CHAPTER THREE

PSYCHOLOGICAL PREDISPOSITIONS

To see a world in a grain of sand
and a heaven in a wildflower,
to hold infinity in the palm of your hand
and eternity in an hour.

*William Blake*

10. EGO PERMEABILITY

In this section I discuss absorption, authoritarianism, family relationships, differential susceptibility to charismatic leaders, and the notions of constraint, impulsivity and ego-strength. I conclude with a statement of the overarching hypotheses deriving from the introduction of the Rites of Passage Model.

10.1 Absorption

So far we have sketched the profile of a seeker in terms of consonant beliefs, distressing prior life events, and inadequate social resources. We have left untouched possible distinguishing enduring psychological traits. What role does mystical
experience play in conversion to NRMs? Are some individuals more predisposed to such experiences than others? Buckley & Galanter (1979) found that mystical experiences were of central importance for many of the members of the Divine Light Mission. They used a combination of in-depth interviews and questionnaires to collect their data. The mystical experiences reported spanned many sensory modalities: 83% of their subjects claimed to have had unusual aural experiences, 90% unusual visual experiences, 25% unusual kinaesthetic experiences and 16% sexual experiences, while 51% claimed to have had a distorted experience of time. These experiences were reported as occurring at the time of ritual commitment to the group, called 'receiving Knowledge'. Buckley & Galanter (1979) note that "a certain amount of prestige within the Divine Light Mission accrues to those who receive Knowledge - and it is possible that some of those who answered positively were responding to this group attitude" (p.286).

Like a number of the mystical moments detailed by James (1960), Buckley and Galanter (1979) note that in the case examples:

Mystical experiences occurred at a critical conflict-ridden time of their lives when they were in the midst of what can best be described as an identity crisis. Their religious conversion can be viewed as a regression in the service of the ego that resolved their intra-psychic social conflicts (p.286).

Ralph Hood (1973) developed a mystical experiences questionnaire by modifying some of the mystical moments documented by William James and then asking subjects to rate whether moments such as these had occurred to them. However, the nature of the experience thus assessed is quite transparent, and someone wishing to ascribe a
mystical ability the him/herself could readily fake.

What is required, is a method of assessing a mystical awareness which might intrude on the everyday, which has perhaps escaped conscious awareness. Pruyser (1977) notes that religious awareness is represented by a 'quality of feeling'. Feeling intrudes into portrayals of experiences when metaphor and simile are used, when like is compared to or represented by unlike. That is, in the poetic flaunting of the reality principle. Feeling intrudes into perception when the normal conditions of the knower being separate from the thing known (Anderson, 1962), and sense-appropriate information impinging on our awareness, are modified or seem to us to breakdown. Buckley and Galanter (1979) acknowledge the importance of a concept described by Ross (1975) which is pertinent here, that affect is a powerful form of knowing, characteristic of the early phases of childhood, which may be reinvoked in certain regressive states. Buckley & Galanter (1979) suggest that this may be an explanation for certain phenomena of mystical states. There are states, sometimes poetic, sometimes confusional, where there is a diffusion of ego boundaries, for example in human intimacy, and crepuscular moments of awareness of our place in the order of natural things, and awareness of the continuity of time before and after our existence, and the continuity of life forms. Huxley (1945) details accounts of such experiences through the ages in The Perennial Philosophy and Laski (1980) marks their existence in Ordinary Ecstasy. Huxley (1945) cites the writings of the poet Rumi, and St. Theresa of Avila which abound with an explosive sense of union, of openness to what is for them 'divine'. The nature worship of Goethe and Wordsworth capture an
absorptive perceptual style, Proust reveals recollection which is powerful enough to supplant present perception, Rolland the reduced sense of separateness of the 'oceanic feeling'. This is perhaps more of the hallmark of religions of the 'fever' rather than the institutionalised kind. People seem to differ in their capacity to lose themselves to such feeling-imbued sensation. How might this readiness, preparedness be assessed?

There is a psychological trait, possibly conducive to spiritual involvement (especially of an eastern nature) which may be termed an 'absorptive perceptual style'. This refers to a person's tendency to experience a reduced sense of separateness from the objects of perception, which I have noted are said to characterise meditative and mystical states. It also refers to a reduction in the separateness of sensory modalities characteristic of synaesthetic experience, where a melody can evoke a play of colours, and a fragrance can evoke a surge of vivid memories. Characteristic of this perceptual style is a reduced sense of the 'as if', e.g. when one is so 'lost' in the viewing of a film that one shelters from a (celluloid) hail of bullets. This openness to direct and recollected perceptual influence (and the intermingling of the two) is akin to suggestibility, but it does not entail a submission to authority.

Tellegen and Atkinson (1974) developed an absorption scale, incorporating items from an earlier 'trust' scale. It is the first dimension resembling a personality trait which has been found to correlate (if only moderately) with measures of hypnotic suggestibility. This moderate correlation is not surprising in view of McConkey, Sheehan and White's (1979) evidence regarding the extent of relationship between Wilson and Barber's CIS and the Harvard GSHS:A. They found a positive correlation
of .28, but data indicated that the two tests are independent in their underlying dimensions; they load on different factors. Tellegen's findings of a .27 correlation in one sample, and .43 in a second sample show a somewhat stronger relationship, though factor analysis on the differential loadings of hypnotic susceptibility did not reveal an absorption factor.

The absorption measure focuses on more purely cognitive suggestibility, although the low but consistent loadings of the autonomy-scepticism variable on this factor suggest that it is not completely related to persuasibility. It seems it may not tap an openness to interpersonal influence, but a wider openness to the influence of current and recollected sensory experience, and in fact Tellegen (1982) suggests that "one would expect high-absorption persons to have an affinity for mystical experience" and that "high scorers on the Absorption subscale of the MPQ are emotionally responsive to perceptions, can summon and be absorbed in vivid recollection and experience episodes of expansive extra-sensory mystical awareness and altered states".

