CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION OF THE SUPPORT AFFORDED THE RITES OF PASSAGE MODEL

Returning by an unused path -
violets

Bakusui

45. THE RITES DE PASSAGE MODEL: DO THE DATA FIT?

Lofland and Stark’s (1965) model was worthy of modified application, as all major predictions of the Rites de Passage model were supported with regard to the focus of this study: the Eastern NRMs. They are the only groups who fulfil the selection criteria, the most important of which is their being affiliates rather than members of groups formed around living leaders who claim special spiritual status and abilities, and where membership of the groups entails assent to a belief system that is innovative relative to the dominant Australian culture.

The significance of their being affiliates lies in the prospective nature of the study, which did not aim to study those who are already members of NRMs, but to study recent affiliates so that distinctions could be drawn between the sequelae and the precursors of movement membership. This was not possible in the case of the highly
committed long-term members of the Western NRM. For this reason, the discussion will focus on the Eastern NRMs and will consider the Western NRM and the Therapy group where relevant.

Affiliation to the eastern groups forms the discriminating variable which is the conceptual and empirical focal point of the other postulated differences between the groups. The support for the model lies in the degree to which the differences predicted by the model reliably distinguish the eastern groups from the control groups, and in some instances, from the therapy group.

The *Rites de Passage* Model tested in this study established that of all the groups, only those who were affiliates to eastern NRMs fulfilled all of the predictions of the model, which taken together present as possible determinants of movement involvement.

**46. THE RITE 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 suboptimal 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. who are somewhat impulsive or 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.

46.1 Unconventionality

The new features of the model which were not included in the Lofland and Stark (1965) model were especially relevant. The first stage, predicting unconventionality distinguished the eastern groups from all others. Given that eastern NRMs are portrayed as non-normative spiritual options, then the high level of conventionality which characterised the western NRM meant that in spite of their spiritual orientation, they held worldviews as far away from the eastern affiliates as those of any in the sample. The differences continued from there with that group.

46.2 Disruptive Life Events

The eastern groups had had the greatest number of life events, the greatest impact felt of those life events, and the greatest emotional response indicative of disruption, a
need for adjustment, and emotions which have the character of a strong personal turning point.

46.3 Aversive and Intense Psychological Impact

It is here that the psychometric sophistication of Henderson et al’s (1981) Recent Life Events Inventory revealed its merits. It was possible to document, using ratings by the subject’s themselves, regarding their own recent life experiences, the emotional impact, and to quantify those differences. The data could be analysed in terms of overall incidence to see if these people just had more happen to them, total impact to see the total cumulative stress impact which formed the backdrop to their day to day coping, and mean impact to see if, due to cumulative impact, or possibly a temperamental feature or a personality trait was responsible for a greater reactivity to life events.

The items regarding anxiety, disruption, anger and helplessness certainly indicated that personal coping resources had been exceeded. The eastern affiliates were also those most likely to have endured recent loss, and to view their close social bonds as inadequate to their needs. The additional impact items regarding personality discontent also proved useful indicators of a possible turning point, in that these items distinguished the eastern affiliates, from the other groups.

46.4 The Absence Of Adequate Close Bonds

It was not possible to retain an analytic separateness of life events and social supports, as they were extremely confounded in this situation, (Thoits, 1982). Not only were a high proportion of the life events which occurred to do with social exits, and recent
losses (with attendant implications for identity maintenance, Duck and Lea, 1983; Greil, 1977; McHugh, 1972; Schein, 1957) but the social domain was such an area of difficulty for those drawn to eastern NRMs that even positive life events had differentially greater disruptive impact on them.

46.5 Poor Family Relations

If, as Ullman (1982) converts experience a re-evocation of early life problems prior to conversion, then the eastern groups are certainly those who feel they had a less ideal pair of parents than any other group.

46.6 Diminished Wellbeing

The eastern groups were also those who had the lowest wellbeing assessed in terms of bodily responses (Galanter, 1980), though they did not evidence a higher incidence of a trait-like operationalisation of stress such as Tellegen’s (1982).

46.7 Opposition to Traditional Moral Authority

They also had a lower tendency to submit to traditional authorities, which is perhaps a further reflection of their unconventionality. It may also reflect dimensions of value which also find expression in their eastern orientation, whereby the contingencies of the moment might be more pertinent to determining a course of action than moral absolutes or allowed traditions. Since a number of these items from Ray’s (1971) scale also refer to parental respect and since the affiliates have a rather poor appraisal of them, this might have contributed to their extremely low scores.
46.8 Lack of Constraint

The eastern affiliates do not seem to endorse control and constraint as being characteristic of coping and responding styles. They are the least constrained of all groups. It is at this point of the model that they become most readily distinguishable from the therapy group.

46.9 Absorptive Perceptual Style

Tellegen's (1982) speculation regarding the discriminant validity of the absorption subscale was empirically supported by this study, as the eastern groups were highest of all on this measure, and the western group lowest of all. The young student sample also had a high score which suggests that absorptive perceptual styles may be a feature of youth, and when carried through to later years may be a more significant demarcating variable of a mystical propensity. More testing on wider age ranges and religious affiliations is required to answer this question.

46.10 Generally Spiritually Intense

The SOS scale definitely distinguished between those drawn one genre of movement activity and another, in this case between those drawn to therapy and those drawn to NRM's of an eastern nature.

Regarding the general belief items, it seems that it can be assumed with some confidence that the scale is worded in such a way as to gain assent from a cross-section of denominations. It is sensitive enough to detect differences in spiritual intensity in those in this sample drawn actively to new religions, and those who
practise the religion into which they were socialised, or have lapsed into non-practising status.

