THESIS
The Question of Violence in New Religious Movements: A Meta-Analysis of Aggregates

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Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies of the University of Ottawa in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Religious Studies

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Ottawa, Ontario

2017

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Abstract

This thesis provides a systematic comparison and analysis on violent and non-violent new religious movements. The purpose of using a meta-analysis as the methodological tool for this research project is that it offers a systematic presentation and synthesis of the characteristics and findings from academic studies that exist on each new religious movement. Of importance is that each study, from the fields of sociology, social psychology and religious studies offers differing truths about each of the NRMs as they each only examine certain characteristics. As these disciplines have a high level of theories, this project utilizes a “measure driven” approach, “in which iterative searches and new computerized search techniques are used to increase the range of publications found (and thus the range of possible analyses) and to traverse time and disciplinary boundaries” (Roelfs et al 2013: 75). This analysis pools together all existing facts to provide a larger estimate of the "unknown common truths" about each movement and provide a fuller picture of the movements and their leaders. By combining studies of new religious movements that are prone to violence with studies of new religious movements that remain peaceful, this meta-analysis will increase the sample size and the power to study effects that may lead to the answer: why do some new religious movements become violent.

The general consensus among the research literature has distilled three salient aggregates associated with new religious groups that have become violent: a) each group possessed an apocalyptic worldview; b) each group maintained an organizational structure predicated on charismatic leadership and authority whereby a potent connection between the charismatic leader and devotee was forged; and c) each group
established firm social boundaries demarcating the separation between the group and the wider social milieu resulting in social isolation. However, though these attributes were present in and common to all the groups that became violent, they continue to remain insufficient and fail to adequately illustrate why certain new religions become violent. The most notable cases of NRMs that have been mobilized to violence that are analyzed include: the Peoples' Temple, The Order of the Solar Temple, Aum Shinrikyo, the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments, the Branch Davidians, Rajneeshpuaram, The Church of the Lamb of God, Heaven's Gate and Scientology. These religious movements are compared and analyzed in relation to groups that have not become violent: the early Unification Church, Sikh Dharma/3HO, Chen Tao, Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT), and Concerned Christians. By analyzing fourteen individual movements that demonstrate the three central aggregates found specifically in violent movements, hopefully this meta-analysis has overcome the problem of small sample sizes, in order to better detect internal and external effects that can explain why some NRMs become violent.
Acknowledgements

This thesis would not exist if not for the persistence and support of Ruby Ramji, Peter Beyer and Mavis Fenn. Thank you.
Chapter 1

Introduction and Methodological Approach

Defining the Problem

New religious movements (NRMs) have surfaced through American history and became prominent in the 1960s, but did not become a centre of public attention until the murder-suicides at Jonestown took place. New religious movements are based on charismatic authority: what the leader says is “the source of authority” for the group (McGuire 1997: 136). New religious movements may claim to be completely new, in terms of belief and practice, while others claim to be much older than the historical religions of the world. What makes them “new” is that they characteristically are formed from a plurality of prevailing cultural values. NRMs put forward alternate worldviews and practices: they stress “real social change will emerge through their movement by the transformation of individuals” (McGuire 1997: 182). Their syncretic hybrid nature includes new interpretations of old traditions, and aim to transform society. In general, new religious movements can be grouped into five subsets: 1) groups that are connected to Asian traditions, including worldviews and devotional practices such as meditation; 2) groups that are related to the American human potential movement; 3) groups that synthesis elements of past western esoteric traditions such as Theosophy and alternative medicines; 4) groups that believe salvation comes from extraterrestrial contact; and 5) movements that revive occult traditions. Most new religions fit into more than one subgroup: they are products of an “ongoing synthesis of different religious traditions and elements of the religious and the secular worlds” (Cowan and Bromley 2015: 4). New religious movements tend to require unlimited allegiance and loyalty.
These social movements have high levels of commitment, which requires a form of sacrifice on the part of the individual: this sacrifice can come in the form of money, time, severance of family ties, relinquishing personal space and a commitment to daily ritual practices such as celibacy, vegetarianism or communal living. Members are resocialized “into a new identity consistent with the group’s beliefs and values” (McGuire 1997: 84). These individual sacrifices, made to the group, create mental and physical boundaries between the group members and the outside world (generating a “we” versus “them” viewpoint), where the in-group is deemed to be “good or superior and outside is evil or degraded” (McGuire 1997: 84).

Numerous studies have endeavoured to unravel the puzzling complexities behind new religious movements that erupt in violence. This foundational research has invariably had to address the most persistent of questions - why do certain new religious movements become violent while others do not? Or to frame the question somewhat differently, under what conditions do new religious movements become violent? Although various aggregates have been identified in different academic fields of studies (sociological studies, social psychology and religious studies), they have not been examined and analyzed in a larger and more meaningful way. This thesis will examine the aggregates of the more popular new religious movements, through a systematic comparison of the literature available, to determine what factors are missing from those that don't become violent, to better understand the reasons why some become violent.

The general consensus among the research literature has distilled three salient aggregates associated with new religious groups that have become violent: a) each group possessed an apocalyptic worldview; b) each group maintained an organizational
structure predicated on charismatic leadership and authority whereby a potent connection between the charismatic leader and devotee was forged; and c) each group established firm social boundaries demarcating the separation between the group and the wider social milieu resulting in social isolation. However, though these attributes were present in and common to all the groups that became violent, they continue to remain insufficient and fail to adequately illustrate why certain new religions become violent. Why are these characteristics deemed insufficient by scholars? The dominant critical observation points to other new religious movements that satisfy the above cluster of aggregates but nevertheless remain non-violent. The problem with this critical observation - it only offers a cursory understanding of those aggregates at a generalized level of analysis, or it focuses on one or two aggregates within other NRMs to discredit the whole. This generalized level of abstraction presents contradictory findings and outcomes, i.e., some NRMs that meet the above criteria become violent while others do not. However, two critical strategies are needed to flesh out the attendant nuances within the three aggregates.

Methodological Approach

This thesis will provide a systematic comparison and analysis on violent and non-violent new religious movements on the basis of the literature research that has been carried out on them. The purpose of using a meta-analysis as the methodological tool for this research project is that it offers a systematic presentation and synthesis of the characteristics and findings from academic studies that exist on each new religious movement. Of importance is that each study, from the fields of sociology (sociology providing the largest field of study), social psychology and religious studies offers
differing truths about each of the NRMAs as they each only examine certain characteristics. As these disciplines have a high level of theories, this project utilizes a “measure driven” approach, “in which iterative searches and new computerized search techniques are used to increase the range of publications found (and thus the range of possible analyses) and to traverse time and disciplinary boundaries” (Roelfs et al 2013: 75). An iterative search process is used in order to exhaust the literature of the multiple sub-fields, which includes scrutinizing bibliographies, citation articles, news articles, and group literature, thereby creating a “search wave”. Therefore a manual search is also included with the database search. The search waves are then repeated until no further sources emerge. This type of methodology allows for the capture of concepts that may have not been initially searched for through a guided literature search. Thus, the measure-driven approach promotes “eligibility criteria” that is “organically developed” (Roelfs et al 2013: 77). This analysis pools together all existing facts to provide a larger estimate of the "unknown common truths" about each movement and provide a fuller picture of the movements and their leaders. The meta-analysis contrasts results from different studies in order to identify patterns among the studies, as well as sources of disagreement amongst them. Databases searched include PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, Sociological Abstracts, Academic E-Book Collection, JSTOR, Academic Search Ultimate, Google Scholar, MLA International Bibliography, Taylor & Francis and Sage Journals Online. The types of literature used as a basis of comparison for each group includes both primary and secondary sources, well researched newspaper and media reports, and in some instances memoirs are consulted to provide in-depth information
about the beliefs and actions taking place in some of the new religions that are more isolated and secretive about their rituals.

A meta-analysis is the best method to apply in this situation as it is impossible to research all the movements that have existed and do currently exist: most of the key movements have all disappeared, but there has been a lot of research conducted on them to provide an authoritative analysis. The meta-analysis synthesizes the various theoretical studies, in the hopes of producing a larger portrait of the relationship between the formation of new religions and their mobilization toward self violence, interpersonal violence and collective violence. The existing published research remains limited and exclusionary, so the meta-analysis broadens the search, and examines all available studies, including new variables that have not been taken into account in previous models, so that a more particular outcome size can be calculated, and future actions can perhaps be teased out. By combining studies of new religious movements that are prone to violence with studies of new religious movements that remain peaceful, this meta-analysis will increase the sample size and the power to study effects that may lead to the answer: why do some new religious movements become violent.

The selection criteria of new religious movements are based on those that have reached a high level of success in recruitment, retention and public notoriety. Although there are many review articles that have been written on new religious movements, this quantitative analysis combines those articles, merging the available information in order to generate an integrated result. The most notable cases of NRM.s that have been mobilized to violence that are analyzed include: the Peoples' Temple, The Order of the Solar Temple, Aum Shinrikyo, the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten
Commandments, the Branch Davidians, Rajneeshpuaram, The Church of the Lamb of God, Heaven's Gate and Scientology. These religious movements are compared and analyzed in relation to groups that have not become violent: the early Unification Church, Sikh Dharma/3HO, Chen Tao, Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT), and Concerned Christians. By analyzing fourteen individual movements that demonstrate the three central aggregates found specifically in violent movements, hopefully this meta-analysis has overcome the problem of small sample sizes, in order to better detect internal and external effects that can explain why some NRMs become violent. The goal of the meta-analysis is to give representation to the idiographic particularities of each movement but there is also a desire to generate a nomothetic generalization based on that analysis. Although some groups provide more in-depth descriptions regarding their origins and developments, unfortunately this is not true of all the groups researched - the reason for this is because some of that information is just unavailable. What makes each movement integral to this research project is the fact that they all include the three salient aggregates associated with groups that became violent, that have already been identified in previous studies.

Furthermore, in order to better understand why some NRMs become violent, it is necessary to understand the root cause of instability in such groups. Thus, Weber's explanation of charisma/charismatic authority and its role in social movement violence is included in the literature analysis. This meta-analysis also examines stable and unstable self-esteem, narcissism and membership in collective movements, in order to analyze such groups to better understand what causes violence to happen. For the purpose of this research, the following definition of “violence” will be used: according to
the World Health Organization, violence is defined as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation” (Krug 2002: 6) This definition includes three sub-types of violence: self-inflicted; interpersonal; and, collective. The W.H.O. definition for “collective violence” is defined as the “instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group…against another group or set of individuals, in order to achieve political, economic or social objectives” (Krug 2002: 6). In this case, religious movements can be seen as social objectives, as they are in themselves social movements.

Findings

This meta-analysis of new religious movements and religious violence found at least ten attributes that are prevalent in violent movements, which include the three aggregates that have already been identified. These aggregates are: 1) a dramatic ideology of apocalypticism (often with imminent denouement), 2) charismatic leadership, which has formed strong bonds between followers and the charismatic leader, that demands 3) absolute authority over members, 4) isolationism or encapsulation, 5) strict rules of commitment by the leader, 6) supernatural beliefs, 7) new religion/teachings, 8) unstable self-esteem, 9) paranoia and 10) external suppression. These attributes, as provided in chapters four and five of this thesis, those regarding apocalyptic ideologies with impending denouements, strict rules of commitment to the group by the charismatic leader, paranoia and unstable self-esteem on the part of the leader and extreme isolationism or encapsulation were substantially
more associated with violent NRMs than with nonviolent movements. Although some leaders became ill in groups that became violent, this cannot be considered a significant factor as the same aggregate existed in some of the non-violent NRMs (such as the Church Universal and Triumphant). Furthermore, the analysis of the literature points to the fact that: narcissism/grandiosity and paranoia of the leader (usually provoked by suppressing pressures from the media, anti-cult groups, family, and police investigations); absolute authority of the leader; divine missions of the leader (which the members in the collective devoted themselves to bring about), a sense of apocalyptic urgency and suppressive government and police interactions towards the new religious movements play an essential role in the rise of violence amongst these groups. This thesis summarized and integrated results from a number of studies in order to analyze the differences between NRMs and illustrates the differences through summary tables that outline the endogenous and exogenous factors of each group. The complex theoretical models of Galanter, and Hall and Schuyler illustrate that further analysis and the development of more complex models and typologies are required to determine if a new religious group may become violent. These models have to focus on the complex interactions between external pressures and internal features.

Summary of the Literature

Much of the research literature studying new religious movements and violence comes from a sociological perspective. Since the nature of charisma is so central to the research on 'cultic' violence it is not surprising that Max Weber customarily serves as an entry point into the discourse on the nature of charisma. Weber defined charisma as a "certain quality of an individual personality, by virtue of which he is set apart from
ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities" (1964: 358-359). Though this conceptualization characterizes charisma as a facet of one’s personality it is important (sociologically) to recognize that charismatic authority is contingent upon those who are willing to acknowledge it as such. At its core, it is a social interaction dependent on group recognition and only when recognition has been granted can authority be conferred to the charismatic individual. Framed in this context, charismatic authority is not only socially constructed but also socially dynamic; and, a formidable symbiotic bond between leader and devotee. However, the maintenance of charismatic authority is delicate matter. The work of Dawson (in Bromley and Melton 2002), Palmer (1988), Latkin (1992), Mayer (1999) and Hall, Schuyler and Trinh (2000) can flesh this out.

Intrinsically, Weber’s formulation of charisma is rooted in unstable relationships. Why? Because it lacks the institutional supports of rational-legal authority. This precarious relationship has implications for the general well being, or health of the group. To put it another way, the charismatic relationship between the leader and group can have a positive or negative impact on group esteem. If the charismatic authority possesses a narcissistic personality (read unwell) then there is a greater likelihood of violence. Research in social psychology has found a link between narcissism and aggression. This is not to say that all charismatic leaders are narcissists but it is feasible to postulate that those groups that became violent were governed by a narcissistic individual. This may also help explain why groups that satisfy the "cluster of attributes" don’t become violent. The group is/was not narcissistic.
Anthony and Robbins (in Wright 1995) had already fashioned a framework based on endogenous and exogenous factors related to 'cultic' violence. Hall and Schuyler developed it further by specifying the exogenous factors at work and applied it to specific groups. In an effort to bring clarity to the research field, Hall and Schuyler (in Bromley 1998) have designed a theoretical model, bringing into relief the external pressures directed toward those new religious movements that became violent. They argue that an apocalyptic worldview and intense group solidarity is not enough to explain extreme violence. Instead violence ensues when there is an escalation of social confrontation between the apocalyptic movement and the "ideological proponents of an established social order, who seek to control 'cults' through loosely institutionalized, emergent oppositional alliances" (Hall and Schuyler in Bromley 1998: 142; Hall, Schuyler and Trinh 2000: 12). The social order works to destabilize the group and so a legitimate concern arises as to how the group can function on its own terms. This is when extreme violence rises up: as an act of aggression directed towards critics, and as a way to impose self-determination with the collective. Therefore violence can result if the interaction, between the collective and oppositional groups, reaches a critical point in the attempt to subvert the group’s function. These oppositional alliances consist of apostates and concerned relatives, media outlets which characterize cults in terms of moral deviance, and governments which act as the guardians of cultural legitimacy by calling into question that which is deemed socially and culturally dangerous. Hall and Schuyler admit that their model is not binding in all situations and contexts, for example, Heaven’s Gate. Their act of ritual suicide poses a problem to the Hall and Schuyler model, as their act of “violence” was not directed outward. There was no external
conflict or ongoing suppression. Thus, there continues to be current problems with the literature on new religious movements that become violent that need to be further analyzed.

Firstly, the three features, apocalyptic worldview, charismatic leadership and isolationism, have been found to exist when NRMs become violent. Yet at the same time, scholars say these characteristics are not indicative of violence as they can also be found within NRMs that do not become violent. The looming question is why? There is not enough in-depth analysis to say that the groups are necessarily going to become violent - a finer analysis needs to be made to understand how the specifics exist within both violent and non-violent groups to see deeper variations. This does not imply that the analysis is wrong, but that finer features should exist to differentiate between the groups that have become violent in comparison to those that do not.

Secondly, the nine core new religious groups that have been analyzed for violence are often lumped together - even though they meet this criteria, there are variations between them. We need to separate groups that commit suicide (self-directed), commit interpersonal violence (between the group and member) and groups that commit homicide. It’s impossible to say they “all” have the same factors yet the literature has dumped them all into the same pool: they must be separated in order to truly understand these groups. Even though the criteria are met, the differences must be better evaluated.

Lastly, and perhaps the most damning critique related to this cluster of attributes stems from the existence of new religious movements that bear these aggregates but refrain from engaging in violent behaviour. Therefore, NRMs that meet the three
conditions, but are not violent in nature, need to be compared to the groups that exist within the continuum of violence, to really see if they meet the criteria at a more refined level of analysis. What makes the difference?

Groups to be examined that meet the criteria and are violent consist of: Jonestown/The Peoples’ Temple, the Order of the Solar Temple, Aum Shinrikyo, Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God, the Branch Davidians Rajneeshpuram, The Church of the Lamb of God, Heaven's Gate and Scientology. The reason these specific groups have been chosen for review and systematic analysis is because, even though some may no longer exist, they are representative of all NRMs that have mobilized towards violence, as defined in this thesis. There is also sufficient literature on these groups to conduct a high quality summary and analysis in order to quantitatively yield significant results.

Groups to be examined that meet the criteria that are non-violent include: early Unification Church, Sikh Dharma/3HO, Chen Tao, Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT), and Concerned Christians. These new religions were chosen for review and analysis specifically because they are well known and demonstrate the three aggregates that are used to explain the eruption of violence. The literature available on them makes them creditable contenders for systematic comparison. I posit that very definite factors must exist within such groups that construct the way these groups react to both internal and external factors that eventually produce violent actions. Violence is an emergent variable that reflects a group’s collective ideology and resources. Drawing from the various theoretical models that have been postulated, a meta-analysis will systematically synthesize a wider range of factors that can lead to violent behaviour in
order to see if there are correlations amongst them. The research question will address both endogenous and exogenous factors that could explain why some groups become violent while others remain peaceful. It is hypothesized that certain factors will be strongly associated with subsequent violent behaviour. The problem that has prompted this analysis is based on the fact that current literature has not taken into consideration a multitude of factors that may explain the rise of violence in certain new religions. This research will hopefully fill that gap in the research. Since collective groups are complex, it cannot be assumed that there will be a direct correlation that will be drawn between variables and violent behaviour. Yet it is important to evaluate which variables can be found to exist in new religions and how they affect group ideologies, expectations and behaviours. My approach to the problems stated above will utilize social movement theory, social identity formation and examine the role of transformational leadership as well as the role of narcissism within the leader. Perhaps a focus on the way a social movement is created and mobilizes itself, along with better understanding the role of narcissism within a charismatic leader, may add extra layers of understanding when determining if a new religion will become violent. This approach will hopefully redress the missing analysis thus far regarding new religions that become violent.

**Structure of Argument**

The following chapters will provide a meta-analysis utilizing a measure-driven approach to the literature on new religious movements that have become violent and those that have remained peaceful, as they are an integral part of the analysis. I hypothesize that very definite factors must exist within such groups that construct the
way these groups react to both internal and external factors that eventually produce
violent actions.

Chapter One defines the problem of understanding which new religious
movements become violent. It provides previous research done in the field and
provides a synopsis of utilizing a meta-data analysis of aggregates in order to better
hypothesize what elements are necessary to exist within a new movement, for it to
become violent.

Chapter Two provides an overview of the way new religious movements function
as social movements. Employing social movement theory, the chapter focuses on three
social forms of groups: their ideology, their resources and their mobilization towards
collective violence.

Chapter Three examines how individuals come to identity with social groups. It
scrutinizes the process of depersonalization and the way it functions in members to
socially identify with the group. The chapter then inspects the role of external threats to
a group to help understand how violence can possibly arise. It then explores how the
existence of external threats to a group can cause in-group identity to become
uncertain, and sometimes volatile. Next, it presents the concept of self-esteem, both for
the group and the group leader, and how it functions when self-esteem is inflated,
artificially high and unstable, and how this quality of self-esteem can account for
violence. Additionally, the chapter examines the relationship between narcissism and
aggression, as charismatic leaders are shown to be narcissistic. The chapter wraps up
by illustrating the role charisma plays in new religious movement leadership: it provides
an explanation as to why, through a leader’s vision and ideology, they are able to get
followers to obey them. Furthermore, it clarifies how and why these followers are willing to change their values, beliefs and attitudes in order to bring about the divine mission of the charismatic leader.

Chapter Four provides historical case studies of nine new religious movements that clearly illustrated the three operative endogenous preconditions necessary for violence to take place: an intense connection between the charismatic leader and group members; social withdrawal and encapsulation; and, a strong apocalyptic belief system. Each case study provides a summary of charisma in the leader, ideology of the leader and group, and focuses directly on exogenous factors that elevated tensions between the group and its social milieu. The external factors examined include: media portrayals of the collective; the actions of disenfranchised apostates; the role played by anti-cult organizations; as well as the political and legal systems that saw these groups as harmful and deviant and acted to bring about their demise. Finally, the chapter illustrates how the issue of violence can be seen differently in groups that commit violence solely within the group in relation to groups that included violent actions to members and the external world. This examination will hopefully highlight why Heaven’s Gate should not be lumped into the group of “violent NRMs” by researchers.

Chapter Five provides illustrative case studies for five new religious movements that demonstrate the existence of the three factors that exist for violence to arise – charismatic leadership, isolationism and an apocalyptic worldview – as well as the workings of the aforementioned theoretical considerations, and yet never display any signs of violence. Groups examined in the chapter include: early Unification Church, Sikh Dharma/Happy, Healthy, Holy (3HO), Chen Tao, the Church Universal and
Triumphant (CUT) and the Concerned Christians. The historical case studies of each of these groups provides an overview of the charisma the leaders exhibited in each of the collectives, the ideologies of the leaders that were then taken on by their followers, whether or not the ideologies espoused apocalyptic and millennial beliefs, and how the collectives unravelled. They also, where provided, include exogenous factors that impacted the collective mindset.
Chapter 2

New Religious Movements as Social Movements

In order to create a more comprehensive model on new religious movements that become violent, a larger variation of characteristics and features of NRMs are required. Sociologically, new religious movements are social movements. Utilizing social movement theory, I will focus on the three social forms of these religious groups: examining their ideology, resources (which take into account social mobilization, perceptions of threat and the umwelt: how socially encapsulated people react to threats from out-groups) and mobilization towards collective violence. This literature will provide the components, features and elements by which to compare them to non-violent religious groups.

A further set of categories can be extrapolated from social identity theory to better understand how a group mobilizes itself from non-violence to collective violence. Social identity theory examines the way in which individuals identify with a group. Literature on social identity formation examines group values and practices, the moral superiority of group membership and out-grouping. Self-esteem and group esteem are also important factors that can impact leadership style. Transformational leadership mobilizes collective groups. If self-esteem (and by extension group esteem) is high yet unstable, leadership can mobilize from non-violence to violence. I call this the Janus Impulse. What do I mean? It is best to begin with the question: why do groups that begin and develop non-violently cross the threshold into violence? I believe part of the answer can be found in the roots of narcissism and by beginning with the assumption that many of the charismatic leaders who found NRMs are narcissists. This does not
mean that all leaders who are narcissists will engage in violence (nor is narcissism necessarily a bad trait) but those that possess a particular quality of narcissism attenuated to high but unstable self-esteem are more likely to engage in aggressive behaviour. The grandiose self-impression of the leader needs to be constantly maintained. So, initial group successes (the visible positive) can bolster or sustain that self-impression but it constantly needs re-affirmation due to the instability of that self-impression. The danger with this impulse is that it can also manifest (as it is somewhat latent but never fully) as a darker impulse with negative consequences. Indicators of the darker impulse can be found in certain practices that point to dominance and control within groups. Do these practices increase in frequency over time? Are there elements of deception on the part of the leadership? Is there a shift, or emphasis on beliefs that may have been less salient (perhaps apocalyptic beliefs) that bubble to the surface? Is there an increased emphasis or preoccupation with outsiders and those that are perceived to be a threat to the group? I believe that this impulse may account for some of the contradictory tendencies found within certain NRMs and may be a mitigating factor leading to aggressive, violent behaviour.

By researching NRMs as social movements, and incorporating social identity theory as a vital element in understanding how a group mobilizes itself, this analysis will begin at a higher level of abstraction about social movements so that it will provide a larger set of characteristics in which to examine NRMs that have become violent. By examining the range of factors that exist in social movements, these features will amplify the variations that exist within those features. An examination of both new religious movements that engage in violence in relation to those that do not will help us
highlight the influence of certain particular factors that intersect within communities that contribute to the mobilization of violence.

Social Movements: Ideology, Resources and Mobilization

A social movement functions inside a social space that only has room for a limited number of participants. Within such a movement, individuals struggle for attention (Marwell and Oliver 1993). At the center of a highly mobilized social movement is a collective upheaval (Durkheim 1912/1995). New religious movements are social movements. Within the movement, there is a shared spotlight of awareness. Participants typically perform stereotypical actions: a religious movement will usually have particular chants, prayers or gestures. These actions become a part of the tradition of the group because there is a preceding history of such participation. These actions may start impulsively or unexpectedly, but then are brought forward as a regular act. There is also a focus of attention in social movements. A fundamental process of a social movement is a sense of unity. The group is focusing together, both through morality and cognition. Durkheim calls this the “conscience collective”. This leads to a sense of group solidarity. Each member of the movement, through their participation, brings about an emotional energy, making them enthusiastic and confident through their participation (Durkheim 1912/1995).

In order to make a movement highly mobilized, there must be a commitment to an ideology. A shared sense of collectiveness increases a member’s feelings of solidarity and morality (Swann et al 2012). Members are filled with the emotion of doing something that has a higher importance than what is taking place in the outside world. Morally serious participants have a deeper sense of dedication to the group’s ideology.
(Collins 2001). Within new religious movements, there are symbols which embody the collective participation of each member. Markers or signs aid the participants in feeling a shared sense of belonging to the collective, even when they are not with other members. These markers are symbols of loyalty that challenge the external world: it places participants in confrontation with their opponents, usually because of group ideology. Ideologies promote “beliefs, attitudes, and norms that motivate people to fuse with the group and its members. Fusion and self-sacrifice may also be triggered by transient contextual variables, such as certain ritual practices” (Swann et al 2012: 451). Collective movements also have a sense of morality: the ideas of right and wrong come from a commitment to a collective unity. When an individual commits to a group, there is also a sense of sacrifice on their part. Members must feel like they are sacrificing their own individual selfishness in the service of the group. People who are outside, or oppose the movement, are seen as unworthy or immoral. Often, the parents of group members, governments, the media and the anti-cult movement are placed in the category of outsider, as they are regarded as oppositional to the movement itself.

According to Durkheim (1912/1995), an emotional transformation takes place through collective rituals. This emotion creates solidarity within the group. Rituals make individuals feel emotionally stronger as a result of being a member of the group. Durkheim referred to this as “moral force”. Scheff (1990) contends that pride is the essential emotion of strong social bonds. Members feel shame, or uncertainty, if their social connection is weakened or broken. Rituals in new religious movements, often called “imagistic” rituals, are typically emotionally intensive (Atkinson and Whitehouse 2011). Imagistic rituals characteristically generate intense reflection, which are “an
essential element in the process, as reflection produces enduring and vivid episodic memories for the ordeals and the other group members who uniquely shared in the ritual” (Swann et al 2012: 450). Rituals that are considered successful, because of the shared emotion they evoke, utilize emblems that allow members to encapsulate collective participation. The emblems focus attention: they act as touchstones for loyalty to the group, as well as acting as targets for external challenge towards the group. They often cause confrontations to occur, by opponents of the group. These emblems symbolize a feeling that the movement can win in whatever endeavour it pursues: these endeavours are transcendent in comparison to the mundaneness of the outside world. Intense practices deeply connect members to a common identity and the symbolic emblems carry the ideologies of the group. These practices hold high significance: they transcend all other experiences. The emotionally unifying process creates a belief that there is nothing that can stand against such a collective movement: it can overcome any external threat or danger (Collins 2001).

Also some movements experience the process of producing collective emotional energy, especially if the ritual process effectively generates a sense of commitment. There are many types of social movements that differ in a member’s level of participation: new religious movements tend to demand an extremely high level of participation, and therefore produce a high level of commitments in its members. Individual members submit to the leader and perform behaviours that could even ultimately lead to the undoing of the group (Swann et al 2012). A purposeful willingness for self-sacrifice, to put oneself in harm’s way, transmits the member’s sense of moral commitment to the group. “The process of creating and widening a conscious
constituency is this process of taking the moral high ground” (Collins 2001: 33). Members of new religious movement fuse their morality into high levels of dedication to the collective. All of the religious movements analyzed in this thesis have reached a high level of success, in recruitment, retention and public infamy. Yet the process by which new religious movements are formed is usually the same process that keeps it from growing into a large collective movement. Their ideologies are not usually of concern to the majority of the outside world, but they have high internal commitment. Religious movements usually maintain a purist stance and only desire members who have moral long-term commitments and share a “conscience collective” (Durkheim 1912/1995).

When members fuse with the “conscience collective”, they tend to stay fused. “One reason for this is the relational ties principle, which introduces the possibility that actual or imagined relational bonds to other group members – in addition to devotion to the collective – will buttress feelings of fusion” (Swann et al 2012: 445). Members of collective movements who have fused with the collective create strong relations with other group members, who in turn support those feelings through their own alliance with the group. Furthermore, members who fuse with a group tend to remain exclusive to that group: this exclusion encourages members to sever ties with other groups. This alignment “locks highly fused persons into self-perpetuating interpersonal cycles that stabilize the very psychological structures that drew them into their groups in the first place” (Swann et al 2012: 445).

In some instances, members in collective groups can become competitive: they then split off and create rival groups (such as a disciple breaking away from a teacher).
When this splinter takes place, the process of recombining and transforming the cultural capital of a group takes place. Emotional energy can be transmitted vertically, to a leader, or horizontally, towards another group when such rivalries occur. The Church of the Lamb of God can be considered a rival social movement because it took its energy and strategies from the Church of the Firstborn. Ervil LeBaron focused a great deal of his concentration on distinguishing the Church of the Lamb of God and his role as Prophet from his brother Joel and the Church of the Firstborn. Ervil LeBaron embellished the differences between the two churches, stating that only he could provide salvation to his followers: he was the true prophet, not his brother. Although the Church of the Firstborn tried to continue its own mobilization, the Church of the Lamb of God created dramatic events, got into confrontations and committed atrocities that became more historically memorable.

New religious movements can arise when traditional customs no longer provide reasonable structures for behaviour. Breaking deeply held rules and norms becomes the first step in individual mobilization. Within these movements, individuals find a sense of community and identity, a strong bond with other members (Jasper 1997). Collective mobilization is seen as a meaningful act, motivated to bring about social change. In order for a collective movement to mobilize, there has to be a mobilization of collective resources. “The capacity for mobilization depends on the material resources (work, money, concrete benefits, services) and nonmaterial resources (authority, moral engagement, faith, friendship) available to the group” (Della Porta and Diani 2006: 15).

Mobilization promotes bonds of solidarity amongst members in the collective. New religious movements are social movements because they have distinct a social
process. They have mechanisms in which members: 1) engage in collective actions; 2) they conflict with opponents (outside world); 3) they are linked by intense informal networks; and 4) members share a distinctive collective identity (Diani and Bison 2004). The creation of a collective identity occurs through connectedness through a common purpose: 1) members must be committed to the ideology of the group; 2) membership in a collective movement depends on mutual acknowledgment between members; and 3) defining who is a part of the collective and who falls outside it plays a fundamental role in the creation of collective action (Della Porta and Diani 2006). The existence of these three elements enables us to see how new religious movements are social movements. Membership in social movements is not determined by a solitary act of obedience, but by a progression of differentiated acts: together, these acts strengthen the feeling of belonging and of collective identity (Gusfield 1994). Social movement members are usually marginalized: they often “invent new disruptive forms of action, challenging the state on issues of law and order” (Della Porta and Diani 2006: 27).

Collective groups, such as new religious movements, that have strong distinctive identities and solid interpersonal networks which exist only amongst group members are highly organized and, as such, are willingly mobilized: new religious movements often have strong collective identities and weak ties to the outside world. Ideal social movements, such as communes, usually end up disintegrating “because they are too introverted and socially isolated” (Jenkins 1982: 543). Resource mobilization is an interactive process: societal reactions toward the ideologies and activities of a movement transform future exchanges (Hannigan 1991: 315). New religious movements can be understood as sources of power which members can then access.
Members who participate in such collectives can gain personal and collective experiences of power (McGuire 1983). They are sources of empowerment to their members.
Chapter 3
Social Identity Theory and New Religions

Research on violence in religious groups has identified three salient features that need to be present for the violence to occur: (1) apocalyptic beliefs; (2) intense connection between leader and devotee through a charismatic bond; and (3) social withdrawal and encapsulation (Galanter, 1989; Robbins and Anthony, 1995; Palmer, 2006). The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (2002) estimates that there are roughly twelve hundred active new religious movements throughout the world and that four hundred of these groups subscribe to an apocalyptic worldview. Not all religious groups who uphold an apocalyptic vision become violent, yet all groups that have become violent, whether that violence was directed internally, interpersonally or externally, upheld an apocalyptic belief structure. Moreover, the same thing can be said for the role of charismatic authority and social withdrawal: all three features are necessary but not sufficient enough to predict violence. The literature has not demonstrated a clear causal link between charisma and violence (Chidester 1998; Maaga 1998; Lifton 1999; Mayer 1999; Reader 2000; Hall et al 2000; Wessinger 2000; Wallis 2004). None of the aforementioned salient qualities in and of themselves, or in any combination, leads to violent behaviour (Dawson 1998).

One of the general premises of this research endeavour asserts that the fundamental motivation of individuals is to make sense out of their world and that by making sense out of one’s world, one can better manage their life. For many, religion, and for the purposes of this research project, new religious movements, provide the key to this motivational impulse. This premise, though stated somewhat differently, is found
in the writings of eminent sociologists Berger and Luckmann (1991) who see religious motivation as the need to adapt subjective reality to the outside world, and in the writings of psychologists Rothbaum, Weisz and Snyder (1982) who maintain that individuals attempt to gain control over their world by changing their cognition of the environment. Though these insights come from different fields of knowledge, both perspectives nevertheless recognize the basic need to harmonize the internal world with one’s perception of the external world. One way to fulfill this motivational impulse is through the adoption of a new social identity, centred on religious group membership.

Social identity theory maintains that individuals have both a personal identity (based on a unique sense of self) and a social identity (based on group membership) (Turner 1999). One’s level of involvement and belief in the teachings and/or practices of a religious group will, to varying degrees of subjective importance for the individual, facilitate that stability and reorient one’s self-concept, by answering the question of “who am I and in that light what do I do?”. In other words, one important motive for identifying with social groups, and in this case NRMss, is to reduce subjective uncertainty (Turner et al 1987). It is from this social psychological stance that this thesis begins its query into social identity as it relates to charismatic authority, membership and violence in new religious movements.

Self-categorization and depersonalization processes associated with social identification and group behaviour is well suited to uncertainty reduction. Depersonalization refers to a process whereby individuality and unshared cognitions, feelings and behaviours are replaced by an in-group prototype that prescribes shared cognitions, feelings and behaviours. Depersonalization changes people so that they
appear to agree more strongly with one another. Subjective uncertainty, therefore, is tied to group membership and, thus to the self-concept. Things that we are certain about are linked to who we are via the prototypical feature of social groups with which we identify and which form part of our self-concept. Thus, certainty about cognitions, feelings, and behaviours is certainty about who we are. The links between certainty and self via social identity – certainty and self via social identity as it pertains to membership and commitment in NRMs – means that uncertainty has greater motivational force if it relates to subjectively important dimensions. We care much more about uncertainties that have implications for the self-concept (Mullin and Hogg 1999).

Two assumptions come to mind which need to be explored further. First, the lower the importance on the subjective dimensions of the self-concept, the weaker the charismatic bond: thus, the cohesiveness of the group should be compromised. Second, the higher the importance on the subjective dimensions of the self-concept, the stronger the charismatic bond: therefore, the stronger the cohesiveness of the group. For instance, Heaven’s Gate members had a very high level of self-concept and an extremely strong charismatic bond. All members had to undergo a process of depersonalization, as set out by Marshall Applewhite, in order to maintain in-group feelings and behaviours.

The possibility of violence emerges when the group experiences perceived threats from the outside, which causes the group to experience levels of uncertainty. The threat can be towards the group’s espoused ideology, group cohesion, or limiting its freedom to operate – if any of these elements are removed from the collective movement, it weakens the basis for the member’s social self. Defending the group is
actually defending the self (Zurcher 1982). The social self of the group member rests in a belief system that holds membership to be sacred insofar as it is total, complete, and exclusive. The social self, as a reflection of the belief system, is accepted rigidly and without question as right (Zurcher 1982). Perceived external threats could be characterized as threats to the in-group: if one's personal identity has been eclipsed by the in-group model (an extremely intense identification with the in-group prototype), then this could cause uncertainty within the group and facilitate the call to violent eruptions as a means to restore certainty for the group. Nevertheless, subjectively felt states of uncertainty remain, but in this configuration uncertainty manifests itself at the collective level. Both Jonestown and the Branch Davidians strongly experienced external threats, which in return caused the groups to act violently.

Self Esteem

When personal and social identity is threatened, people are motivated to restore self-esteem in two ways: either by showing favouritism to in-group members (Branscombe et al 1993); or, by engaging in out-group criticism, whereby those outside the in-group are viewed contemptuously (Branscombe and Wann 1994). These tactics contribute to prejudice and discrimination and, at times, violence. (Tajfel 1982; Turner 1987; and, Crocker and Luhtanen 1990). Self-esteem is partly determined by one’s social identity, or collective self, which is tied to one’s group memberships (nationality, religion, gender and so forth) (Luhtanen and Crocker 1992). Whereas one’s personal self-esteem is elevated by individual accomplishments, one’s collective self-esteem is boosted when an in-group is successful. Likewise, one’s self-esteem can be threatened on both the personal level and the collective level. An exemplification of threatened self
esteem can be seen in the Peoples’ Temple: Jim Jones felt personally attacked by the outside world, and the collective felt threatened when outsiders entered their compound.

One theoretical strand of social identity theory posits that individuals are motivated by the need to achieve positive self-esteem through group membership. However, our concern lies in the maintenance of a positive social identity, i.e. collective self-esteem. Collective self-esteem refers to how individuals feel about themselves as members of a group (Luhtanen and Crocker 1992). People with high collective self-esteem are primarily concerned with enhancing themselves for the purpose of positive evaluation for their own social group: a clear illustration would be the members of Heaven’s Gate. They were highly dedicated to evolving themselves so that they could voyage to the Next Level. Group memberships provide individuals with a sense of belonging and allow them in part to define themselves; as well, these memberships have the tendency to reflect positively on individual selves (Luhtanen and Crocker 1992).

Another contributing explanation which may account for violence can be found in the literature which examines the relationship between narcissism and aggression. In this context, it may be appropriate to characterize the charismatic leader as a narcissist. Narcissism is characterized by feelings of superiority over other people, and can lead to the disregard of rights and feelings of others, resulting in aggression. Narcissistic individuals (charismatic leaders) passionately want to think well of themselves. They are preoccupied with fantasies of success, believe that they deserve special treatment, and react aggressively when they experience threats to their sense of self. Research has shown that narcissists who experience ego threats are likely to engage in
aggression, such as partner abuse, rape, gang violence, individual and group hate crimes, as well as political terrorism (Baumeister, Smart and Boden, 1996). The highest levels of aggression are found amongst people who are emotionally invested in grandiose self-images. Through laboratory research, Bushman and Baumeister (1998) found clinical evidence for this argument through a series of tests that gave participants the opportunity to aggress against someone who had either insulted or praised an essay they had written. Narcissistic participants reacted to insults with exceptionally high levels of aggression. However, it is important to note that thinking well of oneself (high self-esteem) did not lead to aggression; rather it was the desperate need to validate a grandiose self-image that was the problem. For instance, Ervil LeBaron can be regarded as an archetype of the narcissistic leader: he constantly disparaged his brother Joel and his church in order to define himself as superior over his brother, claiming to be the one and only true Prophet and ordering the murder of his brother.

Charismatic leaders possess high, but unstable, self-esteem, and therefore tend to suffer from the trait of narcissism (Bushman and Baumeister 1998; Baumeister et al 1996). Bushman and Baumeister (1998) found that people with high but unstable self-esteem reported the highest tendencies toward hostility and anger, whereas people with stable high self-esteem reported the lowest. They concluded that unstable high self-esteem produces a heightened sensitivity to ego threats, because the individual has much to lose and is vulnerable to despondent feelings that come with a brief drop in self-esteem: this may lead to hostility. Typically, in groups where charismatic leadership is central, perceptions of threats to the leader, and by extension the group, will lead to actions that seek to restore certainty within the leader, and by extension the group. The
psychological wellbeing of the leader, in this case, high but unstable self-esteem, becomes part of the social group and collective self-esteem. Groups centered around charismatic leaders with high but unstable self-esteem are more likely to engage in aggressive and violent behaviour.

Weber (1968), in his research on members of social groups, gave emphasis to the fact that charismatic leaders have a mission. In expanding Weber’s formulation to the charismatic groups being researched here, the mission is clearly seen as a central factor to group membership, and thus to collective self-esteem. A charismatic leader “seizes the task for which he is destined and demands that others obey and follow him by virtue of his mission” (Weber 1968:1112). A charismatic leader’s mission is collective in nature and requires the participation of others for its fulfillment. The collective mission is expressed in terms of a belief system and structure that creates group norms. Followers contribute to the accomplishment of such a mission because “it is their duty” and obligation to recognize the charismatic leaders’ authority (Weber 1968). Sun Myung Moon, Bonnie Nettles and Marshall Applewhite, Elizabeth Clare Prophet, Jim Jones, Osho Asahara, Credonia Mweinde, Ervil LeBaron and L. Ron Hubbard all espoused a divine mission which was the foundation of their belief systems. They were exemplary models of charismatic leaders.

The collective aspects of charismatic leadership stimulate followers to think of themselves as interdependent members of a group, rather than as independent individuals. From this perspective, the collective group is one predicated on charismatic leadership and the charismatic’s vision. Furthermore, Weber affirms that “all charismatic authority is naturally unstable” (1978: 245). Charismatic unstableness can occur for two
reasons: 1) either the charismatic leader has been unable to carry out his mission and therefore cannot provide any benefits to the followers; or, 2) if the leader if victorious in the mission, then charisma becomes “routinized”. The charisma “suffocates under the weight of material interests” (Weber 1978: 1120). Violence is an indicator of the complexity in routinizing charismatic authority. In order to maintain charismatic authority, leaders tend to act violently in order to maintain their charismatic credibility. Instability and violence can also arise when leaders experience hostility or persecution from external sources.

NRMs provide researchers the opportunity to study group dynamics and social identity in small settings. Understanding the nature of the charismatic leader, and the relationship members have to the collective and the leader, will help further clarify and add depth to the internal/external factors that need to be present for violence to occur in NRMs. The three key factors that have been identified as significant features that must be present for violence to occur does not always hold true. There could be further detrimental forms of charismatic authority, social isolation and apocalyptic views that do not necessarily lead to violence. Social identity theory explains the correlation between violence and the three factors, but it does not explain the violence. The following section will flesh out the analysis further, using the various NRMs that became violent (discussed in chapter four with full descriptions) as illustrative examples demonstrating the workings of the aforementioned theoretical considerations.

Charismatic Leadership and Narcissism

Some researchers state that charismatic leadership is sufficient reason for violence to occur in a new religious movement (Bromley and Melton 2002). Other
scholars argue that different factors are required, on top of charismatic leadership, for violence to ever occur (Dawson 2002). Collective members must believe and act on the ideologies of the leader: the leader, on the other hand, must frequently display achievements that are coupled with the “aggrandizement of the leader’s power, along with the increased homogenization and dependency of their followers, thereby setting the conditions for charismatic leaders to indulge the ‘darker desires of their subconscious’”\(^1\) in order to maintain their legitimacy (Dawson 2002). Galanter (1999) asserts that for violence to occur in a charismatic leader, “grandiosity and paranoia” must characterize “the leader’s self-concept (which isolates him)” (in Robbins 2002: 71). The charismatic leader has absolute authority over members, meaning external authorities and laws no longer have any influence on the group (Galanter 1999). Hon-Ming Chen, Marshall Applewhite, Ervil LeBaron, Jim Jones, David Koresh, L. Ron Hubbard and Shoko Asahara all had absolute authority over their collective members.

As charismatic leaders isolate their members from the normative views of society through absolute authority, they are also being denied access to the outside world: refusal to engage with wider society helps to solidify the leader’s control over the group. Outside views may challenge or undermine the beliefs of the group, which in turn may help to counter the leader’s psychopathology (Galanter 1989). This social encapsulation helps to ‘protect’ the group from perceived outside threats. Yet, because it remains closed to external influence, paranoia, internal violence and defensiveness become heightened under these conditions. Consequently, this type of action is viewed as a

\(^1\) Weber argues that charismatic leadership is inherently precarious, as such leaders must constantly legitimize their authority. In order to keep the movement from becoming routinized, the charismatic leaders’ restraints are worn away and they will behave violently (Wallis 1986).
means by which the group can maintain control over its boundary, i.e., its perceived position and relationship to the outside world. In addition, Mullin and Hogg (1999) found evidence demonstrating that individuals who engage in certain groups do so in order to reduce subjective uncertainty and thus adopt the beliefs and practices of the group. This was true of Chen Tao, Heaven’s Gate, the Peoples' Temple, Order of the Solar Temple, Aum Shinrikyo and early Scientology.