10.2 Authoritarianism

The Absorption scale does not seem to be a measure of interpersonal suggestibility, but an openness to a sense of fusion with the non-interpersonal world and to unusual sensory experience. So some further assessment of susceptibility to the influence of authority was required. Adorno (1970) describes authoritarian submission as a "very general attitude that would be evoked in relation to a variety of authority figures: parents, older people, leaders, supernatural powers etc." (p.231 cited in Kreml, 1977:29). Such a trait is suggested
one way of resolving the child's ambivalent feeling towards authority figures. The hostility and rebelliousness all children have within them is unduly restrained, more than likely because of a fear of the authority itself, and the child allegedly overcompensates for this fear with an overweaning respect for the authority of the figure (Bay, 1968:232 cited in Kreml, 1977:29).

This restraint of hostility and overcompensation through overgeneralized submission does not occur in every parent-child relationship. Richardson (1979) notes that Wallis (1974) suggests that maintaining authority emerges as one of the three problems cult-like groups have to face (as opposed to sect-like groups). A cult is, Wallis says (1974:304) "epistemologically individualistic" whereby the locus of authority is located within the person rather than in some outside source. Given the unconventional nature of eastern NRMs it is unlikely that they will evidence a generalised submission to traditional authority. Even recent balanced versions of the P-scale (Ray, 1979) concern a very traditional conception of authority rather than a charismatic form of authority. Some suggest the latter is a defining feature of NRMs (Stoner & Parke, 1979; Galanter, 1989). The apparent contradiction between suggesting that NRM affiliates are less traditional, and might reject personal authority, in the light of their evident attraction to a group formed around a leader, who requires a deep and abiding attitude of openness to his guidance, is not a true paradox. A person who in general rebels against traditional *mores* may nonetheless unquestioningly obey and believe in someone who can answer pertinently their questions and dilemmas, and provide for their unmet needs and longings. So, it is suggested that affiliates of eastern NRMs will *not* show a high level of submission to authority as assessed by traditional psychological measures, though followers of NRMs of a western nature may still find
their views consonant with those of the dominant culture and evidence more submission in this regard. Fromm (1941) suggests that the essential element of authoritarian religion is the surrender to a power transcending [wo]man, whereby s/he loses personal integrity but gains a feeling of being protected by the power of which s/he becomes a part. Eastern NRMys are more akin to his notion of humanistic religion, centring on [wo]man and [her]his strength, and the experience of a solidarity of all things, where no knowledge is of any value unless it grows out of ourselves, (he cites Zen as an example), and where conceptions of God are akin to ‘Spinoza’s God’, where [wo]man must see [her]his own limitations and [her]his dependency on the whole of the universe. This perhaps addresses the timely popularity of NRMys, in that for some, dominion and control over the forces of nature is no longer a point of celebration given pollution and the squandering of non-renewable resources, and when dominion over others has brought fascist regimes and death camps. Awareness of the interrelatedness of parts of the universe and different forms of material existence is as much a fact of science as of religion. Affiliates do have an educated white-collar, thoughtful profile (Richardson, 1985) in addition to the troubled histories we have been tracing so far. It is important to query, to whose conception of authority are we measuring the affiliates’ tendency to submit? With what justification do we use our conceptions as the measure of the relative adjustment of the members of these groups? Richardson (1985) exemplifies this point when he traces the movement of his own assumptions underpinning his research. He notes that Simmonds (1978) found that members of the Jesus Movement were examples of a dependency-prone personality type, in that they were lower on defensiveness, self-confidence, self-control,
achievement, dominance, endurance and affiliation. Simmonds (1978) referred to this pattern as *maladaptive* and suggested that participation was a form of addiction similar to drug dependency. At a second glance, says Richardson (1985), Richardson and Simmonds (1977) found it obvious that the majority were functioning well within the context of the organization.

The observation lead us to consider seriously the problems associated with using instruments developed in one context (such as the individualistic competitive American culture, as exemplified by University students) in a vastly different context (such as communal, more collectively-oriented religious groups stressing basic values of love, caring, submission etc.) (Richardson, 1985:211).

As psychologists we look for conformity, compliance, potentially destructive obedience: concepts like humility, common enough in religious *parlance*, are foreign. In the face of complex decisions some people look for guidance from someone whom they feel knows better, surrounded by people, it seems, who feel better in that context than they did 'outside'. Richardson (1985:215) cites Kuner's (1981) finding that members "seem to live with less worries and under less psychic stress". The works of Ross (1983, 1985) reveal that the psychometric profiles of 42 Hare Krishna devotees are within the normal range, with a slight decline in mental health after one and a half years in the movement, and an increase in mental health after three years involvement. The follow up reasearch (of 25 devotees) indicated that after a further four years of involvement all responses (to the MMPI) were within the normal range, and of seven changes in personality profile, all but one (increased anxiety) were in a positive direction. It seems there is evidence for a slight increase in mental health attendant on involvement with the Hare Krishna Movement. How adaptive is involvement with a
charismatic group seems to depend, at times, on the stability of the psychology of the leader (Deutsch, 1983).

10.3 Problematic Family Relationships: Early Childhood And Adolescence

Deutsch (1983) notes that common symptoms among those drawn to an eastern style NRM were feeling 'out of step' with peers and sibling expectations. He notes there were strong and unresolved sibling rivalries, with affiliates of the movement having experienced themselves as less favoured, attended to or competent than their siblings, and, if they had older siblings, they usually felt neglected or mistreated by them. Out of fourteen subjects, there was only one who had not experienced both parents as unsatisfactory, as being distant, domineering and harshly critical.