46.11 An Eastern Conception of the Sacred

It is the eastern items which really differentiate the groups. Only those drawn to eastern NRMs scored highly on this scale. The nature of the items is such that they are candidates for a spiritual Problem-Solving Perspective. Only a longitudinal study could tell if believers came to experience a reduced level of stress in response to life events. In the light of the data which suggested that in addition to a greater response to life events, more events actually happened to these eastern affiliates, it may be their lack of constraint, as Tellegen (1982) suggested which is responsible for the life stress. If as Kohut (1971, 1977) suggests there is something which drives those drawn to charismatic leaders to seek others with an addiction-like intensity, it may be that there are wider theroretical ramifications for the concurrence of a lack of constraint, a tendency towards absorption and an eastern worldview in those who have had parental relations which they rate relatively negatively.

46.12 The Importance of Psychological Predispositions

This model has demonstrated that affiliates arrive at NRMs with many needs unmet, and with a number of intensely-held beliefs which are likely to have contributed strongly to movement appeal. This suggests that a psychological level of analysis is important in explaining differential openness to movement involvement, and is in fact crucial for differentiating why one person rather than another joins one movement
rather than another. Structural features like having movement contacts in one’s social networks, and enough time on one’s hands just will not do the explanatory task set them. They cannot account for what has been termed Type Two Differential Openness above. The affiliates in this study have more than time on their hands, they are lonely and stressed and angry, and they have some ideas of a spiritual nature as to how all these events might be interpreted.

This study does not address the degree of linkage between the beliefs endorsed, or whether they operate as an explanatory perspective. It is assumed, rather weakly, that the beliefs are not enough in themselves, as the guidance of a leader is still sought, and it was shown that of all the groups it was the eastern groups which had the greatest discrepancy in number who sought a leader and number who had found a leader.

The western items of the SOS were the source of the empirical validation of the scale, along with the discriminant validity demonstrated in the co-occurrence of a low level of belief in the eastern items by the western group. The western items were also the occasion for some surprise regarding the degree of eclecticism which characterised the eastern affiliates. Their disaffection with western religion does not extend to its beliefs, though their behavioural involvement evidences very little experimentation with western options by any of the eastern groups other than the Theosophist group. With more extensive validation the scale itself could assess the degree of syncretism which characterised a given movement.
This is a brief outline of the essential features of the *Rites de Passage* model. It differs from the Lofland and Stark (1965) model in its emphasis on the quality of life events, specifically the difficulties in the social domain which seems to characterize the affiliates, and in the psychometric detail with which these are assessed. It also attempts to provide data by which it can be established that a personal turning point has been reached rather than inferring it, or merely asking the subjects. It does not assume that the seekers need be self-reflexive of their status, but views them as rather impelled by needs only a fraction of which they may be aware of or give voice to themselves.

It does not assume that these people have a functioning problem-solving perspective, but that they have a perceptual style which lends itself to eastern forms of spirituality, and a distaste for conventional religious moral absolutes and traditional institutionalised forms of that religion. The beliefs they endorse are akin to a coping perspective, sharing many features of a perspective which would enable a 'hardy' response to stress. From their recent past it seems they need it.

These people do not emerge as socially handicapped, or lacking in achievement. They do not have habitually negative styles of engagement with life events, and they attribute much to themselves and to others in the interpersonal world, and little to chance.

A profile emerges, which is neatly supported by the data. It begs the question of the ontogeny of religious beliefs, and traits like constraint, and an absorptive perceptual
style, but the model links well with many of the findings in the literature, and it asks more questions than it can answer.

47. GROUP AFFILIATION AS FOCAL POINT OF DIFFERENCES

By and large these measures do reliably distinguish the eastern groups, with an astonishing consistency and clarity. Complexities emerged at times due to complicating features of having used as an ‘active control group’ a therapy group run under the auspices of a Methodist church. They proved to be more spiritual than expected, for example, given the irrelevance of spiritual belief to eligibility for the therapy group course. In some instances the data was better than had been hoped. For example, it was suggested in the introduction that religion was more of a generalised compensator than therapy, addressing as it does both daily and ultimate concerns, and therefore it is highly probable that those experiencing the maximum level of stress and loneliness would be those drawn to this option for guidance and affiliation with others in a similar situation. However, in terms of the value added form of the model, it was not necessary to assume that there would be greater disruption in terms of life event incidence and impact. So a conservative expectation of ‘no difference’ between the therapy group and the eastern NRMss informed the hypotheses. This proved advised for all of the qualitative subcategories of life events, and for the impact attendant on those qualitative groups of events. However, in terms of total incidence of recent life events, the eastern groups had experienced significantly more events than the therapy group. It does seem that overall the eastern groups have had more happening in the recent past than the therapy group, even if that overall
difference in incidence is not reflected when the events are analysed in terms of qualitative event categories. In terms of the qualitative subcategories of life events, it seems these two genres of group are in similar life circumstances in terms of incidence and impact of disruptive life events. If these events endured in relative isolation and loneliness have been causal contributors to the openness to involvement or the decision to take a social remedial course of action, (called Type One Differential Openness above), then the remaining postulates of the model are called upon to provide a reason why one set of people had become involved in eastern NRMs (to a limited degree) and the others in a therapy group, (Type Two Differential Openness, above), and distinguish them it does.

While the model presented has a broad focus in assessing transitions occurring in the human life cycle which require a major departure from existing life practices, the data that has been presented is very detailed. For this reason, there will at times be a return to the larger picture and a sketching of the broad parameters of interest which may seem to entail a wide departure from the data, but there will be a return to a detailed consideration of the support provided for each segment of the model below.