Max Weber (1968) asserted that a charismatic leader is considered to be above ordinary, a person who is “treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least... exceptional powers and qualities” (359). Research shows that charismatic leaders attempt to resolve crises through a vision anticipating a positive image of the future that then induces collective action (Conger and Kanungo 1998; Kirkpatrick and Locke 1996). Leaders are observed by the followers in such a way that they believe the leader expresses charisma: at the same time, the leader’s behaviours mirror the member’s perspective. Charismatic leaders are differentiated from other leaders by “their ability to formulate and articulate an inspirational vision and by behaviours that foster an impression that they and their mission are extraordinary” (Conger and Kanungo 1994: 442). Followers choose leaders that have extraordinary characters. Charismatic leaders have a destiny to follow, a mission to complete, and followers obey these particular leaders on the merit of that mission (Weber 1968). Followers are attracted to charismatic leaders. Followers hold such leaders with high levels of admiration and respect: this in turn leads to reverence for the charismatic leader. Reverence is further reinforced by the leader’s inspirational vision, which conveys the sense that his or her mission is extraordinary (Congor and Kanunga 1994).
During the implementation of the vision, the charismatic leader is also seen as engaging in exemplary acts that followers read as involving great personal risk and sacrifice on the part of the leader. Leaders who sacrifice for their cause are seen to be taking a position for internal reasons, i.e., moral convictions or sincere beliefs, which transform into greater influence over their followers. Followers are more likely to make sacrificial choices for the ideologies of the group if they perceive the leader doing so as well. This, in turn, builds trust and esteem for the leader (Yorges, Weiss and Strickland 1999). Charismatic leadership transforms a follower’s self-interest into collective interests. Charismatic leaders aspire to develop the importance of collective identities in the self-concepts of their followers because it tends to make followers take on self-sacrificial and cooperative behaviours for the ideology of group: they are more willing to give up their own personal goals. A collective or shared identity increases the likelihood that the member will abandon self-interests in favour of more collective and altruistic endeavours. A collective identity places significant social and psychological forces onto followers, which increases their commitment to the values articulated by the charismatic leader. Therefore, charismatic leadership is positively related to the followers’ sense of a collective identity (Conger et al 2000). Charismatic leaders have the ability to change followers’ values, beliefs and attitudes, usually in combination with an ideology or vision of the future. Followers are empowered to take part in the fulfilment of the mission. Charismatic leadership empowers followers to internalize their own goals. Therefore, charismatic leadership brings about a sense of empowerment amongst followers.
For instance, Jim Jones, in his leadership role of the Peoples’ Temple, possessed high self-esteem, which was founded on unstable, grandiose narcissistic self-conceptions. Jones exhibited his grandiose personality by claiming to be the manifestation of the Christ Principle. Thus, he had the powers of Jesus: he claimed to have the power to heal and raise the dead and people could access the Holy Spirit through him (Wessinger 2000: 33). Any challenge to his authority resulted in excommunication from the group. The same can be said for Ervil LeBaron, in his leadership of the Church of the Lamb of God: he claimed to be the one and only true Prophet.

How Endogenous and Exogenous Variables Can Lead to Violence

Social identity theorists claim that individuals seek group membership in order to reduce subjectively felt states of uncertainty. “Subjective uncertainty refers to…one’s attitudes, beliefs feelings and perceptions, as well as about oneself and other people, [and] is generally an aversive state associated with feelings ranging from unease to fear” (Mullin and Hogg 1999:92). One main criticism of uncertainty reduction is its over-emphasis on feelings of unease and fear as the prime motivator for an individual’s desire for group membership. It is possible that individuals can choose to join groups free from the negative associations of uncertainty reduction. This is not to say that some individuals do not suffer from some degree of uncertainty about themselves and may choose to reduce subjectively felt states of tension through group membership. In spite of this potential weakness, the theory usefully shifts the focus from an antecedent cause to one that becomes psychologically meaningful in the context of group dynamics.
Thus, individually and collectively, the group can experience subjective uncertainty in the face of challenges and/or threats.

External pressures can contribute to collective uncertainty which will affect collective self-esteem. External pressures can create a state of psychological crisis for the charismatic leader since these challenges usually confront the leader’s own prophetic identity. This confrontation leads to subjective uncertainty as to who they really are. In response, there are two choices for these leaders. The leader either: 1) re-evaluates who he/she is; or, 2) he/she has to disregard the challenges and/or criticisms, thus, reifying their narcissistic tendencies and authority. If charismatic leaders maintain their narcissistic self-concept, they have to then motivate individuals to respond to the threat. In order to do this, the charismatic leader has to inform the group members of the threat, which in turn will create uncertainty in the members: certainty is restored for members once a decision has been made to engage in a behaviour that will serve as a corrective in the face of a threat.

For the purpose of this meta-analysis, the definition of violence being used needs to take into account various elements: firstly, we must realize that some new religious groups will have conflicting values and interests to that of mainstream society, as well as be in competition with established social groups for membership, economic resources and political support. By understanding violence as “a struggle to maintain, change, or protest asymmetrical social relations governing the distribution of scarce resources by the threat or exertion of threat” (Ball-Rokeach, 1980: 46), we can better understand the origins of collective violence. We must also examine the factors within social groups that cause violence to erupt, such as the individual and personal factors
that give rise to conflict in such groups: there is continuous competition for power in social groups, as well as psychological and personal factors. Yet another element that must be taken into consideration is whether these groups are acting in a rational or irrational way: according to Weber (1958), collective behaviour that is goal-directed is rational, therefore we must assume that the collective violence that takes place in new religious groups is occurring in order to bring about particular social change-oriented objectives. Furthermore, this violence is considered rational by the group members as it is in service of achieving group objectives (whether or not we agree with these goals). Therefore, violence can be understood as occurring: 1) within the group; 2) between groups; or 3) as a product of the interdependencies between the two: whether deliberate, inadvertent or directed towards the group and members.

For instance, the Branch Davidians may never have become violent if not for the BAFTA intervention. Heaven's Gate did not engage in external acts of violence, but members committed self-harm in the service of achieving group objectives: thus, suicide can be considered a type of violence yet is very different to that committed by groups who perpetrated violence onto others. Another example is Jonestown, which on the surface looks like an act of mass suicide, but upon closer inspection indicates more murder than suicide. Aum Shinrikyo can be considered a pure case of external violence. They killed their perceived enemies and attempted to "purify" the world. Some groups become violent, and then mitigating factors may turn them suicidal after that fact, such as the Solar Temple. The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God may have actually been an instance of mass murder committed by leaders of the group, staged to look like a mass suicide. L. Ron Hubbard, in order to
have members achieve group objectives, created a system of punishments that members had to endure (including exhausting physical labour and isolation) if they did not adequately conform to group behaviours: therefore, this type of violence was interpersonal (the group punished the member). These issues need to be better addressed so that group characteristics and dynamics can be fully understood. Therefore, the types of violence being committed by each of the groups needs to be better examined and distilled. These groups are distinct, and need to be separated to observe like-groups with other like-groups. They should not all be evaluated equally as they have committed different types of violent acts under very specific circumstances. The characteristics of the groups considered "violent" have to be refined. Violence needs to be examined along a continuum - moving from "pure suicide" to "pure homicide". At the "pure suicide" end of the spectrum you would have Heaven's Gate, and at the "pure homicide" side you would have Aum Shinrikyo. After evaluating the characteristics of these groups, it will be essential to examine the internal dynamics of these groups. The next two chapters will provide illustrative analyses of movements that have become violent and those that have not, in order to determine which factors have been isolated as an explanation as to the basis of violence that took place.
Chapter 4

New Religious Movements That Display Violent Behaviours

There are thousands of new religious movements in existence at any one time worldwide, yet only a handful has become “violent”. Whether committing acts of suicide, harming members, or injuring others, these types of behaviours have been labelled as blanket acts of “violence” by scholars, media, and anti-cult groups. For example, during the years from 1972 to 1977, Church of the Lamb of God followers are known to have committed multiple murders against persons who opposed the group, as well as group members. Ervil LeBaron, the leader of the movement, also is believed to have ordered the murder of more than 25 people from his prison cell. On November 18, 1978 a few members of Jonestown killed 5 people who had come to Guyana on a congressional visit. Then the members of Jonestown committed a mass act of suicide (some members were murdered – children were administered the poison and some who fled were shot). In total, over 900 people died at the Jonestown compound in Guyana. A new religious movement in Japan called Aum Shinrikyo committed a violent attack on Japanese citizens on March 20, 1995 by using sarin gas to kill people on a Tokyo subway. 13 people died and 6,252 civilians were wounded (also, a member of the group was murdered in 1989, for trying to defect). In September and October 1994, a handful of members of the Rajneesh movement poisoned the food in ten local restaurants in Oregon, poisoning at least 750 individuals. Nobody died, but this act of violence, considered to be the first and largest bio-terror attack in the US to date, was meant to have been a trial run for a much larger event, which could have led to multiple deaths. The Branch Davidian compound fifty-one day standoff with the FBI, ATF and Texas
National Guard in Waco, Texas from February 28 to April 19, 1983 resulted in the deaths of their leader David Koresh, 82 members of the movement and four ATF agents. The Order of the Solar Temple committed both acts of murder and collective suicides in different countries between the period from 1994 and 1997. On March 26, 1997, police discovered the remains of 39 members of the Heaven’s Gate movement: they had committed mass suicide in order to reach, according to their beliefs, an alien spacecraft that was following Comet Hale-Bopp. On March 17, 2000, the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments in Uganda committed either mass suicide or mass murder: authorities, after carrying out an investigation, concluded that it had been acts of mass murder as the leadership of the movement had disappeared. All 780 members of the movement lost their lives. During the life of L. Ron Hubbard, Scientology members were punished for not behaving in accordance with his wishes, so that they could receive spiritual elevation.

Mass suicide is the simultaneous act of taking one’s own life as a member of a social group for collective self-assertive purposes, in the face of real or imagined threats: the act of suicide is meant to sustain the human dignity of the group (Mancinelli et al 2002). For this reason, Heaven’s Gate is at the farthest end of the continuum of violence: only committing self-harm. In order to understand the factors that lead to mass suicide, one needs to examine the charismatic elements of the leader and the social collective. Retrospective studies of NRMs have found that these elements have existed within groups that have become violent. Thus, the first part of this analysis will examine the nature of the charismatic bond between leaders and members of new religious movements, delineate their apocalyptic beliefs, and the manner/type of social
withdrawal found in the group. These three elements are sociological descriptive categories for the act of violence to occur. This research also speculates on the psychological dynamics of the group that may be pertinent to the development of violence. It also examines the trait of narcissism found in charismatic personalities and the possible dangers associated with leaders who possess inflated views of the self. Challenges to exaggerated self-esteem are potentially volatile: this instability is transmitted from the leader to the group, thus affecting the group’s collective self-esteem. This instability leads to uncertainty within the group and the leader, consequently moving them toward defensive reactions to alleviate the distress and restore certainty within the group. Such actions can lead to conflict and violence. Groups to be examined that meet the criteria and are violent consist of: The Peoples’ Temple, The Order of the Solar Temple, Aum Shinrikyo, the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God, The Branch Davidians, Rajneeshpuram, The Church of the Lamb of God, Heaven's Gate and early Scientology.

When violence occurs in new religious movements, media accounts, in typical sensationalistic fashion, invariably highlight the assumed psychopathology of the charismatic leader and the unquestionable ‘brainwashed’ obedience of the followers as central mitigating factors leading to that violence. Jonestown is often highlighted as the paradigmatic case by which all other apocalyptic and violent cult tragedies are measured, such as the Order of the Solar Temple, The Branch Davidians, and Heaven’s Gate. Unfortunately, reports on the growth of apocalyptic belief and collective suicide do little in explaining the causes of that violence. Following the Jonestown massacre, many media reports now declared the act of suicide as a characteristic of
cults in general (Dein and Littlewood 2000). Of course, these explanations are secondary to a ‘good’ story and have the effect of explicitly stigmatizing and promoting common misconceptions that all NRM s are a dangerous threat to society and to the members who belong to such groups because they are brainwashed, irrational or mentally ill. Yet much of the scholarly literature suggests that rates of mental illness are no more prevalent among “cult” members than in the general population (Galanter et al 1979; Hill 1980; Ungerleider and Wellisch 1983).

Religious studies scholars have widely discredited the notion of brainwashing as a technique for recruitment and retention of members. Its usage has not waned in popular discourse, and it is still widely quoted as the explanation for how individuals are ‘controlled’ and obliged to remain actively engaged in alternative religious lifestyles.\(^2\) By extension, if one is brainwashed, then one can explain or understand why individuals and/or groups carry out nefarious motives and violent actions. There can be little doubt that certain charismatic leaders are part of, and influential in, the violent outcomes but it would be presumptuous to assume that they are the root cause. Perhaps more carelessly would be to suggest that all charismatic leaders inherently nurture and incite acts of violence in NRM s.

\(^2\)This thesis is not concerned with the brainwashing debate. However, I bring it to light, merely to indicate that it is still a popular explanation outside of academic circles. For a fuller treatment of the brainwashing debate, and its grounds for refutation, I suggest that one consult the works of Eileen Barker (1984) The Making of a Moonie: Choice or Brainwashing, Frederick Bird, and Bill Reimer (1982) “Participation Rates in New Religious Movements.” Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 21 (1): 1-14, David Bromley and James Richardson, eds (1983) The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy: Sociological, Psychological, Legal and Historical Perspectives and James Richardson (1991) “Cult Brainwashing Cases and Freedom of Religion.” Journal of Church and State 33 (1): 55-74. More pointedly, both psychological and psychiatric research studying NRM s found that participants are generally well adjusted and in fine mental health, again running contrary to popular sentiment. As Richardson (1995) argues, these findings indicate, “… participation in the new religions is similar to that of participation in other, more ‘normal’ religious groups, “Clinical and Personality Assessment of Participants in New Religions.” The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion 5 (3): 145-170. I bring these considerations to the forefront, indicating that NRM participants are not brainwashed nor do they suffer from some type of personality disorder and are more or less ‘normal’.
Charismatic leadership and authority are just two key components of an integrative explanatory model that considers the dynamic interplay between endogenous and exogenous factors leading to violence. When considered in tandem, these factors help explain, although only to a certain extent, the conditions under which NRMs may become volatile and hence potentially dangerous. Scholars studying violent NRMs have identified three operative endogenous preconditions necessary for that violence to transpire: (1) a strong apocalyptic belief system; (2) an intense connection between the charismatic leader and group members; and (3) social withdrawal and encapsulation (Smith 1982; Mills 1982; Wallis and Bruce 1986; Galanter 1989; Hall 1990; Robbins and Anthony 1995; Palmer 2006). Exogenous factors represent divisions in the established social order, consisting of loosely institutionalized associations in opposition to NRMs, which seek to exert control over the religious movement as tensions between the group and its social milieu increase. These include 1) media portrayals, which offer tantalizing and negative exposés (as they get the headlines); 2) disenfranchised apostates; 3) ‘anti-cult’ organizations; 4) concerned parents and spouses; and 5) political and legal systems working through administrative branches of the government, designed to protect society, and ‘cult’ members from the harmful effects of deviant religious groups and practices: therefore these external factors can be considered repressive to NRM freedom of expression (Hall, Schuyler and Trinh 2000).

Overall, most NRMs begin with innocuous ambitions: even when the aforementioned conditions are present, violence need not be the end result.

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3 I use the term “cult” with respect to exogenous factors because in this context it carries pejorative connotations, whereas the term NRM, promotes neutrality and the absence of value judgments.
Unfortunately, these conditions have been present in most of the NRMs that have become violent. Some alternative groups that are in high tension with society may resort to violence, especially after a period of escalated ‘conflict’, in which endogenous and exogenous variables continually exacerbate the situation, compounding and pushing the group toward the precipice of violence (Bromley and Melton 2002). I wish to note that this is not an apologetic for NRM violence, nor is it an attempt to lay sole responsibility on the exogenous factors, thereby exonerating the volatility of the internal dynamics of the group. There has not been enough in-depth analysis to say that the groups are necessarily going to become violent, therefore the goal of this research is to analyze case studies of NRMs with a violent paradigm. Through this analysis, this chapter will examine what conditions existed, leading the groups to violence. By creating a model that integrates insights from social identity theory, research on charisma and narcissism, as well as the exogenous/endogenous factors, I believe a partial, though tentative, answer will emerge.

As explained earlier, collective violence can be understood as “a struggle to maintain, change, or protest asymmetrical social relations governing the distribution of scarce resources by the threat or exertion of threat” (Ball-Rokeach, 1980: 46). The most damning critique related to this cluster of attributes stems from the existence of new religious movements that bear these aggregates but refrain from engaging in violent behaviour (which will be systematically analyzed in chapter five). Therefore, NRMs that meet the three conditions, but are not violent in nature, need to be compared

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4 Some groups who meet the criteria are Aum Shinrikyo, The Branch Davidians, The Solar Temple, and Jonestown.
to the groups that exist within the continuum of violence (in chapter four), to really see if they meet the criteria at a more refined level of analysis. What makes the difference?

**Peoples’ Temple/Jonestown**

In 1952, Jim Jones (b. 1931-1978) became a pastor in a Methodist Church, wanting to preach the humanity of Christ and the love of humanity. Jones left the Methodist church because he did not think they were integrating African Americans into the congregation. He then became interested in faith healing and believed he could help society. Through healing, he attracted followers. The Peoples’ Temple was influenced by Christianity, racial acceptance, communism, socialism and social justice. Jones used elements of Christianity to make grand claims and to spread his message. Jones proclaimed:

I have put on Christ, you see. I have followed after the example of Christ. When you see me...it's no longer Jim Jones here. I'm crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ that lives here. Now Christ is in this body...You will only get Christ's blessing in Jim Jones' blessing until you walk like Jim Jones, until you talk like Jim Jones, until you act like Jim Jones, until you look like Jim Jones. How long will I be with you until you understand that I am no longer a man, but a principle. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Light. No one can come to the father but through me (Chryssides 2001: 37)

Jones cited Acts 4:31-32, asserting that Christians should pool their resources in order to help the needy. Jones purported to heal the sick like Christ and claimed to have raised people from the dead. He also professed that he was a saviour sent by the true God, in order to free people from their suffering: the fact that he had psychic abilities, powers of prophesy, and healing abilities meant that he was the messiah sent by God (Wessinger 2000). He dreamt of a utopian communal society, free from capitalism and racism. This dovetailed soundly with the Marxist maxim: “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need” (Wessinger 2000:33). These
beliefs formed the cornerstone of the Peoples’ Temple: they became social activists in the United States, and they lived a communal lifestyle, which would later be central to the living conditions in Jonestown. Jones perceived the United States as the Antichrist, and viewed capitalism as the antichrist system: he promised to lead his followers to a new Eden. Jones embodied Weber’s (1968) characteristics of a charismatic leader: he was above ordinary, endowed with supernatural powers and qualities. He envisioned a positive future for his followers, where he could resolve the crises of American life. Jones was able to attract a large following and exercise a significant amount of influence over these people.

Even though the Peoples’ Temple possessed a pro-social orientation that desired to help the disenfranchised and less fortunate, Jones increasingly preached that nuclear war, racial conflict, and genocide would ultimately destroy most of the world: these concepts became the center of Jones’ apocalyptic thinking. The inevitability of this apocalypse was central to the beliefs of Jones and his congregation: nuclear war would result in the destruction of the present social order. A battle between the Antichrist (capitalism) and Christ (socialism) would produce a new world order in which Divine Socialism would reign supreme. Jones frequently condemned capitalism and later Christianity, emphasizing Communism as the ultimate manifestation of Divine Socialism. In order to escape death, Jones preached that the favoured few would have to retreat to a safe haven. Following the destruction of capitalist nations, Jones believed socialist countries would persevere and the Communists would emerge victorious, establishing a socialist heaven on earth (Wessinger 2000).
Research shows that charismatic leaders attempt to resolve crises through a vision anticipating an optimistic image of the future that will induce collective action (Conger and Kanungo 1998; Kirkpatrick and Locke 1996). Jones engaged in numerous social activities to assist the poor and elderly. He turned his house into a nursing home for the elderly and adopted children of different races. Temple members often referred to Jones as “dad” or “father”, illustrating his parental role amongst followers. Jones worked diligently for racial integration at a time when racism was rampant. Jones’ message of social activism, justice, hope and equality made people want to join the Temple: “his followers bestowed authority upon him in recognition of his power” (Weightman 1983:135). Jones wanted to find a non-racist environment in which his congregation could thrive and be happy. Younger members of the Temple “sexually expressed love for Jones, who in turn empowered them by allowing them to perform administrative duties in his work for social justice and the “establishment of their ideal socialist community” (Wessinger 2000:34). In return, the followers saw Jones as an instrument of God on earth. Jones’ moral convictions were able to transform his followers: he built trust and esteem in them for his leadership, and they would make sacrificial choices for his ideologies (Yorges, Weiss and Strickland 1999).

The bond between Jones and his followers was constantly reaffirmed by acts of loyalty. Jones tested his followers by asking them to rehearse their final suicides; what came to be termed “White Nights”. Members were told to drink poison during these rituals, but they never knew if the poison was in fact real or not: these exemplary acts of performance epitomized the sacrifices followers undertake for charismatic leaders. Jones considered his death a revolutionary act, and this willingness to die for the cause
became a prominent theme in the Peoples’ Temple and later Jonestown. For the Peoples’ Temple, these revolutionary suicide drills functioned as a test of loyalty to Jones’ prophetic cause, a way of avoiding an oppressive or “subhuman” death, and as a threat to the outside world to accept the cohesiveness of the group (Chidester 1988 and Hall 1987). Jim Jones epitomized the virtues of a classical charismatic leader, making his followers carry out his demands in order to fulfill his divine mission, as elucidated by Weber (1968). His belief system became a group norm through the enactment of White Nights. Jones’ constant need for re-affirmation clearly illustrated his narcissistic qualities and his grandiose self-impression. The White Nights were his followers’ greatest act of devotion to him.

Jonestown was the name of the agricultural compound that the Peoples’ Temple built as their base of operations in Guyana during the early 1970s. The members of the Peoples’ Temple, at the Guyana compound, were completely isolated from American society. This isolation took members away from the normative views of society and allowed Jones to impose absolute authority over his followers. They fled the United States just before a telling exposé was published about the Peoples’ Temple and Jim Jones. Investigative journalists Kilduff and Tracy (1977) published a story about the dire experiences of ex-members of the Peoples’ Temple. The Mertles were a family that stayed in the group for over a year, even after witnessing their child been publicly beaten for a minor infraction in the group, because of their isolation in Guyana. They asserted that they stayed in the church because they had nothing left on the outside to go to: they had given up their employment, their home and donated all their equity and money to The Peoples’ Temple. Membership meant abandoning former lives and giving
all valuables to the larger cause. Ex-member Laura Cornelious stated that African American members gave their property and money to Jones in order to build the compound in Guyana: they needed to build it because Jones told them “the fascists” in the United States were going to murder African American people and put them in “concentration camps” just as the Germans had done to the Jews (Kilduff and Tracy 1977: 36). Another former member, Grace Stoen, described how she fled the group in order to have a weekend to herself but she had been unable to relax for fear the church would track her down and punish her. Members could not leave at their own behest. In a documentary film made thirty years after the tragic events of Jonestown transpired, former members described how they were forced to remain isolated from each other: they “were never really allowed to speak with one another” in order to keep them from thinking for themselves (Nelson 2006). Jones kept members extremely busy working on the compound so they had no time to socialize. If members got out of line, the church employed corrective beatings to discourage such behaviour. Jones' charismatic leadership was able to transform his follower's self-interests into collective interests, and they in turn took on self-sacrificial and cooperative behaviours for the ideology of the group (Conger et al 2000). The isolation in Guyana was extreme, as they lived on a secluded property, away from family and friends in the United States. Jim Jones kept telling members that the US neo-fascists were rising to power and this would have a murderous impact on the members, especially on the African American members. Jones made his followers believe that the compound was the last bastion of freedom on earth: the outside world had become too harsh to face. “No one was allowed contact with the outside world without permission, and most outsiders were not welcome [there]
either” (Richardson 1980: 246). By refusing to engage with the wider society, it helps charismatic leaders cement their control over a group (Galanter 1989).

The Peoples’ Temple held potent apocalyptic beliefs as they thought that the world was deteriorating: they felt that their place in it was being seriously threatened and that the end was drawing near. This would culminate in a race war, genocide and nuclear catastrophe. Jones taught that American capitalism was corrupt and beyond reform, and labelled it Babylon. As an alternative to living in such a corrupt society, he believed that his followers could stay in Guyana, withdrawn from society, and wait until the destruction had finished so that they could emerge to establish the perfect communist society. For many years, Jim Jones promoted these ways of viewing the world. While Jones preached “about human injustices”, this was then accompanied by colossal apocalyptic threats: a fear that a nuclear holocaust was going to bring about the end of the entire world imminently (Chryssides 2001: 38). He also launched the idea that, since their time on earth was coming to an end, committing suicide in the name of revolution was an honourable exit from a society that they felt was an utter failure. As Galanter (1989) explains, this type of social encapsulation helps protect the group from outside threats. Yet, by remaining completely closed off to external influences, paranoia and defensiveness become heightened.

Consequently, external and internal threats caused Jones and the group to experience a great deal of paranoia and on several occasions they put the idea of mass suicide up for serious consideration and debate. Mass suicide drills, called “white nights”, were regularly carried out by the group, both prior to and during their time in Guyana. The members would voluntarily drink wine and then be informed that it had
been poisoned. This was done to test their loyalty and to get them used to the idea, as Jones felt that they would someday soon be asked to take their lives as a sign of faith. Those who “kept the faith would be transformed and live with [Jones] forever on another planet” (Harrary 1992: 67). This practice constantly re-affirmed Jones' self-impression, but his constant need for re-affirmation lead to darker impulses: he would eventually display the Janus Impulse. The collective members, in order to reduce their own subjective uncertainty, accepted these apocalyptic beliefs – spurred on by Jones' claims about the horrible state of the world outside the compound. The members also held an internal group view, that ending their lives in the compound was a plausible defence mechanism against these perceived external threats. The group truly felt that they were under a massive amount of external opposition. The Peoples’ Temple collective felt significantly threatened by these external threats: Jones, maintaining his narcissistic self-concept, motivated the group to respond to the threat and restored their certainty. Mass suicide served as the curative to this threat. Defecting members and the media made up a significant portion of this external hostility. Before the group left the United States, several members of the group defected and their grievances would end up being aired in the media.

Jones saw himself as a “danger” to mainstream society, thereby heightening the sense of isolation he and his followers felt towards society. He used the notion of revolutionary suicide against what he perceived to be enemies of the Temple community. For example, in 1977 Jones became entangled in a custody battle and considered the courts to be fascist. To demonstrate his power to outside forces, Jones used the threat of collective suicide to push away his enemies from the boundaries of
the Temple community, and told these enemies that if they pursued him, they would be responsible for the group’s destruction.

Jones also claimed to be able to heal the sick and raise people from the dead, boosting his supernatural position of power from prophet to messiah. His followers had a fear of losing Jones if they did not “respect and care for him” (Hall 1987:111). Therefore, there was a fear of complaining or criticizing Jones, and if defied or confronted, he would clutch his heart as if preparing to die. Jones, in return for his followers’ devotion, pledged his own loyalty to them by promising to keep their secrets, healing them and taking care of their needs. Members of Peoples’ Temple underwent the process of depersonalization, in order to maintain in-group feelings and behaviours, as asserted in Mullin and Hogg’s (1999) research. Members in the higher echelon of the Temple signed “confidential confessions” which would remain secret as long as the confessors remained loyal to the Temple, and thus Jones (Weightman 1983). Jones further asserted the bond between himself and his followers by telling them, “I can have more power if you give it to me. I’m like a dynamo; I’m like a hydraulic system”. He alone could not be the messiah; his followers were a necessary component for Jones to “let Christ have a body” (Jones, as cited in Hall 1987:113). Jones mobilized the collective, and created a strong bond of solidarity between himself and the collective, as well as between the members themselves. They engaged in collective actions that strengthened their collective identity and empowered Jim Jones.

The process of social withdrawal in the Peoples’ Temple expanded from Jones’ feelings of persecution, to the creation of physical barriers, and then finally to the departure for Jonestown. Jones persuaded his most loyal followers to move with him to
Guyana (construction of Jonestown was already underway), thereby severing most contact with the outside world. Jones became the complete source of authority. With no access to outside news, Jones could suppress alternative views. He stated that he himself was the “Temple”, and the relationship of the members to the Church “became indistinguishable…when Jones saw himself as having no way out, he saw there to be no way out for the Temple, and the members of the Temple agreed” (Hall 1987). The Peoples’ Temple umwelt was to commit collective suicide if faced by threats of out-groups.

**External Factors**

A history of external challenges and criticisms existed for the Peoples’ Temple prior to the mass exodus to Jonestown, Guyana. In the early 1970s, the *San Francisco Examiner* published an exposé attacking Jones’ messianic pretensions and his claims to have raised the dead. In response to the threat, Temple members protested outside the *San Francisco Examiner* and threatened lawsuits. The exposé, “Inside the Peoples Temple” by Kilduff and Tracy, gave ex-members a public platform for their voices to be heard: this was perceived as such a hazard to the group that Jones and the majority of the group immediately packed up and fled to the compound in Guyana the night before the article was released. In the article, the defectors explained what life was like for them in the group and it was full of negativity. The stories of the beatings that members faced were given in great detail. Members would be paddled for committing minor behavioural infractions. These beatings would take place during services that would last all night long and hundreds of people would be lined up, humiliated and punished for trivial issues (Kilduff and Tracy 1977). Ex-member Birdie Marable explained how she
joined the Peoples’ Temple in order to get her husband access to Jones’ healing methods, but they left the group because she saw how members were being mistreated. Furthermore, her husband’s condition was not improving and she felt that “the cancer ‘cures’ Jones was performing seemed phoney” (Kilduff and Tracy 1977: 35). The article quoted defectors who claimed that the healing ceremonies were a ruse. Laura Cornelious detailed how Jones constantly asked members for money and that those who could not afford to give money would donate their jewellery, their time and services for fundraising. Walter Jones, who ran a church-owned home for troubled young boys, asserted that state cheques for the home were being funnelled back into the Temple church budget and only a small portion of the money was given to the group home. Ten defectors from the church came forward and gave derogatory evidence against Jones: to Jones, this was damning enough to cause him concern that the government would investigate and suppress the church. These allegations could have caused the group to experience uncertainty, thereby weakening the basis for the members’ social self (Zurcher 1982).

Then, the Temple’s church was bombed: these actions prompted Jones to create a branch of the church in the Republic of Guyana: he sent members there to begin preparing for the eventual arrival of all Temple members. Temple lawyer, Tim Stoen, began consolidating the Temple’s affairs should further persecution ensue from the media and government. By 1977, the IRS and the Concerned Relatives group – comprised of Temple apostates and relatives of members – demanded the investigation of the Peoples’ Temple on allegations of fraud and for holding Temple members against their will. This group wanted to expose the dark side of the Temple, claiming that life
within the Temple was “a mixture of Spartan regimentation, fear, and self-imposed humiliation” (Moore 1985: 138). There were also allegations of faked healings, brainwashing, physical discipline, and child abuse. Additionally, key Temple members Tim and Grace Stoen left the group and a custody battle ensued between Jim Jones and the Stoens over the paternity of John Victor Stoen. In 1972, Tim Stoen signed an affidavit declaring Jim Jones the biological father of John Stoen. Yet, the Stoens wanted John Stoen returned to their care - who was then living in Jonestown - and to be legally recognized as the child’s parents.

The group's social identity was threatened: in order to re-establish the group's self-esteem, it engaged in out-group criticism (Branscombe and Wann 1994). The Peoples' Temple declared themselves to have three main enemies: 1) a group of defectors who called themselves the Committee of Concerned Relatives; 2) the media; and, 3) the United States government. Defection was viewed by the group as a massive betrayal against the entire movement: it was seen as a considerable threat “because the identity of the community was fashioned out of an integrated fusion of parts within a whole – the defection of even one member called into question the survival of the entire community (Chidester1991: 139). As a collective movement, the Peoples’ Temple created a highly organized and strongly distinctive identity. They strengthened their collective identity by weakening ties with the outside world and maintained a strict insider versus outsider mentality. Exemplifying ideal social movements, according to Jenkins (1982), the Peoples’ Temple became a socially isolated and introverted commune. As a distinctive collective identity, members mutually acknowledged that any
threat to their espoused ideology required defending. When the external threats manifested themselves, the Jonestown collective had no choice but to act violently.

When Jones' predictions came true, and the external threats (in the way of a government representative, along with several anti-cult group members) arrived at the compound, Jim Jones felt personally attacked. This, in turn, caused the collective to feel threatened and violence erupted. An affidavit written by defected member Deborah Layton, once the financial secretary of the Peoples' Temple and close aide to Jones, was presented to Embassy counsel Richard McCoy at the American Embassy in Guyana in May 1978, describing the 'horrors' of the jungle compound and the plight of Jones' followers there. In the affidavit, Layton called Jones a tyrant, controlling the lives of Temple members. Corporal punishment was meted out on members and many were starving. Furthermore, she detailed how Jones proclaimed that any act of dissent would be considered an act of treason and defectors would be punished by death. The affidavit, along with the stories of defectors, helped convince Congressman Leo Ryan to journey to Guyana to investigate the situation himself (Drew 1999). In November 1978, Congressman Ryan and his entourage – consisting of journalists and Concerned Relatives delegates – traveled to the Guyana compound to investigate the accusations levelled at Jonestown. Within the compound, the Congressman’s impending visit was perceived as a direct threat and Jones called Ryan a ‘disreputable fascist’ (Walliss 2004). Congressman Ryan’s visit ended in extreme tragedy: the Congressman was murdered and many members of the Peoples' Temple committed revolutionary suicide (some members were murdered) by drinking poisoned fruit juice.
The events that followed ignited the anti-cult paranoia of the 1980s. The incident at Jonestown played a major role in the revival of the anti-cult movement. As news of the disaster that took place at Jonestown began to spiral in the media, The Peoples’ Temple started being defined as a “cult” (Wilson and Cresswell 1999: 220). The media wrote shocking tales about Jonestown, and former members of various new religious movements and anti-cult groups were given the ability to voice their opinions in the media, heightening negative perceptions amongst public opinion regarding these movements. The US government, both the Senate and Congress, launched investigations into Jonestown and state legislatures began attacking new religions publicly (Wilson and Cresswell 1999). All in all, Jonestown solidified the image of new religious movements as a danger to society. External threats to the group, real or perceived, contributed to the downfall of the community in Guyana. When defectors aired the group’s dirty laundry in the press, Jim Jones isolated the group from US society, and when the US government finally got involved in Guyana, it was viewed as detrimental to the existence of the group.

**Internal Factors**

Jonestown also dealt with major endogenous issues during its existence, especially during the collective's way of life at the Guyana compound. Defection was always a problem for the Peoples' Temple as it was internally viewed as a threatening action. However, at the compound it appears to have impacted the group more than ever before. As spelled out by Swann et al (2012), people who oppose a collective are regarded as unworthy or even immoral. In May 1978, Deborah Layton (financial secretary), a prominent member of the inner leadership circle of Jonestown, defected.
After learning of Layton's deep betrayal, several Jonestown recordings, in particular Q279, Q359 and Q284, revealed Jones' paranoia and hostility towards her, and increased group uncertainty. The collective became hostile and irate: handwritten notes found on the compound after the murder/suicides detailed members' violent desires of killing Layton (Jonestown Institute 2009). This act of duplicity was so enormous to Jones, that the idea of group suicide was seriously contemplated. In order to preserve his charismatic authority, Jones escalated the demands that he placed on his followers. He called his members to conduct another loyalty test, a 'white night,' and told them: “It's better for us all to die together proud than have them discredit us and take us apart and make us look like a bunch of crazy people” (Chidester 1991: 150). This process of 'taking the moral high ground' produced what Collins (2001) refers to as a widening conscious constituency: it fused the social movement's morality with higher levels of dedication to the collective. Furthermore, Layton's betrayal would have threatened Jones' sense of self: narcissists who experience ego threats are more likely to act aggressively because of their emotional investment in their own grandiose image (Bushman and Baumeister 1998). Jim Jones' health also started to fail him in Guyana and this became a larger problem for the inner circle as he was usually heavily medicated and “on the edge of despair” (Chidester 1991: 151). However, the biggest internal concern arose when Leo Ryan's Congressional delegation visited the Guyana compound. Disillusioned members, normally keeping their dissenting opinions and objections to themselves and never stepping out of line, decided that this was their chance to find a way out of the compound. During the visit, a note was passed to reporter Don Harris stating that two residents wanted to leave with them. Congressman
Ryan conducted interviews with members who also wanted to leave the Guyana compound, eventually leading to a plan to help these dissenters return to the US with the delegation (Chidester 1991). These members committed the ultimate transgression against the group as they went against Jones when he needed the support of his membership the most. Jones' self-esteem, which was high in relation to group commitment to his authority, was made extremely unstable. Feeling persecuted, Jones had no other way to maintain his charismatic credibility (Weber 1978). The actions of the defectors threw Jones over the edge: he called for an ambush against the delegation and the mass suicide of members. Members of Jonestown murdered five people and wounded ten in Congressman Leo Ryan’s party. Congressman Ryan and Peoples’ Temple defector Pattie Parks were among the dead. The internal and external threats combined together and brought about the demise of the Peoples’ Temple. In the jungle of Guyana, South America, Jonestown came to a cataclysmic end on November 18, 1978. Over 900 people, including Jones, participated in collective murder/suicide. Members of Jonestown were given a mixture of tranquilizers, cyanide and Fla-Vor-Aid. Of these 900 deaths, approximately 300 of them were children under the age of 18. Even though only seven autopsies were performed, there was no evidence to suggest that people were forced at gun point to drink the poisonous concoction. Eighty-five members survived. Some were still in the United States, while others found sanctuary in the jungle. Three of the survivors were Jones’ sons.

The Peoples’ Temple possessed the necessary conditions that contribute to violent outcomes. The collective had been subject to internal and external pressures, which culminated in violent tragedy. Membership in Jonestown was inclusive, as they
chose to live in segregation with the leader, indicating a high level of involvement and dedication to their respective group and loyalty to the leader and his beliefs and claims to authority. Such commitment would seem to indicate that much of one’s identity was intimately entwined with group beliefs and behaviours. A high degree of dedication to a group seems to indicate that much of one’s personal identity is at stake in relation to group identity. The strength and cohesiveness of group identity are maintained so long as they remain psychologically significant for its members. In this circumstance, members were heavily dependent on Jones for their information about the external world.

In trying to understand why such groups resort to violent behaviour, it is necessary to remember that their charismatic leaders have grandiose self-conceptions – these self-conceptions are often fragile. Challenges to this self-conception can lead to violent behaviour. This violent behaviour can be directed inwardly or outwardly to the perceived threat. The act of committing suicide, in this instance, is tied to the maintenance and preservation of a valuable ideal. It is also considered a courageous act, designed to restore certainty to the group (Galanter 1999). For the members of Jonestown it was better to die by one’s own hand than at the hands of one’s enemy.

Consequently, the most important element leading to the violence in Jonestown was Jim Jones himself. His charismatic authority motivated his followers to respond to the threat in a violent way. The collective was influenced by Jones' paranoia about betrayal, his deteriorating health and his increasing sense of persecution. These central elements were the internal driving force behind apocalyptic suicide. Members venerated him, his supernatural powers of healing and his prophecies. This allowed him to motivate members to practice the “white nights” of collective suicide. It also prompted
followers to kill in order to maintain their divine mission. Furthermore, their social
isolation required members to be more obedient as they were all dependent on Jones.
He had removed them from mainstream society, from their own country, and the
compound marginalized the movement from the outside world. When the outside world
came to Guyana, in the form of the congressional group, tensions further heightened
the volatility of the movement. External factors forced Jones to act on the group’s
internal outlook toward suicide. The worship of Jones and the group’s apocalyptic
beliefs resulted in acts of religious violence towards members of the outside world and
acts of self-harm amongst members who believed they were committing an act of
revolution.

Trying to understand how these factors affected Jones, we can infer the
psychological impact on Jones on two different occasions: the first pertains to his
preparations for the exodus to Jonestown and the second pertains, more dramatically,
to Guyana. Claims made by Jones during this period illustrate that he was able to
maintain an inflated view of self even though negative external evaluations threatened
that view. This, in turn, created a discrepancy between Jones’ appraisal of himself
versus the negative external views of Jones. The result of this appraisal was the
perception of threat and uncertainty. At this point, a choice emerged, either to reject the
appraisal of the external views or to accept their appraisal. If the external appraisal was
accepted, then new self-conceptualizations would have lead to a deflated sense of self.
If this had been the case, Jones would no longer have seen himself as the Christ
Principle. In the end, Jones rejected the external appraisal, maintained his grandiose
self-image, and restored certainty. This then created negative emotions towards the
source of the threat. At this point, I believe there was another choice: to withdraw
socially or to engage in violent behaviours. I think the decision to withdraw and move to Jonestown, Guyana was the attempt to maintain inflated favourable self-views and the preservation of the group, without having to resort to violence. Though Jones retreated to Guyana, the perception of threat and suppression still followed. Since previous threats had no effect on appraisals of the inflated self, there existed a rebound accessibility\(^5\) causing the whole process to begin again. Jones, unable to accept what he perceived to be continual threats, reacted in an aggressive manner that led to the death of the Congressman and members of his entourage. Furthermore, he compelled Jonestown members to take their own lives as a means to preserve their utopian community, as Jones told the members that the CIA and Guyanese soldiers would murder them. By making the collective decision to commit suicide, members were able to restore certainty to themselves and the group.

Jonestown would go down in history as the one of the biggest mass suicides of all time and it kicked off the ‘cult fear’ that would sweep Western nations shortly after. Following the Jonestown slaughter, media reports began indicating suicide as a common characteristic of cults in general (Dein and Littlewood 2000). Jonestown became the primary reason why new religious movements are often viewed with suspicion and negativity by the media, public and government.

In summary, Jonestown members were led to feel immense perceptions of threat: Jones informed his members that US neo-fascists wanted them killed, and they worried about external apocalyptic threats that would bring about the end of the world.

\(^5\) I use the term “rebound accessibility” to indicate the susceptibility of one to go through this process again on the grounds of a lack of lowered self-appraisal in the face of previous criticisms or negative evaluations. By maintaining a grandiose sense of self, instead of lowering it, one continues to run the risk of repeating the process, and at a certain point reach a violent outcome.
Their umwelten, or particular worldview, was that collective suicide was an honourable way to exit such a horrible world. The visit by the senator and members of the press mobilized them towards collective violence. The Jonestown movement met all the three aggregates of new religious movements that are prone to violence: a strong apocalyptic belief system; the Peoples' Temple maintained an organizational structure predicated on the charismatic leadership and authority of Jim Jones through a powerful connection between leader and follower; and, extreme social encapsulation. The followers maintained Jones' supernatural ideology through his teachings. Jones demanded absolute authority over members, yet suffered from unstable self-esteem and moments of paranoia. The exogenous factors that sought to suppress the movement and raised tensions between the group and social milieu include: negative media portrayals of Jonestown; disenfranchised apostates; anti-cult groups calling for an end to the group; both political and legal systems that believed they were protecting members from a deviant and harmful situation. These internal and external factors have been systematically outlined in the summary table below in order to visibly illustrate how the complex intertwining of factors brought about a violent end to the Jonestown collective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exogenous Factors</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media Representations/Defectors</td>
<td>Kilduff and Tracy (1977)</td>
<td>Two journalists wrote an exposé on the Peoples' Temple and interviewed ten defectors. They provided a very negative view of Jones and life on the compound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defectors/Anti-Cult Group/Media/State</td>
<td>Chidester (1991)</td>
<td>The Peoples Temple identified three threats against their movement: defectors who identified themselves as the Committee of Concerned Relatives, the media, and the United States.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
States government. “Defection was seen as a dangerous act in the worldview of the Peoples' Temple. Group identity was constructed out of an integrated fusion of parts within a whole, therefore the defection of one member affected the survival of the entire collective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Representations</th>
<th>Wilson and Cresswell (1999)</th>
<th>Jonestown played an essential role in the revival of the anti-cult movement because of all the negative publicity around the group.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Cult Groups and State</td>
<td>Wilson and Cresswell (1999)</td>
<td>Jonestown became the subject of a US Senate hearing and then a Congressional investigation. Anti-cultists used the actions there as a symbol of everything that was bad about the new religions. “1979 became a bumper year for books on the issue of cults. The efforts to suppress new religions through state legislatures were renewed and, finally, a more or less stable national anti-cult organisation emerged” (221).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apostates</td>
<td>Drew (1999)</td>
<td>Deborah Layton rose quickly in the hierarchy and became its financial secretary. After defecting from the group six years later, she wrote a memoir, describing her disillusionment and harrowing escape from Jonestown. Layton wrote an affidavit about the jungle compound that helped convince Congressman Leo Ryan to journey there. These actions were oppressive to the Peoples' Temple.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Millennial Goal: Defectors within the group</td>
<td>Chidester (1991)</td>
<td>On Jones's birthday, May 13, 1978, Deborah Layton defected.&quot; Jones was so distraught by this act of betrayal that he stated that on that day he died. A white night was called to prepare for collective death on behalf of socialism and in defense of the integrity of the community. Jones stated: 'It's better for us all to die</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Authority/Charisma of Leader: Loss of health</td>
<td>Chidester (1991)</td>
<td>Jones' health began to deteriorate, he was heavily medicated, and on the edge of despair (151).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Millennial goal: Dissent and defections within the group</td>
<td>Chidester (1991)</td>
<td>When the Congressional team came to Guyana, a note was given to reporter Don Harris revealing that two residents wanted to leave Jonestown. Ryan interviewed some of the residents who had concerned relatives. He decided to take those members who wanted to leave with him. 14 members of the community came forward to express their desire to leave.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Order of the Solar Temple**

There are many Templar organizations still in existence around the world today. They vary greatly in ideology and function and often rival each other. Geneva and Montreal had multiple esoteric groups in the 1980s: physician Luc Jouret (1947-1994), who had become a homeopathic healer, set up homeopathic practices in Canada, Switzerland, and France, travelling between the countries often. Jouret then began lecturing on homeopathic and ecological topics at New Age clubs and bookstores, and even at The Golden Way Foundation in Switzerland, a neo-Templar group, originally lead by Joseph Di Mambro (1924-1994). Di Mambro felt that the group needed a charismatic spokesperson so in the early 1980s Di Mambro partnered up with physician/homeopathic healer, Luc Jouret. The group eventually became known as the Order of the Solar Temple (OTS): Di Mambro and Jouret established a co-leadership of the movement. They created lodges in Quebec (Canada), Martinique, Australia and
Switzerland. According to Bromley (2002), “Di Mambro was never a particularly engaging speaker, and in Jouret he gained an effective spokesman” (171). Jouret became the face of the movement while Di Mambro stayed in the background, “secretly coordinating projects and weaving international webs of intrigue” (Mellor 2013: 250). The Di Mambro-Jouret alliance allowed Jouret to become “the front man who provided channels to a Templar-and Rosicrucian-inspired secret society via an integrated, holistic vision of the New Age” (Lewis 2006: 65). Members who defected from The Order of the Solar Temple claimed that Jouret was “authoritarian, paranoid and at times messianic” (Riding 1994: 1). The OTS shared a distinctive collective identity: their intense scrutiny of insider-outsider categories played an essential function in the formation of collective action in the group (Della Porta and Diani 2006). The group maintained their European and North American chapters into the 1990s but maintained a strict insider versus outsider mentality: much of their operations were kept secret and they maintained beliefs of superiority over the rest of society. The movement remained hidden until ex-members began talking about OTS publicly, inviting the curiosity of journalists.