Interestingly enough Ullman (1982) suggests on the basis of in-depth interview data with a broad range of converts to NRMs and orthodox religions, that converts to NRMs have experienced increased emotional upheaval relative to control groups and orthodox religious groups throughout their childhood and in the period preceding conversion. "While some proponents of the psychodynamic approach emphasise the adaptive consequences [of conversion]" she notes, "all trace its origin to childhood conflicts stirred anew prior to conversion" (p.183). Her results suggest "that emotional dynamics are better predictors of conversion than the cognitive constructs examined" (p.191). Her study supports the major hypotheses raised by the psychodynamic approach to conversion, that is as a defensive reaction to an unavailable or rejecting father (p.191). She cites Freud's (1927) short paper where he describes the process of
conversion as a defensive reaction to an upsurge of Oedipal hatred in which aggressive impulses towards the actual father are defended against by submission to the omnipotent father figure in the form of God.

Ullman (1982) found several interesting differences between the convert and non-convert groups in terms of family relationships. Seventy-seven percent of the converts indicated an extremely problematic relationship with their father (cf. 23% of the non-converts) with father absence being the most frequently cited category (28.2% of the convert sample). The difference between the two groups in terms of their perception of their mother was not significant, and only achieved significance when all categories reflecting a problematic relationship to their mother were summed. The converts characterised their childhood as more unhappy than the non-convert group, and they recalled a greater number of specific traumatic events. The data provides suggestive support that this especially characterised the converts to NRM s (which she terms cult groups, such as the Hare Krishna group, and the Bah' ai) within her convert sample which also contained converts to traditional groups. When the ‘cult’ groups were excluded from the analysis there were no differences between convert and non-convert samples in terms of childhood trauma, suggesting that the data from the cult groups were responsible for the effect.

The adolescences of the convert sample were described as more unhappy, though there was no significant difference in terms of the specific traumatic events recalled. Eighty percent of the convert sample reported emotional turmoil during the period immediately preceding conversion and a similar percentage indicated relief from
anxiety, anger and depression as the predominant response to involvement in religion. The profile Ullman outlines is of an unavailable, hostile or rejecting father in one’s childhood which may predispose one to convert to a religious group in an attempt to gain the approval, protection and guidance of an authority figure. This seems all very well for western spiritual groups, but seemingly conflicts with the non-theistic nature of eastern religions. However, a NRM is a group focussing on a belief system formulated and interpreted by a living enlightened leader, and devotion to that leader is an important element of belonging to the group. It is to more detailed consideration of the role of the leader in NRMs which we now return.

10.4 Differential Susceptibility To Charismatic Leaders

While the 1927 article by Freud that Ullman (1982) cites as support for her psychoanalytic hypothesis is directly pertinent to her study, and a concise rendering of a motivation for conversion, psychoanalytic theory has more to offer regarding the nature of religious experience and the appeal of charismatic leaders and regarding possible motivations of believers than she had time to delineate in her concise article. Psychoanalytic accounts of religion potentially render coherent a wide array of stimulating articles with varying empirical data bases from experimental to clinical. For this reason it is perhaps worthwhile to consider the psychoanalytic account of religion in some depth. ²⁰

In The Future of an Illusion Freud (1927) presents a reductivist analysis of religion. He postulates that the deity is the result of a projection of early parental relations. It is motivated by a wish to obtain protection from the ‘superior and crushing forces of
nature’. By believing in a deity who is omniscient and omnipotent, the universe for the believer becomes a system of demand and response rather than one of bare mechanistic causality where suffering, life and death have no meaning. Belief in a deity affords some sense of divine providence: someone’s will must be done, and this anchors moral responsibility and authorises a code of ethics. Meaning is restored to the vagaries of cause and effect and a palatable view of death emerges, as ‘sinking into an etruscan tomb’, as Freud poetically notes. He also relates (1930) the mystical religious sense of oneness, of harmony with the world (citing Romain Rolland’s concept of an ‘oceanic feeling’) to the phase of primary narcissism - a golden age - where the child is totally dependent on a caretaker, and blissfully unaware that the ministrations of cleaning, tactile comfort and nourishment come from a separate being who may arrive late or not at all. The caretaker is, of course, in fact independent from the child, but the narcissism of this phase is captured by the fact that the child is postulated to be unaware of this split between this caretaker and itself. Weston La Barre (1980) dates the developmental origin of the religious impulse to the first cry of abandonment, when the split between subject and object, knower and known must be acknowledged, when reality (what is the case) predominates over the wished-for state of affairs. Hallucinated fulfilment no longer satisfies, the infant must learn about the world, discriminate objects, perfect co-ordination in obtaining them, learn the language of asking, learn to demand and woo. As, for Freud, childhood ‘love’ is insatiable, the loss of this golden age is never truly compensated for in anyone. The sense of ontological aloneness leaves us yearning for (at least) ‘another half’ to which popular slang and Aristophanes’ myth in Plato’s Symposium attests.
Yet from a Freudian perspective, few of us emerge into adulthood with the belief that our parents are omniscient and omnipotent, and our sense of fusion with them is replaced by identification with the lost love objects which, according to Freud, is essential to the setting of the superego via the introjection of the moral beliefs of both parents. The role of identification in the setting up or modifying the ego is a highly controversial point. There are many accounts of the ego. Ego psychologists such as Hartmann, Kris and Lowenstein (1946) and Hartmann (1951, 1964) portray the ego as a set of processes e.g. perceptual and motor skills, and a capacity for discernment and synthesis of the plethora of phenomena impinging from reality. Lacan (1977) specifies the mirror stage as the exclusive process of the ego's ontogeny, and therefore sees the ego not as an entity but the residue of identifications. Maze (1983, 1987), in contrast, would refute the notion that anything can be constituted solely on the basis of the relations into which 'it' enters, and suggests there must be independently specifiable properties which determine the nature of the ego. He suggests it must have a dynamic basis (and retains the pre-1925 Freudian position viewing the ego as a subset of instinctual drives), as, he argues, more than structural residues of identification are required to oppose the powerful id impulses. Only an ego with an economic basis (that is consisting of drives) can modify action (at the behest of our moral beliefs, the superego) to avoid culturally unacceptable expressions of unregenerate id impulses. The proscriptions and prescriptions of family and culture determine the contingencies of reward and punishment attendant on any attempted direct expression of a drive, and subsequently determine in part (in concert with differences in temperament and the like) personal values, toleration of delay in gratification, impulsivity, our pleasure/pain
regulatory style: in short, these influences determine our degree of personal control or prohibitions and coping techniques. How identification relates to controversial concepts like 'ego-strength', resilience in the face of stress, emotional and substance dependency, are questions well beyond the humble experimental confines of this thesis. Experimental self-report data does not permit the testing of psychoanalytic hypotheses.