Discussions are always an admixture of restricted optimism about the applications and implications of the findings, and a regretful if advised acknowledgement of the limitations of the study with suggestions as to possible future modifications, especially in the light of recent developments of adjoining fields of research, which have often developed in the interim.
47.1 Influences and Contributions

This study is virtually land-locked in that it borders on a number of fascinating fields of research, and as an exploratory, pragmatic endeavour has attempted to acknowledge, and allow its methodology to be informed by the important issues in each of those fields. Naturally it has not done justice to the methodological complexities of them all, because it has attempted to use assessment techniques to measure theoretically relevant attributes of the life situations and personalities of an unusual subset of the population, rather than explore the intricacies of these techniques in their own right. Nonetheless, assessment procedures and measures, as operationalisations of theoretical constructs, were not made arbitrarily and the interplay between theory and practice is such that even this practical piece of research has implications for some of the issues currently enlivening adjacent areas of research.

It has something to contribute to possible models of life stress, the role that social supports play in the stress and coping process, and issues regarding the assessment of their impact. When the complexities of measuring something as complex as life stress were appreciated, it became a fascinating domain of research in its own right. As with so many dimensions of this study, practicality was the priority, in the face of the exigencies of field research, achieving a high level of subject compliance, and the fact that (as was demonstrated) the sample contains unconventional people without a high regard for traditional authorities, who might not have been sympathetic to the rigours of social science. Hence, despite the acknowledged superiority of interview techniques in assessing recent life events (Brown & Harris, 1978), self-report data was used. The
instrument itself was sophisticated: it covered a broad range of topics, and had detailed
provision for assessment of psychological impact which was central to the research
interests of this study. Assessing the nature, extent and psychological impact of the
disruption attendant on life events provides important information regarding the
domains of felt difficulty.

47.2 Group Ideology and Individual Motivations and Beliefs

The study also contributes to the debate regarding the importance of psychological
domains such as individual motivation, values, and beliefs in rendering more probable
movement contact. The emphasis here is on an interactional and dynamic analysis of
the interplay between the structural features of life situation and their functional
impact in the light of certain attributes and beliefs of the person involved. In this way
the study escapes the criticisms of Zurcher and Snow (1981) of a too purely intra­
psychic focus regarding the explanation of movement involvement.

47.3 The Role of Beliefs

This study may seem to the reader to take a very cognitive stance on affiliation,
emphasising the directive role of beliefs in influencing the nature of the course of
action taken when a turning point was reached. However, it must be acknowledged
that while this study is not taking a generalist position by suggesting that these
individuals are ripe for any movement, it does seem plausible that the relative lack of
integration of therapy and Eastern affiliates, and their relative loneliness, coupled with
a recent history of a high incidence of social exits from their social networks, and their
avowed distress might render differentially appealing a social course of action, and be a response to emotional features like loneliness. In this sense, the nature of the life events is also important, in addition to the disruption attendant on their occurrence, in determining the nature of the course of action embarked upon. The psychological "relief" attendant on participating in a community of people who share a worldview, and who might also be in a similar state of questioning, and transition is not emphasised within this study, (but see Galanter, 1989) but the emotional impact of social departures and the absence of adequate social contacts is a central concern, redressing perhaps the overly cognitive emphasis on the directive function of beliefs.

47.4 Ideology and the individual

The study has demonstrated a link existing between group ideology and the worldview and needs of the individual who is drawn within a NRM’s ambit, as suggested by Toch (1965) and Zygmunt (1972). There is definitely a conjunction of individual and collective worldview, and this emphasis on individual’s differential openness to movement appeal shifts the recruitment debate beyond surrender or capture to the seemingly paradoxical surrender and capture, whereby there is an alignment of individual needs and the operational requirements of the movement which is the essence of commitment, as Kanter (1968) notes.

47.5 Development of The SOS

Far from ignoring group ideology in favour of an intrapsychic focus, an emphasis criticised by those who favour a more sociological consideration of movement

IMPATIENT FOR PARADISE 461
involvement, this study has the beliefs of the groups studied centre stage. Some compromise was attempted between a nomothetic versus an ideographic approach in the portrayal of each eastern movement's ideology, treating each movement as an individual entity for the idiographic emphasis, in developing the Spiritual Orientation Scale [SOS]. Yet it attempted to achieve a nomothetic generality, by using source material that was an admixture of the literature of a number of new religious movements, (some not directly involved as experimental groups in this study), and more 'secondary' texts (Caird and Law, 1983; Robbins et al, 1978; Stone, 1978) which analyse belief systems in a more philosophical and comparative manner. A synthesis was attempted of the common defining and distinguishing elements, and the level of abstraction involved was that sufficient to phrase items in a manner which would capture the important elements of the beliefs of a diversity of NRMs, and which would receive assent from their members. This was not viewed as an easy task as Snow and Machalek (1983a) note, there is a certain incommensurability ascribed to the particular beliefs and particular leader and practice of NRMs by the members. Social organisations do have epistemological consequences (Shearmur, 1980). To convey items in a manner which was assented to by a range of NRMs of an eastern orientation was really quite a triumph. The degree to which the scale managed to assess beliefs that might have been tacitly believed by those who were not members of these groups was confirmed by a statement made to the researcher by one of the affiliates, that answering the questionnaire was "like having your brain scraped".
47.6 Religion as Problem Solving Perspective

The focus of the development of a scale from these items was an attempt to operationalise a feature of religion as a problem-solving perspective, as a cognitive coping style, in terms of the interpretation it permitted of life events, and of transient and enduring concerns. Hence the SOS addresses the possibility of suffering being interpreted as a spiritual task, awareness as being conducive to a sense of release and transcendence from the vicissitudes of daily life, the value of meditation and yoga as practices which might be a step towards a new kind of awareness, and the possibility of a sense of connection with a guru or leader-figure, which might transgress normal limitations of time and space in receiving 'communications' from him or her by supernormal means. The scale also addresses the perceived necessity of a guru-figure for enlightenment to occur. All of these are beliefs and values which seem to predispose a person towards contact with (and perhaps membership of) a group offering instruction on how to apply these notions to enhance one's experience of life, and to achieve this in a community setting. This thesis presents a reductivist account of religion, as something sought in response to stress, but it is thought possible that the outcome is a continued enhancement of a person's way of life if these beliefs and practices are sustained when the crisis is over.

