conversation with the contact, which according to the interviewee results in *"a better response rate."* This form of communication is far more personable and considerably less *"spammy"* than sending a lengthy text message or email with an overwhelming amount of information that could perhaps put off potential recruits.

Attitude of Apathy

In terms of culture, Cru and Agape have different challenges that they must face in the recruitment of students. In England, the more prevalent secular culture is by far the biggest roadblock. From the interviews, the awareness, acceptance, and implementation of the concept of "pre-evangelism" will benefit Agape greatly. The data demonstrates that Agape is implementing this strategy to a certain degree already; however, a greater focus on this concept in the planning and organization of events could potentially help bridge the gap between front-end interest and deeper spiritual conversations and relationships. The attitude of apathy that was common among interviewees from Agape is another challenge that is directly related to the secular culture in England. It is interesting that this attitude did not arise out of any of the interviews with Cru staff

members and further illustrates the challenge that Agape faces that the Cru movements analyzed in the United States cannot relate to.

Nominal Christianity

With the movements of Cru analyzed in the United States, the aspect of nominal or cultural Christianity is the biggest issue in terms of culture. The data has shown that a large portion of students that become involved with Cru have been exposed to Christianity in some form. The challenge that Cru faces is how to break down the pre-conceived idea of Christianity that students might bring to college with them from their upbringing and present the Christian message to them in a way that has never impacted them before. However, Cru does use the historical demographic of the Bible Belt to its advantage, especially during the beginning of the academic year when handing out surveys. From the interviews, Cru is intentionally seeking out incoming students that have some background in the faith with the hope that they will become involved with the movement.

Lack of Social Presence

Lastly, regarding the use of Facebook and Instagram by the campus ministries being analyzed, it can be concluded that apart from one Cru campus, the frequency of posting on both platforms by both Cru and Agape is minimal and inconsistent. It is shocking that perhaps the most densely populated areas posted the least in comparison to the other campuses analyzed in this study. Both Cru and Agape are missing a huge opportunity by not being more active on Facebook and Instagram. These platforms are where the majority of the university and college age generation are spending their time and by not increasing their social presence on these platforms, they are missing a major opportunity to engage students both on a mass scale and interpersonally. The use of personal videos from students sharing their experience being

involved with Cru or Agape is another strategy that could be utilized to communicate that friendly, warm, and relatable message that is associated with social presence.

In summary, Cru and Agape have many similarities and differences in their communication strategies to recruit students. From this study, the author hopes that campus ministries can read the findings of the research and consider the conclusions drawn from the data when moving forward in their attempts to strategically carry out their mission. The hope of this thesis is that campus ministries will take a look at the topics of outreach and evangelism, interpersonal communication, culture, and use of social media, and use them efficiently to create an opportunity for college and university age students to be transformed by the Christian message.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is of course not without its limitations. Firstly, the demographic of the campus ministries studied is of a different make-up. London and Birmingham are the two largest cities in England and so the metropolitan culture of these cities is not comparable to the college towns of Virginia Tech and Radford University. Having said this, Oxford and Cambridge are notable university towns; however, Oxford and Cambridge are the equivalent of the top Ivy League schools in the United States, and therefore, the type of student that attends those universities may be different than those who attend public schools such as Radford or Virginia Tech. The only Cru campus that was comparable to London and Birmingham was that of Washington, D.C. Cru.

Secondly, the fact that Agape and Cru are the same corporate organization provides explanation for a lot of the similarities in terms of communication used in the recruitment process. The differing reputation of Cru and Agape is another limitation of the study. The fact that Cru is a widely known campus ministry in the United States and that Agape is not as well-

known in England is a definite drawback. Also, the sample size of the interviews may not have given a true representation of the recruitment strategies utilized by Cru and Agape.

Lastly, the social media content analysis only took into consideration posts from a 1-month period and did not incorporate Facebook or Instagram stories that are a widely used aspect of the social media platforms.

Future Research

In light of the limitations of this study, the shortcomings provide a brilliant opportunity to take this research and build upon it. Future research could analyze campus ministries not necessarily under the same corporate umbrella and expand the research to include campus ministries of similar size, reputation, and demographic. For example, with more time and resources, future studies could include the campus ministries of the Christian Union in England and Chi Alpha or Young Life in the United States. An expansion in the number of campus ministries analyzed would provide more depth and potential differences in the communication strategies used in the recruitment of students.

Along with an increase in the number of campus ministries analyzed between the two nations, a social media analysis of a longitudinal nature would provide a better insight as to how campus ministries are using this strategy. This study analyzed the frequency of posts during a 1-month period. Future research could analyze the content and frequency of posts over an entire semester or academic year and include the "story" aspect of social media.

In terms of methods, an ethnographic methodology would be of great benefit. If the resources were available, a researcher could spend a period of time observing the internal operations of campus ministries in England and the United States. This would provide data that

would provide insight into the operating of the ministries at a grassroots level that no other

method could achieve.

References

Agapé. (n.d.). Our history. Retrieved April 6, 2020, from

      http://www.agape.org.uk/About/History.aspx

Alger, J. R. (2018). Faith and learning: The role of religion in higher education. Retrieved from

      https://www.stetson.edu/law/conferences/highered/archive/2008/Faith_and_Learning.pdf

Altman, I., & Taylor, D. A. (1973). Social penetration: The development of interpersonal

      relationships. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Apathy. (2020, March 25). Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apathy

Brown, C. G. (2009). The death of Christian Britain: Understanding secularisation, 1800–2000

      (2nd ed). London: Routledge.

Cady, L. (2004). Categorical imperatives: Religion, spirituality, and the secular in American life.