However, a full background account is not required for the summary attempt this study makes to assess the perceived adequacy of early child-parent relations, and the possible consequences of differential adequacy for the impact of stressful life events, the acquisition and maintenance of satisfying interpersonal bonds and love relationships, the response to a breakdown of those relationships, and a differential openness to charismatic influence.

Cushman (1986) suggests (using Kohut's (1971, 1977) theoretical framework and terms) that those individuals who are differentially susceptible to charismatic others have sustained 'low level narcissistic wounds' which stem from an absence of a 'phase appropriate merger' with an 'idealised omnipotent other'. Thus they reveal a absence of certain psychic structures, which would have developed when this phase appropriate merger came to an end, as the 'idealised cathexes were withdrawn from the idealised love object' and set up within the subject's psychic apparatus. Cushman is in accord with Kohut, who suggests that, if there is a failure to merge, or a traumatic breakdown of that merger, the subject will lack the idealised psychic structures which are one way of maintaining self esteem, and Kohut says, the individual will be left:

yearning to find a substitute for the missing (or insufficiently
developed) psychic structure, such persons are forever seeking with addiction-like intensity, and often through sexual means (the clinical picture may be that of a perversion) to establish a relationship to people who serve as stand-ins for the omnipotent idealised self-object (Kohut, 1977:400).

Kohut suggests that identifying with admired and loved people in our environment contributes to our sense of self, or self-esteem, and that trauma in these early relations leaves development incomplete (though he does not specify the nature of the psychic structure) and the person 'seeking'. However, Kohut's account must be critically evaluated as an attempt to explain the ontogeny of a 'seeker'. He does not clearly define what he means by 'self'. Is it the ego, or the totality of the drives, beliefs and values of the organism? Lothane (1983) notes:

The noun 'self' is not in Freud. Thus when Freud (1915) writes about a behavior (he called it an instinctual vicissitude) directed towards oneself, which he termed "Die Wendung gegen die eigen Person," literally "turning towards one's own person" we find Rivière translating it as "turning around upon the subject," whereas Strachey renders it "turning round upon the subject's own self" (italics added). Replacing "person" or "subject" by "self" paves the way for introducing reification (p.210).

Freud's usage of the concept 'self' was synonymous with one's own person, the totality of the drives, beliefs and values of the organism. Lothane's (1983) detailed and competent critique notes Kohut's changing usage of the concept self, his reification and the problematic status of a psychic structure which Lothane terms "another high level abstraction and a metaphor" (p.211). He suggests that Kohut's (1977) definition of self is a misreading of Kant which results in the self being portrayed as an unknowable reality. In summary, Lothane says that in attempting to formulate a new causal theory of self-love, Kohut
invented a hypostasis, an entity, which he called the structure self. This fictional structure embodies an anatomical simile. The dynamic conflict model... has been given up in favour of a quasi-neurological defect model. The deficit or defect in the structure can be corrected by an addition of a missing ingredient, love, which is renamed empathy (p.210).

Positing of the self as an entity does not render problematic Kohut's position, for in fact, if one takes a determinist, materialist stance with regard to a theory of mind, to have causal effect it must have material properties. However, his leaving unclear the posited contribution of identification to that psychic structure 'self' is problematic. Kohut accords causal role to the deficit in development of the self. He suggests that it leaves the person seeking reparation, or restoration as he calls it. According to Lothane (1983) Kohut's position suggests that

through empathy or empathic nurturing, obtained from a self-object, the self, stunted by defects due to a lack of such nurturing in early childhood, achieves a state of restoration: the self has 'a need for a self-object to complete its development' (p.212).

Given that Kohut has given up the dynamic conflict model for a structural model, he is in a difficult position theoretically in so far as it is impossible to state a priori what 'complete development' might consist in. It is always possible to specify sub-goals or further goals, but there is no way of determining when 'complete development' has been reached other than a de facto absence of searching. Further, the account has overtones of teleology, as the lack or the 'need for a self-object' is burdened with the status of a 'drive to' do something, be it depend on or merge with, a self-object. This contravenes Freud's (1915) deterministic injunction that a drive can only be defined by its bodily source, that only those not further reducible are worthy of the name, and that
the object by which a drive attains satisfaction is the most flexible attribute, and certainly is not a defining attribute of a drive. The weakness of Kohut’s account in positing a structure which is tantamount to a ‘drive to depend’ is a weakness shared by Doi’s fascinating account of *The Anatomy of Dependency* (1971) in Japanese culture. Doi gives a theoretical account of issues similar to those which concern Kohut, suggesting that there is a form of love, called *amae* where no shame or obligation, can be felt due to one’s dependence on another, because it is as if that other were not separate from oneself. The literal origin of the term *amae* is "cleaving to the breast with no shame". He comes to define *amae* as a ‘drive to depend’. The self-object of Kohut’s account, may have the same status as the object of (what Doi terms) one’s *amae*. The self-object derives its status from a mistaken unconscious belief that the other is not separate from oneself: this belief has the hallmark of a regression to the state of primary narcissism, or the ‘golden age’ mentioned above, where it was not yet realised due to the formation of the pleasure ego, that that which succoured and tended us, was in fact not part of us. The pleasure attendant on a seeming return to this state is apparent: there can therefore be no shame, obligation or abandonment. It is not enough to say that there are theoretical problems with psychoanalytic accounts which attempt to have mechanisms like identification do motivational tasks, because the phenomena they describe are real enough. Some account must be given of them. Some individuals do seem to be seekers, drawn to charismatic movements and their leaders.