The similarities drawn lightly between an eastern worldview and certain of the tenets of Kobasa et al's (1982) notion of 'hardiness' present as a possibility that the former provides tuition on techniques of reinterpreting events to diminish their deleterious impact. From this perspective, whether the postulates by which this interpretation is
achieved are true is not the issue. To take for the moment a Jamesian stance in contrast to a Freudian or Marxist stance on the ontological status of religious beliefs, if they have the potential to imbue a person with a sense of challenge and of the potential for change and insight from encounter with disruptive life events rather than helplessness, depression or anxiety, then if they are a phantasy solution to stress, they are phantasies with material effect.

Whether these beliefs do function in this manner could only be discovered by diachronic studies. What this study establishes is that those drawn to these groups have experienced recent life crises, and hold beliefs consonant with an eastern worldview. The data suggests that the existence of these beliefs prior to movement membership, and the congruence between individual focus and movement ideology may have played a determining or influential role regarding which of an array of options from a person's 'opportunity structure' appeals (Richardson and Stewart, 1977) when strife occurs, and a turning point is reached. The fact that these people are open to these beliefs and know about karma and reincarnation and so on, yet are still drawn to the groups, suggests that such beliefs on their own are not the answer to problematic life circumstances. The community environment, the leadership, and group practices are still sought.

It is of course possible that these beliefs played a part in creating the life crisis. The causal sequence cannot be teased out with cross-sectional data. It is possible that holding beliefs which are non-normative within the dominant community ethos, and being, as we have demonstrated, untraditional in other regards, might be one factor in
leading to the diminished sense of social integration found to characterise those drawn
to these movements in this study. It might also mean that meaning is seen in a
sequence of events which others might not attribute the same significance to or might
disregard. The ontogeny of the beliefs, and their role in the stress and coping process
cannot be established, but in this instance it has been established that these beliefs
which form an eastern spiritual worldview existed prior to affiliation with this group.

48. NRM s AS A NON-NORMATIVE INVOLVEMENT OPTION:

Unconventionality and Loneliness in those drawn

The study focuses on people who are drawn to a set of groups which are viewed as
non-normative within the wider culture. It is therefore, normatively speaking, an
extreme option. One of the things which, rendered extremely unlikely eastern
movement participation by the western NRMs very early on in the value-added model
is their significantly higher endorsement of the traditionalism subscale of the MPQ
than any other group. This is indicative of members of the western NRM holding a
strongly traditional worldview, which encompasses attitudes to child-rearing practices,
traditional religion, selfishness and indulgence. This renders it quite unlikely that,
whatever their state of need, this group would be drawn to NRMs with unconventional
belief systems. While this group will be shown to share with those drawn to eastern
NRMs the characteristic of having somewhat troubled early and adolescent relations
with the parents, and an intense endorsement of non-denominational items deemed
central to any spiritual worldview, they are distinguished from the eastern groups on
every other feature of the Rites de Passage model.
The eastern NRMs are portrayed as a non-normative affiliative option within the wider culture, which might be viewed as appealing by those who do not endorse traditional values. The affiliates to the eastern NRMs are certainly significantly less traditional than any other group. For the rebirthing groups in this study, there is an affiliation requirement additional to an openness to alternative values. These groups require temporary though complete departure from all of previous life circumstances and social circles. Shupe and Bromley (1980:37) note that this is one point of parental concern, that these groups take "individuals out of conventional social networks and (productive) career paths".

In the light of research done by Galanter et al., (1979), Barker (1981, 1984), and Snow, Zurcher and Ekland-Olsen (1980), it was not expected that these people would be those who had proximal and demanding social relationships. This assumption proved correct. They were people who lacked a sense of social integration, in terms of available acquaintance-level bonds especially, and were lonely in that they lacked close bonds that were deemed adequate to their needs. Further, the qualitative analysis of life events into categories reflected a high incidence of events of a social nature, particularly those involving the disintegration of social networks via the departure of significant others (social exits), compared to more general life related events. These individuals are characterised by having an markedly high incidence of aversive social events, and social exits. Duck and Lea (1983) suggest that this is likely to have powerful ramifications for a person's sense of identity. The descriptive analysis of single events reveals these groups to have an extremely high proportion of people who

IMPATIENT FOR PARADISE
have recently lost their intimate partner. So while these individuals have a 'two to tango' perspective on problematic life events, that is ascribing responsibility to themselves and to others, it appears they have recently been rather 'out of step' with significant others in their life environment. That this was not reflected in the results regarding recent interpersonal discord as assessed by the social interaction questionnaire is surprising. However, there were very few instances of discord recalled by members of any of the groups. Results might have been different if specific probes or an interview technique had been used (Brown and Harris 1978). There is certainly evidence of greater responsivity on the part of the subjects in the eastern groups to the specific probes in the recent life events inventory regarding arguments and problematic behaviour from either a spouse or parents.