The OTS put forward the idea of an impending ecological apocalypse. Both Jouret and Di Mambro revealed that they received revelations and they disclosed the fact that the world was going to lose its guardians sometime at the end of 1993 or early in 1994: at that point, the world would come to an end. The beliefs that the Order of the Solar Temple collective, received from Jouret’s teachings, appear to have isolated them from the rest of society as they came to see themselves as exceptional and even supernatural. Jouret described the nature and function of the temple as “the manifestation of a celestial archetype among men and will bring together men and
women who are marked with the celestial seal and are willing to serve” (Lewis 2016: 16). The social self of OTS members was based upon the belief that membership was sacred: it was total, complete and exclusive to the group (Zurcher 1982). These teachings gave group members a sense of superiority that went beyond that of mortals. The Order of the Solar Temple collective did not see itself as part of the human world, but rather that of the gods. The group’s secret texts also reflected the belief that they were themselves Godly beings:

We are the Star Seeds that guarantee the perennial existence of the universe, we are the hand of God that shapes creation. We are the Torch that Christ must bring to the father to feed the Primordial Fire and to reanimate the forces of Life, which, without our contribution, would slowly but surely go out. We hold the key to the universe and must secure its Eternity (Mayer and Siegler 1999: 208-209).

OTS members thought that their small faithful chapters located around the world truly held the key to the entire history, past, present and future, of the universe. Jouret taught these grand isolating prophecies to the members. Jouret's leadership clearly demonstrated Weber’s (1968) concept of charismatic leadership: he created a mission that was central to group membership, and therefore to collective self-esteem. His divine mission required the participation of others in order to carry it out. By accomplishing Jouret’s mission, the collective members were obliged to recognize his absolute authority.

Jouret’s vision of the future included the belief of a coming apocalypse. Apocalyptic beliefs were maintained by the group throughout its existence. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service investigated the group and claimed that “they believed in an imminent ecological apocalypse, where members were the chosen ones to repopulate the earth after its demise, but not before they had been persecuted on the
earthly plane by non-believers” (CSIS 1999: 03). Jouret spoke incessantly about an ecological end-time, emphasizing the fact that the apocalypse would be brought about specifically by humanity’s devastation of nature (Riding 1994). It was this impending apocalyptic obsession that brought the movement to a catastrophic end (Niebuhr 1994). The group would end up committing murders and performing mass suicides in the mid 1990s. “It appears that most of the cult members died because Jouret was able to convince them that the apocalypse was truly at hand, that authorities in Canada and France were suppressing them and that salvation could only be obtained by dying together” (Wallace and Fulton 1994: 12). Not only did OTS members trust the world was going to end, the enduring external pressures against OTS members pushed them to commit these acts of self-harm and interpersonal violence.

**External Factors**

The Order of the Solar Temple felt threatened externally by the government, police, defectors, and anti-cult groups. The collective regarded those outside the movement to be worthy and immoral: they were regarded as oppositional to the movement in general (Swann et al 2012). The movement encountered difficulty with the state and police, particularly in Quebec: the Solar Temple group residing in Quebec was investigated by authorities in 1993 for being in possession of illegal weapons as well as a suspicion that they had played a role in threats made to kill the province’s Public Security Minister, Claude Ryan (Farnsworth 1994). Quebec reporter Yves Boisvert claimed that the Sureté du Quebec actually infiltrated the Solar Temple movement with an undercover officer to investigate the group because the SQ had received information informing them OTS members had purchased revolvers with silencers: there was a real
concern that acts of terrorism would be carried out against Quebec politicians (Boisvert1993). The Order of the Solar Temple was also investigated for shady international bank transactions. The Royal Bank of Canada became concerned when several large deposits were made to the bank from abroad: Joseph Di Mambro did not provide satisfactory answers to bank officials (Wallace and Fulton 1994): these red flags may have alerted the Quebec authorities to investigate the group in the first place. The group, having experienced these externally suppressive threats, would have experienced levels of high uncertainty, affecting group cohesion and limiting their freedom to operate (Zurcher 1982).

Defectors were also highly problematic for the group, but none more than the Dutoit family. The Dutoits had been, at one time, high ranking members of the Solar Temple: Nicky Dutoit was responsible for making robes for the members, and her husband Tony created the ‘electronic miracles’ during ceremonies. The Dutoits, after parting ways with the group, began to ‘confess’ to the other members that the ‘miracles’ they saw taking place were being faked. They also gave birth to a baby boy and named him Christopher-Emmanuel, the latter being the name of Di Mambro’s “cosmic” daughter. These activities angered Di Mambro to such an extreme that he demanded their deaths (Mellor 2013: 244). Di Mambro’s self-esteem was threatened, which would have caused high levels of uncertainty in the group. This uncertainty facilitated Di Mambro’s call for violence. This was the only way to restore certainty to the group. Furthermore, given Di Mambro’s sense of superiority over others, his narcissistic personality would have been insulted and so he reacted with high levels of aggression towards those individuals who threatened his ego (Bushman and Baumeister 1998).
New York Times journalist Clyde Farnsworth asserted that the entire Dutoit family was murdered because di Mambro regarded the “Dutoit baby as the Antichrist” and because the Dutoits had taken the name matched to his daughter for their son without any consultation or permission (Farnsworth 1994: 19). The killing of the Dutoit family marked the beginning of the violent murderous actions and suicides that would take place in 1994.

The Order of the Solar Temple also dealt with unwanted scrutiny from the press and public criticism from anti-cult groups. In March 1993, Canadian media outlets ran articles about the arrest of OTS members, and even published extracts from police wiretaps. Two Temple members were arrested for attempting to buy semiautomatic weapons with silencers, which were illegal in Canada. This gave the Order unwanted negative publicity. In Martinique, anti-cult groups became interested in the Order of the Solar Temple, making them feel suppressed. Mayer and Siegler (1999) state:

In the end, critical coverage did not come from Europe or Canada, but from the island of Martinique: on 10 September 1991, Lucien Zecler president of the local branch of the Association for the Defence of Families and Individuals (ADFI), the leading anti-cult movement in France, sent a letter to several associations and centers in Quebec, asking for information on the OTS. The request followed the decision of several citizens of Martinique to sell their worldly goods, leave their families, and move to Canada to escape coming disasters (213).

The investigation by the Association for the Defence of Families and Individuals, along with the police investigation and media articles about the collective's activities regarding illegal firearms caused more unwanted publicity, which in turn made several members publicly separate themselves from the movement (Mayer and Sieger 1999: 213).

Between October 4th and 5th, 1994 a total of fifty-three OTS members were found dead in three locations: in Quebec, Canada as well as in Cheiry and Salvan,
Switzerland. Most had been drugged and then shot, or died from smoke inhalation: some of the bodies had burned up in fires set off by incendiary devices. In Cheiry, 23 bodies had been found, 20 with gunshots to the heads.\(^6\) In Salvan, 25 bodies had been found but most had been burned beyond recognition in fires. Di Mambro and Jouret had died in Switzerland. In Quebec, a young Swiss couple had died in the fire, and the three bodies of the Dutoit family, stabbed multiple times, had been found in a storage closet. Letters written by OTS members were found, explaining that they had not committed “suicide”, but had ascended to new bodies – solar bodies – on the star Sirius. They also stated that they had experienced constant suppression and "systematic persecution" from authorities in different countries (Hall and Schuyler 2006).

After the murders and suicides occurred, anti-cult groups used these violent actions as a way to strengthen their negative messages about new religious movements. The anti-cult movements exploited the “Solar Temple tragedy to attack cults in general” (Lewis 2006: 37). This has been a longstanding trend dating back to Jonestown: the media, in its pursuit for headlines, has at times assisted anti-cult groups in spreading their propaganda about “brainwashing” and “mind control”. In the case of the Order of the Solar Temple, much like Heaven’s Gate, the Branch Davidians and the Peoples’ Temple, the sensational end of the movement gave the media the ammunition it needed to get ratings and confirm in the mind of the public that many, if not all, new religious movements are dangerous to society. Two years after the initial OTS murders/suicides, the police in France began cracking down on what they perceived as dangerous cults. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, in 2005 police in France targeted

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\(^6\) A schism occurred in Quebec in the 1980s and a member named Fallardeau displaced Jouret as the leader in Chierny, Switzerland. The Swiss police theorized that the members of the Chierny commune were murdered for being disloyal to Jouret and taking Fallardeau on as their leader (Palmer 2006).
supposed members of a ‘doomsday cult’: over a three-day period they questioned fifty people, searched their homes and places of work, and detained six people, all at the request of a judge who was investigating the Order of the Solar Temple (Times Wire Reports 1996: 1). After the events of 1994, the remaining Order was perceived as a danger to the public and to their own members.

**Internal Factors**

The leadership made extreme demands of its members, enforcing strict rules of commitment on its core loyal members, yet different lodges had varying levels of involvement with the collective. Some members only made monthly monetary contributions, ranging from $90-350. Yet the commune in Sainte-Anne-de-la-Perade, Quebec demanded high commitment to the group: members had to give large amounts of money to the group as well as volunteer their time to manage the businesses of the collective (such as a school, garden, bakery, and printing press). The individuals in this commune had high collective mobilization as the group had both material and non-material resources available to them: this type of resource mobilization promotes strong bonds of solidarity amongst members in the collective (Della Porta and Diani 2006).

Yet, in various communes, the Order of the Solar Temple had severe internal troubles including dissent and defection, as well as major problems regarding the direction and leadership of the group. Dissent was a major issue for the Order: when the collective was at its height in the late 1980s, it had 300-400 members. There was internal contention surrounding the finances of the group and by the early 1990s some members began distancing themselves from the movement. By the 1990s, only 100 core members remained. Many of the large donors wanted their money back, which
was financially damaging for the group (Mayer and Siegler 1999). Defectors in the Order felt that people were not living up to the standards of what the collective preached. One ex-member claimed that there was constant infighting and the members were never given any information. In 1993 there was a large defection as members found out that their donations had actually gone into home improvements for their leader’s residence rather than to aid the movement (Mayer and Siegler). Even Di Mambro’s own children turned against their father: his son declared that his dad was “a fraud to members of the order” (Mellor 2013: 250). Dissent among members was such a problem that the leadership of both Luc Jouret and Joseph Di Mambro was challenged. Jouret had a charismatic personality and was initially well liked by members. Yet over time he began to “irritate OTS members with his controlling demeanour...he was replaced as Grand Master in Quebec and Di Mambro lost faith in his golden boy” (Mellor 2013: 151). These pressures contributed to collective uncertainty. As well as affecting collective self-esteem, the challenge to Jouret’s leadership made him confront his own prophetic identity. According to Mullin and Hogg’s (1999) framework, Jouret chose to reify his own narcissistic tendencies and authority, and was unable to restore the certainty of the members: in response, some members left the group.

Di Mambro also faced leadership challenges in Europe because members there discovered that some of the miracles they had witnessed were actually “electronic tricks” that Di Mambro had used to fool them (Bromley 2002). Di Mambro was able to initially impress the members, but his narcissistic need to re-affirm his self-impression allowed darker impulses to manifest, leading to negative consequences. In order to dominate and control the group, he turned to deception. Di Mambro eventually became
overwhelmed by health problems, suffering from “kidney failure, diabetes and incontinence” (Mellor 2013: 151). Di Mambro's narcissistic character, unstable esteem and failing health were all endogenous factors that could trigger violent acts in the movement. When members learned of Di Mambro's deceptions from Tony Dutoit, who confessed to faking Di Mambro’s “miracles”, members began demanding refunds of the large amounts of money they had invested into the movement. Without these resources (material and non-material), the collective movement could no longer survive and would disintegrate. The Dutoit family became both an external and internal threat to the Order of the Solar Temple: not only did they defect, but their public confessions caused high levels of uncertainty in active members of the group, which in turn lead to further internal strife. Although many members appeared to believe the Dutoit’s claims of trickery, this did not necessarily undermine the beliefs and goals of the entire group, but it certainly did damage the ability of the leadership to maintain their own credibility. The Order had many internal problems; combined with the external aggregates, they ended up committing acts of murder and suicide.

In spite of their internal problems, Jouret and Di Mambro were able to maintain absolute authority amongst loyal members, especially through 'imagistic' rituals that were emotionally intensive (Atkinson and Whitehouse 2011). Through collective rituals, emotional transformation created solidarity amongst members in the group (Durkheim 1995). Members practiced a radical form of asceticism when experimenting with sex (Palmer 2006). As the inner self was considered sexless, members were encouraged to take on sexual partners of varying ages. Di Mambro would intermittently bestow upon his followers spiritual identities of reincarnated past lives. Absolute authority was
maintained through these revisions in identity, as the new identities were associated with promotions or demotions within the collective. If the new identity had a higher spirituality, that individual would be promoted. The leaders would then perform 'cosmic marriages', shifting the composition of marriages that already existed amongst members, forcing members to illustrate high commitment to the collective. Cosmic weddings forced members to commit to a group ideology, filled them with importance not found in the outside world, and provided those members truly committed to the collective with a deeper sense of dedication to the group ideology (Swann et al 2012). This particular ritual asked members to sacrifice their own selfish desires for the service of the group. It was a marker which allowed members to feel a shared sense of belonging to the collective. These alternative marriage patterns also incorporated members into the divine mission of the leaders: "their goal was to create nine 'cosmic children' to usher in a New Age. Only five existed at the time of 'transit’" (Palmer 2006: 47). Members in cosmic marriages were to fulfill the goal and produce four more cosmic children. Not only did members live by these strict rules of commitment, they isolated themselves from the outside world: they wouldn't sit on chairs that had been used by outsiders for fear of contaminating their energy; they wouldn't let their children play with non-OTS children and when OTS children wanted to play together, they had to wear gloves in order to keep their energy from being contaminated (Palmer 2006).

The dramatic ideology of an impending apocalypse was of great importance to the collective. Jouret reduced the food rations of members so that they would be able to survive the end of time. Loyal members lived very strict, controlling lives, and Jouret and Di Mambro had absolute control over the collective as Grand Masters. When Di
Mambro became sick, he hid his ailments for fear it would affect membership loyalty. He had diabetes, and eventually confided to one member that he had cancer in the 1990s. His daughter Emmanuelle, considered a cosmic child, began fighting against the restrictions placed upon her (born in 1981 she was now becoming a teenager). In 1990, Di Mambro's son Elio, upon finding the props his father used to perform miracles, called his father a fraud. All of these internal issues caused Di Mambro to feel paranoid, and he tried to keep all these issues hidden. Jouret also had a falling out with Di Mambro when he (Jouret) lost the Cheirny commune to another member, reducing his sense of self and certainty.

On October 5, 1994 the group committed several acts of collective suicide and murder in different locations. The various chapters all met with the same fate: it is likely that the majority of those murdered were individuals that did not want to participate in the collective suicide. The group appears to not exist anymore, at least publicly, but some former members have survived. The government in France wished to place legal blame on someone associated with the Order of the Solar Temple. Conductor Michael Tabachnik was accused in a France courtroom for inciting the deaths of members but was acquitted for his role, twice, in the OTS suicides (Schweitzer 2006). If individuals are still practicing the beliefs of the Order of the Solar Temple, they are doing so in secrecy.

To sum up, members of the Order of the Solar Temple were extremely anxious about an external ecological apocalyptic threat that was expected to take place imminently. The group umwelt, because of external suppression from police, media and anti-cult groups (creating group fragility), focused on salvation from the impending
apocalypse so they focused on 'transiting' to new bodies on another planet – in reality, they could only secure their future by committing suicide. The constant persecution and suppression by public criticism and internal pressures that were undermining leadership credibility mobilized them towards collective violence. The Order of the Solar Temple movement met all the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence: a strong apocalyptic belief system; an intense connection between members and charismatic leader Luc Jouret as well as Joseph Di Mambro through an organizational structure of authority; and, excessive social encapsulation. The members maintained the movement's supernatural ideology through new teachings. Jouret and Di Mambro demanded absolute authority over members, and as leaders of a collective movement, suffered from unstable self-esteem and moments of paranoia. The exogenous factors that suppressed the movement and raised tensions between the group and social milieu include: negative media portrayals; disenfranchised apostates; ex-members and anti-cult groups calling for an end to the group; as well as political and legal investigations regarding illegal financial deals and weapons stockpiling. These internal and external factors have been systematically outlined in the summary table below in order to visibly illustrate how the complex intertwining of factors brought about a catastrophic end to the Order of the Solar Temple movement, through acts of self-harm, interpersonal violence and collective violence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORDER OF THE SOLAR TEMPLE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exogenous Factors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>State/Legal/Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
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<tr>
<td>Security Minister, Claude Ryan. Quebec police</td>
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<tr>
<td>State/Legal/Polic</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Defectors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media Representations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anti-Cult Groups</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Solar Temple tragedy to attack "cults" in general and launched campaigns against The Family, Scientology, Jehovah's Witnesses and the Hara Krishnas (37).

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Anti-Cult Groups</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tr>
<td>Anti-cult coverage about the Order came from the island of Martinique: on 10 September 1991, Lucien Zecler president of the local branch of the Association for the Defence of Families and Individuals (ADFI), the leading anti-cult movement in France, sent a letter to several associations and centers in Quebec, asking for information on the OTS. This request made several members living in Martinique sell their worldly goods, leave their families, and move to Canada (213).</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Authority: Loss of reputation</td>
<td>Mellor (2013)</td>
<td>Di Mambro’s children rebelled against their role as ‘cosmic’ children: refusing to perpetuate the charade any longer, his son Elie “denounced his father as a fraud to members of the order” (250).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Authority: Loss of reputation</td>
<td>Mellor (2013)</td>
<td>Tony Dutoit’s told members that he had fabricated miracles through the use of technology: this intensified their doubts, and many of Di Mambro’s congregation demanded refunds on the money they had invested in the Order (250-251).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Authority: Loss of reputation</td>
<td>Mellor (2013)</td>
<td>Though Jouret was originally found charming, members of the Order soon became irritated “with his controlling demeanour. As a result, he was replaced as Grand Master of the Quebec chapter, causing Di Mambro to lose faith in his golden boy” (151).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Authority: Loss of health (leader illness)</td>
<td>Mellor (2013)</td>
<td>Di Mambro began suffering from health problems: he had kidney failure, diabetes, and incontinence. He eventually confided to having cancer but was paranoid that the members would find out about his illnesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Authority: Exposure of</td>
<td>Bromley and Melton (2002)</td>
<td>Di Mambro’s leadership was seriously challenged in Europe when members discovered that the miracles he said to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
trickery and/or deceit

Challenges to Millennial goal:
Dissent and defections within the group
Lewis (2006)
According to the Quebec police report of November 1994, the Dutoit family had been targetted as traitors by Di Mambro. This was because they had named their son Emmanuel: they had usurped the unique position of Emmanuelle Di Mambro, the "cosmic child," and their child was now seen as the Antichrist. This was why baby Emmanuel Dutoit and his parents were killed (36).

Challenges to Millennial goal:
Dissent and defections within the group
Mayer and Siegler (1999)
In the 1990s, several members distanced themselves from the Order. Important donors wanted their money back, and the group's revenues began to decline (212).

Challenges to Millennial goal:
Dissent and defections within the group
Mayer and Siegler (1999)
In 1993, French members became upset when they found out their donations had been used for home improvements in the leader's residence.

Challenges to Millennial goal:
Dissent and defections within the group
Mayer and Siegler (1999)
Defectors told Canadian police that they left the Order because they felt people were not living what they preached. There was infighting and members were never told what was going on.

Aum Shinrikyo

The Aum Shinrikyo movement was founded by Shoko Asahara, born Chizuo Matsumoto. In the early 1980s, Asahara was an acupuncturist, and eventually opened a Chinese herbal medicine pharmacy, but went bankrupt when he was fined for selling fake medicines and served a short prison sentence. Humiliated by his economic ruin, Asahara began studying divination and mysticism. He began performing spiritual healings: he underwent a spiritual journey where he healed himself from self-doubt and a sense of inferiority. Searching for enlightenment, he joined a Japanese new religion
called Agonshu: when he left the group three years later, he claimed that it had been spiritually harmful to him. Receiving a number of visions, he was given a spiritual mission to help people enhance themselves. He opened a yoga school and claimed to have superhuman powers. He then started his own society to help people reach salvation, through teachings on esoteric Buddhism, yoga, self purification and the need to rid oneself of bad karma. Aum Shinrikyo – Teaching of the Supreme Truth – finally became recognized as an official religious organization in 1989 (Lifton 1999).

The group consisted of fifteen members in 1984 and many of these first initiates were still devotees at the time of the subway attacks in 1995. The fundamental aim of the group was to endow disciples with the necessary training required to achieve personal transformation, leading to the universal salvation of humanity. Asahara taught that contemporary Japanese society was spiritually wanting and empty. This perceived condition of Japanese society contributed to spiritual impediments and bad karma, and Asahara and Aum offered a solution to eliminate these symptoms of the modern world. Aum rejected mainstream society as materialistic and depraved. This critical stance seemed to stem from Asahara’s early experiences of rejection and discrimination at the hands of Japanese society. Aum also harboured an essentially pessimistic view of the world as corrupt and materialistic (Reader 2002). Basically, everyone who participated in the materialism of everyday society swallowed its negative karma, which contributed to disadvantageous rebirths. Only by rejecting the world and performing ascetic practices to purify the body and mind could one attain salvation. This emphasis on asceticism was directly related to Aum’s “millenarianism”7 and to the sense of urgency

7 Millenarianism refers to the expectation of an imminent collapse of the entire social order and its replacement with a perfect new order. As cited in McGuire (1997: 43).
and mission from which it was derived. Thus, Aum’s millenarian outlook became a powerful source of change-oriented behaviour.

A series of visions and spiritual messages, beginning in 1985, convinced Asahara that he had a special role in the imminent confrontation between good and evil: through his sacred vocation, he had been entrusted with a divine mission to purify the world, culminating in a final cosmic war between the forces of good and evil. Followers called him Sonshi, meaning Revered Master or Exalted One. His visions provided his followers with a sense of higher spiritual purpose, in that they were to be the rightful victors, the chosen few who constituted the vanguard of Asahara’s sacred army in its spiritual battle against evil. In 1986 Asahara claimed to have a final vision of enlightenment, proclaiming that he had been chosen, required even, to be a great guru, or even a god because of his spiritual achievements (Lifton 1999). Asahara's transformational and charismatic leadership would mobilize his followers.

Despite possessing a negative view of the world and being a world-rejecting movement, Aum’s aspirations for the future were initially optimistic, holding out hope that the final apocalyptic war would be fought on a symbolic, spiritual plane and not in the material universe. Asahara prophesied in 1986 that a nuclear war would occur before 1999, but it could be avoided so long as Aum opened two centres in each country of the world before that time (Reader 2002). He also preached that if he could amass a vanguard of 30,000 spiritually advanced beings by the end of the century, Aum would be able to purify the world of negative karma and bring about a peaceful transition to a new spiritual age. Therefore, his followers were necessary in his plan to save humanity.
In 1986 Asahara established monastic-style orders within the movement called sanghas. They became training centres for an “army of spiritually enlightened beings who would rid the world of karmic evil and prevent the prophesied nuclear war” (Reader 2002: 194). Members had to perform strict ritual practices, sacrificing their own needs in the service of the divine mission and surrendering themselves in order to fuse with Asahara: they had to become clones of their guru (Lifton 1999). In order to fulfill Asahara’s divine mission, members had to renounce their families and jobs, as well as turn over all their monetary resources to the guru. They had to follow strict rules of commitment to the movement: meditating for hours, fasting, prostrating, eating a small amount of food daily and remaining celibate. Asahara also set up gruelling initiations that were emotionally intensive. This high level of commitment fused them to the collective, and created a strong bond with the charismatic leader. Asahara typified a charismatic leader: his narcissism was characterized by feelings of superiority over others and he often disregarded the rights and feelings of others. The initiation tests he gave to participants very often aggressive and harmful, and as such, they maintained his charismatic credibility.

The optimism of Aum’s prophecies and plans were not without their own sets of problems. It was a hard sell to get the world to buy into Aum’s brand of salvation and the world’s spiritual transformation. World salvation was based on Aum’s ability to grow at a formidable rate but, in the early days, the movement only had a few hundred members (Reader 2002). Thus, the narcissistic goal of opening centres around the globe and the creation of wholly operational sanghas, which would nourish and train 30,000 members, seemed unlikely. In reality, Aum only had a few centres in Japan and

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8Sangha is a Buddhist term signifying the monastic community. As cited in Reader (2002: 193).
none elsewhere in 1986. Although the messages Asahara preached resonated with some Japanese, “the steps that Aum emphasized as necessary to rectify the situation were too extreme to persuade large numbers of people it sought to renounce the world” (Reader 2002: 194). Prospective seekers were expected to dissolve ties with family and friends and live an ascetic life in small numbers in a regimented monastic order. They had to agree to follow a strict code and remain socially isolated. However, by the mid 1990s the movement had persuaded 1,200 followers to renounce the world and had gained an additional 8,000 followers in Japan. Although Aum tried to expand beyond Japan, the effort was ineffectual (Reader 2002).

**External Factors**

One can trace the development of five external factors that contributed to an increase in group tension with the wider social environment.\(^9\) In April 1989, Asahara wanted Aum to have legal recognition under the Religious Corporations Law, which would grant the movement certain advantages, such as tax breaks and legal protection from state meddling (Reader 2000). Aum met the criteria for registration – it had been in existence for three years, had its own facilities and had demonstrated that it managed its affairs in a tolerant and law-abiding manner (at least insofar as the public knew at this time). Yet the application was turned down because distressed parents petitioned the application. In response, Asahara and the movement challenged the decision, and the struggle between the forces of truth and evil moved from the symbolic and cosmic realm into the ordinary material level: The Aum collective felt that wider social institutions were seeking to suppress and deny the group its legal rights. Eventually, in

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\(^9\)A caveat should be noted. This part of the analysis is formulated retrospectively and as with most positions of this sort, provides a certain degree of clarity that would not typically exist if the analysis had taken place as the events unfolded. The series of events contributing to religious violence only make sense after the event has occurred.
August 1989, the original decision was repealed and Aum was granted its religious status, yet this legal clash solidified the belief that hostile forces were being directed against the movement (Reader 2000).

In October 1989, Aum began attracting negative media attention. The popular magazine *Sunday Mainichi* launched a publishing run of critical articles under the title “Aum Shinrikyo’s Insanity,” which addressed the group’s aggressive recruitment strategies and means of procuring contributions (Shimazono 2001). The series accused Aum of ruining families, manipulating members and depicted Asahara in an extremely unfavourable light. Also, this negative media publicity served as a rallying point for many concerned family members, leading to the establishment of Aum Higaisha no Kai (Aum Victim’s Society), whereby family members could voice their concerns and find legal representation through the efforts of the lawyer Tsutsumi Sakamoto. Once again Aum reacted furiously, threatening to file lawsuits and denouncing what it observed as persecution and suppression by the law and media (Reader 2002).

In November 1989 Sakamoto and his family vanished. Aum was the prime suspect but it could not be proved (Shimazono 2001). Guided by friends and associates of Sakamoto, which included the journalist Egawa Shoko, there was a concerted effort to hold Aum accountable for the suspected iniquity (Reader 2002). These actions reflected the mounting tension between Aum and the external world and created a heightened sense of paranoia in Asahara and the members of the movement.

Given that these external pressures could compromise the collective’s plan for salvation, Asahara decided that the movement should attempt a foray into politics

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10 In 1995 the bodies of Sakamoto and his family were found. Aum Shinrikyo was responsible for the disappearance and murders.
Asahara created the Shinrito Party (Party of Supreme Truth) to run in the Japanese parliamentary elections of February 1990 (Reader 2000). He argued that the apocalypse would begin in the imminent future and religious action alone could establish Shambhala. All of the twenty-five Aum political candidates were defeated. As a result of the campaign’s failure, Aum’s public image continued to suffer and defections ensued. Asahara stated that his dismal failure was the result of a conspiracy propagated by the authorities who were engaged in destroying the only source of goodness and truth remaining in the world (Reader 2002).

Conflict and suppression also arose in relation to an Aum commune that was established in Namino village, when residents discovered Aum was the owner (Shimazono 2001). The local community asserted that the land required special permission for its development and civil authorities decided that Aum had violated the law once again. Aum began petitioning the government and denounced it on the basis of religious persecution. This conflict culminated in a number of violent clashes and fights between both antagonistic groups (Reader 2000).

In summary, these five external factors contributed to making Aum more insular and antagonistic with regards to the wider environment. The group firmly believed that it could no longer live in relation to the conventional social system because it steadfastly believed that it was being suppressed by conspiratorial forces. The group’s preoccupation with outsiders, who were considered a direct threat to the group, led to contradictory tendencies in Aum, and mobilized them to violence. Asahara now preached a transformation of belief: he prophesized that group could no longer save the world but instead needed to concentrate all group efforts into protecting themselves in preparation for the ensuing Armageddon.
**Internal Factors**

Charismatic groups are likely to materialize at a time when the values of a society are felt to be incapable of addressing key social issues (Galanter 1989). This idea allies with Durkheim’s concept of anomie,\(^{11}\) in that it refers to the inability of a society to provide order and normative regulation for individual members. As a response to this anomic condition, new religious movements (NRMs) may emerge and forge a new basis of order and meaning for potential group members. Thus, NRMs respond to the crisis of moral meaning. Aum Shinrikyo was a movement that appealed to thousands of Japanese people who felt that society and its social institutions were somehow lacking, failing to provide a clear sense of meaning and purpose.\(^{12}\) Shimazono (1995) states that Aum was a response to the “ills of contemporary Japanese society – the poverty of the educational system, the ineffectiveness of established religions, collapse of traditional values, and the bankruptcy of the political order” (381). Accordingly, Aum addressed the failure of these key institutions to provide meaning and value for many members of Japanese society. Galanter (1989) asserts that individuals are more inclined to join such groups if they are dispirited because of situational problems or persistent distress. Miss Rika Miyai,\(^{13}\) a formal doctoral student engaged in Chinese Buddhist studies at Osaka University and Aum member, stated her position with respect to the weightiness of worldly concerns:

> I think that our generation has a very strong consciousness that this world is heading for destruction...We suffer from the anxiety that however much

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\(^{11}\) Anomie signifies a crisis in the moral order of a group. As cited in McGuire (1997: 34).

\(^{12}\) Sociologists of religion typically point to a perceived lack or dissatisfaction with the wider social milieu as the impetus for an individual’s religious affiliation. However, in the case of Aum Shinrikyo, states of distress were found as motivational factors. Testimony of Aum Shinrikyo members serves to illustrate this point.

\(^{13}\) Rika Miyai was one of three speakers invited to the National Christian Council (NCC) Study Center to present her views concerning the Aum Affair.
effort we make, the world won’t change...it’ll just continue on its path to destruction.... (NCC Report 1997: 94).

Extreme identification, fusion and devotion can be seen between the members and Asahara in Aum Shinrikyo. These individuals, who perceived themselves to be facing difficult circumstances leading to personal crises, were drawn to the group. This is considered “a critical precondition for identification with totalist groups” (Mullin and Hogg 1999: 100). People attracted to Aum were dissatisfied with the society in which they were raised, i.e., the demands of the education system, the workplace, scientific rationalism and the emphasis on economic progress. Testimonies of Aum followers espoused opinions of alienation and unfulfillment. Many were hard working, possessed good educations and were on the path to successful careers. Yet they felt deprived and alienated, not on a material level, but rather on an emotional and spiritual level.

Aum offered hope, possibility and answers to questions about their lives and attaining spiritual liberation. Aum emphasized renouncing the world and leaving one’s family, which appealed to many of the young people: it provided them the opportunity to reject their parents and the materialistic values of Japanese society (Mullin and Hogg 1999). Asahara professed that the world was depraved and spiritually bankrupt. He stressed the renunciation of the everyday world and therefore members were to seek liberation from this materialistic world (Mullin and Hogg 1999). According to Galanter (1989), engagement and affiliation with a movement contributes to the individual’s sense of well-being and leads to experiences of profoundly felt emotional and perceptual change. Aum offered its members a hope of salvation after death and led them to believe that they could acquire psychic powers in order to attain spiritual liberation. This hope of salvation was “extremely important in an era when this fear was
very real for many young Japanese” (Reader 2000: 103). The attainment of salvation was acquired through ascetic practices. One could be liberated from bad karma, which would lead to the consummation of worldly happiness and personal transformation would lead to universal salvation (Shimazono 2001). These experiences provided validation to the group’s mission (Galanter 1989). As already surmised in chapter three, new religious movements emerge at a time when society fails to address pertinent human concerns. Aum Shinrikyo offered a response to segments of the Japanese population who felt disenchanted with Japanese society. This premise relates to Mullin and Hogg’s research which asserts that people join groups to reduce subjective uncertainty.

Galanter (1989) states that leaders of such groups are renowned for having the ability to resolve the problems of humanity. Asahara claimed to have had extraordinary experiences in which he attained final gedatsu or liberation. “Gedatsu referred to states of absolute freedom and happiness that could only come after the realization of satori (enlightenment)” (Reader 2000: 32). The achievement of satori and gedatsu meant that Asahara had heightened spiritual awareness, which enabled him to transcend the mundane world. Asahara considered himself to be a guru and spring of spiritual nourishment: as a wholly liberated being he could lead his followers to liberation. He also believed that he could impart spiritual energy and power upon his disciples (Reader 2000).

Asahara stated that he could give his followers powers through charged rituals of initiation, “a special method of practice which causes the transfer of energy in those mysterious areas which we cannot understand simply by listening to or studying the Buddhist law, or that changes one’s consciousness” (Asahara Shoko, as cited in
Reader 2000: 14). In order to acquire these powers, one had to perform different rites, including the drinking of the guru’s blood or boiled hair. This ritual implied that the ingestion of the guru’s holy karma allowed the follower to progress in purifying his/her own karma. Aum Hunshubu, the editor of many Asahara texts, stated that “when we ingest this [blood, boiled hair] our body and soul approach those of the Master, and, consequently, various mysterious experiences occur” (Shimazono 2001: 42).

Another torturous initiation ritual was called the samadhi practice\textsuperscript{14} and involved a five day meditation retreat whereby the follower spent time in an underground airtight chamber, three metres square, without food or water. In order to survive one had to enter samadhi. By succeeding in this practice, one was considered to have achieved higher levels of consciousness (Reader 2000). These sacrificial choices to commit interpersonal violence, to follow the group’s ideologies, built trust and esteem for the leader and depersonalized members. In order to receive the guru’s power, energy and knowledge, they had to be thoroughly devoted and obedient to the leader. Here the tie between leader and devotee is strengthened through strict ascetic practices, which foster a direct relationship of union and subservience through the guru’s transcendent power (Shimazono 2001). These gruelling rituals created a strong cohesiveness in the group.

As explained by Galanter (1989), emotionally distanced members of a group feel greater experiences of distress. Former devotees of Aum claimed a fear of falling into hell when they died, which was a very strong factor which drew them to Aum Shinrikyo in the first place, and also caused them severe distress when they contemplated

\textsuperscript{14}Samadhi is the Buddhist term for the cessation of desire, or enlightenment. Aum adapted this idea and equated it with the ability to stop breathing for long periods of time even though the mind and spirit were able to continue functioning. As cited in Reader (2000).
leaving. Belonging to the group was better than returning to the world of ordinary reality and certain doom. It reduced their subjective uncertainty. Egawa Shoko, a journalist who interviewed Aum disciples in the early 1990s, stated that “concepts of hell and of the resultant need to use this life to attain a rebirth in a higher world were uppermost in the minds of Aum members” (Shimizano 2001: 104). This relief effect provided the foundation for reinforcing the follower’s compliance with the group’s norms.

In relation to the relief effect, the group’s behavioural norms supplied structure in many areas of the member’s lives. Aum created monastic communities called sanghas which consisted of practitioners and seekers who wanted to devote themselves to achieving satori and gedatsu, by freeing themselves of worldly attachments and renouncing the world. Members who wanted to join the sangha severed all ties with friends and family and donated their worldly possessions to Aum. They had to sign contracts which would absolve Aum from any responsibility should any harm come to members who joined the sangha (Reader 2000). Moreover, members were required to dedicate their lives to Aum by working at the communes, and spreading the message of Aum. For their dedication, the group supported them by providing food and shelter at a minimal level (Reader 2000). Consequently, members depended upon the community for all their living needs and well being. At the sanghas, Asahara implemented a system whereby members could acquire holy names, which recognized their spiritual achievements. These spiritual achievements and holy names reflect Galanter’s affirmation that “membership is characterized by levels of ‘sanctity,’ so that a member is continually striving to achieve a higher level of acceptance by conforming all the more with the group’s expectations” (Galanter 1989: 198). Moving through these different levels of spiritual achievement depended upon taking up various practices which would
eventually lead one to gedatsu. The passage from one stage to another represented the different levels of enlightenment all members wished to achieve. By designating individuals with new names and rank, it demonstrated to others that the road to enlightenment was possible and it helped to reinforce and strengthen the objectives of the group. It also provided a framework whereby individual members could gauge their progress in relation to other members. The more one wished to achieve, the more one conformed to the expectations of the group. However, movement through these stages was very challenging and only Asahara had achieved full enlightenment. The development of a complex system further maintained and reinforced the guru's position of power and special status among his followers.

Asahara’s charismatic bond and absolute authority was maintained on the basis of what Wallis would call ‘acts of reciprocity’ between the leader and followers (Wallis 1982). Members enter into a contract with the charismatic leader and that contract is maintained so long as the ‘acts of reciprocity’ continue to be mutually beneficial and continue to have meaning for one’s self-concept, i.e., ingestion of blood and hair, spiritual accomplishments and acquisition of holy names to restate a few of the exchanges that took place. Social identity theory maintains that individuals have both a personal identity (sense of self) and a social identity (group membership) (Tajfel 1982 and Turner 1987). Again, an important motive for identifying with social groups, and in this case Aum, was to reduce subjective uncertainty, particularly uncertainty about subjectively important dimensions of one’s activities with implications for one’s self-concept. Through membership in the group, the previous cognitions, feelings, and behaviours one associated with their individuality became supplanted by an in-group prototype that prescribed new shared cognitions, feelings, and behaviours (Crocker and
Luhtanen 1990). These prototypical features, with which one identified, provided greater
certainty for one’s self-concept. In this context, a devotee’s subjective uncertainty is
reduced and a stable self-concept is created through the establishment of a new social
identity in relation to the authority. Likewise, uncertainty is reduced in the charismatic
leader through the devotees’ recognition of their prophetic self-conception. The guru’s
position of power can also be strengthened and exacted over the group when the
organization is analysed as a social system.

Aum Shinrikyo also operated as a tight social system. Initially, Aum’s beliefs
underscored the possible salvation of humanity but external pressures and an internal
predilection toward violence shifted salvation to only the ‘chosen few’, stressing that the
rest of humanity would suffer at the hands of the apocalypse. Thus, in referencing
Mullin and Hogg, high task importance would relate to the adherents preparation for the
apocalypse and individual enlightenment, whereas high task uncertainty would relate
toward the perceived threat from the external world that could disrupt the goal of the
movement.

The group’s desire for transcendence and liberation, through severe practices
included an innate violent dimension. Members performed extreme acts of bodily
punishment and self-immolation (interpersonal violence). Violent behaviour was
legitimated in the search for truth. The stress placed on spiritual value and practice
contributed to an atmosphere where the group members felt separate from the morals
of Japanese society; it sanctified violent behaviour and even justified them as “worthy
acts” (Reader 2000: 232). Interpersonal violence was considered a rational act by

Asahara interpreted ‘worthy acts’ of violent behaviour, aimed at the external
world, in the following manner: he preached that people who lived in the contemporary material world would suffer illness and death because of their abundance of negative karma. He underscored the need to save people from the amount of time one would suffer in hell and “the spiritual value of killing for salvation” (Reader 2000: 194). People who lived in the physical world were reprehensible for they were greedy, ignorant and compelled by base desires and therefore would not qualify for salvation. They were “unnecessary to Aum’s salvation plan, in which only select souls – those of advanced practitioners – would be able to enter the new post-apocalyptic world” (Reader 2000: 194). Consequently, this view demonstrated the clear distinction drawn between members and non-members, in terms of their intrinsic value as people (Galanter 1989).

Asahara asked his followers if they acquiesced with the need to purge the world of corrupt and base souls and with one voice they shouted ‘yes’ (Reader 2000). In essence, it was better for these non-practitioners to be killed, or ‘sacrificed’ because the sooner they were eradicated, the less bad karma they would accumulate. This shift has the effect of reinforcing the beliefs of the group. This change in belief permitted and legitimated the use of collective violence as a means to protect the group from outside ‘aggression’. At this time in the group’s development, Asahara secretly ordered the manufacture of biological weapons and demonstrated, in advance of the subway attacks, that Aum was prepared to wage death and destruction on Japanese society (Reader 2000). The apocalyptic prophecy re-establishes the group’s purpose (high task importance), sense of direction and deepens the relationship between leader and follower. According to Galanter (1989), this intensified internal focus results in the close monitoring of members that can lead to escalated demands placed upon adherents. Likewise, these demands reflect the intensity of the shared beliefs and social
cohesiveness of the group. Expressions of commitment become replete with an intensified ideological orientation, demonstrating the growing control over the worldview of its members. Such demands quite often require tests of loyalty from its members. These tests of loyalty were often of a violent nature, and between 1993 and 1995 the use of interpersonal violence on members increased as levels of paranoia within the movement escalated (Reader 2000). Violence was used against members suspected of being ‘spies’ or directed against those who wished to leave the group.

These acts of violence were considered to be manifestations of Asahara’s compassion to save his disciples from surrendering to the possible hells. By participating or passively acquiescing in the violence, group members demonstrated their faith and their commitment to the cause. Members went along with the violence because they believed it was the appropriate mode of behaviour. In addition, Galanter (1989) asserts that feedback from the outside can help moderate the leader’s deviant beliefs. Yet in Aum there was little moderation, especially since many members renounced the world and physically isolated themselves by living in sangha communities. These enclosed communal settings contributed to the internal solidarity of the group, as members distanced themselves from society at large and joined together in the shared enterprise of creating a new world within their communal environment. This enabled Asahara to tighten the controls of his authority, by making his adherents more dependent on him. It also firmly demarcated the boundary between the movement and the world at large. The use of internal violence helped to either deter people from defecting or it was viewed as a compassionate act.

Aum Shinrikyo materialized as a response to perceived problems or “social ills” found in Japanese society. Though the movement quickly adopted a world renouncing
stance, it initially wanted to offer the world a chance at salvation, thus avoiding an apocalyptic disaster. However, numerous external factors, of which Aum was partly responsible, contributed to a shift in belief that advocated collective violence. This violence was aimed at the outside world in response to the perception that the apocalypse was now at hand. Furthermore, only the religiously prepared would be saved from the hells of the apocalypse and these prepared souls would be the inheritors of a new ‘utopian’ society. Aum’s actions were based on the belief of an impending apocalypse and the quest for personal salvation. Yet the members felt threatened by the external environment, which in turn precipitated the need for drastic action. Galanter’s model also highlights the fact that people enter groups in order to relieve personal distress. Aum members experienced elements of uncertainty within their own personal histories. Once these potential members engaged Aum, they adopted the ideological position of the group and worked on ascetic practices that mediated and reduced the previous levels of distress. However, as Asahara became increasingly paranoid, his beliefs changed, resulting in acts of internal violence and collective violence.