In *Group Psychology* Freud (1921) suggests that identification with a leader takes the
place of the superego, and is like "rediscovering one’s parents" who were initially responsible for the introjected moral beliefs now replaced by the person of the leader. He suggests this identification is the product of transference and recruits powerful motives to please the leader, which may result in the leader being accorded the trust and authority previously accorded to the parents. Sennett (1980) in his scholarly analysis of authority shows how pervasive is this influence in various types of industrial power hierarchies, historical and contemporary. As we are all prone to identify with others (this being perhaps the well-spring of many pro-social feelings and action like altruism) and most of us have heroes: it is arguable that we are none of us immune to charismatic appeal. However, as it is unlikely that a random array of people would all drink arsenic-laced grape drink in the manner of those who died at Jonestown, then the basis of charisma, and differential susceptibility to it warrants further assessment.

10.5 Charisma

Weber’s (1922) analysis of charisma entails the occurrence of a social crisis involving a weakening of traditional values, an emergence of group conflicts and a sharpening of class differences. The traditional order is then challenged by the emergence of a "charismatic authority". Rebhan (1983) cites Hummell who has combined the work of Weber and Freud to define charisma psychosocially.

Charisma exists as the experience of the follower when there is
1. A moment of distress or object loss
2. Complete personal devotion to a leader and a projection of love
3. The experiencing of the leader's qualities as extraordinary or supernatural where there is a sense of the uncanny produced by the unconscious nature of the perception (p.189).

The importance of combining Weber and Freud is evident in the role attributed to societal circumstances as well as individual psychohistory. The possibility of a charismatic movement is said to lie in the existence of people who "have found themselves footloose and unable to identify with and therefore make a firm commitment to the dominant values and ethos of their society" and who are regarded as marginal by those who have made that commitment (Goldberg, 1983:170). This is an issue directly pertinent to the rite of passage interpretation of involvement with NRMs. Hoffer (1951) echoes this point when he notes that

the leader cannot create the conditions which make the rise of a movement possible...There has to be an eagerness to follow and obey, and an intense dissatisfaction with things as they are, before the movement and leader can make their appearance (p.103)

Weston La Barre (1980) characterises the nature of charisma as a personal state of dissatisfaction or longing and the capacity of the potential leader to correctly ascertain that state and give voice to it in terms acceptable to the person. He says "Charisma, which seems to be a 'supernatural rightness' stemming from the charismatic individual, is merely the emotional welcomeness of his message, *deja' vu* in the prepotent unconscious wishes of each communicant..." (p.29). The 'uncanny' sense followers frequently avow of a leader's 'seeing into their hearts', of 'speaking directly to them' derives from the fact that the perceptive leader is expressing longings repressed in the potential follower. La Barre notes "The compelling force comes not
from the great man as he voices new supernatural truth: he speaks to the powerful anti-commonsensical fantasy already present in the unconscious wish of each communicant...The voice of the vatic has an 'uncanny' consistency with each one's private wish (p.52)."

That a charismatic leader is accorded special powers or a special enlightened status is not surprising. Having a leader 'know' one's unexpressed and possibly unavowed desires is likely to make him/her seem omniscient, with powers beyond the natural. In acknowledging unexpressed wishes he transgresses the boundaries of personhood by seeming to 'read one's mind'. Kohut (1977) suggests that some charismatic authorities have "a keen grasp of even the subtlest reactions in other people which are related to their own narcissistic requirements".

The sense of one's thoughts being transparent has an obvious infantile prototype in the cases where parents are able to understand non-verbal gestures and expressions of their children and this may result in the children believing they can read every thought. This may mean that some of the power parents had over the dependent child may be accorded to the leader who evidences similar powers, and may satisfy the longing for the sense of protection and security of that developmental epoch. By this indirect reasoning, it may be seen that a belief in the special powers of a guru or charismatic figure, stemming from his/her insight, may satisfy narcissistic dependency needs in a way that is conducive to supernatural, uncanny interpretations. Deutsch (1983) suggests that the easy acceptance of unusual ideas he found in the followers of a progressively less stable guru, was due to a childlike transference. He suggests that a
mystical experience of union is a compensation for loss, the elation coming from a fantasied merger with a more powerful object. The desire for merger, he attributes to "early traumatic disappointments in one or both parents" which the affiliate attempts to remedy "by seeking out in adult life new idealized objects with which to merge" (p.121). It is open to question whether the critical feelings avowed by affiliates towards their parents were as vehemently felt before any contact has been made with the guru or leader. Deutsch (1983) says that a resolution of conflict came about by the abolition of distance between the omnipotent 'parent' and the devotee through an experience of merger. He makes a further point that is important given our emphasis on precursors vs sequelae of NRM involvement when he says, "The turning to the radically new parent often appeared also to contain an angry rejection of the original parent for their ostensible inadequacies" (p.121). In this way, the security gained, and the new appraisal possible may lead to the finer articulation of dimly-felt points of neglect and inadequacy, which Zygmunt (1972) termed the movement's "motive-defining function". We have then a tentative profile of a seeker. A seeker is one whose dependency needs were not adequately met so that dependency on the parents' love and guidance was tempered by identification with them, who did not emerge from the early years of bonding with an independent sense of his/her own capacities to make his/her way in the physical and social world, who, when a crisis time occurs has either not formed close social bonds, or finds those s/he does have to be inadequate to the level of need aroused, and who is thus open to, vulnerable to charismatic appeal. The loosening of ego boundaries attendant on a mystical sense of union with the objects of perception may be an expression of the same tendency in the less
interpersonal domain.