49. THE TURNING POINT

There is considerable support for the Rites de Passage model of involvement in NRMs. This study is exploratory, regarding the extent to which affiliation to NRMs is a response to a hiatus in the normal life process, whereby the problem-solving perspective which Richardson and Stewart (1977) deem most 'normal' namely, muddling through, is no longer possible to sustain, and the help of an outside agency is sought. The cognitive emphasis of the study on the beliefs of the individual is complemented by a concern with the fairly powerful emotional experiences of the person at this stage. The emotional implications and ramifications of the way that disruption impinges on the person is crucial to whether a turning point occurs, and whether sufficient disruption of coping styles occurs for an agency outside of personal
and social coping resources to be sought. Given the significantly higher incidence of life events, the person may feel there is an great deal happening, for which those drawn to eastern movements take more responsibility than any other groups. This was predicted on the basis of the fact that it was thought those drawn to eastern groups are likely to see their actions as complexly interconnected with the whole causal picture, (given a belief in karma, and a belief that coping with suffering may be seen as a spiritual task), and that they would therefore attribute greater responsibility for events to themselves. This proved to be the case, and they did so to an extent which markedly distinguished them from the rest of the groups. Their attributions of responsibility, the discontent expressed with their personality and their actions in contacting these NRMs suggest that they are open to a new way of responding to life events, given that their current responses appear to cause them significantly higher levels of suffering and disruption than others in this study. They may seek by group affiliation an understanding of how others respond, and perhaps, why certain events are occurring in the limited sense of a concern with how they are contributing to the event process, for they do seem to see themselves as being more personally responsible for life events than others do. However, they do see themselves as merely contributing to the occurrence of life events however, as they also attribute responsibility to others for what is currently happening to them. Those drawn to eastern NRMs are markedly more likely than the control groups to attribute responsibility to other people: attributions of personal responsibility do not preclude a high level of attributing a causal role to others. The difference seems to be a function
of a greater incidence of events, for when mean attribution to others per life event is considered the only significant difference to remain is the lower level of attribution to others evidenced by the Western NRM.

49.1 Additions to the Recent Life Events Inventory: Personality Discontent

An important issue in this study is the nature of the turning point which it is suggested these people have reached in their lives, and whether there is sufficient evidence to support the occurrence of such a turning point for these subjects. It cannot be ascribed willy nilly by the researcher to a subset of the subjects, but must be something felt by the subject. Reasons were given above about the problematic status of personal accounts which precludes merely 'asking the subjects'. To have directly asked the subjects whether they felt themselves to be at a turning point in their life, would have alerted them to the specific focus of the study and gained spurious acquiescence or denial. In preference, inferences from the data supportive of this suggestion will be considered. In a sense many people experience many turning points in changing jobs, research focus, city or partner. Many turning points are only apparent as such in hindsight. So, some items were added to the recent life events scale which assessed the extent to which a person was experiencing unexpected moments of difficulty, feeling the odd person out, for example, in a group with whom one is normally comfortable, feeling anxious about how one handled an event, and feeling there were major changes one would like to make in one's personality. These items are indicative of a certain 'uneasiness in one's skin', and indicates an loss of social ease,
and of confidence in coping. It seems that a high level of assent to these items evinced by someone who has contacted a group relating to renewed self-awareness, is at least indicative of a turning point having been reached.

When the measures added by this author are considered, it can be seen that in terms of feeling discontent with one’s personality, the eastern groups not only have more issues that trouble them in this regard, but they are troubled more by them than either of the control groups and much more than the western group which is more content in this regard than the control groups. It seems that these additional items, while contravening the requirement that life events be defined independently of a person’s response to them (Cohen, 1988) so that one does not establish an empty and empirically tautological link between psychological problems and life events, are useful for this sample. They were kept separate for statistical analyses, however, in keeping with Cohen’s (1988) injunction that

There is no question that life events surveys should not contain items obviously reflective of psychological or physical difficulties, or that if included, must be scored separately (p.13).

These items distinguish the eastern groups from all other groups, show the relative self-content of the members of the western group and, in addition, permit the distinguishing of those drawn to rebirthing groups from those drawn to other eastern movements. In the light of the life circumstances and the individual’s appraisal of them, and the reflection of their personality and coping style revealed by these items, it seems possible that adequate grounds are provided for suggesting that a turning point has been reached.
49.2 Life Events and Rites de Passage

This supports the notion that a Rite of Passage is occurring for those drawn to NRMs and to therapy, and that spiritual affiliation, like therapeutic involvement, might be part of this process. These NRMs are viewed as alternatives, for some people, to therapy. Richardson & Kilbourne (1979) and Galanter (1989) also view NRMs in the comparative context of therapeutic endeavour, suggesting that much of a therapeutic nature is gained from participation in these groups. This study suggests that the NRMs have worldviews which reinterpret stress and disruption in a way which has the potential to have a salutary effect on the adjustment of the individual. Data assessed at point of first contact cannot assess the effects of participation, but can merely attempt to discover the needs which are being addressed by the affiliates to these groups. Life events, their impact, the causal attributions, and the isolation and loneliness in which they have been endured, it is suggested, have brought these people to a transition point, and they have expectations and hopes of greater understanding, a social group: a quest for personal change.

Given the centrality of disruption for the Rites of Passage model in that it is assumed to commence rites of passage for a person, consideration of the nature and impact of life events, and the predominant response to those events which characterises those drawn to eastern NRMs will be considered in detail.

49.3 The Incidence and Impact of Life Events

Thoits (1982) suggests that there is little relation between the sheer number of life
events that occur to a person and the ensuant distress experienced. In this study, while the qualitative analyses of life events and consideration as to the nature and intensity of that psychological impact are highly revealing of domains of special difficulty and response styles characteristic of the different groups, the brute facts of a higher total incidence and a higher total impact of life events discriminate the groups in the predicted order, revealing the eastern groups to have had the most disrupted life circumstances in the recent past. This is one source of the considerable support provided by this study for the Rites de Passage model of NRM involvement.