Consequently, the most salient element leading to the violence was Asahara himself. His charismatic authority commanded such control over his followers, that they were subject to his obsessions, deteriorating personality and his ever increasing sense of persecution and rejection. These elements became so central to the group’s development that they materialized as the internal driving force behind apocalyptic violence. Members revered him as the leader of supreme truth, and it was because of this strong identification and recognition of his power, which enabled him to motivate members to perform acts of collective violence under the sanctity of a divine mission,
while at the same time demanding strict acts of ascetic obedience. Moreover, his lack of accountability to something beyond himself left members at the mercy of Asahara's whims. Additionally, social encapsulation demanded more obedience from members and stressed their increasing dependence on Asahara. Removal from society and entry into the sanghas solidified the borders between the movement and the outside world. This escalated their tensions with the outside world and further heightened the volatility of the movement. The Aum Shinrikyo movement met all the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence: they held an extremely apocalyptic belief system; members had an intense bond with charismatic leader Asahara, maintained through an organizational structure of authority and leadership; and, the group maintained tight social boundaries with wider society, leading to extreme social isolation. The members maintained Asahara's supernatural ideology through his new teachings as he had absolute authority over the members; Asahara's charismatic identity suffered from unstable self-esteem and paranoia. In summary, it was the melding of internal and suppressive external factors – Aum's unwillingness to make concessions with the wider social context, and the group's internal disposition toward violence, guru worship and apocalyptic beliefs along with media, state and legal aggregates – that resulted in acts of religious violence, outwardly. The group umwelt was that those outside the collective were so defiled, they had no right to live. The group acted in a most altruistic manner by killing the unworthy and giving them a 'higher existence' (Lifton 1999: 26).
## AUM SHINRIKYO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exogenous Factors</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>Hall et al (2000)</td>
<td>In November 1994 police began to suspect Aum members of causing previous sarin attacks on different prefectures in Japan. At the beginning of 1995, the largest newspaper in Japan, the <em>Yomiuri Shimbun</em>, publically made the connection of traces of sarin found at two sites, linking them together. Aum acted aggressively towards the allegations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defectors/ Police</td>
<td>Hall et al (2000)</td>
<td>In February 1995, a notary in Tokyo – who was hiding his sister, a defector from Aum who had gone into hiding because she did not want to give them land – was kidnapped. Police investigated the kidnapping and linked it to an Aum member. A national search was enforced, in order to find the 68 year old man.</td>
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<tr>
<td>State/Legal</td>
<td>Reader (2000)</td>
<td>In April 1989, Aum wanted legal recognition under the Religious Corporations Law. Although Aum met the criteria for registration – it had been in existence for three years, had its own facilities and had demonstrated that it managed its affairs in a tolerant and law-abiding manner, the application was turned down.</td>
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<tr>
<td>State/Police</td>
<td>Hall et al (2000)</td>
<td>In 1993, the police were informed that white smoke was emanating from a building that Aum Shinrikyo used. Although the police investigated the case, the members did not allow police entry into the compound and the matter was dropped.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anti-Cult Groups</td>
<td>Hall et al (2000)</td>
<td>Worried parents created the Aum Shinrikyo Victim’s Association in 1989, long before the police ever investigated the movement.</td>
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<td>Apocalyptic Beliefs</td>
<td>Reader (2002); Hall et al (2000)</td>
<td>Asahara prophesied in 1986 that a nuclear war would occur before 1999, but it could be avoided so long as Aum opened two centres in each country of the world before that time. Eventually the group would use violence to bring about the apocalypse.</td>
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<td>Charismatic Authority</td>
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<td>The group’s social encapsulation demanded more obedience from members and stressed their increasing dependence on Asahara. Removal from society and entry into the sanghas solidified the borders between the movement and the outside world</td>
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**Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God**

The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God (MRTCG) was a Ugandan new religious movement that formed in the 1980s, amidst a rash of Marion apparition reports, some authenticated by the Roman Catholic Episcopate in Rwanda. The movement developed out of the teachings of Catholicism, and they first saw themselves as a reformist movement within the Catholic Church: its ideological basis was that the world had gone astray as the Ten Commandments were not being followed and had lost their original importance. In order to right the wrongs of society, the Commandments had to be re-established and strictly followed (Lewis and Peterson 2005: 6). The Catholic Church itself needed to be reformed. To avoid damnation in the

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15 Joseph Kibwetere claimed to have overheard a conversation between the Virgin Mary and Jesus in 1984, proclaiming that the world would come to an end because humans were not following the Ten Commandments appropriately.
coming apocalypse, one had to strictly follow the Commandments. The group developed a large isolated community in Uganda where they lived strict lives in respect of the Ten Commandments. The group had strong apocalyptic beliefs and feared that it was imminent: on March 27, 2000 mass suicides and murders were carried out and the MRTCG ceased to exist.

The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments did not have a typical leadership structure, as it had six men and women at the helm. Yet one individual, Joseph Kibwetere, could be considered to occupy the highest position of authority in the group. The leadership was composed of people who had received supernatural visions of the Virgin Mary and received messages from her about the proper way to live their lives: these visionary messages were then passed along to members of the group. The group can be traced back to one member, Credonia Mwerinde\(^{16}\) (1952-2000?), an ex-prostitute and Catholic nun, who personally had visions of the Virgin Mary starting in 1981: through her visions, she expressed that God was grieving because humankind had abandoned the Ten Commandments (Bromley and Melton 2002). The Virgin Mary told her to change her sinful ways and to prepare for a divine mission in the future. Another member, Angelina Migisha (1947-2000?), eventually went public with claims that she had received messages from the Virgin Mary since childhood, and then from Jesus. Migisha, through her revelations, “announced that twelve new apostles, six men and six women, were to be selected with the assistance of the Virgin and Jesus” to guide the people (Bromley and Melton 2002: 235). Migisha and Mwerinde then recruited her niece, Ursula Komuhangi. They went on

\(^{16}\) After the mass deaths took place, negative rumours began circulating about the leaders of the movement. For instance, Credonia Mwerinde was said to have sacrificed children and drank human blood. None of these statements have been substantiated (Lewis and Peterson 2005).
to recruit Joseph Kibwetere (1932-2000?), a Roman Catholic priest who was well known amongst Ugandans for “his piety, prayer and good works” (Cauvin 2000): these four became the founders of the movement.

The group had a hierarchical structure: each member wore different coloured clothing to signify their position. Those who were new to the group wore the colour black; those who took a vow to follow the Ten Commandments wore green cloths; and, those who were considered to be fully professed members, those willing to die for the movement, wore green and white. The robes acted as touchstones for loyalty to the group and connected members to the common collective identity: it also carried the ideologies of the group so that outsiders would feel confronted by them (Collins 2001). After eight more people were chosen to be a part of the hierarchical structure (all Roman Catholics), these six men and six women were considered to be the twelve apostles, and all claimed to have received visions and messages from the Virgin Mary and Jesus: Kibwetere was the head of the movement, and he functioned as bishop for the group (Venter 2006). His stature and wealth in Ugandan society helped gain the MRTCG more members. He had been a Catholic School supervisor for the region and had founded his own private Catholic school. After serving in the government as a politician in the Catholic Democratic Party, Kibwetere donated land to build two local Catholic churches. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, had written a report in the late 1970s claiming that Kibwetere had tried to pressure bishops to re-install pre-Vatican II practices. It was in 1989 that Kibwetere claimed to have received messages from Jesus.
Kibwetere invited the apostles to come and live on his farm, and eventually two hundred members joined them. Tensions grew between Kibwetere and his family: his wife Teresa had become a member of the movement, and was even elevated to the position of apostle, but she did not like the fact that Mwerende had authoritatively taken over control of her home and her children. Finally Teresa kicked the group out of their home, and Joseph chose the movement over his family. In 1992, Joseph Kibwetere left his family and along with the two hundred members, moved to Kanungu. He never returned to his family (Cauvin 2000). Three more Catholic priests joined the movement.

Credonia Mwerinde had given the group a remotely-located piece of farmland in Kanungu so that they could build a headquarters, a school and other buildings. The members of the Movement lived very segregated lives and had limited mobility privileges. MRTCG “fortified their boundaries and confined their members in various ways” (Venter 2006: 161). They did not allow outsiders to enter the community unless they had studied their prophecies, and members that attempted to leave the group “were attacked and stigmatized as defectors, traitors and deserters” (Venter 2006: 161). The members created a conscious constituency and fused a sense of high morality with high levels of dedication to the collective (Collins 2011). As a collective, they had strong distinctive identities within the group, based on the colour of their robes, and a strong collective identity because of their weak ties to the outside world. The leadership of the apostles, the six chosen women and men, was very powerful as it held supreme and absolute authority over the other members of the group: it was a hierarchy of visionaries. By appropriating the title of ‘apostle’, it became heretical “for anyone to question their authority and pronouncements” (Katongole 2003: 125). The former priests
acted as theologians, explaining the visions and messages of the apostles to the other members. Group members who raised questions were often silenced or frightened into submission. This rigid leadership structure, imposed upon the membership, helped isolate the group from the broader Ugandan society (Katongole 2003).

Given the secluded lives in which the members lived with each other, their greatest source of conflict arose from the strained relationships members had with relatives who were not part of the group (Bromley and Melton 2002). Relationships with those outside the group were at first severely restricted and members were highly discouraged from leaving. The group also used the practice of isolating members from one another. During group events, individuals were constantly shuffled around in order to keep members from communicating and forming relationships. This would quash the potential rise of opposition amongst the membership, but the group went even further than obstructing conversation and preventing relationships: they were extreme in controlling communication (Kanyandago 2011). Members had to follow a strict rule of silence on certain days, and were forced to “use signs if and when they had to communicate” (Katongole 2003). This silence was to make sure members did not break the commandment, “Though shall not bear false witness against thy neighbour.” They were also to remain celibate (even if married), conducted fasts regularly and ate only one meal on Fridays and Mondays. Soap was even forbidden. In this way, members were forced to remain isolated from each other. Members were highly dedicated to elevating their status within the group, creating high collective self-esteem.

The MRTCG also formed a growing ‘us versus them’ mentality, which increased over time. The members were told that they were the ‘holy elect’: by accepting and
living in accordance with the demands of the Ten Commandments, they perceived the outside world as either trapped “in their sinful ways” or as ‘enemies’ who were working for the Devil in an attempt to destroy them (Katongole 2003: 121). Collective identity was defined by collective action: those outside the collective played a fundamental role in the creation of the group's collective action. (Diani and Bison 2004). The group itself was a source of resource mobilization: it could be considered a form of supremacy as it empowered members through their collective experiences. Finally, late in the group's history, they became even further isolated because of perceived external threats from defectors, police and state representatives. Leaders forced members to cut off or severely reduce contact with any non-movement members, including their family and friends (Katongole 2003).

External Factors

The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God experienced several exogenous threats (yet it is worth noting that the external opposition to the movement was relatively minor in comparison to what has been experienced by other new religious movements). Nonetheless, the MRTCG faced hostility from the government, police, defectors, relatives of members, the Catholic Church and from the media. The main governmental opposition the movement faced was in regards to their school. In the mid-1990s the group became registered as a non-governmental organization and received a government license for their school: the school license was revoked in 1998 because it did not meet government standards. They were informed that their teachings were in contradiction to the Constitution, the school violated public health regulations and there were also rumours of the “possible
mistreatment of children” (Venter 2006: 158). This indicates that the group, at least initially, must have been perceived as non-threatening and the government was willing to not only tolerate their presence, but to legitimize their movement and education system. Bromley and Melton (2002) acknowledge that the MRTCG did “not appear to arouse public alarm” in the outside world. Although the movement had problems with relatives and a dispute over its school, it was not understood that the group could be “headed toward a catastrophic end” (Bromley and Melton 2002: 239).

In May 1995 a group of officials and members of a non-governmental organization visited the compound in Kanungu: the leadership, in a typewritten document, provided them with information regarding external persecution of the group. It noted that during a church service, "persecutors" entered the church, barred the exits and then beat and hurt members who were there. The letter also alleged that the movement was driven off their compound in Kanungu for a period of time (Mayer 2011: 209). Although these events cannot be verified, the movement felt threatened by these external pressures and it would have contributed to collective uncertainty. As outlined in the framework by Mullin and Hogg (1999), the leaders had two ways to respond to such threats: they could have re-evaluated their leadership or disregarded the challenges and reified their narcissistic tendencies and authority. The leaders of the MRTCG motivated members to respond to the threat by becoming more insulated from the outside world. Certainty was restored amongst the members and the leaders' prophetic identities were kept intact. Yet, this hostility of persecution from external sources could force leaders to act violently in order to maintain their charismatic credibility (Weber 1978).
The leadership kept their plans highly compartmentalized so most members were not even aware of what was happening around the country, let alone the government, authorities or public. However, post-catastrophe, the Ugandan president claimed that before the horrific events that took place, the authorities had been investigating the group but local officials had chosen not to circulate any negative information to higher officials. Apparently, these reports claimed that the MRTCG was indeed a ‘dangerous’ group, but for some reason locals chose not to forward this information, or chose to ignore such facts (Fisher 2000). It is unclear exactly where the intelligence for these reports may have come from, but it is likely that defectors and the relatives of group members were feeding information to the authorities. In fact, not only did the MRTCG become targets of complaints and campaigns by former members and family members insisting access to their relatives, but they were also pressured by the Catholic Church in Uganda, especially when Kibwetere persuaded two Catholic priests to join his movement. The Church eventually excommunicated Kibwetere and tried to suppress the group (Newport and Gribben 2006). However, authorities did not take these concerns very seriously: it has been alleged that local police may have taken monetary bribes from the MRTCG to remain silent (Newport and Gribben 2006). Yet the external campaigns of defectors and the pressure of authorities may have further contributed to the apocalyptic outcome of the group and added to collective uncertainty, which would have affected collective self-esteem and states of crisis in the charismatic leaders, as their prophetic identities were being directly challenged (Mullin and Hogg 1999). The true motivations of the leadership will likely never be known but it appears that rising internal threats combined with constant external problems and, added together with the
group’s strong apocalyptic principles, likely contributed to the mass murders and suicides of March 17, 2000.

Internal Factors

The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God had, from its outset, specific apocalyptic beliefs: they thought that the world as they knew it was going to end at a date close to the beginning of the 21st Century and the present generation of people in it would meet its end. Initially, the 31st of December 1999 was chosen as the date for the apocalypse and for the group to be delivered into a new social order: Kibwetere declared from his visions, that the world would come to an end because people were not taking the Ten Commandments to heart. The Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ told them to take their message to the people as they would be wiped out by punishments, including AIDS, before finding out God's true mission for them (Venter 2006: 156). Eventually predictions changed (due to ‘false reports’) and the cataclysmic events were now expected to take place at the end of the millennium, at the end of the year 2000. When the leaders began proclaiming their prophesies openly, they wrote (in documents sent to officials) that they were met with hostility, persecution and even torture. Thus, they became even more isolated from the outside world.

The movement’s manifesto, A Timely Message from Heaven: The End in the Present Times (1991), provided a depiction of the world after the impending apocalypse: it declared that after the year 2000 the world would enter a new age, starting at ‘year one’. In this new age, there would exist ‘a new generation’ of humans (those in the movement), but the size of this ‘new generation’ would be wholly dependent on repentance (Mayer 2001). The manifesto prophesized a world filled with
hunger and war, rivers of blood and food too tainted to eat (Cauvin 2000). New members were required to study it and be trained in its prophecies, reading it as many as six times. The movement confirmed its apocalyptic beliefs in a letter it sent to Ugandan civil authorities. The letter asserted the group’s belief that the new world would be populated by a new generation of people, and this generation would only be comprised “of those who have followed the Ten Commandments of God” (Mayer 2001: 207). It appears that the MRTCG may have been attempting to bring about the apocalypse when they committed mass suicide and mass murder in two phases, extinguishing their movement in early 2000.

The group’s endogenous threats aided in bringing about its tragic end. One of the internal threats that arose was within the membership: some began demanding that their donations be returned to them, after group prophecies failed to come about: this would have made the group unsustainable (Bromley and Melton 2002). Without material resources, the group would lose its capacity for mobilization. The group’s two other main internal issues were failed prophecies and dissent amongst members, leading to eventual defection. Wallis (2005) declares that the failures of leadership to accurately predict the apocalypse caused the ensuing suicides and murders. The failed December 31, 1999 apocalyptic prediction apparently caused “significant numbers of the membership...to openly criticize the MRTCG leadership, demanding the return of any money that they had donated” (50). The leaders, as narcissistic individuals, would have experienced ego threats, which inevitably caused aggression and violence to erupt. These personal attacks towards the leadership would lead to threatened self-esteem. When key members began defecting and requested their money back, this action
caused such an internal predicament that the murder/suicides became a simple solution (Wallis 2005). Former members testified that the movement actually predicted the apocalypse to occur on several occasions: the end of 1992, the end of 1995, and December 31, 1999. After the 1999 date passed, widespread opposition and dissent in the movement began to quickly grow (Newport and Gribben 2006).

Earlier on the fateful day of March 17, 2000 approximately four hundred members, the majority who were considered dissidents within the group, were killed and their bodies dumped in mass graves, in six different movement locations around the country. Medical examinations revealed that they had been killed by various methods: strangulation, stabbing and poison. In Kanungu, members had been told to prepare for deliverance at the hands of the Virgin Mary, so they stockpiled food and gasoline: on March 17, 2000, the members gathered in the chapel building that had its windows boarded up (following revelation): they sang, they chanted and then a fierce explosion and fire consumed the building. This mass death led to the discovery of the mass graves of people killed earlier by the MRTCG. After the deaths of March 17, 2000, the media began a firestorm of “cult” fear stories. After the fire, even before all the details emerged, the authorities and media were calling the situation a ‘collective ritual suicide’. The media used the interpretations of “self-styled cult experts” who viewed the incident exclusively through an “anti-cult” perspective (Wallis 2005: 50). This did not leave much room for interpretation as to what really happened: the situation was used to vilify “cults” as a danger to society and to themselves. Only after the mass graves were discovered did the media begin to move in the direction of homicide in their news coverage.
The media and the government made the movement out to be “a cult or sect”, whose members had been preyed upon by their leaders, who “duped them out of their possessions, and led them to a tragic death” (Katongole 2003: 110). Some authorities believe that the leaders died in the fire that killed approximately 780 people in total. Yet their bodies were never identified and so others contend that the leaders committed the mass murders and disappeared with members’ money. It has been theorized that the failure of the doomsday prophecy to come to fruition led to a revolt in the ranks of the movement. But after the first failed prophecy, the leaders then received a vision of a new date – perhaps this is when they decided to do away with their followers. The fact that the church has been boarded up while members were inside worshipping, bodies were found at multiple sites and the presence of flammables all point to the reality of this theory. Furthermore, the disappearance of the leaders leaves all questions unanswered. Members who did not die that day stated that the Movement leadership had never spoken of mass suicide when preparing members for the end of the world. The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God only lasted a short number of years but its sensationalistic ending would impact the community for many years to come. Uganda, along with other countries such as Togo, Kenya and Rwanda began investigating minority religions in order to suppress them.

In summary, The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God was led to feel immense perceptions of threat, both externally and internally: Kibwetere and the other apostles proclaimed that the apocalypse was to take place on a certain date (this date changed but the end of the world was declared). Their umwelten, or particular worldview of the movement, was that the external world was sinful. The
movement dealt with apostates and concerned family of members, but the external world did not mobilize them towards collective violence as much as the endogenous threats facing the leadership: their prophecies kept failing to come to fruition. This alone could have lead to the downfall of the movement, as many members then wanted their money returned. The MRTCG met all the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence: they had a strong apocalyptic worldview with an impending denouement; there was a well-built organizational structure that was predicated on the charismatic leadership and authority of Kibwetere (as their bishop) and an intense connection between members and the apostles; and, the group was highly socially encapsulated through firm social boundaries with the wider world. Members of the MRTCG maintained the apostles' supernatural ideology through new Christian teachings. The apostles demanded absolute authority from their members, especially in regards to cutting ties with family and friends. The leaders of the collective movement eventually suffered from unstable self-esteem and moments of paranoia, particularly from external aggregates. Exogenous factors that suppressed the movement and raised tensions between the group and social milieu include: disenfranchised apostates and angry families who had been denied access to their family members; state issues when the movement's school license was revoked and local police investigations that found the group to be dangerous (although these findings were not sent to state officials). These internal and external factors have been systematically outlined in the summary table below in order to visibly illustrate how the complex intertwining of factors brought about a violent end to the movement.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exogenous Factors</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media Representations (only relevant after the end of the MRTCG)</td>
<td>Walliss (2005)</td>
<td>After the fire and deaths of members on March 17, 2000 both the Ugandan police and the world media quickly labelled the act as a ritual &quot;collective suicide&quot; (5). The media began comparing the deaths in Uganda with other examples of collective “cult suicides.” News programs and newspapers interviewed “self-styled cult experts” who proffered anti-cult explanations of the events.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defectors</td>
<td>Newport and Gribben (2006)</td>
<td>Like Aum Shinrikyo, the MRTCG became a target for complaints and campaigns by former members and relatives of members who wished to see them. During the 1990s MRTCG also felt pressured by the Catholic Church in Uganda and eventually Kibwetere was excommunicated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Venter (2006)</td>
<td>In 1994 the MRTCG was registered as a non-governmental organization and received a licence to open a school. In 1998, the license was revoked by the government because they felt that their teachings went against regulations, they contravened health regulations and there were rumours that children were being mistreated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State and Media Representations (only relevant after the MRTCG ended)</td>
<td>Katongole (2003)</td>
<td>After the mass graves were found, the media and government reports portrayed the MRTCG as a cult or sect, whose members had been preyed upon by their leaders. They unwittingly gave up their possessions and were led to their deaths. The Ugandan government saw these events as acts of murder and issued arrest warrants for Mwerinde, Kibwetere, and Father Kataribabo even though they were thought to have perished in the fire at Kannungu on March 17, 2000.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Newport and Gribben (2006)</td>
<td>Although local Ugandan authorities received requests to investigate the MRTCG by former members and family, it's believed that they may have been</td>
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<tr>
<td>Endogenous Factors</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Challenges to Millennial Goal: Failure to fulfill goal/problems related to the goal</strong></td>
<td>Walliss (2005)</td>
<td>After the murder-suicides, a new theory emerged: the deaths were in response to a crisis within the MRTCG because numerous prophetic claims about the apocalypse had been disconfirmed. Following the last prophetic failure that the world would end on December 31, 1999 a number of members openly criticized the leadership and demanded the return of their money.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Challenges to Millennial Goal: Dissent and Defections within the group</strong></td>
<td>Walliss (2005)</td>
<td>Several key members of the Movement defected when the apocalypse failed to take place on December 31, 1999. Faced with dissatisfied followers, the MRTCG leadership “allegedly set about liquidating any opponents before engineering their own and their followers’ deaths, or, according to some accounts, fleeing the country with the money” (50).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Challenges to Millennial Goal: Dissent and Defections within the group</strong></td>
<td>Newport and Gribben (2006)</td>
<td>Former members testified that the MRTCG leadership had predicted the end of the world for the end of 1992, then the end of 1995, and then again on December 31, 1999. Dissent amongst members grew when the date passed without incident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenges to Millennial Goal: Dissent and Defections within the group</strong></td>
<td>Bromley and Melton (2002)</td>
<td>MRTC leaders, not willing to wait for the new predicted date of the apocalypse, may have orchestrated the deaths of its membership. This could have been brought on because many members wanted their money, making the group</td>
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The Branch Davidians

The Branch Davidians were a Seventh-day Adventist Church movement. The history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church dates back to the 19th century: the movement’s primary belief was that Christ would return to earth. Shortly after the turn of the 20th century the Davidian Seventh-day Adventist Church was born: the Branch Davidian movement eventually emerged as a splinter group. The Branch Davidians were originally led by the Roden family, as leadership passed from father to mother and then to son. By the 1980s, a power struggle ensued between George Roden and the young charismatic Vernon Howell (1959-1993). Roden’s popularity began to decline and Howell’s popularity began to grow. Eventually George Roden was charged with murdering a member of his church (who claimed to be the true messiah), leaving Howell to take charge of the Mount Carmel Center. Howell, who claimed to have prophetic powers, would eventually claim the leadership of the Branch Davidians in 1987. Howell was raised in the Adventist Church: in 1981 he went to live at the Mount Carmel training center – a denominational college – as he was interested in theology. As a young man, Howell claimed to talk to God and God started talking back. When Howell took over the Branch Davidian group, the group created a number of businesses at the Mount Carmel Center and purchased guns. By 1993, there were 130 members living at the center.

Vernon Howell was an extremely charismatic leader of the Branch Davidians. In 1990, Howell changed his name to David Koresh. This was done because Koresh had a “divine revelation” on a trip to Israel, where he became the new Cyrus and David: his
new name became a combination of the two (Koresh being Hebrew for Cyrus). Historically, David and Cyrus had been "anointed," meaning that they had been divinely chosen and formally appointed by God to be King (Chryssides 2001). His new name professed him to be the spiritual descendent of King David, from whose lineage the messiah would come. Koresh now had a divine mission (Bromley and Silver 1995). As a charismatic leader, Koresh had the ability to change his followers' values, beliefs and attitudes, as his ideology presented them with an inspirational vision of the future (Weber 1968).

When Koresh finally took control of the Branch Davidians, his followers saw him as a prophet. The group members believed Koresh had been given the ability to interpret the Bible correctly: Koresh foretold the impending Second Coming of Christ and the opening of the Seven Seals of the Book of Revelation (Newport 2006). Koresh wielded immense power over his followers and he imposed strict rules of commitment over his members. The Davidian men followed his ‘directions’ about all their behaviours and intimate relations. They even became celibate so that only he, Koresh, could father the community’s children (Newport 2006: 213). As a social movement, traditional customs of marriage were no longer required. Koresh broke deeply held rules and norms (such as having sexual relations with under-aged girls), and provided members in the group with a sense of community and identity. Members of the Branch Davidians became part of Koresh’s sacred family. As a prophetic movement, they became a tightly organized communal group, which kept itself socially secluded from the outside world. Koresh remained the unquestioned absolute leader of the Branch Davidians for several years.
Eventually Koresh established the House of David at Mount Carmel, creating separate living spaces for male and female members of the collective and created hierarchies within the movement based on loyalty to Koresh, over family. Loyalty tests allowed members to make sacrificial choices for the ideology of the group, and built trust and esteem for their leader. One such loyalty test required members to go and kill the townsfolk of Waco: members were to prove that they could kill for God first, in order to die for God (Koresh cancelled this test). Members who took on self-sacrificial and cooperative behaviours were more willing to abandon their own self-interests in favour of the collective (Yorges, Weiss and Strickland 1999). The group adhered to Koresh’s absolute authority and socially isolated themselves as he created and ‘us versus them’ mentality toward outsiders. When the 1993 raid and siege took place it was interpreted by the group as the beginning of the Second Coming of Christ. According to Wessinger (2000), the tactics carried out by the ATF and FBI confirmed “Koresh’s prophecies and enhanced his status as the messiah in the eyes of his followers” (57).

The Branch Davidians, under the command of Koresh, were told to cut their “earthly ties,” meaning they were to separate themselves from their families and friends (Chryssides 2001: 53). Koresh made the group members believe that they were religiously superior in contrast to the outside world. Followers were taught that they were “the ‘first fruits’ (Revelation 14:4) or the ‘wave sheaf’ (Leviticus 23:10-11) of humanity, and through their faith, “had come to the truth before others, who would be included in God’s Kingdom” (Wessinger 2000: 85). The Davidians separated themselves from society because they deemed it to be corrupt like Babylon. This social encapsulation would have heightened paranoia and internal violence. They moved to
Mount Carmel in order to live their lives in total dedication to God and viewed the world outside Mount Carmel as unethical: they believed that Koresh was providing them with the true interpretation of the Bible, while the rest of the world only saw lies. According to Rifkind and Harper (1994), the most essential rule amongst the Davidians was to “never admit to anything when questioned by outsiders” (70). Not only were members told to avoid speaking to non-members, they could only leave the compound if they had obtained permission from Koresh: they had to specify why they needed to leave and how long they would be gone (Rifkind and Harper 1994). As members of a collective mission, it was their duty and obligation to follow the charismatic leader’s absolute authority (Weber 1968).

The Branch Davidians long held very strong apocalyptic beliefs. They accepted as true that they were living during the time of the Second Coming of Christ, and with it would come the end times. David Koresh prophesized an apocalyptic end of the world, through his interpretations of Biblical scripture. Koresh also drew parallels between himself and Jesus Christ. Originally, Koresh had claimed that he and his followers would travel to Israel and he, Koresh, would be crucified and die on the cross. When the movement settled in the Mount Carmel Center outside Waco, Texas in 1989, Koresh then declared that the end would come at Carmel (Wessinger 2009). Koresh informed his followers that the apocalypse was upon them and, after he was killed, he would rise up from the dead like Jesus. He “preached that he would be resurrected three and a half years after his death, at which time he would return to earth and avenge his death” (Wessinger 2009: 120). Koresh used the Book of Revelation to formulate his apocalyptic predictions. The Book of Revelation proclaimed that the Seven Seals would
be opened at this time, and Koresh claimed that he, himself, would be “the rider on the white horse who would appear” when the first seal was opened (Court 2008: 178). Branch Davidians expected to take part in a great battle that would ensue between with ‘the demonic forces of the Babylonians’ (the USA) which was to take place in 1995. Koresh preached that they would all eventually be slaughtered in this battle, but they too would rise again “with the Heavenly Host to join in the final conflict of Armageddon” (Court 2008: 179). Their apocalyptic belief system tied directly into the aggressive ATF raid that took place at Mount Carmel in 1993. They were preparing for a great battle between good and evil: they deemed the outside world to be the enemy and it posed a direct threat to them.

**External Factors**

David Koresh and The Branch Davidians had immense opposition from external factions: other religious factions, the media, defectors, anti-cult groups, as well as various levels of government and police forces played a part against the movement. Before the ATF raid, the movement had tensions with the Seventh Day Adventists (SDA): Davidians tried to recruit their members, sometimes interrupting their church services in order to spread their message; they proselytized at the Southwest Adventist College, handing out literature and aggressively arguing and shouting with students until they were physically removed from the premises; they went to other SDA churches and Koresh would profess his interpretations of scripture in order to gain converts. The Branch Davidians did try to proselytize in Israel and the general public in the United States, but were not successful so did not pursue this avenue of recruitment.
Disaffected family members joined anti-cult groups to protest their lack of access to family members. And defectors became their loudest critics. This opposition would become influential in the raid that took place. According to Hall et al (2000), over a year before the raid occurred, several defectors came forth and publicly claimed that the Mount Carmel Center was turning into "another Jonestown" (38). These defectors went rapidly from a small issue to an enormous dilemma. Marc Breault, a Davidian apostate and former recruiter, turned on Koresh becoming his vociferous opponent after finding out Koresh was having sex with underage girls (Wessinger 2000). Breault also claimed Koresh was planning to sacrifice the children on the compound. However, during the investigation Texas Child Protective Services dropped the case for lack of evidence (Wessinger 2000). Breault used the media, stating that the Branch Davidians were another Jonestown waiting to happen. In fact, Breault brought a film crew from Australia to Mount Carmel. Their mandate was to "expose Koresh as a cruel, maniacal, child-molesting, pistol packing, religious zealot who brainwashed his devotees into believing he was the messiah...who eventually would lead them into an all out war with the United States Government, and finally to their deaths" (Walliss 2004: 86). Rather than conferring with Davidian members, the journalists took Breault’s allegations at face value, thereby creating a sensationalized news story, possibly exaggerating the threat posed by Koresh and the Branch Davidians. Breault also convinced another former member to seek custody of his daughter, who was at the Mount Carmel Center, out of concern that she could potentially be sexually abused. The accusations being made in the custody case brought the Davidians directly to the attention of the authorities (Newport and Gribben 2006). This type of negative impression would be an ego threat.
and could create unstable self-esteem in the leader, likely pushing the leader to engage in aggressive behaviour: the highest levels of aggression are often found amongst individuals invested in grandiose self-images (Bushmeister and Baumeister 1998). David Koresh epitomizes this description of a charismatic leader.

The media may not have been the most destructive factor leading to the violence at Mount Carmel, but its role needs acknowledgement. The negative narratives spread by the media and apostates invariably had an effect on the BATF’s approach to the siege at Mount Carmel. As Wessinger illustrates, “the tactic taken by apostates, of exaggerating the facts and disseminating ‘atrocity tales’ to magnify the dangers of the group, had the effect of motivating law agents to use excessive force, which inevitably killed the children and young women” (2000: 94). Furthermore, Marc Breault had become an informant “to several government departments in their investigations of the Davidians in the months leading up to the authorities’ raid on Mount Carmel” (Newport and Gribben 2006: 38). Along with other former members, Breault pushed the authorities to act against David Koresh and the Branch Davidians. Wessinger (2000) asserts that the ATF raid was indeed influenced by this group of defectors, especially when they compared the Branch Davidian members to Jonestown residents, declaring that they too were willing to commit mass suicide. Defectors further claimed that Koresh would not acquiesce to a search of the Center and any long investigation would lead the members to commit suicide. The ATF, upon receiving this intelligence, believed that the best tactic to use would be the element of surprise, in order to minimize any such threats (Wessinger 2000).
On February 28, 1993 the ATF raided the Branch Davidian compound with search warrants, looking for illegal firearms and explosives. During the standoff, Koresh circulated a videotape outside the compound and acknowledged that he had fathered at least twelve children by a number of wives, some of whom were as young as twelve or thirteen. Thus the allegations of sexual abuse, as well as physical abuse, were a concern for the Justice Department (Tabor and Gallagher 1995). Although it’s not known who shot first (the ATF claim it was the Davidians and the surviving Davidians claim they did not shoot back until they had been fired upon), there was a shootout and David Koresh was wounded. After a fifty-one day standoff, the FBI launched a gas attack on April 19. A fire eventually spread across the compound, and in the end, eighty Branch Davidians (twenty-two were children) died. Many of the members died from asphyxiation, while a group of women and children were fatally injured when debris collapsed on them during the fire. Officials also stated that others were shot to death or committed suicide in apparent mercy killings (Tabor and Gallagher 1995).

In trying to understand the governmental reactions at Waco, the media played a crucial part. The defectors who publicly announced that the group would commit mass suicide were broadcast by the media before, during and after the raid. Initial reporting in the media, at the beginning of the siege, substantiated to the public that the situation at Waco was “a case of a religious maniac who, together with his followers, had finally gone right off the rails” (Newport 2006: 2). Jonestown associations were made immediately. Oprah Winfrey brought former Peoples’ Temple member Timothy Stoen onto her show to make this comparison and his voice carried weight, as she stated that he truly understood “cult mentality” (Tabor and Gallagher 1995: 121).
The media relied on the use of ‘cult scare tactics’ that had become popular in the previous two decades. The disparaging “cult” label was emphasized in order to justify the actions taken against the Branch Davidians: the siege that ensued could be validated “as a just extermination of nonhuman beings; they were brainwashed cultists duped by a false messiah who was really a con man” (Wessinger 2000: 59). By utilizing the derogatory label of ‘cult’, the public was led to believe that, like the Peoples’ Temple, members of the Branch Davidians could easily commit mass suicide, and the blame would fall directly onto Koresh (Newport 2006). Media headlines declared that the Branch Davidians had a ‘death wish’ and called the members ‘children of the cult’ (Rosenfeld et al 1994: 921). After the events unfolded in Waco, the media framed the actions of the government and ATF as a ‘fiasco’, but David Koresh and the members of the group were also negatively portrayed “as murderers, sexual deviants and psychopaths” (Rosenfeld et al 1994: 922). By depicting the Branch Davidians as brainwashed devotees of a crazed cult and their leader as an ‘out of control madman’, the media was able to justify the actions taken against the movement. Koresh was constantly labelled a madman, a manipulator who had the power of mind control: Koresh was even compared to Charles Manson for his ability to manipulate people’s minds (Tabor 1995).

The media successfully planted ‘cult bias’ into the minds of the American people so that the government and police force seemed justified in taking such drastic measures in ‘diffusing’ the situation at Mount Carmel. In fact, both the ATF and the FBI acted exceptionally aggressive toward the Branch Davidians and academics have argued that there was no need for either the raid or the siege to have taken place. In
fact, as far back as May of 1992, Koresh personally contacted the ATF and offered to cooperate with them, as he was concerned about legal issues. Furthermore, Koresh regularly left the Center to go into town or go jogging, and arguments have been put forward that the search warrant and/or arrests could have been made at that time with little recourse (Foster et al 1998: 5).

The ATF was also dealing with its own internal problems and it has been asserted that the ATF believed “a successful Rambo style raid” would provide them with more authority; that the ATF fabricated evidence so that they could use a show of force; and, that the ATF were indeed the first to fire, upon the Branch Davidians (Foster et al 1998: 5). During the standoff, FBI agent Bob Ricks, who was handling press briefings, repeatedly portrayed Koresh as a “lying, manipulating 'punk' who thought he was god, abused children, had sex with minors, and interpreted the Bible through the barrel of a gun” (Tabor and Gallagher 1995: 106). The actions of the FBI substantiated Branch Davidian prophecy that they were undeniably at war with Babylonian forces of darkness. As the group was preparing themselves for an apocalyptic battle, they considered the United States to be the evil threat for which they had been waiting. The military style aggression facing them could easily be interpreted as the beginning of an apocalyptic doomsday scenario.

Anti-cult and ex-member groups furthered the ‘cultist’ propaganda and openly played into the apocalyptic fears of the group. The ATF and FBI relied on advice from “cult deprogrammer” Rick Ross, who also negatively influenced public perceptions about the Branch Davidians in a number of media interviews (Newport 2006: 155). Anti-cult groups, the media, the police and government all publicly framed the Waco standoff
as a situation which required brute force: Koresh was depicted as a threatening loose cannon leader of a mind-controlled group that was fully armed, unpredictable, who had the potential for lethal violence and/or mass suicide. By perceiving the group in this way, these actors, especially the ATF, actually created a self-fulfilling prophecy where collective violent confrontation and acts of suicide (self-harm and interpersonal violence) were likely outcomes of the siege. These external threats directly ended the world for the Branch Davidians at Mount Carmel.

**Internal Factors**

Although the Branch Davidian movement did experience various endogenous issues, they were greatly overshadowed by the many external forces opposing the group. The main internal problem was that of member defection. David Koresh’s alleged appetite for “marrying” teenage girls was a point of major contention for some defectors. Marc Breault, who defected in 1989, stated that he had experienced “some serious doubts about Koresh for some time, and when he witnessed a thirteen-year-old girl go into Koresh’s room and spend the night he decided to leave the group” (Newport 2006: 201). As previously mentioned, Marc Breault was a highly problematic defector for the group: his allegations convinced the media and then law enforcement to investigate Koresh. However, before Breault completely defected, he represented a dissenting movement within the Branch Davidians. While giving Bible study sessions in Australia, Breault tried to convince members there that Koresh was actually a “false prophet” and that he, Breault, was the true prophet (Wessinger 2000: 96). Although such actions could have led to Koresh experiencing ego threats that could then end aggression, the members of the Branch Davidians maintained group cohesion by obeying Koresh on the
merits of his vision and mission. Consequently, these issues of dissent and defection seem relatively minor when compared with the exogenous threats the group was facing.

To this day, questions continue to remain unanswered: who fired the first shot, which led to the 51 day standoff? Who set the fire, the Branch Davidians or the tear gas inserted through the fence by the FBI? There is no conclusive evidence around this situation. Regardless, the Davidians died and that version of the group was ended. The Branch Davidians still exist today, however the group’s teachings are different than those of Koresh. The 1993 Waco, Texas siege at Mount Carmel continues to keep the Branch Davidians in the public eye. In fact, there is a limited television series show in development about the siege by the Weinstein Company.\(^{17}\)

In summary, according to Hall and Schuyler’s categories that leads movements to commit violence, the Branch Davidians fit all of the criteria: they held a very distinctive and inspirational apocalyptic worldview with a looming denouement; their organizational structure was predicated on the charismatic leadership and absolute authority of David Koresh (the strong bond that Koresh had with his members allowed him to maintain tight internal social control over them); and, they had socially isolated themselves from wider society and maintained firm boundaries with the outside world. Members upheld Koresh’s supernatural ideology through his new interpretations of Christian scripture. Koresh’s charismatic social identity suffered from unstable self-esteem and instances of paranoia, which only became worse when external

\(^{17}\) According to an article in The Hollywood Reporter by Lesley Goldberg (2016), the series will offer perspectives from both sides of the standoff. Utilizing two biographies – A Place Called Waco, written by Branch Davidian member David Thibodeau who survived the fire at Mount Carmel on April 19, 2003 and Stalling for Time: My Life as an FBI Hostage Negotiator, written by FBI special agent in charge of negotiations Noesner – the series will chronicle the events that led up to the siege and the 51 day standoff between the Branch Davidians and the FBI/ATF.
aggregates, such as the ATF raided the compound, impacted the group. The movement’s umwelt, or particular worldview, was that the Second Coming of Christ was at hand and, as Koresh had predicted, they were now meeting their tragic end (to be slaughtered), but they would rise again. The actions of the ATF and the press mobilized them towards interal and collective violence. The exogenous factors that suppressed the movement included negative press, defectors, and anti-cult groups, and in particular, government suppression. These aggregates raised tensions between the group and social milieu. The internal and external factors, outlined below in the summary table, visibly illustrate how the complex intertwining of factors brought about a violent end to the Branch Davidian collective. Although it's unknown whether the ATF raid caused the fire that killed the majority of the members in the compound, it is clear that Koresh and the Davidian members did not want to give themselves up to outside forces during the fifty-one day stand-off. Those outside the compound were corrupt and immoral, like those in Babylon. The Branch Davidians saw themselves as a moral force, and would have considered dying as a sacrifice on their part. If Koresh had given himself up, he would literally have contradicted his own beliefs, prophecies and visions as the messiah, rejecting his extraordinariness – the collective, in defending the compound, were defending themselves. In order to maintain their belief system, they had to rigidly defend it without question (Zurcher 1982). Yet the group would not have been pushed to commit any acts of violence if they had not been pressed by the actions of the FBI and ATF. According to social identity theory, it might explain why the group mobilized itself to take up arms and remain in a 51 day standoff. The group, as well as David Koresh, maintained a sense of moral superiority over those outside the group; a
strong ‘us versus them’ mentality. They believed that they would be resurrected after the battle between good and evil had taken place. So they were willing to stay on the compound and fight the war they believed was meant to happen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exogenous Factors</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media Representations (during the ATF raid)</td>
<td>Newport (2006)</td>
<td>Initial media reports described Koresh as a cult leader who had brainwashed his followers. There were some balanced media reports which became more regular during the siege, but the initial coverage fixed public sentiment that Koresh was a religious maniac who, had “gone right off the rails” (11). Comparisons to Jonestown were quickly made in the press.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media Representations (during the ATF raid)</td>
<td>Newport and Gribben (2006)</td>
<td>National news magazines portrayed Koresh as “a deranged sex-crazed, gun-toting ‘cult leader’, and the Branch Davidians as passive followers” (153). The public expected the group to commit mass suicide, and if they did, the blame would lie with Koresh.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media Representations</td>
<td>Wessinger (2000)</td>
<td>The media disseminated the ‘Cult’ stereotype and increased public panic about the group. The public came to regard members of the Branch Davidians as “brainwashed cultists duped by a false messiah who was really a con man” (59).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Representations</td>
<td>Rosenfeld et al (1994)</td>
<td>Due to negative media depictions of Koresh, the public began referring to Koresh as “that wacko from Waco” (921). Headlines used belittling terms for his followers, claiming they had a &quot;death wish&quot; and were described as 'children of the cult&quot; (921).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media Representations</td>
<td>Rosenfeld et al (1994)</td>
<td>Not long after the fire was extinguished at Mount Carmel, news media described the actions of the FBI and ATF as a ‘fiasco’. In response, disparaging portrayals of the Branch</td>
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<td>Source</td>
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<td>Davidians</td>
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<td>circulated, describing members as “murderers, sexual deviants, and psychopaths” (922).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media Representations</td>
<td>Strenski (1993.)</td>
<td>Koresh was described as a madman in the media.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media Representation</td>
<td>Tabor and Gallagher (1995)</td>
<td>Former members publicly stated to the media and government officials that Koresh was a madman who manipulated his followers. ABC News correspondent Tom Jarriel stated: &quot;The power of this mad man, as told by three who broke away from the cult, were his skills at manipulation and mind control, powerful skills, frightening skills&quot; (124). He was compared to Charles Manson, in the way that he was easily able to “manipulate minds” (125).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Representation</td>
<td>Tabor and Gallagher (1995)</td>
<td>Timothy Stoen, a former member of the Peoples Temple, was brought onto the Oprah Winfrey Show during the standoff because, as Oprah Winfrey claimed, he understood the “cult mentality” – the events at “Jonestown were being used as an interpretive model for Koresh and the Branch Davidians” (121).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defectors</td>
<td>Newport and Gribben (2006)</td>
<td>Former Branch Davidian member Marc Breault was used as an informant by various government departments during their investigations of the Davidians. This information led the authorities’ raid on Mount Carmel. He also portrayed the Branch Davidians negatively in the media (38).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defectors</td>
<td>Hall et al (2000)</td>
<td>Former Branch Davidian members asserted that the group would commit mass suicide like the Peoples’ Temple at Jonestown, more than a year before the February 1993 standoff.</td>
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<td>Source</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defectors</td>
<td>Newport (2006)</td>
<td>Former members brought Koresh to the attention of the authorities because of their assertions of violence and impeding suicide. On February 26, 1992, Jewell and Breault “contacted the Texas Department of Human Services and made further charges of actual or potential child abuse at Mount Carmel” (202).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defectors</td>
<td>Wessinger (2000)</td>
<td>Ex-members stressed that the Branch Davidians were likely to commit mass suicide like Jonestown members. They asserted that David Koresh would not allow a search of Mount Carmel, and would force members to commit suicide. Thus, the ATF decided to use &quot;the element of surprise&quot; on the compound in order to minimise the threat of mass suicide (60).</td>
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<tr>
<td>State/Legal/Police</td>
<td>Foster et al (1998)</td>
<td>David Koresh had heard rumours of possible problems in 1992 and offered to cooperate with the ATF. Instead they got a search warrant to enter the compound, rather than working with Koresh or waiting until he had left the compound to serve him. “The BATF prepared to use massive force, including military helicopter gunships that would eventually strafe the community from the air (5).</td>
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<tr>
<td>State/Legal/Police</td>
<td>Foster et al (1998)</td>
<td>On February 28, 1993, David Koresh (unarmed) came to the door of the main building with “hands up to face black-suited BATF agents, asked them what was going on, and then fell back when the front line of the BATF erupted with gunfire, using armor-piercing bullets (5).</td>
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<tr>
<td>State/Legal/Police</td>
<td>Foster et al (1998)</td>
<td>On April 19, 2003 the FBI and ATF rammed the walls of the compound with Combat Engineering Vehicles (modified M60 tanks) in order to infuse gas into the buildings. A fire broke out, killing eighty members.</td>
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<tr>
<td>State/Legal/Police</td>
<td>Tabor and Gallagher (1995)</td>
<td>FBI spokespersons, agent Bob Ricks and his associate, constantly portrayed Koresh as a “lying, manipulating ‘punk’ who thought he was God, abused children, had sex with minors, and interpreted the Bible through the barrel of a gun” (106). The FBI reasoned that Koresh had to dealt with severely as he was, “first and foremost, a psychopathic con man” (106).</td>
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<tr>
<td>State/Legal/Police</td>
<td>Tabor and Gallagher (1995)</td>
<td>The FBI played the role of antagonist, confirming to the Branch Davidians that, according to prophecy, they were in a war with Babylonian forces of evil (111).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anti-Cult Groups</td>
<td>Newport and Gribben (2006)</td>
<td>The ATF and FBI relied on advice from deprogrammer Rick Ross as to the best way to deal with the Branch Davidian investigation. He also served as an advisor to ATF and FBI agents during the standoff in 1993. Rick Ross influenced public perceptions of the case through television interviews, portraying Koresh negatively and calling the group a ‘cult’ (155).</td>
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<tr>
<td>State/Legal/Police</td>
<td></td>
<td>The ATF placed the Branch Davidian compound under surveillance and tried to infiltrate the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endogenous Factors</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Quote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Millennial goal: Dissent and defections within the group</td>
<td>Newport (2006)</td>
<td>In July 1989 Marc Breault left the group due to concerns about Koresh having sex with teenage girls and publicly shared this thoughts. “As Breault told the story he was working on a computer one evening when he saw Aisha Gyarfas go up to Koresh’s room. Breault stayed at the computer all night and awaited Aisha’s return, which occurred at about 5.00 a.m. and Breault took both the fact and the length of the young girl’s stay in Koresh’s room (Aisha Gyarfas would have been about thirteen at the time)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
as an indication of sexual activity” (201).

| Challenges to Millennial goal: Dissent and defections within the group | Wessinger (2000) | When Breault was still an active member of the Branch Davidians, he used Bible study sessions in Australia to convince members that Koresh was a ‘false prophet’ and he was the true prophet (96). |

**Rajneeshpuram**

A philosophy professor in India named Chandra Mohan (1931-1990), forced to resign from his university in 1966, became a spiritual teacher known as Acharya Rajneesh (Acharya meaning "teacher/professor" and Rajneesh meaning “lord”). He started doing lectures, holding meditations camps and offering private counselling. In 1970, Rajneesh settled in Bombay and began initiating disciples, both male and female, and taught them to view renunciation as a process of abandoning the ego rather than that of the world, offered new understandings for current religious and philosophical teachings and taught the sannyasins a new meditation method: these initiates distinguished themselves from the outside world by wearing ochre robes, a beaded necklace and a locket with Rajneesh’s picture in it – they became markers or symbols, helping the initiates feel a shared sense of belonging to a collective (Swann et al 2012). During this time, he adopted the title Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (Bhagwan meaning "Blessed One"). By 1972, Rajneesh has initiated 3,800 members into his group in India.