Without this predisposition on the part of the follower, the phenomenon of charisma could not occur. Goldberg (1983) notes the importance of unconscious longings when he suggests, "[t]hese leaders could not attract a large following if they were not encountering youth who were actively seeking lapses from reality" (p.165). Deutsch (1983) again brings an important and fresh dimension to what has, until now, been the mapping of a highly asymmetric dependency on and identification with the leader on the part of the follower. He notes that the merger, in this instance, was not one-sided. As the Guru deteriorated in mental stability, he said, "I held out my hand to them in a blessing, but I'd take on their bad experiences...Many times I'd take on the attributes of another person" (p124). A full and telling comparison between the psychology of the leader with that of the followers, is discussed in Deutsch (1983) and Kohut (1977).

10.6 Constraint, Impulsivity and Ego Strength

It has been suggested that for those drawn to charismatic movements, there may have been early troubled relations with parents. According to Cushman (1986) and Kohut (1977) this has influenced the development of a person's sense of self as a result of narcissistic wounds. Given that Kohut characterises them as seeking, with an addiction-like intensity, it seems possible that such people would either not value impulse control, or simply not be capable of it

Judah (1974, cited in Foss and Larkin, 1979) suggests that many of the values of the
counter-culture are carried through into the belief systems and lifestyles of NRMNs. Kilbourne and Richardson (1984) suggest that the differences between NRMNs and psychotherapy may be overdrawn simplifications. Certainly, whether due to the eclectic interplay of beliefs, or the movement of seekers from one domain to another, the leaders or gurus of certain movements may be characterised as 'cosmic therapists' as they receive total trust and surrender from their followers and are viewed as quintessentially loving and non-judgemental. Further, with certain of these groups, intellectualisation, constraint and emotional control are not positively valued. Quite the reverse for example in rebirthing groups, the ventilation of strong emotions is accepted as real growth, which is viewed as having an experiential rather than an intellectual basis. It is deemed preferable to allow expression to these strong feelings and to 'watch' oneself enact them rather than supressing them. Hence people may feel more honest and open, less frightened of revealing themselves to others, and less timid about their own potential responses (Judah, 1974, cited in Foss and Larkin, 1979). Alison (1965) found that Christian religious devotees allowed more threatening material to emerge in a Rorschach test, but seemed able to tolerate it, so it may be that devotees have a flexible and tolerant appraisal of impulses rather than a lack of ego strength. If this characterisation pertains across a number of NRMNs this might be reflected in a more experimental approach to one's lifestyle characterising those drawn to and involved in therapy and such NRMNs. Given that NRMNs are pattern setters, it is likely that individuals drawn to them may be more impulsive, more willing to 'want change now'. A 'present-orientation' and an openness to the impulse of the moment is consonant with the charismatic nature and emphasis of eastern NRMNs which
promotes an openness to enlightenment and bliss consciousness now, rather than virtuous renunciation now for the sake of an ideal after-life. This emphasis is the kernel of the new status of eastern NRMs, their hybridisation with aspects of the human potential movement. Traditional eastern religions usually have ascetic elements and an emphasis on karma (the inevitable causal effect of any action on one's present life, and future lives) which temper any self-indulgence arising from an emphasis on living for the moment. However, given that the evidence suggests eastern NRMs are such hybrids, there is basis for expecting those drawn to these movements to be less constrained than adherents of charismatic western NRMs, who would in turn be less constrained than the general population. It is likely that those willing to reassess themselves and their lifestyles by becoming involved in therapy are likely to fall midway between those drawn to eastern NRMs and followers of western NRMs.

A measure was sought which assessed the degree of ego-strength, or the degree of frustration tolerance which characterised an individual. The Ego Strength Scale by Baron (1953, cited in Bloch, 1965) is one which predicts response to psychotherapy, but the items seemed rather out-of-date for the relatively sophisticated affiliates of NRMs who are rather sceptical of paper and pencil tests. Block (1965) refers to an Ego Control scale which is one of two developed to measure the first two factor dimensions of the MMPI on non-pathological populations. He suggests that the second factor of the MMPI can be identified as relating to the way individual's characteristically monitor their impulses. At one end of the dimension is a scale specifically measuring over-control (EC-4) and at the other end a scales relate to...
impulse expression and social expansiveness" (p. 52). This required the administration of a large test battery, so something more time-efficient was sought. Jane Loevinger's (1976) work on ego development, while compelling, was thought to be somewhat culturally specific and her test requires a particularly high level verbal facility which might disadvantage certain subjects.

A measure of constraint which seems to provide an appropriate index for the concept being discussed here is the Constraint scale of Tellegen's (1982) Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire. It is a higher order factor, which provides a weighted sum of a number of subscales.21 A subject's score is obtained in the form of a regression estimate combining primary scale scores. Tellegen suggests "this dimension may reflect variations in overall pleasure-pain regulatory style: the self-restrictive and cautious among the high constraint scorers and the more self-indulgent and impulsive among the lows" (p.3.). He also notes that whether one is a high or low constraint person may have implications for one's experience of stressful life events. He says that "even if objectively similar experiences would tend to be more stressful for a high than a low constraint person, the cumulative consequences of the latter's flirtations with disaster could compensate for this difference"(p.4).