49.4 Event Quality: Negative Social Experiences

When the events were broken down into categories which were meaningful in terms of the predictions of the model it was revealed that for those drawn to eastern NRMs there are very real difficulties with the social environment in terms of negative social experiences. This is reminiscent of the social support deterioration model outlined by Barrera (1988), which might be a source of stress in its own right and contribute to impaired coping. The implications of this for their personal mental and physical health, in causal terms, cannot be commented upon with this cross-sectional data. However, some interesting issues emerge when their levels of wellbeing and neurotic distress are considered, and these will be commented upon below.

A higher proportion of those involved in eastern NRMs have more social exits and social arrivals than the other groups. The descriptive data revealed many of those drawn to eastern NRMs to have recently lost their lovers. Interestingly, they are also most represented in the category of people who have just begun new relationships in
the last twelve months, excepting those who were graduates of the three-month residential course. This is of particular interest, because Tellegen (1982) suggests that there are attributes which might determine the occurrence of stressful life events. That is, he suggests there are personality attributes which increase the probability of eventful lives. He notes that an unconstrained person might be less affected by stress than someone who has a positive investment in being in control, but that the unconstrained person might also have more occur, due to the ‘flirtations with disaster’ which his/her relative impulsivity leads her/him to. There seems to be some evidence for part of that postulation in this study in that those who are least constrained are those who are affiliates of eastern groups, and are those who have the highest incidence of life events. However, it was not found to be true of the unconstrained eastern affiliates in this sample that they were relatively less affected by stress. They are also those who evidence the most psychological impact overall and per event, and who avow more anger, disruption and adjustment to be attendant on life events, which suggests that they are not unaffected by the changes in life, and the adjustment required. Zuckerman (1979) also looks at life events as a dependent variable, suggesting that they might be the results of a sensation seeking style of personality. It would be interesting to consider the psychometric relation between a lack of constraint and the more active operationalisation of impulsivity: sensation-seeking.

49.5 The Total Range of Life Events: Impact and Mean impact

To return for a moment to consideration of the whole range of life events, and the psychological impact which was experienced by the different groups. When the higher
levels of responsivity to the different qualitative categories of life events evidenced by the eastern groups were considered, it was apparent that the higher level of impact was not merely a function of the greater number of events occurring, but where also reflected in the impact felt per item. The differences consistently fell between the linked quadruple of the three eastern groups and the therapy group, (who did not differ from each other), but who experienced more distressful psychological impact from life events than either of the control groups or the western group.

To consider some results in detail for a moment: the only groups which are singled out in terms of the average impact of life events across all categories of event, are the eastern groups. They experience more life events and more impact from those events than the therapy group, the control groups and the western groups, but when the average response per event is considered, the only difference is their greater vulnerability compared to the western group. This is evidence of a relief effect on the part of the western NRM. It seems that they are not more reactive than the therapy group or the student sample and general population sample, but lack, significantly, the equanimity of the western group. When the impact of negative life events are considered the eastern NRM have a greater incidence of negative life events than the students, and experience more impact from them than both the student group and the western NRM. These differences remain when the effect of differential incidence is removed and the mean impact per event considered. When the incidence of negative social events is considered, in these instances the eastern groups do not differ from the therapy group, but are more afflicted and more psychologically affected than either of
the control groups. For negative social events however, the differences do not hold when the effect of greater incidence is removed and the mean response per event considered. When the mean impact of negative social experiences are considered all of the differences between the groups disappear. It seems that everyone in this sample finds them similarly distressing. The fact that there is a higher incidence for the eastern groups suggests however that it is a problem domain for them.

It seems plausible to suggest of the therapy group and those drawn to eastern NRMs that these two sets of people, while drawn to different genres of social agencies within the community, are both involved in a rite de passage, have experienced disruption in their lives, and are taking active steps to change their ways of coping and experiencing life. For the eastern groups, the qualitative analysis of life events into meaningful subscales reveals that they are distinguishable from the student group and from the western NRM in terms of negative life experiences, but are much more significantly different from both sets of control groups, and from the western NRM when exclusively negative social experiences are considered. This seems to be a dimension of considerable difficulty for all of the eastern groups, and, relative to the general control group, a slight problem area for the western NRM as well.

49.6 Acutely-felt and Enduring Life Events: Their Importance for the Lofland and Stark and Rites de Passage models

The original Lofland & Stark (1965) model does not emphasise the nature of the life events which occurred. The early statement of the model in 1965 suggested that the concern was not with the nature of the occurrences, or even a matter of their...
differential incidence (strictly speaking) but with the degree to which life events were "acutely felt" or "enduring".

From the perspective of the reformulated Rites de Passage model the nature of the events matters rather more than it did for Lofland and Stark's, in that there is the suggestion that these people might have special difficulties with the social environment. Therefore, from the perspective of the Rites de Passage model there is reason to consider the qualitative nature of the events, as demonstrated above: the social nature of events is a meaningful qualitative category concerning life event incidence and impact which distinguishes the eastern NRMs and therapy group from other groups in the study.

Family history is considered within the latter model, and the possibility is considered that the individuals experiencing more aversive social experiences might be those with a difficult family history and those more likely to question their personal adequacy. This effect might have occurred in a number of ways: disruption in bonding might have had a direct effect on the manner of appraisal of stress in relation to a person's perceived capacity to deal with it effectively; or disruption in bonding might have had an effect indirectly, resulting in an individual's inability to deal with stressful life events without experiencing high levels of anxiety and disruption. Ullman (1982) suggested that those who have experienced conversion are those who have experienced emotional upheaval throughout their childhood and in the period preceding the conversion, suggesting that present life conflicts might gain their impact by re-evoking earlier conflicts. In the Rites de Passage model, the significance of the impact of life
events concerns not only their emotional impact, but the extent to which they lead a person to assume that s/he could not go on as s/he had before. As we saw above, the higher incidence and impact of life events experienced by the eastern groups, is paired with personal questioning, and discontent with personality and coping style.