A monograph, written in 1972, outlined Rajneesh’s concept of his movement: he wanted to create a worldwide movement, which affirmed life and joy; that was based on science rather than belief or dogma. This movement was to be based on practices and methods that would offer every individual the opportunity to discover their own proper religious
path. Rajneesh proclaimed his wish to lead people in a universal movement, open to anyone, regardless of religious or non-religious belief. He claimed to be reviving the hidden truths of all religions, not creating a new religion. In 1974, Rajneesh founded an ashram in the Indian town of Pune and focused on building his fellowship internationally. In Pune, Rajneesh encountered public criticisms of the ashram and political tensions as the ruling party restricted the ashram’s expansion, while police authorities threatened the ashram with punitive actions.

Thus, to get away from these external threats, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh announced in 1981, through his secretary Ma Anand Sheela, the inception of the ‘religion of Rajneeshism,’ which was based on discourses and interviews that he had given over the previous years (Rajneesh took a self-imposed period of public silence for the next three years). Rajneesh moved to the United States from India, along with thousands of his followers, and built a city out of a 64,229 acre rural ranch in Oregon, and renamed it Rancho Rajneesh, later called Rajneeshpuram. They were isolated from the normative views of society around them, through the absolute authority of Bhagwan Rajneesh: the followers were now known as Rajneeshees. By refusing to engage in the wider society, the most loyal followers solidified the leader’s control over the group (Galanter 1989). The movement created a small city that was exclusive to their religious and spiritual ways of life, while also creating a successful business enterprise and developing an effective and profitable corporate structure (Urban 2005). Yet Rajneesh predicted the end of the world to his members: it would destroy itself through nuclear war, and pollution and AIDS were also a threat to the world. The building of Rajneeshpuram was
necessary in order to offer his followers a place to escape these catastrophes. It became a place to protect them from the threats of the external world.

Rajneeshpuram, as a self-sufficient city, became a system of corporations which offered yoga and spirituality services to seekers and generated approximately $120 million during its existence in Oregon. As a city, it had its own post office and school, restaurants and malls, all available for its seven thousand inhabitants. Residents of surrounding towns clashed with the Rajneeshees, Eventually, a siege mentality set in among the commune’s leaders, and certain leadership members began actions of intimidation against those outside their commune, while also carrying out acts of authoritarianism towards its own members. Although social encapsulation helps to protect the group from perceived external threats, it also increases paranoia, internal violence and defensiveness (Galanter 1989). Disillusioned members began to leave Rajneeshpuram, and members who stayed were instructed to cease communication with anyone who left (Urban 2005). In order to reduce subjective uncertainty, it was best for members to focus on their collective identities.

External Factors

The Rajneeshees encountered several external threats that directly contributed to the downfall of the community. Many of the issues stemmed from the actions and attitudes of the group and the reaction of the surrounding Oregon community. Members from the outside community wrote local newspapers complaining about the collective, voicing their displeasure and hatred towards the group. One letter asked, “are we going to stand by and see another Sodom and Gomorrah rise, or are we going to make a stand for morality and our children’s futures?” Another called the group “a cancer in our
midst” that “will spread beyond control throughout the whole state” (Latkin, 1992: 259). American media portrayals of the Rajneeshes were often very harsh about the group: the negative and often inaccurate coverage caused the group “to believe that the media and the state were prejudiced, bigoted, and out to destroy them” (Latkin, 1992). Generally, the media portrayed the sannyasins “as cult members, freaks and deviants” (Latkin, 1991: 367). As the media continued to portray the Rajneeshees as a growing threat to the public, various governmental levels were soon brought in and asked to deal with the “Rajneeshee problem” (Latkin 1991: 262).

The government launched investigations, covering such issues as “violations of church-state laws, the tax exempt status of the group, zoning and development plans, and immigration violations” (Van Driel and Van Belzen 1990: 80). As early as 1982, US immigration officials began issuing orders to deny Shree Rajneesh permanent-resident status in America: he was to be deported back to India (FitzGerald 1986). Rajneeshpuram tried to deal with the backlash in the surrounding community by gaining political control of the nearby town of Antelope through forceful methods. As the aggressive behaviours taken by the movement in Antelope, such as buying up their real estate for votes and taking seats on the town council, became national news, state members of Congress and Senate, as well as a group known as the “Concerned Citizens’ of Oregon took action against the group: they brought lawsuits against the commune, declaring that the city of Rajneeshpuram was illegally incorporated as it violated the constitutional separation of church and state (as Rajneesh and his followers were considered a religion). They further feared that the group would take over control of the county and eventually the state itself (Latkin 1992).
The external threats posed by the media and government caused the group leadership, at the time headed by Ma Anand Sheela, to tighten security and control over the group, and they then committed several crimes. In order to reduce the external threat to the group and restore certainty within the leadership and the group, ruthless and tyrannical actions were used against its own members and the external communities: it led to extreme behaviours, such as wiretappings and poisonings, both inside and outside of the commune. When these events were brought to light, the group started to disband. External threats were extremely damaging to Rajneeshpuram and the unstable reactions they brought out in the leadership, particularly Sheela, would greatly contribute to the collapse of the group. Bromley and Melton (2002) outline how violence and aggression rise up in leaders who need to validate a grandiose self-image: Sheela, having failed in her political endeavours, moved to drastic actions of bio-terror through the use of poison on her detractors. Ma Anand Sheela, Rajneesh's appointed leader, reigned over the collective and was able to run it as she saw fit, as Rajneesh himself remained silent. Perceived threats originating outside the group caused her to overreact through violence: under orders by Ma Anand Sheela, some group members carried out a biological attack against Oregon citizens. Many of these actions were carried out without the knowledge or support of most members.

In September 1985, less than a year after Sheela had tried to take control of the county elections, she and her inner circle of members fled Rajneeshpuram for Europe. Rajneesh had ended his public vow of silence. The day after Sheela disappeared, Rajneesh publicly accused her and the members who had followed her of perpetrating a number of nefarious acts: drugging rebellious sannyasins, wire-tapping, arson,
attempted murder, and embezzling funds from the Rajneesh movement (Urban 2005). He publicly announced that “Sheela defected after attempting to poison three core members of the group, bugging [Bhagwan’s] chambers, and leaving the commune $55 million in debt” (Palmer and Bird 1992: 74).

Rajneesh informed members that an FBI investigation had discovered Sheela had ordered members of her own inner circle to manufacture and drop salmonella poison into numerous restaurant salad bars located in the Wasco County: it is believed that she was responsible for poisoning at least 750 individuals. Rajneesh further claimed that this act of bio-terrorism was a test run to carry out a larger act of poisoning of anti-Rajneesh voters on the day of county elections. The poisoning is considered the first attack of bio-terrorism to take place in the United States. By the end of the investigation, 25 sannyasins were charged with various offenses: electronic eavesdropping conspiracy, immigration fraud, lying to federal officials, harbouring a fugitive, criminal conspiracy, burglary, racketeering, first degree arson, second degree assault, first degree assault and attempted murder. Although Sheela had fled to Germany, she was arrested: after being tried, she was fined $400,000 and was sentenced to concurrent prison terms of 20 years for attempted murder, first degree assault in the poisoning of county Commissioner William Hulse, second degree assault in the poisoning of Commissioner Raymond Matthew, wiretapping and immigration fraud. Ma Anand Sheela served two years in a federal security prison and then was released for good behaviour in December 1988 (Carter 1990). Although Rajneesh was charged with one count of criminal conspiracy and 34 counts of making false statements to immigration officials, he pled guilty to two counts of immigration fraud and agreed to
pay a $400,000 fine. He was given a 10 year suspended sentence and ordered to leave the country. The Rajneesh Corporation paid $400,000 to the State of Oregon to reimburse investigative costs, $500,000 to settle the claims of four restaurants who endured financial losses due to the poisonings, an additional $400,000 to the restaurant owners, and $5 million to the Oregon state victim’s fund: it sold the ranch (Carter 1990). Bhagwan Rajneesh's collective mission was destroyed: members lost their strong bond and social connection to Rajneeshpuram, compromising the cohesiveness of the group.

**Internal Factors**

Rajneeshpuram was basically attacked by the outside community, Oregon officials and the media until its eventual downfall as a community. At first, the Rajneeshees, through the group's authoritative leadership, did not let outside laws and authorities influence them. They remained dependent on their leadership, and the leadership in turn had to maintain its legitimacy: grandiosity and paranoia eventually characterized Rajneesh's self-concept. He kept himself isolated from his members and from the external world. By trying to protect the group, Sheela’s leadership became defensive towards the external world. Leadership self-esteem was high but unstable, and it led to hostility. This heightened sensitivity to ego threats from the outside community pushed the leadership to politically take over the nearby town of Antelope, by purchasing land there and registering themselves to vote. In the autumn of 1984, Sheela and members of her inner circle sent hundreds of homeless individuals to Antelope in an effort to control county elections. These actions brought about considerable negative publicity, which led to state monitoring of voter registration, and legal opposition. The movement came to be viewed as hostile, as they not only had
taken over the control of Antelope, but they were now viewed as an aggressive threat to the state.

Life in the city of Rajneeshpuram was very rigid for its membership but it also had a strange leadership structure. Since Rajneesh had taken a three-year vow of public silence, he handed the reins of leadership over to his secretary, Ma Anand Sheela, and would only speak to her. Once a day, his followers saw him as he took a drive in one of his many Rolls Royce’s, where he waved to his sannyasins. Organizational management of the members and Rajneeshpuram, under Sheela, was highly authoritative (Goldman 2009). Latkin’s (1991) extensive research of the movement illustrates the highly controlling nature of the collective. Members were to surrender their relationships with family and children, in order to become spiritually elevated. Sterilization was encouraged for those who wanted to live in the ashram. Visitors were monitored and their access to the ashram regulated. Security guards monitored the gates, and pictures of “banned” people were kept at the guard post, to restrict outsiders from entering: those permitted inside had “guides” to monitor their access. Those members who resided inside the inner sanctum led a communal life, where everyone worked to keep it maintained: they lived independently of outside support and regulation. They were to live free from the constraints of family, governments and culture in order to connect with the divine; achieved through daily meditation and silence (Carter 1990). Rajneeshpuram did not accept negativity from the members as the community was meant to only focus on the positive aspects of life. Those who spoke their mind or were persistently negative were asked to leave.
The leadership established a sophisticated security apparatus in order to monitor and control its members when they ventured out into the streets: they set up a colour coded bracelet system to indicate whether an individual was a visitor, a short term resident, or a commune member so that they could be tracked at all times. This “resident status” was utilized in order to designate different travel restrictions (Latkin 1991). The internal control measures were quite extreme but the sannyasins felt that the leaders were doing it for their own good: they believed that the leaders “would make good decisions regardless of the situation and regardless of the organizational structure” (Latkin 1991: 375). As the leader's divine mission was collective in nature, members felt it was their duty and obligation to recognize the charismatic leader's authority (Weber 1968). The leaders used information control in order to make members perceive the world outside the group (such as government officials, the media and the surrounding communities) as a direct threat towards their existence (Latkin 1991: 374). Hostility and aggression were required to maintain the leader's charismatic credibility, which could become unstable due to persecution from external sources.

The community of Rajneeshpuram was socially isolated from the broader Oregon society because surrounding communities did not look kindly upon their various social norms, practices and beliefs – they were shunned. Not only was Rajneeshpuram isolated as a city because of its geographical location, after a member committed to the collective, their isolation intensified. The Sannyasins were “psychologically isolated” because they were forced to cut contact with friends and family, but also lacked media access: the happenings in the outside world were irrelevant to the members but it was also problematic as they did not have the ability to receive any criticisms about the
community’s behaviour from sources outside of Rajneeshpuram (Latkin 1991: 372). Their information flow from outside the compound was carefully handled by the leadership and only consisted of television news clips that portrayed Rajneeshpuram and its members in extremely negative and inaccurate ways. Furthermore, fundamentalist Christian groups would come into the town and hold small protests, claiming the group was satanic and evil. Therefore, limiting group contact to external society reinforced the “belief that the outside world was hostile and antagonistic toward them” (Latkin 1991: 372). Rajneeshpuram also had a highly suspicious view of politics: members were told that it was evil, and that the actors within it were only full of self-interest. Their teachings expounded that the “ideal Rajneesh society would be free of political institutions” (Latkin 1991: 375). The social movement had a strict rule of commitment to collective labour. Work on the commune was viewed as a form of ‘worship’ and a spiritual experience that served the function of meditation: “the work schedule was 12 hours, 7 days a week” (Latkin et al 1993: 44).

Another form of isolation was maintained through the Rajneeshees’ self perception: they perceived themselves as “superior beings on a higher level of consciousness” and were “happier and better adjusted than outsiders” (Latkin 1992: 267). These beliefs maintained a positive social identity, or collective self-esteem. Members with high collective self-esteem are highly dedicated to evolving themselves (Luhtanen and Crocker 1992). Group members believed themselves to be “the only sane individuals in an otherwise insane world” (Latkin 1991: 367). This feeling of superiority, held by the group and charismatic leaders, is narcissistic in nature (Bushman and Baumeister 1998). Bhagwan himself, when he began to speak publicly,
made judgmental comments about Oregonians and other non-Rajneeshees (these actions tried to restore certainty and high self-esteem in the charismatic leader). Yet Rajneesh was unable to hold the collective together. Rajneesh's charismatic unstableness could not provide benefits to his followers anymore, as his mission was unsuccessful (Weber 1978). When the community fell apart, members were apprehensive about interacting with non-Rajneeshees. Once they spent time away from Rajneeshpuram, many members “expressed surprise that outside the commune they had met good-hearted individuals who were not sannyasins” (Latkin, 1992: 265).

In the last week of September 1985, Rajneesh stated that the religion of "Rajneeshism" and "Rajneeshees" no longer existed, and renounced his title of “guru”. Anything that bore the name of Rajneesh was to be destroyed: his disciples burned five thousand copies of the Book of Rajneeshism. Although Rajneesh was charged with two counts of immigration fraud, he was free to leave the country. After leaving Oregon, Rajneesh traveled all over the world, trying to find a country that would allow him to enter, until his representatives were able to make a deal with the Indian government and he resettled in his old Pune ashram. By the end of the decade the community ceased to exist.

In conclusion, the members of Rajneeshpuram were led to feel immense pressures and suppression from internal and external threats: Rajneesh predicted that the world would destroy itself and the only safe place for the Rajneeshees to ride out this destruction was to stay at Rajneeshpuram. The group umwelt, or particular worldview, was to protect Rajneeshpuram at all costs. The outside world was their biggest threat. Following Hall and Schuyer's model of new movements that are prone to
violence, the Rajneeshee movement met all the three characteristics: they held a strong apocalyptic worldview; their organizational structure of authority and leadership forged a strong bond between members and Rajneesh, then Sheela; and, the group maintained tight social boundaries with wider society, leading to extreme social encapsulation. The members maintained Rajneesh’s supernatural ideology through his new teachings, yet his and Sheela’s social identities experienced unstable self-esteem and paranoia. The exogenous factors that suppressed the movement and raised tensions between the group and social milieu include: negative media representations of Rajneeshpuram; negative reactions from the outside community; as well as threats from political, state and legal systems that investigated the actions of Rajneesh and his followers. Sheela reacted with interpersonal as well as collective violence in order to maintain the collective and the ashram. The endogenous and exogenous factors that brought an end to Rajneeshpuram have been systematically outlined in the summary table below in order to visibly illustrate how the complex intertwining of factors lead to violent bio-terrorist acts by members of the Rajneeshee collective in order to protect their sanctuary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RAJNEESHPURAM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exogenous Factor</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Media Representations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the whole state” (259).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Legal</th>
<th>Latkin (1992)</th>
<th>The commune was embroiled in a series of legal battles. Lawsuits were brought against the commune, declaring that the city of Rajneeshpuram was illegally incorporated; and, that the city was a violation of the constitutional separation between church and state.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media Representations/State</td>
<td>Latkin (1992)</td>
<td>In the present case, the Rajneeshees were new and an unknown entity. They needed to be assessed for potential danger. The government and especially the media are charged in American society with primary appraisal (Patterson, 1980); others have described this governmental role as that of consumer protector (Beckford, 1986; Richardson, 1986). The outcome of the appraisal process was that the Rajneeshees were seen as threatening (262).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Representation</td>
<td>Latkin (1992)</td>
<td>The Rajneeshees were shocked and upset by the coverage they received, which focused on conflict and negative images. The Rajneeshees would regularly view television news clips of themselves, which were uniformly negative and at times highly inaccurate. This portrayal led members to believe that the media and the state were prejudiced, bigoted, and out to destroy them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Representation</td>
<td>Latkin (1991)</td>
<td>The Rajneeshees were portrayed as cult members, freaks, and deviants (367).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Representations</td>
<td>Van Driel and Van Belzen (1990)</td>
<td>The focus on legal problems, involving both Bhawan and his secretary Ma Anand Sheela, was especially pronounced in the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Representations</td>
<td>Van Driel and Van Belzen (1990)</td>
<td>In the United States, the print media contained more paragraphs quoting authorities using a “crime” framework to illustrate Rajneesh and the movement (83).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Representations</td>
<td>Van Driel and Van Belzen (1990)</td>
<td>Ma Anand Sheela was especially covered by the media in consistently negative terms. Rarely was a positive sentence relating to Sheela found; in the United States and West Germany there were only negative portrayals in print media.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media Representations</td>
<td>Van Driel and Van Belzen (1990)</td>
<td>While print media coverage in the United States and in West Germany constituted attacked the Rajneesh movement in general, in the Netherlands the attack focused specifically on Sheela (86).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/Legal</td>
<td>Latkin (1992)</td>
<td>Actions by the government were means of behavioral coping to ease the fear of the public: they handled the threat of the Rajneeshees by investigating Rajneeshpuram, enforcing the laws, and making new laws. In fact, the office of the attorney general and other state offices were barraged with phone calls and letters asking them to do something about the Rajneeshee problem (262).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/Police</td>
<td>Van Driel and Van Belzen (1990)</td>
<td>Investigations into the Rajneesh movement were initiated shortly after Bhagwan Rajneesh moved to the United States in 1981. These covered such issues as violations of church-state laws, tax exempt status of the group, zoning and development plans, as well as immigration violations (80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/INS</td>
<td>FitzGerald (1986)</td>
<td>In December 1982 the Office of Immigration and Naturalization Service issued orders denying the guru permanent-resident status, while his disciples fought his deportation to India.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defectors</td>
<td>Palmer and Bird (1992)</td>
<td>Ma Anand Sheela, the second in command at the commune, defected from the commune, left Rajneeshpuram in debt and abandoned Rajneesh.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Endogenous Factor</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Authority: Exposure of trickery and/or deceit</td>
<td>Palmer and Bird (1992)</td>
<td>Rajneesh held a press conference on September 4, 1985, in which he announced that Sheela had defected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
after attempting to poison three core members, had planted a bugging device in his private chambers, and left the commune $55 million in debt. She had also poisoned surrounding communities.

Challenges to Millennial Goal: Failure to fulfill goal

Latkin (1991) When Rajneesh found out that Sheela had left the commune in debt, he disbanded Rajneeshpuram and renounced his title of guru.

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**The Church of the Lamb of God**

The Church of the Lamb of God is a Mormon fundamentalist group that formed by breaking away from its original splinter church, the Church of the Firstborn. The Church of the Firstborn was established by the LeBaron family in Chihuahua, Mexico in 1955, when the family was excommunicated by the Church of the Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints for practicing plural marriages, a custom no longer considered appropriate in mainstream Mormon practice. Thus, the LeBarons formed their own church and continued living plural lifestyles, while its leadership followed an inherited lineage. In the 1950s three of the five LeBaron brothers created the Church of the Firstborn of the Fullness of Times: Joel LeBaron became the President and Prophet of the newly founded church, while the other two brothers, Floren and Ross, became the First Counsellor and Head Patriarch respectively. Joel LeBaron, after claiming to have received visits from past prophets, was considered to be the rightful heir of Joseph Smith Jr. (Bennion 2004). Ervil LeBaron (1925-1981) and his mother soon joined this new church, and in 1962 Ervil became the Presiding Patriarch and second-in-command to Joel in the Church of the Firstborn.
Initially, Ervil supported his brother Joel as the leader and rightful prophet of the church. As the years passed though, Ervil – through his own interpretations of Mormon religious texts – began claiming that he was, in fact, the true leader of the church and Joel was a false prophet. In 1967, Ervil became very controlling and started aggressively pursuing many young women, telling them, and sometimes their parents, that it was God’s will that they marry him or another man in the group. Ervil exerted his power over the members and created a massive wedge in the Church of the Firstborn, causing an eventual power struggle to arise. Joel LeBaron and other leaders of the Church of the Firstborn denounced Ervil and pushed him out of his position.

In August 1972, Ervil started a new church with his own followers, the Church of the First Born of the Lamb of God, and tried to influence his brother’s flock to defect and join him. Ervil proclaimed that he was the prophesized “One Mighty and Strong”, the one who would set God’s house in order, not his brother Joel, and that he was the rightful leader of the church (Kraut 1991). Ervil promoted the concept of “blood atonement”, spilling blood for God, amongst his church members. However, Ervil interpreted “blood atonement” as his group’s duty to execute those who were following false prophets, when they should have been worshiping him. In order to mobilize his social movement, Ervil had to create collective emotional labour: he broke deeply held rules and norms of society (by legitimizing murder). Individuals were mobilized to bring about social change. The Church of the Lamb of God created an assassination squad that chose targets based on Ervil’s prophetic commands. Essentially, all other Mormon fundamentalist groups were considered enemies for following false prophets: Ervil claimed that even President Jimmy Carter was misleading the country as a false
prophet, because he would not listen to Ervil’s spiritual advice. This form of mobilization bonded members in the collective and created a distinct collective identity amongst them. Ervil, by connecting members through this common purpose, committed them to his divine ideology and also clearly defined who was part of his collective and who fell outside it (Della Porta and Diani 2006).

Upon the creation of his new church, Ervil received a prophecy from God that his brother Joel would be killed on August 20, 1972: one of Ervil’s followers assassinated Joel LeBaron by shooting him in the head, causing the prophecy to ring true (Spencer 2009). The church members would go on to execute dozens of members from Joel’s Church, members who had left Ervil’s church and other Mormon fundamentalists. Ervil eventually was brought to justice in the United States for his murderous directives, but even behind bars he continued commanding the executions of several more individuals: Ervil wrote a four hundred page bible called The Book of the New Covenants, which included a list of people Ervil claimed God wanted killed, including a commandment to kill insubordinate and wayward church members. The assassinations continued after his death in 1981. Ervil had established such loyalty amongst his followers that they were willing to follow through on his orders, even when he was removed from the collective, first by imprisonment and then eventually by death. The social movement, although marginalized, invented new "disruptive forms of action" that ruthlessly confronted "the state on issues of law and order" (Della Porta and Diani 2006: 27).

Ervil LeBaron can easily be considered to be one of the more charismatic new religious leaders, not only because his followers believed him to be the true Prophet and followed his religious interpretations, but also due to his immense ability to influence so
many people to do his violent bidding for him. He created a conscious constituency: his members fused their sense of morality with high levels of dedication to the collective. They purposely and willing self-sacrificed themselves to exemplify their moral commitment to the group. Interpersonal and collective violence maintained the social identity of the members. Ervil LeBaron had created an intense ‘us versus them’ dichotomy, between his members and the rest of the world.

Even before the creation of his own Church of the Lamb of God, Ervil was a powerful figure within the Church of the Firstborn of the Fullness of Times. The Church of the Firstborn believed that its members were extremely significant and sacred because they were chosen people, who were going to live on after the Second Coming: they had many children in order to inhabit a world that would belong only to them (Spencer 2009). The group was led by the LeBaron family and the brothers all held leadership positions, with Joel leading and Ervil behind him.

Irene Spencer, wife of Ervil’s youngest brother Verlan LeBaron, wrote a tell-all account of the group and recounted the history of Colonia LeBaron; the LeBaron enclave located in the northwest of the state of Chihuahua. It was at this enclave that Ervil became exceptionally superior and claimed that “my brothers and I will eventually rule the world” (Spencer 2009: 112). Ervil became obsessed with dissecting Mormon religious texts: this became his main objective. Spencer’s husband Verlan told her that Ervil was always giving commands to his siblings, telling them which manual tasks they were to do, while he would follow them around preaching “Mormon beliefs,” or “relaxed in the shade of a tree, sleeping, or reading the scriptures” (Spencer 2009: 46). In fact, Ervil told his membership that God informed him that he “was to only labour in spiritual
matters” (Spencer 2009: 164). The interpretation of these religious texts would cause Ervil to become increasingly autocratic. He studied “early Mormon dogma, teachings that were an embarrassment to the contemporary LDS church” (Spencer 2009: 106). These teachings would give Ervil the basis for his assent to power and his eventual violent and authoritative leadership of the Church of the Lamb of God. Ervil proclaimed that God, through the texts, gave “him the knowledge of the civil law,” which meant administering the “death penalty” upon anyone, for a host of offences, the worship of false gods receiving special attention. Essentially the messages that he construed from the religious texts would give Ervil the position of “God’s avenger” as he proclaimed that God had given him “a license to kill” in His Name (Spencer 2009: 112). This new position and outlook prompted Ervil to “build up an army for God,” which meant, in Ervil’s mind, that the “Mormon Church and all its splinter groups would eventually have to bow down to the new kingdom, or the wrath of God would subdue them” (Spencer 2009: 112).

The Lambs of God, in their attempt to convert members from Joel’s flock, released a text called Priesthood Revealed, which asserted that Ervil was in fact “God’s top representative and that the Church of the Firstborn members were failing to recognize him as the patriarch of the kingdom” (Spencer 2009: 289). The Church of the Lamb of God was born out of Ervil’s desire to hold power over, not only his family’s church, but also other fundamentalist Mormon groups and beyond.

Ervil was successful in persuading many of Joel’s members to join his church, because of his “effective power of persuasion” and the fact that he had influenced Dan Jordan to join him: Jordan had previously “revered [Joel] as the prophet who would save
the world;” in this way, the Lambs of God were able to absorb a few members from the Church of the Firstborn into their own church (Spencer 2009: 290). With a membership of 30 families, Ervil consolidated his authoritative power over the group: members were committed to him and his vision of spreading the word through blood atonement. Claiming to be the true Prophet of God, Ervil was able to command his devoted members to follow a strict rule of commitment: murder was seen as a form of judgement from God. Those who were judged to be worshiping false prophets, those who would not repent or were rebellious, those who disobeyed the world of God, or were considered defectors and traitors for leaving Ervil’s church were to be killed. Ervil backed up these blood atonement orders with “reasoning” he found within the Book of Deuteronomy (Bradlee and Van Atta 1981: 192).

While Ervil was locked away in prison, he managed to write a four hundred page “epistle” entitled *The Book of the New Covenants*, which also contained a list of church members Ervil wanted killed because he considered them to be disobedient: it was smuggled to his followers on the outside, who printed and distributed it to others (Schmidt 2006). Ervil’s murderous orders were faithfully carried out even though he passed away in 1981, shortly after calling for these atonements to be carried out. His followers were so committed that even in death, Ervil’s wishes were followed. It is believed that at least twenty five people were ‘blood atoned’ based on Ervil’s hit list (Spencer 2009). Ervil was an extremely powerful figure in both the Church of the Firstborn and the Church of the Lamb of God; exerting his influence to such a high degree that several members were willing to murder others in the face of their own personal reservations, and in the face of potential prosecution from the legal system.
The collective maintained a purist standpoint, and through their emotional energy were able to remain enthusiastic and confident in their commitment to the Church of the Lamb of God. The imagistic ritual of assassination was emotionally intensive, as it was an essential element to the collective ideology: it produced enduring memories of their prophet after he had passed away.

Ervil LeBaron kept the members of the Church of the Lamb of God socially isolated from larger mainstream society. The group was isolated in its religious beliefs and practices: the Mormon Church (LDS) had abandoned the practice of plural marriage, and there was no way it was going to accept “blood atonement” or Ervil LeBaron as the ruler of the world. The Church of the Lamb “completely seceded from society in order to practice an esoteric doctrine” (Bradlee and Van Atta 1981: 223): members were totally dependent on LeBaron and he insisted that his members avoid any relationships or contact with non-group members” (Bradlee and Van Atta 1981). Ervil increasingly isolated the group from other fundamentalist Mormon movements as he branded them “false prophets” that had to be put to death (Spencer 2009: 235). Ervil kept the women in the group socially isolated by not allowing their children to leave the church: the women could technically defect if they wanted, but they would have to leave their children behind (Spencer 2009: 203). The group also held themselves in higher regard than others because they believed themselves to be chosen by God to judge other for their “sins”. The Lambs of God held “an elitist philosophy, a superior attitude that everybody else was below them and unimportant” (Bradlee and Van Atta 1981: 280).
The Church of the Lamb of God held intense apocalyptic beliefs: they believed they were ushering in the return of Christ. Ervil, through his interpretations of scripture, preached to his members:

The Holy One of Israel has again set His hand to gather His people. The signs of the times declare that the coming of the Son of Man is drawing near. It is now expedient to make preparations for this great event before Babylon is laid to waste in one general ruin. The almighty has decreed...that the overflowing scourges and terrible destructions which shall shortly come upon the land shall commence upon the Mormon people who fail to heed the voice of warning (as cited in Bradlee and Van Atta 1981: 82).

The group not only believed that the world would soon be destroyed and Jesus would return again, but they were the chosen people, destined to live in the new Kingdom. Ervil reiterated these declarations after he was arrested, claiming to prison officers that “he was the ‘anointed one’ who would bring about the millennium… The only person on Earth designated to lead God’s kingdom and prepare a worthy people to meet Christ at his Second Coming” (Spencer 2009: 447).

External Factors

Members of the Church of the Lamb of God faced several external threats, particularly from the government, police, courts and defectors. Ervil LeBaron had many enemies but it appears that his hatred of other Mormon leaders in turn lead to police and court actions against the group. Yet the Lamb of God members perceived their primary enemy to be the Church of the Firstborn: they believed that their members were “out to get them, and kidnap them, to kill them” in retaliation for Joel’s blood atonement for being a false prophet (Spencer 2009: 319). After Joel’s murder, ordered by Ervil himself, Church of the Firstborn members, and Ervil’s youngest brother Verlan (now the
new leader of the Church of the Firstborn), notified police authorities in Mexico and the United States that Ervil posed a real threat to their lives (Spencer 2009).

After Joel was murdered, Ervil was detained by Mexican authorities and, in 1974 Ervil was tried and convicted of the murder of his brother and sentenced to twelve years in prison (Bradlee and Van Atta 1981). However, Ervil was set free on a technicality, reversing the court decision after having served only one month of his twelve-year sentence. It is believed that the Mexican authorities were bribed to overturn the conviction (Bradlee and Van Atta 1981). With Ervil out of prison, the Church of the Lamb of God members continued their assault on The Church of the Firstborn. More people were executed: the group attacked Ervil’s former church with a paramilitary style raid, fire-bombing homes and indiscriminately shooting, the actual goal being to kill his brother Verlan, who was now the leader of the Church of the Firstborn. Ervil’s assassins were unsuccessful in killing Verlan and he had escaped to Nicaragua (Bradlee and Van Atta 1981). The Mexican government responded by sending troops to protect the terrified residents: because of the level of violence (2 people were killed) and firepower used in destroying the town of Los Molinas, both the Mexican and United States media covered the event.

Around this time, the Secret Service and FBI began investigating the Lamb of God group because they had stated in a pamphlet that President Jimmy Carter had been marked for death for “exalting himself as a false god” (Spencer 2009: 402). The US intelligence community perceived this threat as a real concern because they deemed Ervil capable of killing Carter, if given the chance. A murder of another
member, Dean Vest, brought one of Ervil’s wives, Vonda White, under suspicion of the murder but police were unable to find sufficient evidence to make a charge.

The authorities sought cooperation from defectors in order to build cases against Ervil and his hit squad. Ervil wanted to kill his brother Verlan so intensely that he had an uncle killed so Verlan would attend the funeral and be an easy target. However, Verlan was in contact with authorities and informed them about Ervil, claiming that Church of the Firstborn members were all in danger (Spencer 2009). The police took the threat as credible and they kept guard at the funeral, keeping Verlan safe. After the funeral, things started to unravel for Ervil and the Church of the Lamb of God. Not only was Verlan an informant for the authorities, several members of Ervil’s church were arrested and interrogated by police in order to bring murder charges against Ervil. Vonda was picked up again, and using the testimony of Lloyd Sullivan, another former member, Vonda was implicated in the murder of one of Ervil’s own hit squad, Dean Grover Vest, as he had attempted to defect from the church (Bradlee and Van Atta 1981). Vonda White was convicted and given a life sentence: the Judge claimed that Vonda was “dangerous to society because of her beliefs and loyalty to LeBaron” (Bradlee and Van Atta 1981: 329).

Eventually, Ervil’s “blood atonement” prophecies caught up to him: Mexican authorities arrested Ervil on June 1, 1979, who then turned him over to the FBI so that he could be taken to the United States to stand trial. Ervil was charged with ordering the murder of Rulon C. Allred, the leader of a Mormon fundamentalist group called the Apostolic United Brethren. A few former members cooperated with authorities and identified Ervil as the person who ordered the murders of his own members and leaders
of other religious groups. Defectors identified Ervil as a man who ordered the murders of at least four people in the US (Bradlee and Van Atta 1981). Authorities claimed that, on top of the murders carried out on the word of LeBaron, “his small cult ignored immigration regulations, harboured illegal aliens, broke public schooling rules regarding their children, flaunted consumer laws with their business, received welfare and social security fraudulently…, trafficked in stolen cars and unregistered weapons, and threatened the President of the United States” (Bradlee and Van Atta 1981: 331). At Ervil's trial in 1980, he was found guilty of first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder and sentenced to life in prison: Ervil died in prison on August 16, 1981.

Internal Factors

The Church of the Lamb of God faced various internal issues that contributed to its eventual downfall. The chief internal problem began when Ervil was thrown out of the family church, the Church of the Firstborn. Ervil, in the creation of his own church, accused his brother Joel of being a false prophet. Ervil's rival group had to be recombined and transformed in order for cultural capital of the group to take place (Swann et al 2012). Emotional energy was transmitted horizontally, from Joel to Ervil, and a rivalry was born. In order to distinguish his church from his brother's, Ervil had to make the distinction that his church was superior, and he had to usurp his brother's power by making himself Prophet. Ervil “threatened to blood atone” Joel and devised plans to undermine his authority in the Church of the Firstborn. Ervil “began his campaign of terror, not only in his writings, but in almost every conversation with Joel's flock” (Spencer 2009: 276).
Ervil, using passages from the Book of Deuteronomy, also claimed that his youngest brother Verlan should be killed because he was not bowing down to the will of God, as he continued to follow Joel as the true leader of the family church. Ervil, in order to take over the leadership of the church from his brother, had to discredit him and assassinate anyone who stood in his way. Once Ervil created the Church of the Lamb of God, Ervil grew paranoid of the threats he perceived around his leadership. He told his church members that he was being followed, to kill him and his group members, so they had to constantly be on the move. He made his members fearful for their safety: one of Ervil’s former wives stated that they “would never be safe as long as they (the Church of the Firstborn) were around to pose a threat to us… We had to get them before they got us” (Mayer 2001: 367).

It has also been argued that Ervil may have had undiagnosed mental health problems because he often gave members of his group orders to lash out violently at others that did not appear to be threatening towards the Lambs of God in any way. Ervil’s paranoia lead to multiple deaths and likely increased the amount of violence the group used, which in the end further damaged the group.

Defection was also a major problem because the Church of the Lamb of God was small: Ervil needed to retain their membership in order to carry out the blood atonements. Ervil would keep the members of the group in line by threatening to kill anyone who defected from the church (Bradlee and Atta 1981). For instance, in the early 1970s, Dean Grover Vest’s wife defected from the group and Ervil, afraid that one of his henchmen would also desert him, began “planning his execution” (Spencer 2009: 387). Defection and dissenting behaviour were not tolerated and often led to death. Ervil
even commanded the execution of his 17 year old daughter Rebecca, pregnant with her second child, because of her dissenting behaviour. Rebecca was rebellious and became a flight risk, so the group used the previously mentioned tactic of separating mother from child: instead of causing Rebecca to defer to Ervil, she threatened to go to the police. Fearing Rebecca’s ability to damage the group by exposing their plots, Ervil ordered her murder (Spencer 2009: 396).

Ervil also had problems regarding his prophecies, as they often would not come to fruition. Ervil would then have to adjust the narrative in order to fit his failed predictions because members often showed their disappointment when his prophecies failed to materialize: this would then lead members to question his leadership and authenticity as a Prophet. When Lloyd Sullivan questioned Ervil about the prophesized date Verlan was to be assassinated but wasn’t, Ervil asserted: “I can’t question the Lord on these things” (Bradlee and Atta 1981: 235). This particular failed prophecy caused some members to openly imply that Ervil was a false prophet. Another prediction that Ervil put forward was that “all Mormon factions as well as the LDS Church, would crumble by May, 1977” (Spencer 2009: 436). When this prophecy failed to transpire on the allotted date, Lloyd Sullivan, Ervil’s third in command “lost all faith in Ervil once and for all”: with this failure “Ervil himself abandoned his flock and fled to Mexico (Spencer 2009: 436).

Ervil left a large void amongst his members when he was sent to prison and then died in 1981. However, Ervil left his children and other members instructions to carry out further “blood atonements” in his bible *The Book of the New Covenants* and that is exactly what happened after his death. For example, Daniel Ben Jordan, once
considered to be LeBaron’s closest disciple, was attacked and murdered in 1987 “because he started his own church when LeBaron went to prison” (Abramson 1987). On June 27, 1988 three of LeBaron’s former followers were murdered by his sons. Eventually, the law caught up with the movement and many of them went to prison for these post-Ervil murders.

The LeBaron Church of the Firstborn still exists to this day. They survived the terrorism that Ervil put into motion in the early 1970s and they still practice their form of Mormon faith. The Church of the Lamb of God emerged out of a desire to take over and then eliminate the Church of the Firstborn, but in the effort to destroy it, they destroyed themselves through internal and collective violence. In summary, members of the Church of the Lamb of God were led to feel immense perceptions of threat: Ervil LeBaron claimed that all other Fundamentalist Mormon groups, and even political leaders, were their enemies, creating a strong ‘us versus them’ group mentality. Their umwelten, or particular worldview was that Ervil, as the true Messenger of God, had given them a licence to kill all false prophets. The continued existence of Joel LeBaron’s Church of the Firstborn mobilized them towards collective violence.

In summary, the Church of the Lamb of God movement met all the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence: they held a strong apocalyptic belief system with imminent denouement, as they believed they were ushering in the return of Christ; the collective maintained an organizational structure that was built on Ervil LeBaron’s charismatic and authoritative leadership as the true Prophet (the connection between Ervil and his followers was so intense, they continued carrying out murders even after his death). The members maintained Ervil’s supernatural
ideology through his new teachings, which required him to have absolute authority over them. However, Ervil's charismatic identity suffered from unstable self-esteem and paranoia, especially in relation to his brother's church. The exogenous factors that suppressed the movement and raised tensions between the group and social milieu include: negative media portrayals of the Church of the Lamb of God; defectors that testified against Ervil LeBaron in court trials; anti-cult groups; and legal systems, investigating the movement for fear they would kill the American president, and the fact that they were murdering people. These internal and external factors have been systematically outlined in the summary table below in order to visibly illustrate how the complex intertwining of factors brought about caused The Church of the Lamb of God to commit violent acts.

<table>
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<td><strong>Exogenous Factors</strong></td>
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| Defectors/Legal/State/Police              | Bradlee and Van Atta (1981)| Lloyd Sullivan testified at Vonda White’s preliminary hearing: “He said Vonda had told him in Denver that she killed Dean Vest by command of God, and that as a result of doing so, she was to
become one of heaven’s elected ladies. The order actually came from Ervil LeBaron.” Lloyd explained that Ervil had put out an order of execution on Dean Grover Vest (294).

State/Legal/Police
Bradlee and Van Atta (1981)
Vonda White was found guilty of murdering Dean Vest given a life sentence. “The Superior Court judge who sentenced her said she was dangerous to society because of her beliefs and loyalty to LeBaron” (329).

State/Legal
Bradlee and Van Atta (1981)
On Monday, May 12, 1980 Ervil LeBaron was put on trial for murder. Police stated that LeBaron and “his small cult ignored immigration regulations and harboured illegal aliens; broke public schooling rules regarding their children; flaunted some consumer laws with their business; received welfare and Social Security fraudulently; disobeyed Selective Service regulations; trafficked in stolen cars and unregistered weapons; and threatened the President of the United States (331).

Defectors
Bradlee and Van Atta (1981)
Defectors who had left the Church of the Blood of the Lamb identified Ervil as the man who ordered numerous murders of people who left the group, as well as leaders of other religious groups (331).

Endogenous Factors
Source
Quote
Challenges to Authority: Loss of health (leader illness)
Mayer (2001)
Ervil LeBaron suffered from paranoia. One of his wives recounts: "Ervil was very paranoid...'They’ were following us and were going to kill us and we had to keep moving. He made us feel as paranoid as he was. This came to justify murders: ‘We would never be safe as long as they were around to pose a threat to us’, he would say. 'We had to get them before they got us.' was his message” (367).