An Eastern spiritual orientation entails an awareness of the "here and now" and an attempt to attain enlightenment in this life rather than postponement until a final day of reckoning. For this reason Maze [personal communication] suggested that those drawn to such a tradition might have less impulse control. Further, given that not everyone with movement contacts in their social networks becomes involved, it is
possible that those who do have more of a tendency to act on the impulse of the moment, and to try new options. The Constraint subscale of Tellegen's MPQ is of relevance as it measures impulse control and cautiousness. Greater impulsiveness does not account for the differential openness to less traditional options. The combined role of an eastern spiritual orientation and a less traditional outlook may be determining influences here. Individuals with such tendencies may be more activated by the experience of life stress, and may be more inclined to attempt remedial action. They have been brought to a turning point by motivating life events which require coping ability beyond their own capabilities and in excess of the support afforded them by their social resources. While there has been considerable interest shown in the literature regarding personality attributes which play a mediating role on the impact of stress (Kobasa, 1979, 1981, 1982) interest in such attributes is restricted here to those which render people differentially susceptible to movement appeal. A major directing influence on affiliation is the nature of the beliefs an individual holds about the sources of dissatisfaction and suffering, and the nature and efficacy of potential solutions. If an individual is untraditional, endorses beliefs and values of a spiritual nature but different from those held by the general population, has a mystical tendency and is impulsive, then, when the opportunity arises to attend a new group, it is suggested that s/he is more likely to become involved than someone from the general population without such a profile.

Searching for scales which measure personality dimensions does not necessarily entail the assumption that the situational context is not a powerful component of involvement
in NRM s. The person-situation debate which began with Hartshorne and May in 1928, and was more recently taken up by Mischel in the 1970's debar s a researcher from taking a de-contextualised trait approach to personality. However, the value-added model which forms the blueprint for this study takes very seriously the specific life situation of an individual. The psychological attributes assessed in this study are assumed to have a determining role only if specified, relevant features of the causal field pertain. These features are highly situational: they assume an isolated person who has had an objectively high frequency of particular categories of life events.

11. HYPOTHESES

The following are general hypotheses which make up the Rites of Passage model. The value added nature of the model means that disruption is viewed as necessary but not sufficient for movement affiliation to occur, and is likely also to have been a feature of the recent life circumstances of those drawn to a social agency of self-change like therapy. Differences between these groups at the initial stages of the model are not expected. If they do occur, they would suggest that there is difference in the nature and degree of disruption experienced by those drawn to NRM s, and it would be expected that since religion is viewed as a generalised compensator of broader scope than therapy, that it would be the religious groups who had experienced more disruption, and experienced it more intensely. Differences are expected between the eastern groups and the control groups, and between the eastern groups and the western group throughout, (bar parental relations and general spiritual orientation). Differences are expected between the therapy group and the eastern groups where parental
relations, personality differences like constraint and absorption are concerned, and
certainly where beliefs of an eastern spiritual nature are concerned. These are the
variables which are presumed by the value-added model to have a directing function
indicating the manner in which the motivating life circumstances and personal
response to them will be ameliorated and resolved. The only directing function
 accorded to the motivating life circumstances is the prediction that the loneliest people
will be the eastern and therapy groups who have become involved in a social option.

Before listing the hypotheses, it is perhaps appropriate to outline the Rites de Passage
[RdP] model.

11.1 The Rites of Passage Model

This model predicts that the following conditions must apply for eastern spiritual
affiliation to occur:

1. Unconventional people

2. who have recently endured disruptive and aversive life events, especially those
   concerning social-exits,

3. which they appraise as having had intense and aversive psychological impact,

4. endured in the absence of adequate acquaintances and friends,

5. for those who have a history (subjectively viewed) of sub-optimal experience of
   their parents, in childhood and adolescence,

6. and diminished wellbeing and increased distress in the recent past,
7. who have a tendency to oppose traditional conceptions of authority,
8. and are somewhat impulsive and unconstrained,
9. who have an absorptive, mystical perceptual style
10. and are generally spiritually intense
11. with an orientation towards eastern conceptions of the sacred

will be drawn towards NRMs of an eastern nature.

The model differs from that of Lofland and Stark (1965) in that it suggests that the nature of the disruption experienced is important, in that recent loss of social support is expected, especially the recent loss of an intimate relationship. Thus, the absence or neutralisation of extra-cult ties specified by Lofland and Stark (1965) is now portrayed as loneliness and recent loss, and as an absence of a sense of community participation perhaps due to unconventional beliefs, and recent rupture in economic and employment circumstances. The emotional and psychological response to life events is assumed to reveal their being "acutely felt" according to Lofland & Stark (1965) and the current model endorses that predisposing feature of involvement. Special attention is paid in this model to the nature of the person's emotional response. Since life events are seen as commencing a rite of passage whereby the person embarks on a new life course, responses indicative of disruption and adjustment are particularly emphasised. These are the indicators taken to suggest that the person cannot go on as s/he had before. If social agencies are contacted as a result of life circumstances which require adaption in excess of a person's coping ability and social resources, then
the emotional responses of anxiety, anger and helplessness are particularly expected. More attention is paid in this model to the form of the person’s emotional response, since it is presumed that spiritual guidance is sought in a time of stress and dissatisfaction; for some, a time of despair.

The model also considers mental health as an important index of a person’s neediness and relative suffering, which was not considered in Lofland and Stark’s (1965) model. Consideration of family history is also a new addition, seen as important since Ullman (1982) suggests that recent life stress evokes past conflicts which is here seen as potentially further undermining a person’s confidence in their coping skills. Since the groups involved in this study all have charismatic leaders, family history is considered as one possible factor leaving a person open to having a single trustworthy other to provide a model of coping and interpretive skills, and as a source of acceptance and love. Those most open to this appeal are thought to be those whose early life environment was viewed as least adequate.