For both the original form of the model and the modified model, responses indicative of an event’s being acutely felt are highly pertinent. Specifically relevant is the extent to which events produced a sense of disruption, adjustment, a feeling of anxiety which might be reflective of events being beyond a person’s ken and coping skills, and the extent to which events are experienced sufficiently strongly to produce feelings of anger, and helplessness.

49.7 Individual Response Style

The independent impact items addressed quite different elements of psychological response to life events, and when analysed separately with the impact summed across all events facilitated consideration of predominant responses for the different groups to life events. It was here that some really interesting differences emerged, which will now be considered in some detail. The items in italics refer to the individual impact items being discussed.

The results are quite striking regarding the predominant individual response styles for the different groups. When the adjustment which individuals felt to be necessitated by life events was considered, the eastern groups were more affected than all other groups, and the rebirthing groups most significantly of all.
That the eastern groups differ from almost all of the groups on all of the items assessing emotional responses could be explained by their higher incidence of life events. This is not the case however. Even when differential incidence is accounted for, the eastern groups still differed significantly from the therapy group and from the control group. They experience more anger per event than any other group, and experience more mean adjustment, disruption and upset than the control groups per event. Adjustment and disruption are closely allied as verbal labels, and it might be important at a future date to discover from subjects how they interpret these verbal labels of the Likert scales used to assess the impact of life events. There is some difference in the ordering of the groups for these two items which suggests that they are being distinguished by the subjects.

When the degree to which life events elicited anxiety from the subjects was considered, the eastern groups (the rebirthing groups especially) differed markedly from all other groups except the therapy group. When mean anxiety per event was considered, the only difference to remain significant was the difference between the eastern groups and the western groups. The degree to which this difference is significant affords some confidence in the support accorded the prediction of greater anxiety on the part of the eastern groups. It also suggests that commitment to religion might decrease this tendency. However, caution must be exercised in drawing too bold a conclusion here, as membership is conflated with involvement in a group whose belief system is more consonant with the prevailing ethos, and whose marginal status is slowly transmuting into a charismatic adjunct of an orthodoxy. The eastern groups
experienced much more anxiety than the members of the western group, and this is summed across all life events.

The pattern of results for the experience of anger across all life events is similar to that of patterns of anxiety across the groups. There is one difference of note: the western groups experience significantly more anger than the general control group, though they are still no match for the eastern groups in terms of emotional response. This difference carries through into the average amount of anger felt per event. The similarity between the eastern groups and the therapy group falls away when average anger felt per event is considered: the eastern groups avow far more anger than the therapy group per event, and this is especially the case for the rebirthing groups. Anger is perhaps the most discriminating item of all of the emotional response styles considered so far, as the differences found in terms of the incidence of anger carry through when the mean amount of anger is considered. This is also supported by results from a quite different psychometric source. Tellegen’s (1982) aggression subscale revealed the eastern groups to have significantly higher levels of aggression than the other groups in this study. When the amount of upset, helplessness and depression is considered, the eastern groups differ from the control groups and from the western group in their elevated level of responses. They seem to have more intense responses for all of the emotional responses considered so far.

49.8 Constraint and willingness to acknowledge feeling

The finding that those drawn to the eastern groups and the therapy group were significantly less constrained than the other groups may be related to the greater
tendency of these groups to report emotions of considerable intensity in response to life events. Whether or not the psychological impact of these events is expressed behaviourally, it seems as though they are more willing to admit to having felt them, which may be a function of differential levels of constraint. However, group ideology may influence differential willingness to report emotions and feelings of disruption from those who have become involved in groups for whom an emotional honesty is perhaps valued more than personal control.

However, an attempt had been made to exclude the influence of group ideology on the willingness to acknowledge feelings. The items were supposed to be answered on the basis of the time of occurrence which would have been pre-movement contact for all of the subjects bar the western group and the graduate rebirthing group. The fact that the novice group has in most instances the highest scores of any of the groups suggests that this is not an instance of selective avowal from the situated vocabulary of the movement.

49.9 Enduring Life Events

In addition to the extent to which life events were ‘acutely felt’ there was an attempt to assess their actual duration. Data was gathered on the duration of life events, but subjects seemed to personally assess this in markedly different ways. One subject said he had broken his leg on his motorbike, and noted the duration of this event as "a matter of painful seconds". The disruptive life effect of such an event might have been rather longer than that. It calls into question what one means by an ‘event’ when assessing occurrence, impact and duration. Differences in classification of events by
individual subjects meant that simple computation of duration would not have been meaningful without further contact with subjects. These data are not reported here.

The lingering emotional impact of the memories of life events was assessed. In terms of this measure the eastern groups are once again singled out from all of the other groups bar the therapy group. The rebirthing groups are markedly and significantly different from the other groups in their heightened tendency to feel a lingering emotional effect of events which happened in the recent past, and this difference is robust even when the level of response per item is considered. This measure does not adequately operationalise the enduring quality of life events in terms of their actual occurrence, but it does address a tendency for them to have lingering impact and therefore lingering influence on a person's coping resources.

The items regarding continuous strain, such as disappointments and continuous worry, were not frequent enough occurrences for this sample to be considered in statistical detail. The patterns of results were based on single cases in some instances, though not surprisingly these cases came from the eastern groups.

The implications of these results for the model are clear. Not only are the eastern groups and therapy group distinguishable from the others in terms of the incidence and impact of life events overall, but they have a stronger emotional response to the items, which they were instructed to rate on the basis of feelings at time of occurrence, and they avow a greater lingering emotional impact of those events. These data provide strong support for the suggestion that these people experience life events more
'acutely' and with more lingering emotional impact than any of the others involved in this study.