It has been argued that Ervil suffered from mental health issues which lead to
| Challenges to Millennial Goal: Dissent and Defections within the group | Spencer (2009) | When Ervil was thrown out of the family church, he created his own church and began “a campaign of terror, not only in his writings, but in almost every conversation with Joel's flock” (276). |
| Challenges to Millennial Goal: Dissent and Defections within the group | Spencer (2009) | After Joel's death, Verlan took over the office of patriarch and the presidency of the Church of the Firstborn. By doing this, he was not validating Ervil's claim to Prophethood. He stated that by continuing to follow Joel's teachings, Verlan was in fact following a false god. Therefore Verlan and his followers had to be killed. |
| Challenges to Millennial Goal: Failure to fulfill goal/problems related to the goal | Spencer (2009) | Ervil prophesized the death of his youngest brother Verlan, for following a false god. Several of Ervil's followers were disappointed in Ervil because his prophecy did not transpire (Ervil was unable to find Verlan and kill him during a raid). |
| Challenges to Millennial Goal: Dissent and Defections within the group | Spencer (2009) | Ervil ordered the murder of his own seventeen year old daughter, Rebecca, because of her dissent and desire to leave the group. |
| Challenges to Millennial Goal: Failure to fulfill goal/problems related to the goal | Spencer (2009) | Lloyd Sullivan, a high ranked member of Ervil's leadership, began studying the scriptures and debunked Ervil’s prophecies. He challenged Ervil’s divinity and expressed his beliefs in letters that he sent to other members. He eventually defected because of the numerous false prophecies made by Ervil. |
| Challenges to Millennial goal: Dissent and defections within the group | Bradlee and Van Atta (1981) | LeBaron feared defection and threatened his members with death if they thought of leaving his church. “LeBaron spoke of his ‘Law of the .38,’ ‘Hot Lead and Cold Steel’ and ‘A One Way Ticket to Hell’ to defectors (226). Ervil was confronted by disillusioned members when he changed the date of Verlan's assassination because the first prophesized date resulted in failure. |
| Challenges to Millennial Goal: Failure to fulfill goal/problems related to the goal | Bradlee and Van Atta (1981) | Ervil, having failed at prophesising the date of Verlan's death, then explained to his church followers: "Want to know a secret? The Lord always gives us a date in advance, to prepare us for the real date."

When Lloyd Sullivan asked Ervil why Verlan had not been killed, Ervil retorted: "I can't question the Lord on these things" (235). |
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<td>Defectors</td>
<td>Spencer (2009)</td>
<td>Vonda White, one of Ervil’s wives, shot Dean Vest because he was planning on leaving the group (388).</td>
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**Heaven’s Gate**

Heaven’s Gate was a new religious movement founded by Marshall Applewhite – also known as Do and Bo – (1931-1997), who was a choir director and Bonnie Nettles – also known as Ti and Peep – (1927-1985), who was a registered nurse when they met. In 1972 Applewhite had dealt with a string of broken relationships and Nettles was going through a divorce. They eventually cut off other relationships they had and formed a partnership based on the idea that they had been brought together to complete a special mission. They left their homes in Houston, and for three years they shaped their religious ideology. The two would create a controversial movement that was based on the idea that they were themselves extraterrestrial walk-ins, in truth one entity that occupied a body whose soul had already left it. They could provide salvation to all humans – their message was of evolution and eternal life. Humans could change their bodies, which were just vessels, into extraterrestrial ones and live eternally amongst the stars (Zellerman 2011). Their followers, referred to as the crew, were offered salvation from a world on the brink of being “recycled” or cleansed/wiped clean: the only way to
survive the cleansing of the earth was to leave it. Their salvation was to be found in a UFO, awaiting them in order to take them up into a perfect realm, considered Heaven. This Heavenly place was called the Next Level as it was a higher existence than that of a human existence. In the early days of the Heaven’s Gate movement, the leaders proclaimed that they and their members would bodily transition to the heavens. The Heaven’s Gate collective offered its members a sense of hope and salvation beyond this world. Although Ti and Do predicted their own deaths, they prophesized that the only way to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven was in a physical body. If one of them was to die on earth, they would have to be reincarnated in order to enter the Next Level. The idea of suicide, in the early days of Heaven’s Gate, was not an option for it meant turning “away” from the Next Level (Balch and Taylor 2002).

Ti and Do initially tried to spread their message but they encountered doubt and negativity, yet by 1975 they had attracted their first followers. By 1977 they had gained over one hundred members. They attempted to have their revelations heard in a controlled manner in order to recruit believers. They were largely engaged in distancing themselves from conventional society, while they examined their identification with life on the Next Level. They eventually minimised group contact with outsiders by maintaining a discipline monastic lifestyle, and lost many members. Heaven’s Gate did marginally well at recruiting new members, and they only did so for a short period of time. Heaven’s Gate remained reclusive and small for the majority of its existence. In order to be gain membership to the Next Level, members had to agree to discard all attachments they had to the planet. They had to shed any human characteristics they had, which included their family, individuality, possessions and even their sexuality.
Members had to strive to reach a high level of acceptance by following the strict rules of commitment. They would receive spiritual benefits by following the laws set out by the leaders: Wallis (1982) called this contract an "act of reciprocity": they were mutually beneficial and provided meaning for one's self-concept. Members underwent a process of depersonalization, as they replaced their own feelings and behaviours by an in-group prototype that prescribed shared cognitions, feelings and behaviours (Mullin and Hogg 1999).

In 1985, Ti passed away from liver cancer, yet the group did not fall apart with her death. It was understood that Ti had made her trip to the Next Level ahead of the other members, in order to prepare for their assent. Applewhite was now the sole leader, and the ideology of the group began to change. Now the body became less important, something to be discarded when ascending to the Next Level. New age concepts entered into the collective's ideology as well as the idea of Satan. As a charismatic leader, Applewhite resolved the potential crisis of Ti's death by formulating a new and extraordinary mission. The mission still needed to be completed, and followers had to obey Applewhite on the merit of the mission (Weber 1968). Through a series of revelations given to them by Applewhite, members of Heaven's Gate came to understand themselves as an elite group: they were actually members of the Next Level who had been placed on Earth as an “Away Team.” They were tasked with spreading the message of eternal life to all those who would accept it, and they were to train them to “shed their human characteristics so that they would be capable of joining in the cosmic journey home and reassuming their true identities” (Cowan and Bromley (2015: 153). Thus the collective tried to reach out to new followers who accepted their
ideology: but they maintained a purist stance and only desired members who were willing to make a long-term commitment to the ideology and share a "conscience collective" with the other members of the group (Durkheim 1995).

Heaven’s Gate members made satellite television shows, published pamphlets for distribution and began travelling around the United States to share their spiritual message. In the 1990s they finally established a main base at a lavish California mansion and began to spread their message online. Ideologically, the idea of voluntarily discarding the body completely had become a central ideology in Heaven’s Gate. Members did not consider this abandonment of the body to be an act of “suicide” – it was “moving on” in another form. But they also stated that they hoped they could reach the Next Level in the bodied forms. In 1996 the comet Hale Bopp became visible for many months and it was rumoured that trailing behind the comet were aliens in a UFO. The Heaven’s Gate collective took this as a sign that it was time to leave this planet, to undertake a voyage to the space ship. They wrote “exit” letters, printed their history and created a webpage on the internet so that all their ideologies and prophecies could be made public after they had moved on from this world. 39 group members prepared to leave behind their bodies, otherwise known as their vehicles, so that they could ascend to the spaceship and acquire new bodies. On March 22, 1997 they removed themselves from their human form so they could make the transfer to the Next Level. For Heaven’s Gate members, they were taking a voyage: a final and logical step indicating their dedicated conviction that beyond the Earth lay their eternal existence. Outsiders decried it as an act of suicide, an act of self-directed violence. The Heaven’s Gate collective was mobilized by an act of collective emotional labour: traditional customs no longer
provided them with reasonable structures for behaviour. This collective mobilization was a meaningful act to bring about social change, to evolve so that they could save their souls and to live eternally (Della Porta and Diani 2006).

Marshall Applewhite and Bonnie Nettles held great charismatic authority over the crew members. They “presented themselves as key cosmic figures, sent by extraterrestrials from the Next Level, who alone had the capacity to save humankind” (Shterin and Al Rasheed 2009: 38). Ti and Do claimed that they were continuing the message of Jesus, reiterating the genuineness of what he had originally taught: “now as a male and female couple” (Chryssides 2001: 70). They carried this message from place to place, proclaiming that they were “sent to earth via UFOs to save souls by imposing on them a strict regimen of celibacy and abnegation” (Davis 2000: 245). The strict routine imposed on members was an effective method of keeping them in line: the firm schedule of activities was constantly evolving and moving in different directions, keeping members enthralled in their day-to-day restrictions and sacrifices. The regimented rules and regulations were referred to as “procedures.” These procedures had to be followed with complete acceptance: if any members rebelled from the regimen, they would suffer slow growth and tardiness. “Do and Ti constantly tinkered with their group’s discipline and routines,” to “keep their followers entertained and obedient” (Davis 2000: 255). The procedures that members undertook included strict diets, intense fasting, and checking in with a partner every few minutes. Crew members were taught “to follow orders without giving them a second thought” (Davis 2000: 254). Those who could not follow the rules were told that they were being selfish, choosing to follow their own minds and stagnating instead of following the guidelines given to them.
so graciously by their Teachers so that they could evolve (Davis 2000: 255). Applewhite even references dogs and cats, wanting his followers to emulate the behaviour of an obedient pet.

Do demanded complete submission from Heaven’s Gate members: they were to follow only his orders and to never use their own thoughts to try to rationalize an order, event or procedure he had given. He wanted them to carry out his wishes with absolutely no hesitation. Applewhite required the crew to constantly be “working against identity, working against separateness, working against uniqueness, working against anything that is still of the human kingdom” (Davis 2000: 254). This level of absolute control over the membership was deemed necessary so that he could complete his spiritual mission of saving them from earthly destruction. The group structure was so influential that members committed themselves to celibacy and eight men, plus Do, were castrated as a sacrifice. As the sole leader of the Heaven’s Gate collective now, Do had authoritative leadership. He claimed through prophecy that no member could enter into the Kingdom of Heaven unless it was through his will. By demanding an extremely high level of participation, Do was producing a high level of commitment in his followers. Members fused their morality into high levels of dedication to the collective (Collins 2001).

Heaven’s Gate was an extremely isolated new religious movement: meaningful contact with the outside world and relationships were looked upon as sacrilegious behaviour. Marshall Applewhite and Bonnie Nettles contributed to the crew’s “dependency and obedience” by keeping them isolated from their family, friends and the general public. They were reclusive (Davis 2000: 248). Do claimed that lives outside
the collective – careers, having children, buying homes, being involved in organized religion, working for the betterment of society – were all part of a satanic plot to create “servants” for the “acceptable establishment” (Davis 2000: 250). Do looked to create his own establishment where each crew member was isolated both from the outside world and from each other inside the collective:

> If you’re going to overcome this world and come into my Kingdom, you’re going to be only familiar with one thing, and that’s my Kingdom. As far as a physical familiarity with anyone, the only familiarity you’re going to have, the only confidant you can have, the only one you can talk to about things that you might want to talk…[about] are your check partner, within procedures, and your Older Member. That’s the way we have designed it, and if you try to change those, then to that degree you’re going against the lesson plan (cited in Davis 2000: 258).

Applewhite maintained controlling and absolute discipline through these established structures, limiting the amount of interaction the crew could have with one another; effectively isolating them and preventing dissenting opinions or doubt from being fostered in the membership. The crew worked daily in order to defeat their humanness, which required them to not partake in “any activities that might draw them back into their human ways, such as reading, listening to music, using drugs, talking about the past, and engaging in sex” (Bromley and Melton 2002: 213). Internal and external isolation kept the crew in line for decades and enabled them to complete their final sacrifice. As Dawson (2002) explains, collective members must believe and act on the ideology of the leader, and the leader must frequently display achievements that are coupled with “aggrandizement of the leader’s power, along with the increased homogenization and dependency of the followers.” These conditions allow charismatic leaders to indulge darker desires in order to maintain their legitimacy” (Dawson 2002: 98). Furthermore,
the social encapsulation demanded by Applewhite maintained control over the group's boundaries: yet, it also heightened paranoia and defensiveness (Mullin and Hogg 1999).

From its inception, Heaven's Gate maintained an impending apocalyptic outlook. Unfortunately, due to their reclusive character, understanding the ideology of the group is hard to truly discern: there was only one living member left after the rest of the collective left this earthly plane. Briefly, they believed that the universe had a whole host of intelligent beings, who existed on various planes. The Bible was in fact a record of extraterrestrial activities that had taken place on earth millions of years ago: according to Applewhite and Nettles, extraterrestrials living on another planet known as the Next Level, seeded the earth with humanity, and humans had finally spiritually evolved to the point where they could now take on the role of the crew of flying saucers. But only a few humans could ever advance past their human state, so those left behind would stay on the poisoned earth until it was cleansed. The members of Heaven's Gate were to help guide all humans back to their true homes so they could assume their true forms. This was to happen imminently, as the earth was going to be recycled, cleansed of everything. Members were preparing to escape the earth's destruction and move on to the Next Level. Hale Bopp's arrival was taken "as a definitive sign confirming their prediction that the Earth's present civilization was about to be recycled – 'spaded under'" (Hall et al 2000: 155). The reason the world needed to be recycled was because humans, comparable to weeds, had destroyed its earth garden beyond repair. The "recycling of the earth" was the equivalent of the end of the world; the apocalypse. This information, found on the group's official website, still displays a Red Alert claiming "Hale Bopp Brings Closure to Heaven's Gate."
**External Factors**

Heaven’s Gate only experienced a small amount of exogenous problems, especially in comparison to other new religious movements examined in this thesis. Most of the problems that the group encountered occurred earlier in their history, when they had a more public presence. In the 1970s and 1980s, the group, while making their campsite travels across the country, would attempt to gain converts through public presentations and meetings. Naturally, putting themselves and their beliefs out in the public sphere led to ridicule: from the public, defectors from the group, families of members and the media. This was a difficult time for the collective because they would hold meetings in order to recruit, but sometimes the crowd would hurl insults at them and object to their teachings. For instance, Joan Culpepper, who briefly traveled with the group in the 1970s, left them and then began speaking out against the group in the media. She opened up a halfway house for former members and even “followed the group around, questioning their teachings, until they went into seclusion” (Hall et al 2000: 161). In 1975 the group held a large meeting in Oregon that became highly publicized around the country, and their beliefs were mocked. This had a negative impact on Heaven’s Gate members because it caused a “sudden mass exodus of converts, [and] there were town meetings and the Oregon State Police investigated” (Hall et al 2000: 163). Heaven’s Gate had to endure a police investigation, which concluded that no crime had been committed by any of the members. Even though nothing could be done to the group legally, the media continued their barrage: CBS’s Water Cronkite reported on national television how Applewhite and Nettles saw themselves as martyrs for humanity, who performed miracles and would eventually be
resurrected by being beamed up by aliens to a Next Evolutionary Kingdom. Cronkite also asserted that individuals in Oregon had already disappeared, insinuating that they may have taken a trip to eternity, but more likely, they had been taken against their will by the Heaven’s Gate movement (Hall et al 2000: 163). Bromley and Melton (2002) argued that “it was only a matter of time before the media began reporting on people who had disappeared after attending Ti and Do’s lectures” regularly (214). They became a media “sideshow” as reporters ridiculed Ti and Do, interviewed anti-cult group experts who claimed the collective was a deviant cult that brainwashed people, as well as parents who worried their children were being used like the Manson family (Bromley and Melton 2002).

Due to negative press coverage, constant hecklers at their public events and police suspicions, the group dropped out of the public sphere. Their isolation minimized externalized pressures, but heightened their paranoia and defensiveness towards outsiders. This isolation helped in further solidifying Do's absolute authority over the group (Galanter 1999). Hall et al declared that “after friends tried to prise one member away, the group went underground for nearly seventeen years” (2000: 155). Whatever the reason for their reclusive nature, this defensive posture deterred future enquiries. The removal of external pressures, critiques and criticisms would also prevent the fostering of internal dissent, but left nothing to contradict the leader's psychopathology (Galanter 1999).

Internal Factors

The Heaven’s Gate collective experienced a few internal issues but the rigid structures established by Marshall Applewhite and Bonnie Nettles aided them in
determining if an individual was “appropriate” for being a crew member. The group’s selectivity, through the expectation of total obedience to the leaders, caused less desirable members to be purged from the group. For instance, in 1976 Applewhite and Nettles identified nineteen people that they considered to have low commitment to the ideologies of the collective, and so they were separated from the highly committed members and sent to Phoenix, Arizona: then they were eventually dropped from the group membership completely (Hall et al 2000). This particular mechanism protected the collective from experiencing many internal issues. The crew that remained had to display their complete dedication to the cause, in order to reach the Next Level: unlike many new religious collectives, Heaven’s Gate presented itself as a cohesive unit.

Minor problems emerged within the crew but they did not upset the balance of the collective. The members would watch the skies for UFO activity and at one point Ti and Do prophesized a date for their trip to the Next Level: the members prepared for the voyage, packed their few belongings, and waited but to no avail. Instead of the failed prophecy creating doubt amongst members towards the leadership, “the members regarded the event as just another test” (Bromley and Melton 2002: 217). When Ti passed on, it also caused a few internal problems. Ti’s physical form was supposed to evolve, as her body was “supposed to metamorphose and be lifted en masse” (Lalich 2004: 92). When this did not happen, rather than scepticism setting in, Applewhite augmented the group ideology. This did not seem to cause any significant problems inside the group, as Ti continued to communicate with Do from the Next Plane. In fact, Applewhite declared that Ti had sent him a message, telling the members to prepare for their voyage when the Hale-Bopp comet appeared. Ti’s death endowed Do with
supernatural abilities, as he could now communicate with the Next Level. He was able to resolve the potential crisis of Ti’s death through a vision that provided an encouraging image of the future that then prompted collective action through self-directed violence (Conger and Kanungo 1998).

One of the most challenging internal factors to affect the collective was related to Applewhite’s failing health. The continued existence of the group was called into question – if Do could depart this plane through death, it threatened the members’ possibility of being ushered to the Next Plane: they would be stranded on a dying planet if Applewhite died (Newport and Gribben 2006). Therefore, Applewhite’s declining health most likely contributed to the group’s anxiety, and their group exit/self-directed violence in 1997. In the end, Applewhite was able to carry out his divine mission, ushering the spiritually evolved members of Heaven’s Gate to the UFO hiding behind the comet Hale Bopp, so they could reach the Next Level and live eternally amongst the stars.

One crew member, Rio DiAngelo, had expressed doubt about leaving this earthly plane and was granted permission to remain behind so that he could pass on Do and Ti’s millennial prophecies about the end of the world, and how those humans left behind could escape this suffering. It was DiAngelo who discovered the deceased crew members: they had mailed him a press release that explained the nature of the movement to the public, as well as video tapes that included Exit Videos of Do and the other members. They had included a map to the house in which their bodies or vehicles could be found, and had left the door unlocked so he could gain entry. Although the Heaven’s Gate collective had remained reclusive to the point of shocking the country
with their apparent suicides, they encapsulated many traits of other new religious movements: they were paranoid about external threats to the group; there was no successor to take over the leadership of the group; their leader was dying and without him they could not complete his mission; and they carried forward their apocalyptic scenario until the very end. Members of Heaven’s Gate were extremely anxious about the approaching apocalyptic cleansing of the planet. The group’s umwelt was to ascend to a higher level of existence before the cleansing took place and this could only happen when the extraterrestrials, who originally created humanity, arrived to save them: their salvation arrived with Hale Bopp. The early persecution from the media and defections as well as internal pressures concerning Marshall Applewhite’s failed prophecies and health mobilized them towards collective suicide through a form of self-directed violence.

In conclusion, the Heaven's Gate movement met all the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence: they believed in a strong apocalyptic belief system with imminent denouement; there was an intense connection between members and Ti and Do as the organizational structure of the movement was predicated on charismatic leadership and authority; and, by the end of the movement's existence, they had completely withdrawn from society by maintaining absolute social encapsulation. Members maintained the ideology and new teachings given to them by Ti and Do, and after Ti’s death, Do maintained absolute authority over the members' thoughts, beliefs and behaviours. The exogenous factors that suppressed the movement and raised tensions between the group and social milieu consist of negative media portrayals, defectors, and police investigations. These particular aggregates
caused the Heaven's Gate collective to go into seclusion. Do's physical illness may have forced the movement into action, for fear they would lose their leader before they could carry out his, and therefore their, divine mission. The internal and external factors have been systematically outlined in the summary table below in order to illustrate which factors most influenced members of Heaven's Gate to commit ritual suicide collectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exogenous Factor</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media Representations</td>
<td>Bromley and Melton (2002)</td>
<td>The media began reporting that people were disappearing after attending Bo and Peep's lectures. Reporters mocked Bo and Peep, anti-cult groups were interviewed as experts that claimed the group was a cult that brainwashed its members. Parents of members were afraid their children had joined a cult like Manson Family (214).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Representations</td>
<td>Hall et al (2000)</td>
<td>In 1975 Bo and Peep held a successful meeting which brought unwanted public attention. Held in Oregon, the meeting was publicized across the nation. The local newspaper displayed a photo of the town's mayor throwing a flying saucer (162).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Representations</td>
<td>Hall et al (2000)</td>
<td>In 1975 CBS News anchor Walter Cronkite ridiculed Do and Ti because of their ideology. He told viewers that they saw themselves as martyrs, they were performing miracles, and were going to be beamed up to the Next Evolutionary Kingdom in a space ship (163).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defectors</td>
<td>Hall et al (2000),</td>
<td>A Heaven’s Gate member, Joan Culpepper left the group, and then began speaking out against them in the media. She opened a halfway house for former members and followed the group around, questioning their teachings, until they went into seclusion (161).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Police</strong></td>
<td>Hall et al (2000)</td>
<td>Oregon police investigated the group but could not find any evidence of a crime being committed by them.</td>
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<td>-----------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Defectors</strong></td>
<td>Hall et al (2000)</td>
<td>After friends tried to prise one member away, the group went underground for nearly seventeen years (155)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Endogenous Factor**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Challenge to Millennial Goal ii. Dissent and defections within the group</strong></th>
<th><strong>Source</strong></th>
<th><strong>Quote</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hall et al (2000)</td>
<td>In 1976 nineteen members were found to lack enough commitment to remain with the group and were first sent away from the main group and then eventually dropped by the group completely (170).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Challenge to Millennial Goal: failure to fulfill goal/problems related to the goal</strong></th>
<th><strong>Source</strong></th>
<th><strong>Quote</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bromley and Gordon (2002)</td>
<td>Ti and Do prophesized a date for lift-off, and the members packed their belongings and drove out to the desert to wait to be picked. Although the prophecy did not come to fruition, members regarded the event as just another test (217).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lalich (2004)</td>
<td>When Nettles died, her body was supposed to metamorphose and be lifted up en masse. Applewhite, therefore, had to alter the beliefs of the collective (92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newport and Gribben (2006)</td>
<td>The continued existence and mission of the Heaven's Gate &quot;crew,&quot; for example, were, as noted above, threatened by the possibility that Do would, like Ti over a decade before, depart from them through death and thereby leave them &quot;stranded&quot; on earth. Pg. 45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Early Scientology**

Scientology describes itself, on its official website, as “a religion that offers a precise path leading to a complete and certain understanding of one’s true spiritual nature and one’s relationship to self, family, groups, [Hu]mankind, all life forms, the material universe, the spiritual universe and the Supreme being.” Scientology was started by L. Ron Hubbard in the early 1950s. Hubbard was a science fiction author and
in 1950 he released the book *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*. The ideas within *Dianetics* became foundational elements for the core beliefs of the Church of Scientology, founded in 1954. Hubbard would further the ideas he developed in *Dianetics* in hundreds of books that he authored in order to explain and spread the belief system of Scientology: these writings are referred to as scripture in the church. In fact, Hubbard’s writings were protected and preserved by a special organization called the Church of Spiritual Technology, ensuring that the original texts would survive any future disasters, and allowing those who survived to rebuild civilization using Hubbard’s teachings (Cowan and Bromley 2006).

In *Dianetics* and his other works, Hubbard crafted a religion based upon spiritual self-help that would ease a person’s physical and mental problems and reveal to them the true essence of their existence. Scientology claims that the body and the mind are things that the self possesses, but are not identified with a person’s true self. The individual’s real self is known as “thetan or spirit, and is the godlike, creative force, which is immortal” (Chryssides 2001: 282). A person’s real self, or thetan, is in reality responsible for the creation of all Matter, Energy, Space and Time (MEST). These four principle elements encompass the physical world. The problem is that humans do not realise that they themselves are the creation of thetans, so they have become ensnared in matter, energy, space and time: humans have forgotten their “original, essential, immortal state” (Chryssides 2001: 283).

Scientology explains that the human condition, trapped in MEST, can be explored in the ‘reactive mind’: that part of the mind that operates on a ‘stimulus-response basis’, as it functions beneath the level of consciousness. The reactive mind
records traumatic events; thetans have lived for millions of years within various individuals, therefore, the entirety of these traumatic incidents has been stored in our reactive minds. Scientologists refer to these stored memories as 'engrams' (Cowan and Bromley 2006: 174). The engrams can be triggered when a part of the traumatic experience that originally produced the engram happens again: this recalling of engrams can cause emotional and unreasonable responses as well as trigger physical and psychosomatic illnesses. As individuals do away with the engrams, they are able to re-establish their “original, natural condition, their native state” (Cowan and Bromley 2006: 175). Thus, according to Durkheim (1995), an emotional transformation takes place through this collective "ritual". The ritual of doing away with engrams allows individuals to feel emotionally stronger and the emotion creates solidarity within the group. Pride in accomplishing the ritual creates strong social bonds. As this ritual is emotionally intensive, it generates intense reflection, which itself produces "enduring and vivid episodic memories for the ordeal and the other group members who uniquely shared in the ritual (Swann et al 2012).

This section only focuses on early Scientology, as that is when L. Ron Hubbard positioned himself as the powerful and charismatic figurehead of Scientology. As a new movement, it encountered the most external factors with which it had to contend and because its membership was small, it was able to enforce the greatest amount of social encapsulation upon its members. He opened the Dianetics Research Foundation in 1950 where he offered classes and trained people how to “audit” themselves. People began following the teachings in Hubbard’s books and lectures and they soon became like members of his flock, following his directions, giving him absolute authority. “To
devout Scientologists, Hubbard is the founder of the practice [of auditing], the author of the scriptures, the touchstone of belief and the guarantor of salvation” (Cowan and Bromley 2015: 30). Hexham and Poewe claim that Scientology “appear[s] to merge the office of prophet and guru to create a new leader who both proclaims the truth and becomes the object of devotion” (1997: 115). According to Raine (2015), Hubbard presented himself as heroic, or even superhuman, because he was able to solve the problems of the world and had a spiritual mission to lead humanity to a life of true happiness and understanding. Hubbard asserted that through Scientology, those people who followed his teachings could become much more advanced than the rest of society. This advancement was referred to as “Clear”. Scientologists, once cleared, were then mandated to bring the rest of humanity to the same state: by doing so, they would create a perfect society, free of sickness, disease, insanity and war. Those who stayed outside the collective were seen as unworthy or corrupt (Swann et al 2012). According to Hubbard's apocalyptic and millenarian worldview, as advanced beings, those who have become Clear, are responsible for bringing about this new world. John McMaster, the first Clear in Scientology, would eloquently tell members that Hubbard’s aim was to bring about a New Civilization where all humans could achieve their dreams and that it was only a short matter of time before humanity could achieve a Clear planet: their children would not be burdened by the nightmares of the planet that currently existed (Wakefield 2009). This meant that Scientology was in fact mandatory for everyone, in order to free the world from disease and war (which could inevitably wipe out everyone). Members of Scientology are held socially responsible for reinforcing the desire to become clear, and this can only be done through one’s participation in the rigorous
services of auditing and training. The attainment of spiritual freedom, or “salvation”, is a worldwide endeavour.

The apocalyptic myth is also found within Scientology. Mikael Rothstein (2009) notes that the Xenu myth put forward by L. Ron Hubbard has received little analysis, but it does exist in a few places, particularly on the internet. Rothstein calls the Xenu myth “one of Scientology’s more important religious narratives, the text that apparently constitutes the basic (sometimes implicit) mythology of the movement, the Xenu myth, which is basically a story of the origin of man on Earth and the human condition” (2009: 365). The myth tells how a catastrophe affected this side of the galaxy seventy-five million years ago: Xenu was a ruler of a section of the galaxy, and was about to be deposed of power so he created a plan to eliminate a large group of the population from his dominions. He kidnapped these citizens, brought them to earth, placed them at the base of volcanoes and detonated hydrogen bombs. Once their bodies were destroyed, the disembodied souls, or thetans, were captured, and were implanted with misleading data to cause them to forget who they truly were: immortal beings. Xenu was captured and locked away, but still exists and could be a threat to the world sometime in the future. The Church of Scientology forbids individuals from learning this creation story without proper authorization as it could be fatal – that information is only available to those members who have reached the highest levels of going clear (Rothstein 2009). If this story is held by the innermost faction of Scientologists, then the need to clear all of humanity as soon as possible is of utmost importance so that thetans can never be entrapped again.
Scientology maintains a belief in the afterlife, symbolized in the billion-year covenant that members of the Sea Organization (and other dedicated Scientologists) have signed. This covenant is a sign of a member’s commitment to the faith as well as an affirmation of belief that they will be born on earth again. The member promises that when they are born again, they will again work toward the goal of spreading Scientology and freeing, or clearing, the planet. This marker or symbol, explains Swann et al (2012), embodies the collective participation of each member, and aids participants in feeling a shared sense of belonging to a collective. It also places them in confrontation with the outside world because the ideology they are now espousing has different beliefs, attitudes and norms than those outside the group. Scientologists look forward to a future in a next embodied life, with the goal of "Clearing the Planet" (like building the kingdom of God). To clear the planet means that all humans must reach the state of “Clear” as well as ridding the world of war, crime, addition to mind-altering drugs and illiteracy. This belief motivates members to high levels of commitment to the collective movement. Scientology espouses that it has the solution of all the problems humans face and they provide that knowledge. The fact that Scientology has that knowledge makes the members duty bound to share the truth with all of humanity.

Hubbard stated that by undergoing Dianetics therapy, or auditing, it would push the individual forward to the level of clear. ‘Clears’ are considered to be optimal individuals, who will live much better lives than non-Scientologists (Zellner 1998). Stark and Bainbridge allege that the level of clear is much like an eminent status position within a hierarchical social structure: it directs Scientologists through various different statuses, leading them to the eventual goal of becoming an operating thetan (OT) (in
According to Bednarowski, “OT has provided Scientology with a vehicle for multiplying the level of statuses that an individual can achieve” (1995: 387). In order to rise up through the status levels, members are required to take special courses that are only offered by the Church of Scientology, for a cost (Bednarowski 1995). Roy Wallis, British sociologist, claims that Scientology is participating in “an ‘enrollment economy’” (in Bednarowski 1995: 387). This is how Scientology survives as a religion: it sells the potential for the achievement of rising status in the group. The more a member can pay – while also completing the course work and auditing requirements – the higher they can rise in rank and more of life’s mysteries are revealed. Scientology clearly structures the group in a hierarchical manner that separates one status from the next. The system of Scientology is sacred, as it is total, complete and exclusive. The social self reflects the belief system, and accepts it without question as right. Members dedicate themselves to evolve so that they can reach the highest level of evolution (Luhtanen and Crocker 1992).

The Church of Scientology has three major administrative bodies. The most dedicated members of Scientology belong to the Sea Organization: members “occupy the most essential and trusted positions in the senior churches and in the Scientology hierarchy” (Church of Scientology International 1998: 323). Only Sea Org members can receive the highest levels of training and processing, in order to become Clear. These members lived communally, and dedicated their lives “entirely to the furtherance of Scientology” (Cowan and Bromley 2015: 39). It was the Sea Org members that accompanied L. Ron Hubbard aboard a fleet of ships. They maintained an intense
bond with Hubbard, maintained absolute loyalty to him and swore to serve him completely.\textsuperscript{18}

Members who are unable to pass through the levels to go clear because they “fail to put in their own ethics,” Hubbard states that “the group takes action against him and this is called justice” (Hubbard 1994: 361). This punishment is form of interpersonal violence, meted out by the group towards a member in order to make them comply to the rules. For those members who commit serious offences, a tribunal called the Committee of Evidence (or Comm Ev) is convened – members of the church can request such a tribunal against other members when they believe they have evidence showing someone has committed a serious wrongdoing by breaching church ethics codes. The Committee, if it finds a member guilty, recommends a punishment that has been defined by Hubbard himself. Committee members themselves can also be investigated and prosecuted if they do not aggressively pursue a proper form of punishment.

Hubbard also coined the term “suppressive person” for those individuals in society who are considered enemies of the church: their “disastrous” and “suppressive” actions impede the progress of scientologists and therefore are deemed a danger. These suppressive persons are said to have characteristics and mental manner s that make them violently oppose the betterment of the group. Entire groups in wider society can be considered suppressive, including journalists, government agents, exp-members, splinter groups and psychiatrists. Anyone who publicly opposes Scientology

\textsuperscript{18} Dawson (2005) postulates that, if the Sea Org had been severely persecuted during the time of Hubbard’s reign as charismatic leader, it perhaps could have imploded like Rajneeshpuram and the Order of the Solar Temple and led to an eruption of collective violence.
can be considered a suppressive. Any Scientology member who communicates with Suppressive Persons is subject to the same label if they do not disconnect from them. If a member continues communicating with a suppressive person, they will face “disconnection”: they will be shunned by other members of Scientology. This can cause marriage severances and removing children from parents. Those who are punished are aware that they must undergo these codes of conduct if they wish to remain in the movement. Thus, they undergo interpersonal violence, where the group imposes the act of violence onto the member. (Church of Scientology 1994).

**External Factors**

Although Scientology kept itself separated from mainstream society in its early days, its rise met with external opposition. Scientology has had to deal with various external pressures: from the government, media, former members and anti-cult groups. The Church of Scientology views the rest of the world (i.e. non-believers) with a certain amount of suspicion and uncertainty. In the media, L. Ron Hubbard was often portrayed as distrustful and apprehensive of the world in general. An exposé on Scientology in the *Los Angeles Times* described Hubbard as having a suspicious view of the world, seeing the world filled with madmen who wished to destroy Scientology. Hubbard made his followers see the world in the same way – filling them with fear (Sappell and Welkos 1990a). Hubbard was quoted stating that for decades “the vested interests which pretend to run the world (for their own appetites and profit) have mounted full-scale attacks. With a running dog press and slavish government agencies the forces of evil have launched their lies and sought, by whatever twisted means, to check and destroy Scientology” (Sappell and Welkos 1990a). Hubbard would defend the group against
almost any criticism and there was plenty of opportunity for defence. Because members shared a distinctive collective identity and are linked through group cohesion, members who defended the group were, in turn, defending themselves. Scientology operated a tight social system. Referencing Mullin and Hogg, members could feel high task uncertainty in the face of the perceived external threats but Hubbard provided high task importance and contributed to their sense of well-being (Galanter 1989).

The US government also began investigating the Church of Scientology, due to the fact that there was so much revenue going through Scientology and because it was rumoured that Hubbard was profiting massively (Petersen 1982: 222). Therefore, in response to these allegations, the Internal Revenue Service withheld the tax-exempt status given to religious institutions for twenty-five years because it viewed the group as a commercial enterprise: the decision was overturned in 2003 in a landmark reversal.

Like most new religious movements, Scientology has been criticized by the media as being a brainwashing cult or a misleading group only in search of money and power, not spiritual advancement. The profitability of Scientology has made it extremely controversial throughout its existence. The IRS, in the early 1990s, disclosed the fact that the church was earning approximately $300 million a year from auditing fees, selling Scientology literature and recordings, and through the franchising of its philosophy. Journalist Douglas Frantz, in a New York Times article, reinforced the notion that Scientology was “a highly profitable global racket that survives by intimidating members and critics in a Mafia-like manner” (Franz 1997: 12). Frantz outlined how the group orchestrated a campaign of intimidation against the IRS agents to change their minds, even though the IRS denied that such tactics had any effect on
the decision to overturn their tax-exempt status; he charted Scientology’s history in the courts, harassing and suing their detractors for any negative portrayals of Scientology, using private investigators to dig into the personal lives of their critics to silence them.

The media would often feature the negative opinions of defectors. Sappell and Welkos (1990b), writing a six-part series on Scientology for the *Los Angeles Times*, highlighted the story of Patricia Braine, a former Scientologist who claimed to have been ‘brainwashed’ by the Church of Scientology, by twisting her thoughts and isolating her from the world. They also claimed that members of the Church were continually told that if they left the group, they would not be safe as the world outside them had become “a breeding ground for criminals, the insane and people too ignorant to see that Scientology is the answer to [hu]mankind’s problems” (Sappell and Welkos 1990b: 1). Other former members have attempted to damage the church through legal action. Chryssides (2001) cites how one former member unsuccessfully attempted to sue for the Church of Scientology for $39 million because it had failed in their promise to improve her eyesight. In 1990, another former member, in the United States v. Stephen Fishman case, claimed that the Church had manipulated him: he attempted to back up his claim with psychologist Margaret Singer’s theory of brainwashing. However, District Court Judge Lowell Jensen found that this brainwashing theory lacked scientific merit so Singer and her colleague were not allowed to take the stand on Fishman’s behalf (Wilson and Creswell 1999).

Scientology has also had several court room battles with anti-cult groups but none more than the Cult Awareness Network (CAN). CAN was once considered to be the most vocal critic of Scientology: but they lost a costly lawsuit to the church and were
forced into bankruptcy. The network itself was then bought by a Scientologist (Knapp 1996). Scientology has become accustomed to defending itself against criticism from various different sources. In response to these assaults, Hubbard developed the Guardian’s Office. The Guardian’s Office “was assigned the mission of protecting the church against outside attacks and ensuring that the organization moved ahead according to the policies laid down in the writings of its founder” (Melton 2009: 25). Eventually the Guardian’s Office constructed a far-reaching program of intelligence gathering: they infiltrated organizations that were deemed enemies, and disseminated information in order to cease any negative actions taken against the church (Melton 2009). The church also adopted the policy of “fair game,” which identified individuals seen as a major threat to the organization so that they could be “harassed, threatened, or punished using any and all means possible” (Urban 2009: 375). The Guardian’s Office and policies like “fair game” would give Scientology the image of an extremely aggressive defender of its beliefs and ways of life. The church has had successes using this model of tight security. As mentioned earlier, the IRS withheld tax-exempt status from the church for decades. However, the investigation was abruptly stopped when “Scientology negotiators were apparently able to compromise the IRS by threatening to reveal inappropriate activities of some IRS agents” (Galanter 1999: 182). The church has managed to keep an aggressive defensive position but it currently doesn’t deploy its older more extreme tactics like the Guardian’s Office. Hubbard came to the defence of the group from external opposition and he would do the same for issues that arose internally. When personal and social identity is threatened, they often engage in out-
group criticism: these tactics can lead to prejudice, discrimination and violence (Crocker and Luhtanen 1990).

**Internal Factors**

L. Ron Hubbard was always prepared to defend Scientology from external attacks as well as those originating from within the church itself. Hubbard made sure that the church went above and beyond in terms of maintaining security. By the late 1960s, Hubbard had become concerned about ‘subversion’ and ‘communist infiltration’ within the NRM. In order to deal with these issues he constructed an elaborate code of Ethics, which was meant to weed out individuals that he considered ‘suppressive’.Suppressive individuals were members who could pose a threat to the functioning of the church: these included persons who questioned Hubbard’s authority, revealed classified information to outsiders and those who sold Scientology materials at less than retail value (Urban 2006). When rules were broken, there had to be consequences and punishments. Those who witnessed anyone disobeying Hubbard’s pronouncements were encouraged to inform on them: this was called a “knowledge report.” Offenders were audited and could potentially be placed into the Rehabilitation Project Force (RPF). The RPF is an isolated work force that is used for various maintenance jobs. Laurel Sullivan, Hubbard’s former public relations officer, testified in a Scientology lawsuit that Hubbard confided in her that he created the RPF because “he wanted certain people segregated whom he believed were against him and against his instructions and against Scientology” (Sappell and Welkos 1990b: 1). This form of punishment is a collective action of interpersonal violence – the collective imposes the violence upon its members in order to maintain control. Those who conform to the
codes of ethics are rewarded. Internal control and security was always used to deal with internal problems, helping Scientology maintain a strong grip on its operations, especially in the early days of its formation, including the use of collective violence upon its own members. Recently, defectors have begun describing various forms of corporal punishment that exist, such as a detention center called a Rehabilitation Project Force, as well as a prison at International Base for church executives who have fallen out of favour with church leaders. External pressures shifted the idea of salvation for everyone to salvation for those committed to the ideology, and stressed that the rest of humanity would suffer (Mullin and Hogg 1999).

Although Hubbard suffered from pancreatitis, and died in 1986, Scientology as a religion managed to survive over six decades. It boasts a large membership, appears to be financially sound and has received endorsements and support from some of Hollywood’s biggest stars. It appears that in the world of new religious movements, Scientology has longevity and has been highly successful. Dianetics and the teachings of Hubbard will live on for many generations to come. Despite its success, critics of Scientology still view it as the most dangerous NRM to exist in the world today. Canadian authorities, in 1984, called the punishments doled out by the collective as a form of slave labour. Scientology spokespersons stated that “detractors simply lacked the devotion to advance the religion’s aims and the morality to abide by its high ethical standards” (Welkos and Sappell 1990)

To sum up, the group umwelt is to become clear and to help other humans become clear: when this has been accomplished, they can rid the world of illness, insanity and war, thereby bringing about a New Civilization. Early Scientology met all
the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence: they hold a strong apocalyptic belief system with an unspecified denouement; the group's organization structure, built upon the charismatic leadership and authority of Hubbard allowed a potent connection between members and L. Ron Hubbard to be forged; and, the group maintained a high level of social isolation from non-members by keeping its ideology, knowledge and power a secret. Hubbard was an absolute authority, who felt unstable self-esteem and bouts of paranoia; the movement also enforced extreme isolationism for the most ardent of followers, aboard the Sea Org. Scientology is constantly persecuted in the media, in the legal system, by defectors and by government bodies. Media criticism and internal pressures had undermined leadership credibility but it has not dismantled the group. Although there is evidence of interpersonal violence from the collective onto its members, the suppression felt by Early Scientology from defectors and governments was dealt with through the legal system: it had the financial means to fight back against these exogenous factors legally and aggressively. The Scientology collective today remains aggressive towards societal groups that are deemed to do them harm, yet they have not been mobilized towards collective violence openly: they undertake campaigns of harassment and threaten members with disconnection. As outlined in the W.H.O definition of violence, the early Church of Scientology intentionally used physical force and power, threatened and actual, against members of the community which resulted in (or had a high likelihood of resulting in) injury, psychological harm, maldevelopment, and deprivation. These internal and external factors have been systematically outlined in the summary table
below in order to visibly illustrate the complex intertwining of factors that allow interpersonal violence to be tolerated by its devout members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EARLY SCIENTOLOGY</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Exogenous Factors</strong></td>
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<td>Media</td>
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<td>Anti-Cult Groups</td>
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<td>Anti-Cult Groups</td>
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<td>State/Legal</td>
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<tr>
<th>Endogenous Factors</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apocalyptic Beliefs</td>
<td>Urban (2011)</td>
<td>A New Civilization will arrive shortly, where all humans can achieve their dreams. All humans have to be taught that they can reach the level of Clear: this will rid the world of illness, madness and war. Only then will the New Civilization appear. Those who remain unclear are a threat to the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Authority</td>
<td>Urban, (2006)</td>
<td>In the late 1960s, Hubbard worried about the possibility of subversion from within his organization and created elaborate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exposure of trickery and/or deceit

Hubbard developed a code of Ethics weed out suppressive persons. They were any persons deemed a threat to the functioning of the Church by questioning Hubbard's authority, revealing classified information and selling Scientology materials below cost (37, 49–50). Using the E-meter and a series of interrogations called “Security Checks”, Ethics officers could identify any potential threats to the Church (374).

Challenges to Authority
Exposure of trickery and/or deceit

Staff must inform on members seen disobeying Hubbard's rules.

"Knowledge reports” help the organization correct problems and ensure a high standard of operation. Critics contend that the practice stifles expressions of discontent or doubts about the church, even between husbands and wives.

Those who break the rules end up in the Rehabilitation Project Force (RPF): forced labour in isolation.

Challenges to Authority
Exposure of trickery and/or deceit

Hubbard's former public relations officer, Laurel Sullivan, testified in a Scientology lawsuit that Hubbard told her the RPF was created because "he wanted certain people segregated" whom he believed were "against him and against his instructions and against Scientology" (1).