The model also considers attitude to conventional moral authority as a way of distinguishing those drawn to eastern, non-conventional charismatic leaders, and those drawn to leaders promoting a belief system more consonant with traditional authority.

The model also considers additional personality features which were not part of Lofland & Stark’s original model. These are attributes which are likely to characterise someone who is willing to take unconventional action in the face of strife, like a lack of constraint, and approach a meditational group of spiritual orientation, like the
prediposing feature of an absorptive perceptual style.

It is not presumed that those drawn to NRMs already have a spiritual problem-solving perspective [PSP]. It is merely assumed that they will endorse beliefs which can potentially function as a cognitive coping style which promotes resilience in the face of disruption. If these people already had a religious PSP there would be little reason to be drawn to the group for leadership and instruction, and as companionship can be sought from any social option, their loneliness would not be sufficient reason. It is suggested that these individuals certainly have a consonant spiritual orientation, and that this plays a crucial role in rendering differentially appealing a particular movement, and, within the wider specifications of the model in influencing the likelihood of movement affiliation.

The hypotheses are as follows:

1. If the eastern NRMs are truly non-normative religious groups, it is predicted that they will be less conventional than any of the other groups. The therapy group is expected to be less conventional than the control groups, having perhaps been involved in more questioning of values and lifestyle. The western NRM is expected to be most conventional of all, as their spiritual innovation leaves their broader values consonant with those of the wider Australian culture.

2. The eastern NRMs are predicted to have experienced the most disruption in the recent past. It is not a necessary prediction of the model that they have experienced significantly more distressful life events than the therapy group, but
that they have experienced more stress than the control groups and the western NRM.

3. The eastern NRMs are predicted to have experienced more psychological impact from the disruptive life events which have occurred than the control groups and the western group. They are not expected to differ from the therapy group.

4. The psychological nature of the impact which will most distinguish the eastern NRMs from the control groups and western NRM is in terms of adjustment required and disruption felt in response to life events.

5. If the movement towards a self-help agency is evidence for a failure or inadequacy of personal coping skills on the part of those drawn to the eastern NRMs and the Therapy group, it is predicted that these groups will experience more anxiety, anger, upset, helplessness and depression in response to life events than the control groups or the western NRM.

6. If those drawn to eastern NRMs have accepted the notions of karma and advaita then they will accept more personal responsibility for all life events than will any other group. The therapy group is expected to take more responsibility than the control groups, who are not expected to differ from the western group.

7. If the eastern NRMs believe that they are responsible for life events, it is not necessarily the case that they will exclude the influence of others from the occurrence of events in their lives. It is therefore predicted that they will see others as more responsible for life events than the control groups and the western group. Since it is likely that those drawn to therapy have experienced
problematic interchanges with others, and will be alert to the influence of interpersonal relations in their lives. The eastern NRMs are not expected to differ from the therapy group in this regard.

8. Given that eastern NRMs promote a philosophy which concerns the causally interconnected nature of all events, and since it is expected in this study that those drawn to these groups already have a consonance of worldview in terms of the general parameters, it is predicted that those drawn to eastern movements will attribute less to chance than any other group. The western NRM is also likely to attribute little to chance, perhaps seeing it all as part of God’s plan.

9. It is predicted that those drawn to eastern movements will be less socially integrated and more lonely than the control groups and the western groups. The therapy group is expected to share their plight in these regards.

10. It is predicted that given the expectations that the eastern groups will experience more disruption in the recent past, it is expected that this will be reflected in greater neurotic distress and less wellbeing than any of the other groups.

11. It is predicted that those drawn to eastern NRMs will have had the most unsatisfactory early relations with their parents, and that they will appraise them more negatively than the western NRM and the control groups. The western NRM is expected to have poorer early parental relations than the control groups. The therapy group is also expected to have had poorer parental relations than the control groups.
12. The unconventional nature of the eastern NRM s, and their predicted poor parental relations inform the hypothesis that they will also show little regard for conventional moral authority, less than the therapy group, the control groups, and certainly less than the western group which is expected to be most submissive to conventional authority of all the groups.

13. Given the fact that the eastern affiliates and the therapy group have taken action in contacting a social agency, and given the eastern 'here and now' focus of the NRM s it is expected that the eastern NRM s will be less constrained that the therapy group, who, being a gestalt group, are expected to be less constrained than the control groups. The western NRM is expected to be most constrained of all the groups.

14. Since the eastern groups focus on meditation and yoga, it is predicted that those drawn to these groups will have more of a tendency to experience a sense of fusion with the objects of perception and recollection than any of the other groups. It is predicted that the western NRM will have no such propensity and will be least characterised by this attribute than any other group.

15. It is predicted that those drawn to NRM s of either orientation will be more spiritually intense and show more assent to the central spiritual tenets assumed to characterise any religion or spirituality, regardless of orientation.

16. It is predicted that those drawn to eastern NRM s will already have a spiritual orientation consonant with that of the movement they approach. For this reason, it is predicted that those drawn to eastern NRM s will have the greatest assent to
the eastern items of the SOS out of all the groups. The therapy group is expected to show some credence for eastern spiritual items; more than the control groups. The western group is expected to have very little belief in such notions, less than any other group.

17. The consonance of movement and individual worldview is also expected to apply for the western items of the SOS. The western NRM is expected to have the highest credence of all, and as members, to be quite united in their faith. The eastern groups are expected to have least credence in these items, if, as Needleman (1975) suggests, they are disaffected with western spirituality. Because of the religious group under whose aegis the therapy group is conducted, it is expected that this group will show more credence in the western items than the control groups.