      American Journal of Theology & Philosophy, 25(2), 140-156.

Carpentier, M., Hoye, G. V., Stockman, S., Schollaert, E., Theemsche, B. V., & Jacobs, G.

      (2017). Recruiting nurses through social media: Effects on employer brand and

      attractiveness. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *73*(11), 2696-2708. doi:10.1111/jan.13336

Chismar, J. (2003, July 21). Bill Bright Campus Crusade for Christ founder, dead at 81.

      Retrieved from https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/bill-bright-campus-

      crusade-for-christ-founder-dead-at-81-1210561.html

Communities: Cru. (n.d.). Retrieved April 6, 2020, from

      https://www.cru.org/us/en/communities.html

Delehanty, J., Edgell, P., & Stewart, E. (2019). Christian America? Secularized evangelical

      discourse and the boundaries of national belonging. *Social Forces, 97*(3), 1283-1306.

Dochuk, D. (2011). *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt: Plain-folk religion, grassroots politics, and the rise of evangelical conservatism*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

Evangelism. (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/evangelism.

Gallagher, S., & Tierney, W. (2013). Religiousness/Religiosity. *Encyclopedia of Behavioral Medicine*. New York, NY: Springer.

Grounded theory. (n.d.). *Encyclopedia of research design*. doi:10.4135/9781412961288.n169

Guest, M. (2013). *Christianity and the university experience: Understanding student faith.* London: Bloomsbury.

History - Founding. (n.d.). Retrieved April 13, 2020, from

https://www.ymca.net/history/founding.html

History of Cru: Cru. (n.d.). Retrieved April 13, 2020, from

https://www.cru.org/us/en/about/what-we-do/milestones.html

History - 1800 - 1860s. (n.d.). Retrieved April 13, 2020, from

https://www.ymca.net/history/1800-1860s.html

Hoye, G. V., & Lievens, F. (2005). Recruitment-related information sources and organizational attractiveness: Can something be done about negative publicity? *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, *13*(3), 179-187. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2389.2005.00313.x

In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace. (2019, October 17). Retrieved from https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/

InterVarsity and IFES History. (n.d). Retrieved from https://intervarsity.org/about-us/intervarsity-and-ifes-history

Mead, S. (1988). From coercion to persuasion: Another look at the rise of religious liberty and

the emergence of denominationalism. *Church History, 57*, 68-88.

Our Story. (n.d.). Retrieved April 6, 2020, from https://www.uccf.org.uk/about/our-story.htm

Perry, E. M., & Armstrong, E. A. (2007). Evangelicals on campus.

Religion. (n.d.). Retrieved April 7, 2020, from https://bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-

social-attitudes-36/religion.aspx

Religions - Christianity: Christianity in Britain. (2011, April 27). Retrieved April 11, 2020, from

https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/history/uk_1.shtml

Religion in America: U.S. religious data, demographics and statistics. (2015, May 11). Retrieved

April 7, 2020, from https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/

Schmalzbauer, J. (2013). Campus religious life in America: Revitalization and renewal. *Society*,

50(2), 115-131. doi:10.1007/s12115-013-9640-6

Shockley, D. G., & Thurber, L. N. (1995). Selected events in U.S. campus ministry history.

Journal of Ecumenical Studies, *32*(4), 655.

Short, J., Christie, B., & Williams, E. (1997). *The social psychology of telecommunications*. Ann

Arbor, MI: UMI. doi:10.1016/0308-5961(77)90016-7

The Constitution. (n.d.). Retrieved April 9, 2020, from https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-

white-house/the-constitution/

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (1998, July 20). Anglican Evangelical. Retrieved April

11, 2020, from https://www.britannica.com/topic/Anglican-Evangelical

The History of SCM. (n.d.). Retrieved April 6, 2020, from https://www.movement.org.uk/about-

us/history

Van De Poll, E. (2018). Nominal Christianity and contemporary Europe. *Vista*, (31). Retrieved

    from https://www.europeanema.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/vista-issue-

    31.pdf

Voas, D., & Crockett, A. (2005). Religion in Britain: Neither believing nor belonging.

    Sociology,39(1), 11-28. doi:10.1177/0038038505048998

Warwick Montgomery, J. (2016). Christian concern UK: Evangelicals contra irreligion in an

    increasingly secular Britain. *Evangelical Quarterly*, *88*(1), 89-95.

What to Know Before Joining Greek Life. (2015). Retrieved from

    https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2015/09/17/what-to-ask-before-

    joining-greek-life

Woodhead, L. (2017). The rise of 'no religion' in Britain: The emergence of a new cultural

    majority. *British Academy Lectures, 2015-16*.

    doi:10.5871/bacad/9780197266045.003.0011

Wright, P. J. (2008). Predicting reaction to a message to ministry: An audience analysis. *Journal

    for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 47(1), 63-81.

Young, M. C. (2017). Welcome, engage, connect, send: The revolving door of campus ministry.

    Anglican Theological Review, 99(1), 71-79.

Appendix

<u>Interview Questions</u>

1. What are the main strategies used for the recruitment of students?

    a. Does social media play an important role in this process?

    b. Does your organization have "scripts" you ask students or campus ministers to use?

2. Do you emphasize evangelizing in your organization? If so, how?

3. On average, do students have a religious background before becoming

    associated with your organization? How do you determine this?

4. How does interpersonal communication affect the recruitment of students?

5. Could you share with me an experience when an outreach effort did not go as planned?

6. Please describe a recruitment event you would classify as successful.

<u>Soularium</u>

Perspective Cards

Perspective Banners

Knowing God Personally Booklet