In providing this meta-analysis of literature on the most well-known cases of new religious movements (because of a high level of success in recruitment, retention and public infamy) that displayed violence (self-directed, interpersonal, or collective), certain aggregates stand out and are made clear in all nine of these new religious movements: Charismatic leadership and absolute authority are essential elements in an integrative explanatory model to explain violence. All three features extolled by researchers to predict violence can be found in each of the social collectives examined in this chapter:
each of the nine movements had a divinely mandated dramatic ideology of apocalypticism intertwined with the idea of an imminent denouement (the world was going to end very soon); each movement had an organizational structure that was forged by charismatic leadership and authority, which maintained a strong bond between the charismatic leader and group members; and each movement upheld firm boundaries from the outside world in order to follow their own idiosyncratic reality, thereby completely encapsulating them. Regarding leadership, narcissism, unstable esteem and paranoia characterized the leaders' self-concepts. They imposed absolute authority over their members, which isolated them further with their influence. Finally, in all groups with the exception of Heaven’s Gate\textsuperscript{19}, there were strong societal and governmental suppressions on group boundaries, which heightened the group’s perceived restrictions imposed upon them from the outside world. And they all had access to weapons of one type or another: guns or poison. Even though the movements isolated themselves, they were unable to maintain a tight control over their own separate reality, with the exception of Heaven's Gate. As these conflicts escalated, the concept of an apocalyptic doom settled upon the leadership and, thus violence became the only way for the leadership and members to preserve the movement’s in-group identity and ideological reality. Aum Shinrikyo felt driven to bring about the apocalypse in order to help people in the wider world (according to their own rationale); the charismatic leaders of Solar Temple, Branch Davidians, the Church of the Lamb of God, and

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{19} The Heaven's Gate movement did encounter suppression in its early days, but these tensions and conflicts forced the movement to literally go underground and fall off the radar of media and state institutions. This isolation would have caused unstable esteem and paranoia to rise substantially. So in a way, external factors did suppress the movement to the point where it disappeared – allowing them to follow their own idiosyncratic reality. A further aggregate, that of Do's declining health, may have played a part in the decision to "abandon" their bodies, or vehicles as they understood it. The external world regarded this action as collective suicide.
\end{footnote}
the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments, Heaven’s Gate and Scientology all felt their messianic control weakened, and their paranoia and narcissism lead to catastrophic apocalypticism. In the case of Jonestown, the Order of the Solar Temple and Heaven’s Gate, these movements had to contend with ill or dying leadership. All the groups maintained a highly critical ‘us versus them’ mentality to consolidate collective mobility. Furthermore, Jonestown, Solar Temple, Aum Shinrikyo, Rasjneespuram, MRTCG and the Lamb of God maintained or manufactured weapons. Thus, a wider set of aggregates can be found within the collective movements in the context of violence, be it self-directed, interpersonal or collective in nature.
Chapter 5
Non-Violent New Religious Movements

In examining models that claim to determine when violence will take place in new religious movements, the literature alludes to the fact that three factors must always be in place for it to arise: charismatic leadership, isolationism and an apocalyptic worldview. As explained in a previous chapter, Anthony and Robbins created a framework based on endogenous and exogenous factors (in Wright 1995). Hall and Schuyler further developed the framework by bringing to the forefront external pressures which were in place when new religious movements became violent (in Bromley 1998). Although the three features, apocalyptic worldview, charismatic leadership and isolationism, have been found to exist when NRMs become violent, these characteristics are not indicative of violence as they can also be found within NRMs that do not become violent.

The new religious movements to be examined that meet the criteria but have not exhibited violent behaviours include: the early Unification Church, 3HO/Sikh Dharma, Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT), Chen Tao and the Concerned Christians. They were chosen for meta-analysis for the same reasons the violent NRMs were chosen: because of their level of success, in recruitment, retention and public infamy. I posit that very definite factors must exist within such groups that construct the way these groups react to both internal and external factors that eventually produce violent actions. Violence is an emergent variable that reflects a group's collective ideology and resources. Drawing from the various theoretical models that have been postulated, a meta-analysis of NRMs that became violent were systematically synthesized to illustrate
that a wider range of factors exist in each of the groups that lead to violent (self-directed, interpersonal or collective) behaviour. In order to see if there are correlations amongst them, this chapter will conduct the same meta-analysis of the literature of NRMs that remain peaceful. By examining both the endogenous and exogenous factors that exist within non-violent groups, perhaps it will better explain why some groups become violent while others remain peaceful. What factors are strongly associated with subsequent violent behaviour that do not exist in collectives that remain peaceful? These groups will be examined below.

**Early Unification Church**

The Unification Church was founded in 1954 by Sun Myung Moon (1920-2012) in South Korea. Moon proclaimed that he was a messiah: he experienced various spiritual experiences and religious visions which led him to spread his divine message to the world. In the late 1950s, Moon released *Divine Principle*, the religious text that explained his knowledge and interpretations of Christian faith. He would go on to lead the Unification Church with Hak Ja Han and they would jointly run the church as husband and wife.

Sun Myung Moon’s religious journey began in his childhood when he claimed to have conversations with several religious icons. As a youth, Moon had a vision of Jesus who “called on him to carry out His unfinished task...he later met and conversed with Moses and Buddha” (Galanter 1999: 122). The unfinished task of Jesus formed the principal belief and ideology of the Unification Church. The task now given to Moon was to restore the ‘Fall’ of humanity from God “by marrying and giving birth to children who are free from sin” (Chryssides 1991: 44). Moon married Hak Ja Han and they began
referring to themselves as the ‘True Parents’. The concept of ‘True Parents’ is the foundation upon which the Unification Church is built. According to Barker (1989), the theory for True Parents, found in *Divine Principle*, was originally God’s plan for Adam and Eve: they were to assume this role through marriage and conception so that “their children and their children’s children would populate the world” (Barker 1989: 75).

Of course, this plan did not come to fruition and the world became populated by sinners. However, the Unification Church did not interpret the ‘Fall of Man’ as Lucifer persuading Eve to eat forbidden fruit. Instead, Moon proclaimed that Eve first had an “illicit (spiritual) sexual relationship” with Lucifer, and then convinced “Adam to have a (physical) sexual relationship with her” (Barker 1989: 75). Thus, this situation which had meant to be centered on God’s plan was now Lucifer-centered. The original sin, or ‘Fallen Nature’ of Adam and Eve, was then passed on to all succeeding generations in the world (Barker 1989: 75).

When Moon married Hak Ja Han on March 16, 1960, it marked the beginning of the “restoration process”, of bringing humanity back into the lineage of God, instead of Satan. They were the first couple to receive God’s blessing, so their children would be born free of sin. Members of the Unification Church, who had been born with this original sin, could be transplanted into the holy family so that they too could participate in the restoration of God’s kingdom. In order to contribute to the coming of God’s kingdom, they would have to take part in the marriage ceremony known as the blessing – referred to by the media usually as a ‘mass wedding’ (Chryssides 1991). The members of the Church must then pass through various levels that elevate them to the status of ‘perfection’. There are three different statuses members can achieve: servant

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of God; adopted child; and, finally perfect child. These spiritual achievements reflect Galanter’s assertion that membership is characterized by levels of sacredness: "members had to continually strive to achieve a higher level of acceptance by conforming all the more with the group's expectations" (1989: 198). Non-members are considered to be “under the control of God’s fallen servant, Satan; they are servants of a servant” (Parsons 1986: 149). Seeing non-members as immoral and unworthy corresponds with Swann et al's (2012) framework on collective movements. As outlined by Della Porta and Diani (2006), membership in social movements isn't defined by one solitary act, but by progression of differentiated acts. The movement of passing through levels to elevate status strengthens the feeling of belonging and of collective identity. The marriage ceremony, or blessing, deeply connects members to a common identity and carries the ideologies of the group. This "emblem" symbolizes a feeling that the collective can accomplish its divine mission; it is transcendent (Collins 2001).

The Unification Church prophesized an apocalyptic event would occur in 1967 but then changed the date to 2001 (the Kingdom of God would occur in human history). Moon saw himself as Lord of the Second Advent: he is the Third Adam or the final Messiah. Moon espoused that we are living in the time of the Second Coming. The concept of sin is a perversion of God's Trinitarian ideal (God, Adam and Eve): when Satan entered, it became Satan, Adam and Eve (Satanic Trinity). So God changed it, so it would eventually be God, Jesus and his wife: Jesus was crucified, so now the Trinity has become God, Moon and his wife. Moon was given the task of returning the world to an ideal balance of positive and negative forces with God (trying to remove original sin). Moon has active agency by trying to correct the downfall. This apocalyptic
belief was a central principle in the early Unification Church. Therefore, this section only focuses on that time period (eventually Moon would re-evaluate the impending nature of the apocalypse). Moon exhibited aspects of grandiose messiah-hood. This was displayed in a ritual marker that Unification members had to recite: an oath proclaiming Moon to be their Father; they were taking on the responsibility of fulfilling His will; be his dutiful child of goodness; and, attend to him, the Father, forever (Enroth 1977). According to Galanter (1989) this engagement and affiliation contributed to members' sense of well-being and would lead to profound experiences of emotional and perceptual change: members were bonded to the leader.

Moon and his wife claimed to be bringing forth the Kingdom of God as the chosen True Parents and their followers are their children, vying for perfection. The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification Church states that as True Parents, the Moons were to sow the seeds that would actively bring about heaven on earth, a utopian Christian paradise free from sinners. Dawson (1996) claims that church members view themselves as living in the last days of the world, so they must finish the divine mission that Jesus was unable to fulfill because of his murder. Moon declared that the members of the Unification Church have the heart of God implanted within each of them, thus they have recovered their original innocence. They had gained membership to be sacred: anyone joining the church had to recognize Moon’s messianic status. The blessing process allowed them to redeem the world. As a result, this group has formed “a uniquely therapeutic millenarian movement: they believe they can save the world through emotional self-cultivation and the perfection of their hearts” (Parsons 1986: 145). Throughout the 1970s, Unification members had to live communally, devoting “all
their time and energy to paying indemnity and advancing the cause of Restoration” (Cowan and Bromley 2015: 109). However, while the members spoke of saving the world, critics felt that the movement was very controversial and a negative influence in society.

The early Unification Church was heavily criticized for the practices it used to recruit members in the 1970s. Using a practice called "Heavenly Deception,” Moon proclaimed that lying was good for the benefit of saving a person's soul and advancing the Kingdom of Heaven.20 Thus potential converts often didn't know that they were attending Unification lectures until the third or fourth visit (Barker 1984). Sometimes members would solicit money, pretending to be disabled, for false social causes (Elkins 1980). Also in the early days of the Unification Church, members were kept isolated from friends and family. Moon declared that anyone outside the church was to be considered an instrument of Satan – that included members' mothers and fathers. This out-group criticism boosted collective self-esteem and created an ‘us versus them’ ideology that needed to be constantly defended (Branscombe and Wann 1994). Also, members were kept busy at all times, studying the teachings of the church, working long hours to raise money for the church and recruiting potential members. Caroll Stoner and Jo Anne Parke (1977) claimed that followers of Moon were living severe lives of self-denial (196). Moon also had absolute authority over the marriage partners of the members, personally selecting marriage partners for them even though some did not even know each other. By choosing marriage partners for his followers, Moon reinforced and strengthened the objectives of the collective, as expressed by Galanter (1989):

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20 It seems that the most problematic behaviours occurred at the Unification Church in California, Oakland Branch, under the presidency of Mose Durst. In the 1980s he apologized for his mistakes, and claimed he made them out of youthful zeal and ignorance (Durst 1985).
Moon was placing them on the road to perfection. Furthermore, the bond between leader and follower was strengthened, fostering a relationship of union and subservience through Moon's power.

**External Factors**

The Unification Church has garnered a fair amount of negative publicity and controversy during its existence. Their finances and fund-raising efforts have been highly scrutinized over the years. “It was reported that each of the hundreds of members brought in anywhere from one-to-five hundred dollars on an average day” (Galanter 1999: 125). Barker (1989) states that in 1974, the movement had an income estimated at $8 million, “almost all of which, according to the then-president of the movement in America, Neil Salonen, came from street sales of peanuts, candles, flowers and dry-flower arrangements” (Barker 1989: 60). The prosperity of the Unification Church, as well as the way in which they obtained that wealth, was a large source of controversy. Galanter (1999) acknowledges that after the murder-suicide actions at Jonestown, the public had become very concerned with new religious movements, viewing most of them as a threat, if not out-rightly dangerous. The United States government even investigated the Unification Church, and the House Sub-Committee on International Organizations concluded they had substantial evidence proving that “Reverend Moon’s international organization had systematically violated the United States tax, immigration, banking, currency, and foreign-agent registration laws, as well as state and local laws on charity fraud” (Galanter 1999: 125). The US government took steps to deal with Church violations by indicting Moon for filing false tax refunds, as he had failed to report more than $150,000 of his income. Moon appealed the conviction but was
unsuccessful, and was forced to spend eleven months in a minimum-security federal prison (Galanter 1999).

Parents of Unification Church members then came forward to oppose the group. Parents, concerned about the welfare of their children, started to speak out and approached the media with their tales of ‘cult’ worship and ‘brainwashing’. Rice (1976), in an article published in the *New York Times*, escalated the concerns many parents were voicing about Moon’s harmful influence on their children by alleging: “this new Messiah is a spiritual fraud, a devil who enslaves young Americans by means of brainwashing and mind control. Parents have tried to rescue or kidnap their sons and daughters from his communes, but often the kids can’t be found, or refuse to come home (Rice 1976: 145).

As evidence of Moon’s reprehensible tactics, Rice (1976) cited the case of Wendy Helander, explaining how this young girl joined the church, and even though her parents wanted her out, she ‘chose’ to stay. Her parents claimed that she had been brainwashed so they brought suit against the Unification Church. At the trial, the defence called members to testify about their independence to leave the group, while the prosecution called forth ex-members to testify about the lack of freedom they had within the church. Both sides brought in psychiatrists to argue about Wendy Helander’s state of mind. However, in the end, the judge dismissed the case as Wendy’s parents were unable to prove that the church had exercised “control or restraint over her person” (Rice 1976: 145). The Unification Church faced backlash from angry parents that could not legally do anything to force their children out of the religious organization. According to Rice, these angry parents then banded together and formed a national
organization in order to fight the church and to free their children from its control. In response, the Unification Church hired Burson-Marsteller, a large public relations firm, in order to improve their public image. The campaign to clean up the tarnished image of the church and Moon was somewhat successful: political, social and religious organizations were eventually silenced as the Unification Church’s image changed to that of a persecuted minority religion which required sympathy and not abject fear (Tucker 2005). In the 1980s, the Unification Church moved away from communal living. Members were encouraged to live in single family homes, which came to be known as Home-Churches: the family became the church. By the 1990s, Moon began delegating religious responsibilities to committees: ceremonies were simplified, non-Unification members could take part in the Blessing process and a theological shift took place: all souls could be liberated (Cowan and Bromley 2015).

These battles have continued for decades and the media has always been in the wings to catch the next sensational ‘cult’ story. The Unification Church has evolved since the 1970s but the media continues to only focus on the negative side of the NRM. For instance, on September 3, 2012, the day of Sun Myung Moon’s death, The Guardian published an article entitled “I was a Moonie Cult Leader,” which told the story of Steven Hassan, a former member (in the 1970s) of the Unification Church, who now gives anti-cult counselling and has authored several anti-cult books. Hassan asserts that he was brainwashed and isolated from friends and family. After being a member of the collective for a few years, he was deprogrammed by ex-members of the church: since then, he has spent his time writing books about how such malevolent groups work, and has become a therapist in order to protect people (Saner 2012). However, for
all the negative attention the church receives, they are still one of the most prosperous and popular new religious movements.

Internal Factors

Although the early Unification Church had immense problems with external opposition towards them, it appears that the movement had been able to minimise the amount of internal problems that arose. The Unification Church was structured in such a way that endogenous conflict and resistance could not become a significant issue. The beliefs of the church demanded faithfulness. Members experiencing doubt and disillusionment were pressured to keep such negative thoughts to themselves, as expressions of ill feelings were considered the equivalent of a sacrilegious act by the leadership and/or membership. According to Galanter (1999), the reason that the group did not face significant internal problems when Moon was in jail was because the members were allowed to create a periodical entitled The Round table, which permitted members to experience more independence of thought within the movement. This caused “a weakening in the church’s monolithic system of social controls”: but it was a sanctioned type of dissent that was tolerated by the church (Galanter 1999: 126). This type of activity usually goes against the practices of many new religious movements as dissent in any form is not often tolerated. Yet, the Unification Church, by making such small concessions of power, furthered the cohesiveness of the group and kept not only the leadership, but also the membership, on the same page. This has set the church up for a successful future.

To sum up, the collective umwelt, or particular worldview, of the Unification church is to complete Jesus’ divine mission: the Moons elevated the status of many
collective members to perfection through the blessing ceremony. Although Moon originally prophesised the imminence of the apocalypse, the message has changed to a utopian future. The Unification Church is fulfilling God's divine mission, to save the world before the apocalyptic event occurs. Media criticism, defectors, angry parents and anti-cult groups have caused external threats to the Unification Church. Rather than becoming violent or hostile, the Unification Church chose to work on its public image. Internal pressures such as Moon's incarceration undermined his leadership for a time but the Unification Church collective has not been mobilized towards violence. The early Unification Church met all the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence: they had a strong apocalyptic worldview with an impending denouement; the group maintained an organizational structure that was built on charismatic leadership and authority; a powerful connection was created between members and Moon; and, the group created firm boundaries between themselves and the outside world, which resulted in social isolation. In the early days of the Unification Church, Moon imposed absolute authority over members and enforced strict rules of commitment: this level of strictness has been alleviated. Unlike NRMs that have been prone to violent tendencies, Unification Church leaders eventually lessened their authoritarian stance, especially during Moon's incarceration – instead, they became more lenient, allowing members to voice concerns. There does not seem to be any data showing that Moon experienced unstable self-esteem or paranoia. The movement did experience some suppression but has the financial means to fight back legally and aggressively: the suppression felt by the movement was met head on amicably, rather than violently. Exogenous factors that sought to suppress the movement seem to have
raised some tensions between the group and social milieu, but rather than acting out in defensiveness, the group worked on changing its public image. The internal and external factors have been systematically outlined in the summary table below in order to visibly illustrate the complex intertwining of factors, even though the group has thus far not been mobilized to violence. The Unification Church seems poised to continue to be successful in the future: the movement, even in the face of continued opposition, is showing no signs of slowing down even after the death of its founder.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exogenous Factors</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State/Legal</td>
<td>Galanter (1999)</td>
<td>The church’s finances garnered considerable negative attention through publicity over its fundraising methods. Mobile fundraising teams traveled throughout the country and raised money from the sale of small specialty items such as flowers or ginseng tea. It was reported that each member brought in anywhere from $100-$500 a day.</td>
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<td>Galanter (1999)</td>
<td>The House Sub-Committee on International Organizations found evidence that Reverend Moon’s international organization violated US tax, immigration, banking, currency, and foreign-agent registration laws, as well as state and local laws on charity fraud (125)</td>
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<td>Media</td>
<td>Rice (1976)</td>
<td>Writing about parents who could not get</td>
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<td>Media</td>
<td>Rice (1976)</td>
<td>To improve its image, Sun Moon's church hired Burson-Marsteller, the same P.R. firm that has done work for Exxon and General Motors but the relationship was short-lived as the PR firm worried that this account would negatively affect their own public image (145). The campaign worked enough to get political, social and religious groups to forget about them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media/Anti-Cult Group</td>
<td>Saner (2012)</td>
<td>Story of Stephen Hassan (ex-member turned Anti-Cult group leader) was published on the day Moon died.</td>
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<td>Apocalyptic beliefs</td>
<td>Dawson (1996)</td>
<td>Moon and his wife were to bring forth the Kingdom of Heaven, a Christian utopia free from sinners. Church members had to realize that they were living in the last days of the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Millennial Goal</td>
<td>Galanter (1999)</td>
<td>Throughout Moon’s period of confinement in jail, some church members began publishing a periodical, The Roundtable, which pushed for more independence of thought within the movement. This reflected a weakening in the church's &quot;monolithic system of social controls, but at the same time allowed for the expression of dissent by members who were interested in reform yet committed to their church” (126)</td>
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Healthy, Happy, Holy (3HO), also known as Sikh Dharma, is a new religion that blends Sikhism with other Eastern spiritual practices, such as meditation and yoga, with a focus on maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Harbajan Singh Puri (1929-2004), called Yogi Bhajan by his followers, came to North America in the late 1960s and started to grow the movement. The environment in which the Sikh Dharma grew out of was the counter-culture of the 1960s and 1970s (Khalsa 2012). In a society that lacked a clear sense of meaning and purpose, 3HO offered a response to the ineffectiveness of established religions and collapsing traditional values.

Yogi Bhajan offered his followers a path to fulfillment and illumination: by following a rigorous regimen of yogic discipline (sadhana) and through healthy living. He created a form of discipline called ‘white Tantric yoga’, which brings into balance the masculine and feminine energies that exist in each person: Bhajan claimed to be the "mahan tantric", meaning he was the only person authorized in the world to teach these specific techniques (Elsberg 2011). In order to receive the leader’s power, energy and knowledge, followers had to be thoroughly devoted and obedient to the leader (Shimazono 2001).

Although he exposed his students to Sikhism, in the early days of the movement Bhajan’s “primary focus for the first two years was clearly on yogic techniques and healthy eating, not associated with Sikh ideals or practices” (Jakobsh 2008: 3). His followers were eager to follow his teachings and so he initiated them into the 3HO as ‘yogis’ and ‘yoginis’: they took the initiation vows of the Khalsa Sikhs (meaning they agreed to take the oath of the 5 Ks – they practiced vegetarianism, and never cut their
hair) and inherited a military tradition to protect and fight for justice. He then began building gurdwaras and including prayers with morning devotions. Most of the core 3HO members and their children lived in isolated ashrams during the early days, and continued to practice yoga even after they were initiated into the Khalsa. The charismatic bond and Bhajan's authority was maintained through Wallis' (1982) theory of 'acts of reciprocity' between leader and follower. 3HO members entered into a contractual agreement with the charismatic leader and the contract was maintained as long as the acts of reciprocity were maintained: members prostrated to Bhajan daily and wore a locket with his photo in it. In return, Bhajan shared his divine prophecies with the members and taught the chosen few how to withstand the coming apocalypse. Many people who encountered Yogi Bhajan and 3HO did so through Kundalini and Trantric Yoga classes, and never saw themselves as Sikhs (Dusenbery 2012). Those who took the Khalsa vows lived very structured lives at the Ashram. Bhajan appeared to come up with his own unique brand of religion by combining several practices from a previously established faith while not rigorously committing to it. Regardless, Bhajan had clearly established himself as a guru and the charismatic leader of 3HO.

Bhajan espoused impending apocalyptic beliefs: he prophesized it's approach as the Piscean age waned and transitioned to the Aquarian age. He explained that the present age of Pisces was a time of social inequality, insecurity, and greed. With the coming of the Aquarian age, knowledge would be more equitably distributed, and spiritual awareness would be widespread. The transition, however, would be difficult. He predicted great tidal waves of insanity and told his followers that they had to prepare for such a calamity. At first he varied the date of the arrival of the Aquarian Age, but in
1992, Bhajan proclaimed it would come to pass in 2012. In order to receive Bhajan's knowledge, they had to be thoroughly obedient and loyal to their leader.

Yogi Bhajan explained that at the age of sixteen, he was proclaimed to be a master, when his own teacher and master decreed one day, “You are the Master.” When Bhajan emerged from the master’s quarters he explained to several people that he was now the master and they all bowed to him. Yogi Bhajan “was the originator of 3HO/Sikh Dharma, both ideologically and organizationally”, and ruled the group with "unquestioned authority until his death" in 2004 (Jakobsh 2008: 8). In 1977, Time Magazine published an article that illustrated life in the Ashram, where members of the collective resided. It described a strict rule of commitment that the disciples had to follow: members would rise at 3:30 a.m. to practice yoga and meditate, often while gazing upon a picture of Bhajan. It also exposed how members were treated poorly: there were forced to work twelve hours a day, were underpaid and insufficiently fed, yet they continued to follow Bhajan’s every pronouncement about their private lives, including what they ate, how they raised their children, and who they would marry. Bhajan’s lawyer and spokesman equated Bhajan to the Pope (Wilde 1977).

The outside world became standoffish to the 3HO movement. In terms of isolation, Jakobsh explained that “within North American society at large, the white-robed, bearded and turbaned adherents clearly maintain an outsider status” (Jakobsh 2008: 11). They dressed and behaved as a separate collective from wider society. Although many new religious movements are often completely socially isolated from society at large, 3HO/Sikh Dharma received a small amount of acceptance from the Sikh immigrant community for awhile, although at the beginning of Sikh Dharma’s
formation, its relationship with Indo-heritage Sikhs was often disapproving and unsupportive. The practice of yoga was often viewed with negativity as most Punjabi Sikhs believed that “the practice of yoga was a Hindu tradition that was firmly avoided by the Khalsa” (Khasla 2012: 396).

Bhajan's form of kundalini yoga was meant to help the practitioner transcend the boundaries of ego and self. This would lead to enlightenment, which was necessary to deal with the apocalyptic struggles to come. Kundalini yoga would purge the individual of fear, negative attitudes and neuroses. The follower would then enter a neutral state, which would remove desires and needs. Bhajan's chants were meant to strengthen a person's energy field and remove negative energy. This way, people could shape their own realities. Once a 3HO member had achieved positive thinking to create a successful and satisfying life, then that one person would be able to take away the loneliness and sickness of a whole locality. Only in this way could they change the external world (Elsberg 2011). They could withstand the calamity of the impending apocalypse. This personal transformation would lead to their salvation: this sacred knowledge imparted to them by Bhajan provided a strong rationale to the group's mission (Galanter 1989).

External Threats

The larger Sikh community and society at large continued to regard the Sikh Dharma with scepticism, as they did not consider the collective to be true Sikhs, which caused tension in the group. The group also experienced several external threats during its existence. Members were sometimes harassed by the outside world when they began wearing Indian-style clothing and turbans, demanded by Bhajan. They
encountered specific opposition to their turbans when they applied for jobs in education or in the military, and even had some tension with the anti-cult movement: in fact, a few deprogramming attempts took place. During 3HO summer camps, Bhajan made sure to have armed guards around the entrances as neighbouring outsiders had threatened the camp and would drive by and yell at the women (Elsberg 2011). Yogi Bhajan himself had armed guards for security as he'd had multiple death threats: many of these threats were tied to the upheavals taking place in India. In the 1980s, after a few members were forcefully taken by deprogrammers, 3HO Sikhs created a policy to physically oppose any attempts by deprogrammers that attacked their organization (no further attempts were reported after that). 3HO members stated that they would defend themselves in court, and even physically if necessary. Bhajan also sought political influence in order to protect the collective. In terms of self-protection, some members took up gatka training, while others took firearms training. Bhajan constantly predicted future upheaval and times of tribulation: but these predictions were associated with periods of intense communal solidarity and strong group boundaries. Although 3HO was set up to be violent (with weapons and training), they were accommodating towards the external world and its threats, rather than defensive.

**Internal Factors**

Although there were a few internal acts of tension, the group as a whole did not engage in violent contact. Internally, the departure of certain members left the movement open to negative publicity. The 1977 *Time* article also interviewed defectors from the 3HO movement. Bhajan’s former chancellor, Phillip Hoskins and his wife Colleen quit because “they could no longer countenance Bhajan’s luxurious life-style
when so many of his followers has to scrimp along” (Wilde 1977:76) The article also quoted an early apostle who claimed that “originally the Yogi was against titles, against disciplines. Now he teaches only obedience to him” (Wilde 1977:76) When Phillip Hoskins defected, Bhajan regarded his leaving as an act of betrayal to him, his teacher, and for that disloyalty Bhajan said he would suffer 84 reincarnations and then be reborn as a worm (Wilde 1977).

The movement has found itself suffering another internal problem over leadership, after the death of its founder Yogi Bhajan in 2004. This in-house power struggle has found its way into the courtroom. Currently, the leadership of the group is being contested and this issue has turned into a legal matter. Yogi Bhajan’s widow and children are suing because they were left out of the non-profit religious businesses that the movement owns: they didn’t receive a seat on the board of directors. These non-profit organizations make a significant amount of money; for example one company that sells tea made $7.3 billion in U.S. retail sales in 2014. The defence is claiming that the plaintiffs do not wish to actually get a seat on the board but instead are attempting to assume control over the entire movement (Brown 2016). Regardless of how this internal strife plays out, it appears that 3HO/Sikh Dharma will continue to be popular as its teachings and practices are currently in high demand. Some essential practices of the movement, such as yoga and meditation, have become not only accepted, but popularized, in the Western society. 3HO’s “style of living has grown in popularity throughout the Western countries in recent years because it provides tools to deal with widespread societal problems such as stress, depression, anxiety and their associated physical diseases” (Khasla 2012). 3HO/Sikh Dharma provides and teaches these
techniques to the public, and they do not necessarily demand participants to convert and fully commit to the movement. Therefore the movement itself, while not having a large membership, has been able to survive and in one sense become a part of Western lifestyle. Although Yogi Bhajan passed away in 2004, his teachings and the movement live on.

To sum up, the umwelt, or particular worldview, of the Sikh Dharma is that, as the world comes into the Age of Aquarius, great calamities will take place. The Sikh Dharma collective has not been mobilized towards violence even though it meets all the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence: the movement has a strong apocalyptic worldview with an approaching denouement; the organizational structure of 3HO is built on the charismatic leadership and authority of Yogi Bhajan, which had established a strong bond between members and the leader; and it has firmly created boundaries from the wider world as devout members live in ashrams, which force them to remain socially isolated. Media criticism, defectors, angry parents and anti-cult groups (who forcefully removed members for deprogramming) have caused external suppression of the Sikh Dharma while internal pressures have been minor. When the group experienced external suppression, rather than acting out in defensiveness, the collective stated that it would take anyone to court if they became aggressive towards any of their members. Meanwhile, some members prepared to physically fight any attackers by learning to fight with swords and handle firearms. Yogi Bhajan maintained absolute authority over his members, enforcing strict rules of commitment that affected almost every aspect of their lives while they lived at the Ashram. Unlike NRMs that have displayed violent tendencies, Yogi Bhajan’s social
identity was not affected by unstable self-esteem or paranoia. The internal and external factors have been systematically outlined in the summary table below in order to visibly illustrate the complex intertwining of factors, even though the group has thus far not risen to commit acts of violence, internally or externally.

## SIKH DHARMA/HAPPY, HEALTHY, HOLY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exogenous Factors</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defectors</td>
<td>Wilde (1977)</td>
<td>Colleen and her husband Philip, Bhajan's former chancellor quit the collective, saying they could no longer countenance Bhajan's luxurious lifestyle when so many of his followers had to scrimp along. Filmmaker Don Conreaux, an early member who left, says that originally the yogi was &quot;against titles, against disciples. Now he teaches only obedience to him&quot; (76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society at large</td>
<td>Khalsa (2012)</td>
<td>In the early years of Sikh Dharma, Indo-heritage Sikhs were disapproving and unsupportive. The 3HO's teaching of yoga was at the root of the discord. &quot;Although many Sikhs practice some form of yoga in the privacy of their home, yoga was regarded by most Indo-heritage Sikhs as a Hindu tradition that should be firmly avoided by the Khalsa&quot; (396).</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Endogenous Factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Authority</td>
<td>Brown (2016)</td>
<td>This article details the leadership struggle that is taking place in 3HO since the death of Yogi Bhajan. This is a legal challenge to see who exactly will be the future leader/take charge of the leadership of the group.</td>
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Chen Tao

Chen Tao, also known as God’s Salvation Church or the True Way, was started in the early 1990s by Hon-Ming Chen (born 1955). Teacher Chen, a former university professor, was a charismatic leader: he originally started the movement called The True Way in Taiwan but he then moved it to the United States. Chen was an atheist for a majority of his life but in 1992 he claimed to have received a message from God instructing him to pursue a religious life: he had become a prophet. After receiving this divine communication, he started the group and eventually felt that the “followers of God’s message should move to the United States to survive the great tribulation” (Houston 1999: 2). As elucidated by Wallis (1982), the charismatic bond of the leader was maintained on the basis of acts of reciprocity: members entered into a contractual agreement that was maintained as long as the acts were mutually beneficial. Teacher Chen revealed his prophecies to a chosen few, which would keep them safe through the impending apocalypse; in return the followers accepted Chen's absolute authority, through obedience and devotion to their leader.

Chen Tao’s looming apocalyptic beliefs included the world ending in the late 1990s. The teachings of Chen Tao mix UFOlogy with Buddhism: Chen postulated that the Earth has passed through four previous tribulations, all ending in a nuclear war. Those who were chosen by God to escape did so through flying saucers, and returned back to earth at a later time to start the population anew. During the next impending apocalypse, which was to take place in 1999, eighty percent of the world’s population would perish in a global nuclear holocaust. But Chen had been told by God that the United States would remain a safe area, and the believers of his message would be
rescued by God who would send the flying saucers again to save them (Kliever 1999). 147 members of The True Way left Taiwan in 1997 and came to the US in order to survive the impending nuclear war. They eventually settled in Garland, Texas – declaring it a holy site as it was where God would descend from heaven. This relief effect was the foundation upon which a leader could reinforce the follower’s compliance with group norms. The group's behavioural norms supplied structure in many areas of the members’ lives (Galanter 1989).

The True Way demanded isolation from the broader Garland community: the group members did not have employment, none of the children attended school, and many members of the community dressed uniquely: they wore white clothes and sported white cowboy hats (Kliever 1999. Their choice of clothing made them easily identifiable as being a part of Chen Tao, and separate from the larger community. Their specific style of clothing encouraged exclusion as it allowed them to feel that they were part of a collective social group, whose belief system they accepted without question as right – those in the outside world were wrong. Their belief system, combined with their dress, forced isolation, and apocalyptic predictions made the larger society of Garland highly suspicious of them. The fact that the collective existed in a post-Branch Davidian/Heaven’s Gate society caused them to encounter further external opposition.

External Factors

Chen Tao faced often scepticism and suspicion about their intentions from the media, police, legal system and anti-cult groups. In December 1997, the movement started publically announcing their predictions – that God was going to appear on every television in North America and then appear on earth in human form – and in return,
they faced a large amount of external resistance. Teacher Chen prophesized that God would arrive at his house in Garland, Texas at 10:00 a.m. on March 31, 1998. On March 4, 1998, a New York Times article, written by Sam Howe, spread a rumour that the group might commit mass suicide if the predictions failed: the article went so far as to state that Chen’s movement could be the Asian equivalent of Heaven’s Gate (Howe 1998; Kliver 1999). This article was equal to ‘the warning shot heard round the world’ and the media descended on Garland to cover this ‘death watch’.

The US media then began running sensational stories that Chen provided in interviews but the Taiwanese media had been writing similar stories about the group months earlier. The Taiwanese media wrote stories about ‘brainwashing’ taking place in Chen Tao, and how the group was planning on committing mass suicide in Texas (Houston 1999). The Taiwanese Justice Minister, Liao Cheng-hao, made comments to the media that cults such as Chen Tao were currently rising up and spreading because “people feel empty and are searching for a kind of civilized society”, yet Cheng-hao found the flying saucer cults to be a fairly strange trend (Gargan 1998). It appears that the police in Garland, Texas believed, at least to some degree, what the media was telling them. Taiwanese media noted that American authorities were indeed worried that the Chen Tao collective was planning to orchestrate a mass suicide in the same fashion as that of Heaven’s Gate (Gargan 1998).

However, Lonnie Kliever was a Religious Studies professor and had a strong working relationship with the Garland Police Department: he asserted that the police were only trying “to avoid the mistakes that might have been made in the Branch Davidian affair” and that the Garland police were working to protect both the religious
rights of the group as well as to preserve the security of the neighbourhood (1999: 47). Teacher Chen gave the US media access to the group and their own police department activities – although the members lived in isolation to the local community, they were not closed off to the media. Kliever also stated that the police would only move in if there were any indications of violence, “especially in regards to the children in the group” (1999: 48). Chen Tao also faced external opposition from the anti-cult movement: “cult watch groups and fundamentalist preachers were on hand to condemn the group’s teachings” during the media convergence in Garland (Kliever 1999: 48). While the group’s predictions caused great external pressures, the failure of such prophecies to come to fruition created major internal problems as well.

Internal Factors

When God failed to appear on television and in Garland, Texas on March 31, 1998 the group started to internally fall apart. When God did not show himself to North Americans on television at 12:01 a.m. on March 31st, Teacher Chen retracted his second prophecy, stating that he has misunderstood God’s intentions (Marie 1998). The group had faced internal dissent early on as not all the members wanted to move from Taiwan to the United States (Houston 1999). But the members were able to move on from this first crisis. However, the multiple failures of Chen’s prophecies to come to fruition caused the collective massive internal tensions and two-thirds of its members left the church to return to Taiwan. The remainder of the members followed Chen when he moved to Lockport, New York (Houston 1999). After this move, it appears that the trail goes cold. Richard Ostling, of the Daily Courier, wrote that the remaining 35 members of Chen Tao had forecast a millennial nuclear holocaust was to occur at the
end of 1999, yet they would be rescued by heavenly spaceships (1999: 8A). The group ran into financial problems and had to find employment to support the divine mission. Many left and returned to Taiwan. After 2001, Chen Tao completely fell off the map and no new information about the group’s existence (or non-existence) is available. It is believed that the collective disintegrated.

To summarize, Chen Tao members believed that world was about to dramatically end. The group umwelt, or particular worldview, was to expect an apocalyptic denouement to occur, yet they would be saved from a global nuclear holocaust by flying saucers. The Chen Tao collective did not mobilize towards violence, as predicted, even though it met all the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence: it maintained a strong apocalyptic worldview with an imminent denouement resulting from nuclear bombs; the maintenance of organizational structure of the Chen Tao social movement was founded on the charismatic authority and leadership of Teacher Chen, and maintained a strong bond between followers and leader; and the movement created a rigid boundary around them, isolating themselves from the outside world (except when the media descended on Garland, Texas). Media criticism in the United States and in Taiwan externally suppressed the Chen Tao collective. Internal pressures were directly tied to the failed prophecies of their leader. Chen maintained absolute authority over his members, as they depended on him completely for housing, food and clothing in Texas. He enforced strict rules of commitment from his members, making them leave their families and friends in Taiwan to wait for God to appear in Garland, Texas. Unlike NRMs that have been prone to violence, Teacher Chen did not seem to suffer from unstable self-esteem or paranoia, even though his prophecies failed
on numerous occasions. The movement was mildly suppressed by external factors but they did not react to them in any way. The internal and external factors of the Chen Tao movement have been systematically outlined in the summary table below in order to visibly illustrate the complex intertwining of factors, even though the group never committed acts of violence. Chen Tao was like a ‘flash in the pan’ new religious movement. As quickly as it came to be, it was gone. It may have continued and could exist as a movement today, but only in a very small and extremely isolationist way. The failed millennial prophecies and massive media coverage leading up to the divinations appear to have been the undoing of the group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exogenous Factors</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>Howe (1998)</td>
<td>In the New York Times article, Howe wrote “Even more alarmingly, there have been recurring rumours that the group plans to commit mass suicide if God does not arrive on schedule here on March 31...No one knows whether Mr. Chen's group may be an Asian version of Heaven's Gate, the group that committed mass suicide last March in a suburban house near San Diego in an effort to rendezvous with the Hale-Bopp Comet, or whether members simply subscribe to an unusual set of beliefs and will simply accept the development if God does not appear here on March 31”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Gargan (1998)</td>
<td>“In Texas, the authorities are reportedly worried that he intends to orchestrate a mass suicide in the fashion of Heaven's Gate, an American sect in which dozens of members committed collective suicide in San Diego last year.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Legal/State       | Gargan (1998)  | “Liao Cheng-hao, the Minister of Justice, said in an interview that the reasons for the spreading of cults was
‘very, very easy to understand,’ adding: ‘People feel empty and are searching for a kind of civilized society. They are all looking for the true religion.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Representations</th>
<th>Houston (1999: 4)</th>
<th>The Taiwanese media began to report negative allegations about the group in December 1997. The China Post wrote an editorial about Chen Tao, alleging that the group was controlling its members through &quot;brainwashing.&quot; It also accused Chen of extorting fees from people. Other reports in the Taiwanese media stated that the members were planning on a mass suicide in Texas.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media Representations</td>
<td>Kliever (1999)</td>
<td>On 4 March 1998, a <em>New York Times</em> article started rumours about a mass suicide taking place in Garland and media began converging on Garland for a &quot;death watch.&quot; Media began speculating that Chen Tao members would commit suicide when their leader's prophecies concerning God's appearance failed to come true (47).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Kliever (1999)</td>
<td>The Garland police department stated that although they wished to avoid making the same mistakes that had taken place during the Branch Davidian affair, they were ready to move in if there were any indications of violence (48).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Cult Groups</td>
<td>Kliever (1999)</td>
<td>Anti-cult watch groups and fundamentalist preachers descended on Garland, TX to condemn Chen Tao's teachings (48).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents of members</td>
<td>Gargan (1998)</td>
<td>Gargan, interviewing Taiwan’s Minister of Justice was informed that members had to invest large sums of money to join Chen Tao. “Interplanetary travel, however, appears to come with a price tag. The parents of several sect members have complained to the police that their children gave Mr. Chen huge sums of money for the privilege of a saucer ride” (2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Endogenous Factors</strong></td>
<td><strong>Source</strong></td>
<td><strong>Quote</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Failed Apocalyptic Beliefs</td>
<td>Houston (1999)</td>
<td>Chen prophesized the world's imminent end through nuclear war. The Chen Tao members would be saved by flying saucers sent by God. When Chen predicted God would appear in Garland, Texas, the failed prophecy led to the movement collapsing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Millennial goals</td>
<td>Houston (1999)</td>
<td>Chen's book was used as proselytization literature and distributed to the members. “Teacher Chen, as he is called by the group members, attempted to convince the members in all four practice sites of the need to move to the United States.” Not all members left with him (2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissent and defections within the group</td>
<td></td>
<td>“After God failed to appear on television as predicted, a religious leader said today that his second prophecy -- that God would soon appear in this Dallas suburb -- should be treated as &quot;nonsense.&quot;...Using a translator, Heng-Ming Chen, the leader of God's Salvation Church, retracted his second prophecy shortly after God failed to appear on television at 12:01 a.m., as Mr. Chen had promised would happen. He had previously said God would also materialize here on Tuesday.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Apocalyptic Outcome</td>
<td>Marie (1998)</td>
<td>“After God failed to appear on television as predicted, a religious leader said today that his second prophecy -- that God would soon appear in this Dallas suburb -- should be treated as &quot;nonsense.&quot;...Using a translator, Heng-Ming Chen, the leader of God's Salvation Church, retracted his second prophecy shortly after God failed to appear on television at 12:01 a.m., as Mr. Chen had promised would happen. He had previously said God would also materialize here on Tuesday.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Failure to Fulfill Goal</td>
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<td>More than two-thirds of the Chen Tao members left the church to return to Taiwan after the prophecies failed to come to fruition. Some members of the group stayed with Chen, as he claimed that he had misunderstood God’s intentions: the nuclear threat would happen in the near future (14).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenges to Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loss of reputation/Challenges to Apocalyptic Outcome</td>
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<td>Defections</td>
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<td>Failure to Fulfill Goal</td>
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**Church Universal and Triumphant**

The Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT) started when Elizabeth Clare Prophet (1939-2009) took over the operations of the Summit Lighthouse from her
husband, Mark Prophet, when he passed away in 1973. Both Mark and Elizabeth Prophet would communicate messages from the “Ascended Masters of the Great White Brotherhood” to the members of the collective. Their teachings center on the belief that believers can realize their inner divinity and ascend to the ranks of these masters by undergoing inner initiations and through the use of prayers, mantras and ‘decrees’ (Miller 1995: 322). After Mark Prophet passed away, he was considered to have become “one of the lords of the Seven Rays.” Elizabeth Prophet continued to channel the messages of the masters and especially one master in particular, that of El Morya. His communications were considered the “main event” of gatherings (Melton and Moore 1995: 131). In order for her followers to receive her knowledge and power, they had to be completely devoted and obedient to her: they had to be subservient to her power. Elizabeth Prophet took complete and authoritative control over the group as the main messenger between the Ascended Masters and the group members. In 1981, Malcolm Forbes, the publisher of Forbes Magazine, sold a 12,000 acre ranch to the Church Universal and Triumphant and Elizabeth Prophet moved the group to Paradise Valley, Montana where they built an isolated compound and prepared themselves for the apocalyptic end.

The Church Universal and Triumphant believed that the world was about to end in a cataclysmic way so they prepared themselves for the coming disasters, by building bomb shelters underground. The media widely covered the fact that CUT was building fallout shelters and buying weapons illegally in anticipation of the “twenty-five thousand years of negative karma that would soon be made manifest on earth in the cataclysmic disasters, including a Soviet missile attack”, as prophesized by Elizabeth Prophet.
Elizabeth Prophet, after receiving this prophecy in October 1986, pressed her followers to protect themselves from the impending nuclear fallout by staying at the ranch in Montana. According to Galanter (1989), membership in the church was categorized by levels of purity: in order to achieve a higher level of acceptance, members had to completely conform to group expectations. They worked hard to build the shelters quickly and on March 15, 1990 they entered the massive shelters to await the end of the world as they understood it – and to be ready to rebuild a new world. CUT had stored 600,000 gallons of gasoline and diesel fuel and 300,000 gallons of propane in underground storage tanks. The bomb shelters they constructed could house 756 people for the duration of seven years (Wright 1998: 171).

CUT maintained a survivalist philosophy which was “framed in terms of the biblical story of Noah and the ark: food, water, and all the items necessary for a post apocalyptic scenario were assembled” (Wojcik 2011: 81). CUT was preparing to survive a nuclear war: their survival meant that they would be able to save their religion and continue to spread the messages they received from the Ascended Masters after the majority of the earth and population had been annihilated. CUT members functioned as a tight social system, knowing salvation was only for the chosen few. According to Mullin and Hogg, this preparation for the apocalypse was of high task importance. Only the true followers had been chosen to enter the new world. Along with prayers and mantras, Prophet’s followers performed a dynamic form of prayer known as a “decree”. These types of prayers served many purposes: they included devotion, calling on angels for protection, calling forth the light of God on earth, praying for healing and wisdom, as well as seeking to know God’s divine will and getting rid of negative karma.
External Factors

The Church Universal and Triumphant has had to deal with several exogenous struggles. As is the case with many religious movements, defectors tend to be a source of controversy and can attract negative public attention. Barker (1989) affirms that critics of Church Universal and Triumphant, including ex-members, have accused the movement of “brainwashing techniques, encouraging divorce, exploiting its members and getting huge sums of money from them – and practicing necromancy” (212). Starrs and Wright (2005) examined many of the external problems CUT encountered, from the state, the legal system, defectors and anti-cult groups. CUT lost its tax-exempt status in 1992 when the Internal Revenue Service revoked it because of allegations that the group was gun-running and evading taxes, based on receipts they had received from land development and other business ventures. It became known that the Church Universal was in possession of two army tanks: after the incident in Waco in 1993 the Church quietly removed them from their property and put the tanks into storage. CUT’s tax-exempt status was finally reinstated in 1994 when they paid $2.6 million in a tax settlement and “promised to disarm” themselves (Starrs and Wright 2005: 110).

In 1982, the surface water rights to the LaDuke Hot Springs were sold to Michael Kaufman, a CUT member from California. Kaufman then resold these rights to CUT for $10. The Church Universal stated that the hot springs had medicinal virtues, and wanted to expand the springs so that it could pipe water to their headquarters. They claimed to use this hot water in order to heat their offices and for a swimming pool. The movement became mired in clashes with environmentalists and Yellowstone National Park officials in 1992: environmentalists claimed that the group’s compound and their
way of life were damaging the ecological system of Yellowstone National Park. They stated the Church was actually pumping water from LaDuke Hot Springs in order to heat their greenhouses so that they could start a commercial carrot growing operation. Environmentalists were concerned that by taking the hot water from LaDuke Hot Springs, it would harm Yellowstone Park’s geothermal features. They sued CUT in order to stop the pumping. Park officials, on the other hand, were worried about the wildlife in Yellowstone National Park. One of CUT’s compound fences was seen as an impediment to park wildlife as it prevented animals from leaving the park and moving downhill towards their normal winter range habitats. Wildlife officials also claimed that CUT was killing grizzly bears. They declared the Church to be one of the “single biggest threats to the integrity of the park” (Starrs and Wright 2005: 111). The U.S. Congress received a Bill to prevent any drilling to take place within a 15-mile perimeter around the park’s border. Although the Bill failed, the church decided to abandon its drilling plans and eventually sold portions of their property to the federal government (Porter and Porter 2008).

The Church Universal and Triumphant has also faced public opposition from former members and anti-cult groups. Elizabeth Clare Prophet’s own son has offered up negative thoughts on CUT, claiming that it ‘reeked of fundamentalism’ while enforcing ‘Taliban style’ restrictions on members’ clothing attire and interactions with others. The Cult Awareness Network referred to CUT as a survivalist and paramilitary group. CUT fought back at these accusations. While the group did not commit violent acts, they were certainly armed enough and had the capability to pose a serious threat to any of their enemies. Despite the group’s claim of non-violence, they maintained an ‘enemies
list' for twenty years. Starrs and Wright (2005) elaborated on the techniques the Church used in order to pass on threatening messages to their so-called enemies, using the media itself to retaliate at the negative publicity they received. CUT members used prayers, mantras and decrees in their personal lives as invocations to the Ascended Masters, but they used a special decree (a printed form) against their critics, who included “members of the media, the local county planner and Planning Board, U.S. Forest Service officials, neighbouring ranchers, the Episcopal, Catholic, and Methodist Churches.” The form they used declared: "I demand a bolt of Blue Lightning in through the cause and core of all criticism, condemnation and judgement from (Insert Name)." In this way, the Church utilizes veiled threats of retaliation against those who oppose them (Starrs and Wright 2005: 14).

Internal Factors

The Church Universal and Triumphant has also faced internal problems. Elizabeth Clare Prophet personally dealt with endogenous hostility over her apocalyptic declarations. Prophet had chosen two dates that could be the nuclear end that they feared. March 15, 1990 was the first date and members fully prepared themselves for nuclear annihilation – several thousand members descended into the bomb shelters to await the fulfilment of Prophet's prophecy, to initiate a new world order. However, the date passed without incident. Following further prophecy, April 23, 1990 became the new expiration date but it too passed. The impact of these two failed prophecies led to great disillusionment. “After the intense emotion leading up to the 15 March and 23 April 1990 dates, at least half of the three to four thousand members who had moved to Montana left the area” (Wojcik 2011: 82). Although many became disenchanted with
the Church because of Prophet’s ‘false’ predictions, other members experienced
cognitive dissonance: they resolved the tension of failed prophecy by believing the
threat of nuclear holocaust had actually passed them (Dawson and Whitsel 2011). The
apocalypse had failed to occur twice but they did not give up their convictions of faith.
Unfortunately, the failed prophecies caused serious doubt as to the purpose and
direction of the Church. Half of the members were disillusioned to the point of uprooting
their life and starting afresh.

Another element of internal strife stemmed from the failing health of the Church’s
founder, Elizabeth Prophet. In the late 1990s, the Church admitted that Prophet was
suffering from Alzheimer’s, likely because it was publicly obvious that her mental health
was failing. This, coupled with the failed prophecies, had caused a reduction in
membership by approximately 30 percent: this decline led to serious financial problems
within the Church (Starrs and Wright 2005). Furthermore, since Prophet has given up
the reigns of the church, much of the internal dispute fell on the leadership position as it
still remains unfilled. Even though the group has had several seriously damaging
internal problems, the smaller group continues to survive.

In summary, the Church Universal and Triumphant’s collective umwelt was that
the world was about to end and they had to prepare to survive it, in order to rebuild a
new world. The Church Universal and Triumphant met all the three characteristics of
new religious movements that have been prone to violence: it maintained a strong
apocalyptic worldview with an impending denouement; the structure of the organization
was predicated on charismatic leadership and authority, where an intense connection
between members and the Prophets was formed; and, the group demarcated firm social
boundaries with the outside world which led to extreme social encapsulation. External threats suppressed the movement in various ways: they were pressured by outside society for ‘brainwashing’ other members. Defector accusations of brainwashing and exploitation that became widespread through the media could have mobilized them towards collective violence. Furthermore, Prophet's ailing health could have easily caused fear and paranoia amongst the members, leading to violence. The exogenous factors that suppressed the movement and raised tensions between the group and social milieu include: negative media portrayals of CUT; disenfranchised apostates that took CUT to court and won a large settlement; anti-cult groups calling for an end to the group because of their weapon stockpiling; as well as political and legal systems that impinged upon their compound and their religious status. All the while, Elizabeth Prophet maintained absolute authority over her members, enforcing strict rules of commitment that affected their lives while living on the isolated compound. Unlike NRM leaders that have become violent, Prophet did not seem to suffer from unstable self-esteem or paranoia even after her prophecies failed to happen. Although the group had the weapons to become violent, many members instead chose to leave the collective. Internal and external factors are systematically outlined in the summary table below in order to visibly illustrate the complex intertwining of factors that could have led the collective to violence, but didn't. Elizabeth Clare Prophet died in 2009, yet the Church continues to maintain an online promotional presence and holds quarterly retreats. Even if the best days could be behind the Church Universal and Triumphant, its mission of communicating the messages of the Ascended Masters lives on.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exogenous Factors</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defectors</td>
<td>Barker (1989)</td>
<td>Ex-members have accused the movement of using &quot;brainwashing techniques, encouraging divorce, exploiting its members and getting huge sums of money from them - and of its practices constituting necromancy. At the time of writing, the movement is appealing against an award of more than $1,500,000 that was made to an ex-member in 1986&quot; (212).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Starrs and Wright (2005)</td>
<td>In 1992 the IRS revoked CUT'S tax-exempt status due to allegations of tax evasion and gun running.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In 1993 it was discovered that the church had purchased two armored tanks. &quot;When the Branch Davidian compound was destroyed in March 1993, CUT officials quietly removed the personnel carriers from Montana and shipped them away for storage. In 1994 the CUT'S tax-exempt status was reinstated in exchange for a $2.6 million tax settlement and a promise to disarm (110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal/State</td>
<td>Starrs and Wright (2005)</td>
<td>In the 1980s began pumping water from LaDuke Hot Springs. Environmentalists stated this was harming Yellowstone National Park's geothermal features and sued to stop the pumping. Park officials complained that a church perimeter fence was blocking elk, antelope, and other wildlife species from their winter habitats. They also claimed that CUT was killing grizzly bears and declared the church “the single biggest threat to the integrity of the Park” (111).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defectors</td>
<td>Starrs and Wright (2005)</td>
<td>“The children of Elizabeth Clare Prophet do not keep the faith, and son Sean remarks that the church of his youth ‘reeked of fundamentalism’ and imposed ‘near-Taliban style restrictions on dress and human interaction’” (115).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Cult Groups</td>
<td>Starrs and Wright (2005)</td>
<td>Cynthia Kisser of the Cult Awareness Network characterized CUT as a survivalist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and paramilitary group because of their history of weapons stockpiling and their building bomb shelters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Endogenous Factors</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Millennial Goal: failure to fulfill goal/problems related to the goal</td>
<td>Starrs and Wright (2005)</td>
<td>“Prophet predicted that the world would end in a nuclear holocaust on a variety of dates, including 2 October 1989 and 21 March 1990. Even as these dates and others came and went, church holdings in Montana continued to be developed as a refuge from that always-approaching apocalypse” (108).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Millennial Goal: failure to fulfill goal/problems related to the goal</td>
<td>Wojcik (2011)</td>
<td>“After the intense emotion leading up to the 15 March and 23 April 1990 dates, at least half of the three to four thousand members who had moved to Montana left the area, some in disillusionment, others because they believed the threat of nuclear holocaust had passed, and others for economic reasons and the lack of jobs in the region” (82).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Millennial Goal: loss of health (leader illness) Dissent and defections within the group Failure to fulfill goal</td>
<td>Starrs and Wright (2005)</td>
<td>In 1998 the church admitted that Elizabeth Clare Prophet was suffering from a mental problem and family members confirmed in public statements that it is Alzheimer’s. “With the failing health of CUT’S charismatic leader and the failure of Armageddon to arrive, church membership has contracted about 30 percent, causing serious financial problems” (111). Gilbert Cleirbaut, CUT’S secular president, announced that he &quot;wanted his church to stop acting like a 'cult'&quot; and disposed of some of the church lands to make up the financial shortfall (112).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Authority: Dissent and defections within the group</td>
<td>Starrs and Wright (2005)</td>
<td>CUT’s disputes are currently internal, “as church officials recognize that Elizabeth Clare Prophet's retirement is permanent and argue about which of eight major figures around the world now taking &quot;dictations&quot; in her stead are legitimate and which are pretenders or apostates” (114).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Authority: Loss of</td>
<td>Starrs and Wright (2005)</td>
<td>“Elizabeth Clare Prophet, the CUT’S once infallible &quot;Mother,&quot; is now living in Bozeman,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Concerned Christians

The Concerned Christians movement was started in the mid-1980s by Monte Kim Miller (born 1954) in Denver, Colorado. Miller, a charismatic leader, formed Concerned Christians because he perceived an anti-Christian bias in the media about the rising new age movement. He wrote a newsletter entitled “Report from Concerned Christians” which disparaged feminist spirituality, new trends arising in Evangelical Christianity, alternative medicines, the Roman Catholic Church, as well as other Christian denominations and movements. In 1996, Miller claimed that he could communicate with God: he proclaimed himself to be God’s true voice on earth and started prophesying about impending apocalyptic events and even his own death. Miller offered his followers a sense of well-being through engagement with the movement, leading to experiences of profoundly felt emotional and perceptual transformation. He gave them hope of salvation after death (Galanter 1989). He commanded his followers to follow the Bible to the letter: this would give them the ability to resolve the problems of humanity. He claimed to be one of the two witnesses that would be on earth to see its end (as written in the Book of Revelation). The collective considered the press and patriotism to be anti-Christian (Willis and Willis 2006).

Although a few members became disillusioned with Miller for making such prophecies and left Concerned Christians, most of them remained in the group. Miller
claimed that, like Jesus, he would die in Jerusalem and then rise from the dead three days later. This would all take place in the year 1999 (Ackerman and Koerner 1999). Miller went further than just communicating with God; he claimed that he could actually speak using God’s own voice (Sontag 1999). According to Mark Roggeman, a Denver police officer who investigated Concerned Christians, he witnessed Monte Kim Miller speak in this voice of God by “pretending to go into a trance, with the veins on his neck protruding and his mouth contorting…and spoke the words ‘I am the Lord your God. I know you are here to deceive me and you need to bow down to me, and if you don’t, you will die’” (Ackerman and Koerner 1999: 32). To his followers, Miller was God and they listened to him as if he truly was. Miller arranged marriages amongst his members, demanded unquestioned obedience and restricted members from having any contact with family members outside the collective. They, in turn, were told that they were the only true Christians left on earth: by following Miller, they would be rewarded with salvation while the other two billion so-called Christians would burn in hell.

Monte Kim Miller wanted his followers to relocate to Israel at the end of the last decade of the 20th Century. Seventy-eight members of the group disappeared in October of 1998 after Miller prophesized the impending destruction of Denver by an earthquake. It was rumoured that they were going to Israel in order to commit mass suicide. According to Court (2008), Miller believed that he was “both God and the final prophet on earth before Armageddon” (192). The group did disappear, only to show up in Jerusalem in January 1999, to await the end of the world. Miller proclaimed that Jesus would soon return to earth again. The members had sold all their possessions and abandoned family members in order to make this final move to Jerusalem.
(Ackerman and Koerner 1999). The members of the movement were tightly controlled by Miller: any information they received about the outside was monitored by Miller. All knowledge of the external world was filtered through their leader. Miller prophesized that once he entered into Jerusalem, he would not depart. He foresaw his death take place in a gun battle on the last day of the millennium, December 31, 1999. Three days into the new millennium, he would then be resurrected in order to meet the second coming of Christ (Otte 2011).

External Factors

The Concerned Christians encountered multiple external threats when they appeared in Israel, by the media and especially by the Israeli immigration authorities. The media continually cast the group as being a danger to themselves and to others. In a post-Heaven’s Gate era, the media generally portrayed the Concerned Christians as aspiring to commit mass suicide themselves if the world did not come to its foretold apocalyptic end. In the late 1990s Israel had to deal with an influx of millennial groups like the Concerned Christians who claimed that Israel was the logical, if not prophesized, choice for the end of the world to take place and for the resurrection of Jesus to occur at the end of the millennium: in fact, they set up a task force in 1998 specifically to deal with impending acts of violence that could be carried out by Christian groups.

Due to ever increasing media coverage, police and immigration authorities became concerned with this movement and came to the conclusion that they posed a dangerous threat to national security and society at large. Journalist John Kifner detailed in his article that Israeli authorities decided to deport any members they
considered a threat, members who were willing to create a catastrophe in order to bring about the rapture (Kifner 1999: B4). In January 1999, Israel carried out an investigation on the Concerned Christians, with the aid of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation, and accused fourteen members of plotting attacks on sacred sites in Jerusalem. Israeli police said they believed that the Concerned Christians were planning to carry out 'extreme acts of violence' in order to hasten the second coming of Jesus Christ. Although no evidence was brought forth, they were deported back to Denver, Colorado. They did not want to return to the United States because they believed it would be destroyed, so were escorted by Israeli police. When the group members, along with their six children, returned to Denver, they purposely avoided their relatives who had come to the airport to await their arrival. In fact, members asked for a police escort to leave the airport, citing a fear for their safety from the public. Many family members were left distraught and crying at the airport gate (Reuters 1999). In February 1999, the collective then flew to Greece, where they remained until December 1999. That's when the Greek government became worried about the collective's potential to commit violent acts and began deporting members. By December, Greece had deported twenty-five members of the Concerned Christians, on the basis of having expired travel documents. This deportation included a specific member, John Cooper, who was believed to be supporting the group financially. The whereabouts of Monte Kim Miller remained unknown (Brennan 1999).

As the new millennium was ushered in, none of Miller's prophecies came to fruition, and he had disappeared from sight. Mark Roggeman, a Denver police officer who keeps an eye on new religious organizations, claims that there are approximately
sixty Concerned Christian members living in Greece. The rest of the members are thought to be residing in Philadelphia. John Cooper is thought to still be financing the group. The movement’s website is still up and running, and allows visitors to purchase audio tapes of Miller’s prophecies. Supposedly, anti-cult experts have been bewildered by Concerned Christians as there have been no defections from the group, even though Miller’s prophecies did not come to pass (Meadow 2001).

In 2002, Monte Kim Miller surfaced briefly to claim that the world was coming to an end again. Sending out an e-mail message to media outlets in Denver, Colorado, Miller proclaimed: "I am the prophet of the last days, and on Feb. 15, 2002, the 777th day of God's 7th millennium with fallen man, I am the 'heaven on earth' manifestation of The Sounding of the Seventh Angel, warning you of the Lord's intentions that the kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Bortnick 2002). Numerous people who were interviewed at that time acknowledged that they had little to no contact with family members who are still a part of the Concerned Christians.

**Internal Factors**

A lack of information makes it hard to examine what internal problems the group had, other than in the early days of the movement, when Miller proclaimed to be receiving prophecies from God and encountered a few defections. It is known that, thus far, all of Monte Kim Miller’s predictions have not come to pass. Denver was not destroyed in a 1998 earthquake. The world did not end; his own death and resurrection in Israel did not occur, and Jesus did not return to earth a second time. If there had been defections since their disappearance, it’s believed that these ex-members would
have publicly voiced their dissent or disillusionment. If Miller faced any internal turmoil from his false predictions, it has not been seen in the public eye. The group has fallen out of public view.

In summary, the Concerned Christian’s collective umwelt was that the world was about to end and they had to be in Israel for the second coming of Christ. They believed that the apocalypse was upon them but they kept encountering hostility from different countries as they feared members of CUT would commit mass suicide: they were deported from both Israel and Greece. The Concerned Christians movement exhibited all three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence: they held a strong apocalyptic belief system with a pressing denouement; there was an intense connection between members and Miller, who had created an organization structure based on his charismatic leadership and authority which then forged a strong bond between members and leader; and, the group socially isolated themselves from outside society. Miller maintained absolute authority over his members, enforcing strict rules of commitment. Unlike NRMs that have become violent, Miller did not seem to exhibit unstable self-esteem or paranoia even when his prophecies did not come to pass. The group was extremely suppressed by external factors but rather than acting out in violence, the collective continued its mission to get into Israel. The exogenous factors that repressed the movement and raised tensions between the group and social milieu include: negative media portrayals of the Concerned Christians, who portrayed them as dangerous to themselves and to others; dissenting members who did not believe he was speaking to God; as well as political and legal systems that impinged upon their desire to stay in Israel. Internally, the group
dealt with defections and failed prophecies. These internal and external factors are analytically outlined in the summary table below in order to visibly illustrate how the complex interweaving of factors could have brought about a violent end to the Concerned Christian movement, but didn’t. Instead, Monte Kim Miller and the Concerned Christians have disappeared but they may still constitute a small religious movement. According to journalist Jef Otte (2011), although authorities claim that one member did leave the movement and settled in New Mexico, the other one hundred members effectively remain invisible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCERNED CHRISTIANS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exogenous Factors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>State/Policing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal/State/Policing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal/State/Policing/ Media Representations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Endogenous Factors</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apocalyptic beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissent and defections within the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges to Apocalyptic Outcome: Failure to Fulfill Goal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

By combining the studies of fourteen well-known new religious movements (nine that used violence, be it self-directed, interpersonal or collective, and five that remained peaceful), this thesis has summarized the available literature that exists for each movement: a systematic search and analysis of the information was conducted in order to detect endogenous and exogenous factors that can explain why some NRMs become violent. Also, in order to better understand why some NRMs become violent, it was necessary to understand the root cause of instability in such groups. Weber's theory of charisma/charismatic authority and its role in social movement violence was included in the analysis, along with frameworks of factors (created by Hall and Schuyler), such as stable and unstable self-esteem, narcissism, as well as membership in collective movements.

By synthesizing all the data, this meta-analysis has identified at least ten idiographic particularities, or common effects, that exist in each movement that has erupted in violence. These aggregate are: 1) a dramatic ideology of apocalypticism (often with imminent denouement), 2) charismatic leadership, which has formed strong bonds between followers and the charismatic leader, that demands 3) absolute authority over members, 4) isolationism or encapsulation, 5) strict rules of commitment by the leader, 6) supernatural beliefs, 7) new religion/teachings, 8) unstable self-esteem, 9) paranoia and 10) external suppression. Furthermore, in the analysis, weapons and leader illness were added as they were found to exist in a large number of the NRMs analyzed. The analysis yielded significant results as to what factors exist in new religious movements that become violent. This analytic comparison to new religious
movements that do not become violent will perhaps help scholars to examine which variants exist in rising NRMs in order to create outreach measures or interventions. It also may help NRMs that are being suppressed, for no other reason than the fact that new religions are still aligned with deviancy and brainwashing.

The attributes, as outlined in Chapter Four of this thesis, apocalyptic ideologies with impending denouements, strict rules of commitment to the group by the charismatic leader, paranoia and unstable self-esteem on the part of the leader and extreme isolationism or encapsulation were substantially more associated with violent NRMs than with nonviolent movements. Furthermore, the analysis of the literature points to the fact that: narcissism/grandiosity and paranoia of the leader (usually provoked by suppressing pressures from the media, anti-cult groups, family, and police investigations); absolute authority of the leader; divine missions of the leader (which the members in the collective devoted themselves to bring about), a sense of apocalyptic urgency and suppressive government and police interactions towards the new religious movements play an essential role in the rise of violence amongst these groups.

As summarized in Chapter Four, the new religious movements studied and analyzed, that were prone to violence, included: The Peoples' Temple, The Order of the Solar Temple, Aum Shinrikyo, Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God, the Branch Davidians, Rajneeshpuram, The Church of the Lamb of God, Heaven's Gate, and early Scientology. The meta-analysis found, in each of these social movements, at least ten attributes that existed in order for violence to occur.
Members of the Peoples’ Temple worried about external apocalyptic threats that would bring about the end of the world. They were prepared to commit collective suicide as an honourable exit such a horrible world. The visit by the senator and members of the press mobilized them towards collective violence and self-directed violence. The Jonestown movement met all the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence: a strong apocalyptic belief system; the Peoples’ Temple maintained an organizational structure predicated on the charismatic leadership and authority of Jim Jones through a powerful connection between leader and follower; and, extreme social encapsulation. Yet, it also included the other seven that were also found in the other NRMs in this category. Followers maintained Jones’ supernatural ideology through is new teachings. Jones demanded absolute authority over members, yet suffered from unstable self-esteem and moments of paranoia. The exogenous factors suppressing the movement included: negative media portrayals of Jonestown; disenfranchised apostates; anti-cult groups calling for an end to the group; both political and legal systems that believed they were protecting members for a deviant and harmful situation. Jonestown also had financial burdens and structural problems trying to build and maintain a jungle compound for the followers. It was becoming increasingly difficult to support the needs of the members, as there was also an inefficient workforce to complete the building of the compound: Jones himself was ill. Lastly, Jones also had weapons at the compound.

Members of the Order of the Solar Temple were extremely anxious about an external ecological apocalyptic threat expected to take place imminently. They focused on salvation from the impending apocalypse by ‘transiting’ to new bodies on another
planet. The only way this could be done was through collective suicide. The constant persecution and suppression by public criticism and internal pressures that were undermining leadership credibility mobilized them towards collective violence. The Order of the Solar Temple movement met all the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence: a strong apocalyptic belief system; an intense connection between members and charismatic leader Luc Jouret as well as Joseph Di Mambro through an organizational structure of authority; and, excessive social encapsulation. Also, the members maintained the movement's supernatural ideology through new teachings. Jouret and Di Mambro demanded absolute authority over members, and as leaders of a collective moment, suffered from unstable self-esteem and moments of paranoia. Exogenous factors suppressed the movement and raised tensions between the group and social milieu. Furthermore, Di Mambro was critically ill and dying of cancer. Lastly, the movement had weapons. The members ended up committing collective murder and self-directed violence through suicide.

The Aum Shinrikyo movement also met all the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence: they held an extremely apocalyptic belief system; members had an intense bond with charismatic leader Asahara, maintained through an organizational structure of authority and leadership; and, the group maintained tight social boundaries with wider society, leading to extreme social isolation. On top of these factors, Asahara's charismatic authority commanded such control over his followers, that they were subject to his obsessions, deteriorating personality and his ever increasing sense of persecution and rejection. These elements became central to the groups development that they materialized as the internal driving
force behind apocalyptic violence. The members also maintained Asahara's supernatural ideology through his new teachings as he had absolute authority over the members; Asahara's charismatic identity suffered from unstable self-esteem and paranoia. These factors resulted in acts of religious violence. The group umwelt was that those outside the collective were so defiled, they had no right to live, so they believed they were being altruistic by killing the unworthy and giving them a 'higher existence. Lastly, the movement had manufactured a chemical weapon, and used it to commit collective violence.

The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God also felt immense perceptions of threat, externally and internally. The MRTCG met all the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence: they had a strong apocalyptic worldview with an impending denouement; there was a well-built organizational structure that was predicated on the charismatic leadership and authority of Kibwetere (as their bishop) and an intense connection between members and the apostles; and, the group was highly socially encapsulated through firm social boundaries with the wider world. Adding to these factors, members of the MRTCG maintained the apostles' supernatural ideology through new Christian teachings. The apostles demanded absolute authority from their members, especially in regards to cutting ties with family and friends. The leaders of the collective movement eventually suffered from unstable self-esteem and moments of paranoia, particularly from external aggregates. Exogenous factors suppressed the movement and raised tensions between the group and social milieu. It's unknown if the majority of members committed suicide or were murdered: the leaders of the movement were never found. Either way,
interpersonal violence took place when certain members were killed, and self-directed violence occurred when other members committed suicide.

The Branch Davidians also contained Hall and Schuyler’s categories found in movements that commit violence: they held a very distinctive and inspirational apocalyptic worldview with a looming denouement; their organizational structure was predicated on the charismatic leadership and absolute authority of David Koresh; and, they had socially isolated themselves from larger society and maintained firm boundaries with the outside world. Furthermore, members upheld Koresh's supernatural ideology through his new interpretations of Christian scripture. Koresh's charismatic social identity suffer from unstable self-esteem and instances of paranoia, which only became worse when external aggregates such as the ATF raided the compound. The group's umwelt, or particular worldview, was that the Second Coming of Christ was at hand and, as Koresh had predicted, they were now meeting their tragic end (to be slaughtered), but they would rise again. Thus the movement stayed on the compound and fought the war they believed was meant to happen. Although the movement kept weapons at the compound, it’s unknown if they would have committed collective violence if the ATF had not raided the compound. Acts of self-directed violence were committed by those members at the very end in order to bring about their ordained resurrection.

The Rajneeshees believed they had to protect their home, Rajneeshpuram, at all costs. Following Hall and Schuyler’s model of new movements that are prone to violence, the Rajneeshee movement also met all the three characteristics: they held a strong apocalyptic worldview; their organizational structure of authority and leadership
forged a strong bond between members Rajneesh; and, the group maintained tight social boundaries with wider society, leading to extreme social encapsulation. Added to that, members maintained Rajneesh’s supernatural ideology through his new teachings, yet his social identity experienced unstable self-esteem and paranoia. A select group of members manufactured the poison that was used on the townspeople, allowing them to commit acts of collective violence. Exogenous factors suppressed the movement and raised tensions between the group and social milieu. All these factors, woven together, brought an end to Rajneeshpuram.

The Church of the Lamb of God movement also met all the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence, holding a strong apocalyptic belief system with imminent denouement; the collective maintained an organizational structure that was built on Ervil LeBaron's charismatic and authoritative leadership as the true Prophet (the connection between Ervil and his followers was so intense, they continued carrying out his prophecies of assassination while he was in prison, and even after he died). They built a firm boundary of exclusion around them which led to their isolation and encapsulation. Members maintained Ervil's supernatural ideology through his new teachings, which required him to have absolute authority over them. The members were all armed in order to carry out Ervil’s acts of blood atonement: not only did the group commit collective violence, interpersonal violence occurred when members of the church were assassinated. As well, Ervil's charismatic identity suffered from unstable self-esteem and paranoia, especially in relation to his brother's church. Exogenous factors suppressed the movement and raised tensions between the group
and social milieu. These internal and external factors led the Church of the Lamb of God to commit violent acts.

The Heaven's Gate movement also met all the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence: they believed in a strong apocalyptic belief system with imminent denouement; there was an intense connection between members and Ti and Do as the organizational structure of the movement was predicated on charismatic leadership and authority; and, by the end of the movement's existence, they had completely withdrawn from society by maintaining absolute social encapsulation. Members maintained the ideology and new teachings given to them by Ti and Do, and after Ti’s death, Do maintained absolute authority over the members’ thoughts, beliefs and behaviours. Exogenous factors suppressed the movement and raised tensions between the group and social milieu, which caused the Heaven's Gate collective to go into seclusion. Do’s physical illness may have forced the movement into action, for fear they would lose their leader before they could carry out his, and therefore theirs, divine mission to leave this earth behind, by abandoning their vehicles—otherwise understood as committing self-directed violence through suicide: the poison was available to them on their compound.

Lastly, early Scientology also met all the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence: they believed in a apocalyptic belief system with denouement; there was an intense connection between members and L. Ron Hubbard, as the organizational structure of the movement was predicated on charismatic leadership and authority; and, the members of Sea Org, the most devout were kept completely withdrawn from society by maintaining absolute social encapsulation.
Members maintained the ideology and new teachings given to them Hubbard, who maintained absolute authority over the members' thoughts, beliefs and behaviours. Punishments, or interpersonal violence, were considered a normal part of being part of the collective: if one failed to follow Hubbard’s code of ethics, they would undertake the punishment in order to conform to the collective. Exogenous factors suppressed the movement and raised tensions between the group and social milieu, which caused members to retaliate against the media and media through legal avenues. Hubbard’s physical illness may have forced the movement into collective action, but a strong infrastructure had been formed for members to continue on following the teachings of Hubbard and maintaining a high level of secrecy for the most devout members.

The following chart puts the data analysis in context to better understand the results of the meta-analysis: this chart indicates the aggregates that were found to exist in each of the new religious movements that exhibited acts of violence. As stated above, at least ten aggregates were found in the nine NRMs studied: this may help authorities and governments better understand why some new religious movements become violent.

**Chart A: Aggregates within NRMs That Become Violent**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Peoples’ Temple</th>
<th>Solar Temple</th>
<th>Branch Davidians</th>
<th>Aum</th>
<th>MRTCG</th>
<th>Rajneesh</th>
<th>Lamb of God</th>
<th>Early Scientology</th>
<th>Heaven’s Gate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apocalyptic System</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charismatic Leadership</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isolationism (Us vs Them)</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Absolute Authority</td>
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<td>Supernatural Beliefs</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Strict Rules of Commitment</td>
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</table>
As noted earlier, violence in new religious movements is usually actualized only under certain interactional conditions. By undertaking a meta-analysis of the available literature on NRMs that were prone to violence, the summaries and analysis required a comparison to those that remained peaceful. The NRMs that did display violence were chosen for this meta-analysis based on the fact that they had the maximum amount of data available on them to generate a reasonable comparison. Basically, they were chosen because of the literary resources available on them. Chapter Five provided summaries and analyses of factors of non-violent new religious movements. The non-violent NRMs examined that meet the three criteria identified for groups to become violent but did not include: the early Unification Church, 3HO, Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT), Chen Tao and the Concerned Christians.

The early Unification Church exhibited the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence: a strong apocalyptic worldview with an impending denouement; the group maintained an organizational structure that was built on charismatic leadership and authority; a powerful connection had been created between members and Moon; and, the early movement had firm boundaries between themselves and the outside world, which resulted in social isolation. In the early days of the Unification Church, Moon imposed absolute authority over members and enforced
strict rules of commitment over them: this level of strictness eventually was alleviated. Unlike NRMs that have been prone to violent tendencies, Unification Church leaders eventually lessened their authoritarian stance, especially during Moon’s incarceration – instead, they became more lenient, allowing members to voice concerns. There does not seem to be any data showing that Moon experienced unstable self-esteem or paranoia. Exogenous factors suppressing the movement seem to have raised some tensions between the group and social milieu, but rather than acting out in defensiveness, the group worked on changing its public image. The Unification Church continues to attract new members even after the death of its founder.

The Sikh Dharma collective has not been mobilized towards violence even though it meets all the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence: the movement has a strong apocalyptic worldview with an approaching denouement; the organizational structure of 3HO was built on the charismatic leadership and authority of Yogi Bhajan, which established a strong bond between members and the leader; and it has firmly created boundaries from the wider world as members live as ashrams, which force them to remain socially isolated. When the group experienced external suppression, rather than acting out in defensiveness, the collective stated that it would take anyone to court if they became aggressive towards any of their members. Although members had weapons and were trained in martial arts, the collective never used them to commit self-directed or collective violence. Unlike NRMs that have displayed violent tendencies, Yogi Bhajan’s social identity was not affected by unstable self-esteem or paranoia. Although Bhajan has passed away, people are still attracted to the ashrams.
Chen Tao was expected to erupt in collective violence or self-directed violence by way of suicide by media and governments. Even though it exhibited the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence, it remained peaceful. It had a strong apocalyptic worldview with an imminent denouement resulting from nuclear bombs; Teacher Chen's charismatic authority and leadership maintained a strong bond between followers and leader; and the movement created a rigid boundary around themselves, isolating them from the outside world. Internal pressures were directly tied to the failed prophecies of their leader. Yet Chen maintained absolute authority over his members, as they depended on him completely for housing, food and clothing in Texas. He enforcing strict rules of commitment from his members, making them leave their families and friends in Taiwan to wait for God to appear in Garland, Texas. Unlike NRMs that have been prone to violence, Teacher Chen did not seem to suffer from unstable self-esteem or paranoia, even though his prophecies failed on numerous occasions. Failed millennial prophecies and massive media coverage leading up to the divinations seem to have led to the undoing of the group.

The Church Universal and Triumphant also met the three characteristics of new religious movements that have been prone to violence: it maintained a strong apocalyptic worldview with an impending denouement; the structure of the organization was predicated on charismatic leadership and authority, where an intense connection between members and Elizabeth Prophet was formed; and, the group demarcated firm social boundaries with the outside world which led to extreme social encapsulation. All the while, Elizabeth Prophet maintained absolute authority over her members, enforcing strict rules of commitment that affected their lives while living on the isolated compound.
Unlike NRM leaders that have become violent, Prophet did not seem to suffer from unstable self-esteem or paranoia even after her prophecies failed to happen. Prophet's ailing health could have easily caused fear and paranoia amongst the members, leading to collective or self-directed violence and the group also had weapons; yet disenfranchised members chose to leave the collective instead of becoming defensive and violent.

The last non-violent group summarized and analyzed in comparison to violent NRMs was the Concerned Christians. The Concerned Christians movement exhibited the three characteristics of new religious movements that are prone to violence: they held a strong apocalyptic belief system with a pressing denouement; there was an intense connection between members and Miller, who had created an organization structure based on his charismatic leadership and authority which then forged a strong bond between members and himself; and, the group socially isolated themselves from outside society. Miller maintained absolute authority over his members, enforcing strict rules of commitment. Unlike NRMs that have become violent, Miller did not seem to exhibit unstable self-esteem or paranoia even when his prophecies did not come to pass. The group was extremely suppressed by external factors but rather than acting out in violence, the collective continued its mission to get into Israel. They were expected to commit acts of collective and self-directed violence so they were thrown out of Israel. Instead of becoming defensive and violent, Monte Kim Miller and the Concerned Christians seem to have disappeared; they may still constitute a small religious movement.
The following chart, outlining the aggregates found within the NRMs that did not exhibit violence puts the data in context to better understand the results of non-violent NRMs in comparison to the results found in violent NRMs in this meta-analysis: this chart indicates the factors that were found to exist in each of the new religious movements that remained peaceful, as examined in this thesis. As stated above, general consensus among current research literature states that there are three aggregates associated with NRMs that become violent. These three characteristics were found in all five NRMs that remained peaceful. Thus, this thesis establishes that these three factors are inefficient in determining which NRMs will be prone to violence. This thesis has attempted to provide more than a cursory examination of non-violent NRMs by doing a meta-analysis on these groups as well. Perhaps these findings may help scholars, authorities and governments better understand why many new religious movements remain peaceful, even when expected to erupt in violence.

**Chart B: Aggregates within NRMs that Remain Non-Violent**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aggregates</th>
<th>Early Unification Church</th>
<th>3HO/ Sikh Dharma</th>
<th>Chen Tao</th>
<th>Church Universal and Triumphant</th>
<th>Concerned Christians</th>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Leader's Ill Health</td>
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As a summary conclusion of all factors found in the NRMs studied and analyzed in this thesis, they all exhibited a striking ideology of apocalypticism (often with an imminent denouement), strict rules of commitment, supernatural beliefs (usually in the form of a divine mission), new religion/teachings, isolationism and charismatic leadership that demands absolute authority over members. The attributes, as provided in chapter Four, those regarding apocalyptic ideologies, strict rules of commitment to the group, unstable self-esteem, paranoia on the part of the leader, exclusive encapsulation and the existence of weapons were substantially more associated with violent NRMs than with nonviolent movements. Although leaders became ill in violent groups, this cannot be considered a significant factor as the same aggregate existed in some of the non-violent NRMs. Furthermore, the analysis points to the fact that: narcissism and paranoia of the leader (usually provoked by building pressures from the media, anti-cult groups, family, and police investigations); absolute authority of the leader; divine missions of the leader (which the members devoted themselves to bring about), a sense of apocalyptic urgency and suppressive government interactions towards the new religious movements play an essential role in the rise of violence amongst these groups. The complex theoretical models of Mullin and Hogg (regarding subjective uncertainty and the rise of narcissism), Galanter (examining social identity theory and charisma) as well as Hall and Schuyler (endogenous and exogenous factors leading to violence) illustrate that further analysis and a development of more complex models or typologies are required: models that focus on the interactions between external pressures and internal features that produce emergent group volatility. The
analysis yielded significant results as to what factors exist in new religious movements that commit acts of violence.

Hopefully this move to refining the research categories and aggregates can be utilized by future academics to provide a more adequate account as to why some new religious movements become violent and why others do not. This research is important as new religious movements are not dying out - they are thriving (Cowan & Bromley 2015: 214). Furthermore this research is significant because movements are now organizing transnationally, and violence that occurs in one nation can have direct implications to other nations (Melton & Bromley 2002: 231). These collective movements will create new challenges to governmental officials on a global level. Meanwhile, the media and counter cult-organizations continue to offer a simplistic way of regarding all new movements: as "cult" groups to be feared and eliminated.

Secular anti-cult groups, the media, parents who fear for their children and former members who feel they have been wronged continue to perpetuate negative views of new religious movements, and so they continue to be depicted as controversial and detrimental to society. Secular anti-cult groups keep on relying on empirically false ideologies of "brainwashing" and "thought control" and therefore view new religious movements as negative "cults" that “utilize dangerous forms of recruitment strategies” that have the ability to “strip adherents of their own agency” (Cowan & Bromley 2008: 218). Furthermore, anti-cult associations tend to view certain practices as negatively "mind-altering", such as meditation, chanting and speaking in tongues. By identifying almost all new religious movements as potentially dangerous groups, families and government authorities view them in the same negative light, even though there is no
empirical evidence to support brainwashing or thought control (Cowan & Bromley 2008: 219). Although, in recent times, the anti-cult movement has lost some of its political influence in the United States, the "cult" and "brainwashing" characteristics continue to hold "considerable cultural legitimacy" in other countries (Melton & Bromley 2002: 232).

In Europe, oppositional groups towards NRMs have gained political influence. Prior to the Solar Temple murders and suicides, Europe had remained relatively free from violence involving new religions (Melton & Bromley 2002). In response, France created a cult-awareness organization to watch over the one hundred and seventy-two groups that were in existence there as they were now seen as a cause for concern, especially because of the anti-cult allegations that they used "mental manipulation" on their members. Germany then began to officially investigate the Church of Scientology (for two years). Belgium identified 189 ‘sects’ in its country and began officially observing them. Austria followed suit by creating an official observatory of ‘sects’ in its own country (Melton & Bromley 2002). After the Aum Shinrikyo gassing of the Tokyo subway, Japan passed legislation to directly target NRMs: governmental agencies began prosecuting groups that advocated alternative healing methods, as they may have led to deaths of its members. As many members of the Aum Shinrikyo movement were Russians, the Russian Federation passed new laws supporting anti-cult views (Melton & Bromley 2002).

These countries have restricted religious liberty through the utilization of legal frameworks. How does a country create a legal rationale to violate religious liberty? Such groups are often labeled as "dangerous" in order to create laws and policies that can strip away civil and religious liberties. It does not matter if it's right or wrong - the
perception of the threat is put forward to impose restrictive legislation. Scholars estimate that there are now tens of thousands new religious movements in the world, yet countries are restricting group liberties and existence based on the “bad apple” theory: if one is bad, they must all be bad.

Some of the more valuable "take-aways" from this research are: 1) We need to remember the importance of external agencies in the way NRMss may view their encroachment as a threat to their beliefs (external agencies can vary – they can be governmental, concerned family members, defectors or anti-cult groups); 2) Also, media coverage through the internet and mass communication technologies has made events all around the world much more publicly noticed, making it easy to blame new movements for violent acts, without taking into consideration the complex social, cultural and political processes that are in place that can lead to the eruption of violence; and 3) It is easy to think that all new religions are similar, if not the same. These generalizations are problematic. New religious movements that have acted violently are still extremely rare and unusual (especially when remembering that there are thousands of NRMss in the world today). In fact, in 2006 J. Gordon Melton, then the executive director of the Institute for the Study of American Religions at the University of California, Santa Barbara, stated that approximately 40-45 new religious movements were emerging yearly in the United States alone (Luo 2006).

This thesis has not specifically focused on the benefits that come from joining a new religious movement. For instance, Dick Anthony argued in 1988 that involvement in such movements could be beneficial. Examining the mental health effects of new religions, he argued that "for the most part, the effects seem to be positive in any way
that's measurable". Therefore I would add that we'd do well not only to study new religious movements, but also to speak out about the beneficial consequences of membership in such groups as well as the controversial and sometimes harmful behaviours of social movements as a whole. These results would benefit concerned family members and friends, worried about any involvement in new religious movements.

Some could argue that a definitive statement could easily be made about the reasons why some new religious movements become violent while others do not. Researchers in various academic fields are proposing other characteristics which serve as catalysts towards violence. For instance, Thomas Robbins proposes that a group oriented towards "catastrophic millennialism" is more likely to become volatile. Lorne Dawson argues that "the mismanagement of recurring problems" by charismatic leaders is the root of violence, as it calls into question charismatic legitimacy. Eileen Barker examines how cult-watching groups interact with movements to better understand if violence will occur. As Bromley and Melton (2002) state, these characteristics offer finer distinctions about the groups but cannot offer a profile of a dangerous group. Yet they can serve as "sensitizing concepts". It has also been argued that the primary impetus for violence can occur from control agents (such as oppositional groups like the media, and regulatory agencies in the case of the Branch Davidians). John Hall emphasizes the role of external agents as the cause of dangerous "situations" that can arise (specifically at Waco), rather than focusing on the concept of dangerous organizations.
Yet none have acutely examined what some consider a "common sense" concept, such as a movement’s orientation towards actively bringing about the apocalypse: the groups that have erupted in violence have espoused the belief that they themselves would have an active role in bringing about the apocalypse. In Waco, law enforcement and the media precipitated the violent end, but Koresh had already placed these actions within an apocalyptic end. Furthermore, all the movements displaying violence had weapons of some sort in order to help precipitate their prophecies about the impending end of the world. Although the non-violent groups in this thesis project held apocalyptic world views, they did not see themselves in active roles or as agents bringing about the apocalypse.

Although there has been a lot of research conducted on whether new religious movements will become violent or not, this is the first study to take all the variable aggregates together comprehensively that have been put forward, to better provide a more “sensitizing” and authoritative analysis. Existing scholarly literature is limited, as the research studies either focus on the three main aggregates or add one or two more. None have looked at a multiplicity of aggregates to help better understand when and why such movements have become volatile. This is a first step in the exploration, which I hope will aid other researchers dig deeper into the aggregates that NRMs have in common, in order to better verify whether a movement is going to display violent occurrences..

Although hindsight makes it seem as if social psychologists are drawing upon, clarifying and studying common sense arguments about the volatility of such movements, social psychology (and sometimes applied, developmental and personality)
is concerned with the clarification, disambiguation and testing of common sense ideas and beliefs. These types of meta-analyses help researchers better understand the myths and misconceptions that are still held about new religious movements (brainwashing, thought control), and consequently such findings help destabilize certain attributes while searching out and finding other attributes that are integral to future analyses of violent incidents.

This meta-analysis has been designed to be used in future research so that it can provide more evidence in the scholarly process of determining which NRMs are prone to violence. Hopefully future scholarship and research will move in this direction. This analytic comparison to new religious movements that do not become violent will perhaps help scholars examine which variants exist in rising NRMs in order to create outreach measures or interventions. It also may help NRMs that are being suppressed by external forces, for no other reason than the fact that new religions are still aligned with deviancy, thought-control and brainwashing.
Bibliography


http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1986/09/22/i-rajneeshpuram


### Appendix I: Violent New Religious Movements – Compiled Aggregates

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## Appendix II: Non-Violent New Religious Movements – Compiled Aggregates

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