49.10 Positive Events and their Impact on those drawn to Eastern Movements

There were few predictions regarding the incidence of positive life events and so the results were discussed in the subsidiary section of the results. The eastern groups had rather more positive life events than the general population, and more than the rather dismal lot of the therapy group. They did not have as many positive life events as as the student group. In terms of positive social experiences, they had rather more than the general population, and an equivalent number to the rest of the groups for this variable. The picture changes, as predicted, when the impact of positive events is considered. It was suggested that the less constrained (and more absorptive, as will be discussed below) eastern groups might respond more to positive life events and positive social events, as was predicted regarding their response to aversive life events. This proved to be overwhelmingly the case regarding positive life events in general, when they were compared to the therapy group, western NRM and the general population. The heightened responsivity which characterised the eastern groups resembled that of the young student sample from whom they did not differ. A high level of responsivity especially characterised the rebirthing groups, though the high variation for these groups meant that the difference between them and the other eastern NRMs was not significant. The eastern groups were distinguished only from the student sample regarding responsiveness to positive social events. Unlike everyone
else in the sample, the students are rather blase about positive social experiences.

However, when the differential level of incidence is accounted for, the mean responsiveness to positive social experiences distinguished the eastern groups from the control group and from the western group. The social environment is the source of much chagrin for these groups: whether the events are positive or negative, they experience more emotional impact than other groups. This is not reflective of the cumulative impact of many events as it seems to be with positive general life events (for example, promotions and holidays), but for social events reflects more psychological impact per event.

Since it was demonstrated that everybody in the sample is similarly affected by negative social experiences, (there were no significant differences among the groups at all when mean impact per negative social event was considered), it is a telling discovery to find that it is only the eastern groups who also find positive social experiences disruptive. These are also the people in this study who experience a markedly high level of discontent with their personality relative to all other groups, and who have a history of difficult family relations.

49.11 Stress as Response and Stress as Trait

In comparing how the different measures of distress and stress ordered the groups, the measures relating to the incidence and impact of recent life events distinguished the groups differently from Galanter's measure of neurotic distress and Tellegen's stress subscale of the MPQ. The eastern groups have a higher level of stress (Tellegen's
measure) and neurotic distress (Galanter’s measure) than the Western NRM only. These indices, unlike those assessing the response to recent life events, do not distinguish eastern affiliates from the general population. Further, when the indices of wellbeing are considered, there is little agreement between the two measures regarding the ordering of the groups. The eastern groups experienced a lower level of wellbeing relative to the control groups and the western NRM as assessed by Galanter’s measure, (which assesses diminished wellbeing in terms of bodily symptoms, health concerns, and sadness) but a distinctly higher level of wellbeing than the general control group and the therapy group if one considers Tellegen’s MPQ measure of wellbeing which assesses feelings of having a bright future ahead and feeling good about oneself. These measures might address different levels of mental health and wellbeing. Galanter’s scales of wellbeing and neurotic distress have a time frame of one month, and allow a more differentiated response on a one to six scale. Tellegen’s scale concerns the recent past and has a true/false format. Further, Tellegen’s scales have a mood, and enduring dispositional focus, while Galanter’s centres on bodily symptomatology, or the absence thereof. His indices of neurotic distress and wellbeing, in contrast to those of Tellegen, address stress and wellbeing more in terms of the byproducts of an organism’s reaction to stress.

It is tempting to suggest that it is not a generalised predisposition to experience stress reactions which sets a rite of passage in motion and predisposes people to movement affiliation, but a recent high level of life events experienced in a state of isolation and loneliness, consonant with Barker’s (1981) findings. While the eastern affiliates do
evidence a reduced level of wellbeing as assessed by Galanter's scale, consonant with Galanter's (1980) findings, the eastern affiliates and therapy group who had experienced a higher incidence of disruptive life events, do not evidence a higher psychological propensity to experience stress, in terms of usual moods, habits and bodily reactions (Tellegen, 1982).

The eastern NRMs actually have a significantly lower propensity to experience stress than the control group which was an unexpected finding. In fact those who are prepared to countenance involvement in NRMs or Therapy report less habitual stress (in terms of Tellegen's measure) than do the students and members of the general population who made up the control group. Those who actually belong to a NRM broadly consonant in spiritual orientation with the dominant culture have a dramatically lower propensity to experience stress. There seems to be an insulation effect from being a member of a cohesive group, consonant with Galanter's (1989) findings. Galanter et al, (1979) found affiliates to be in a state of suffering prior to involvement relative to their post-involvement profiles, and, suffering relative to the general community even after involvement (in spite of a considerable relief effect attendant on involvement). The lack of elevated stress levels for the eastern NRMs relative to the general population in this study may be due to the extent to which these affiliates are already involved with these groups. A pertinent remark by Galanter (1989) reveals the difficulties in obtaining measures of precursors of involvement, as he found that potential recruits acquire a high degree of social cohesiveness very quickly during initial phases of the introductory workshops. Furthermore the psychological wellbeing of active
members was directly proportional to how closely affiliated with the group they felt, in terms of both social ties to other members and acceptance of the group's beliefs (p.11).

It may be that a 'relief effect' had already occurred, given the factors which left these people ripe for movement involvement: the neutralisation of extra-movement attachments, and the consonance of beliefs may have made eastern affiliates and those of the therapy group 'ready primed' for connection with the new groups. In any case, on this measure, these individuals are not in a position of relative suffering compared to the control group, even if they fall short of the stress-free western religious group.

The greater consonance between predictions of group ordering indicative of relative stress levels and the results obtained from assessments of the more immediate reactions to things which happened recently, over Tellegen's admirable stress measure, suggests that the stress productive of rites de passage considered here might be a dynamic process, relating to how a person adapts to occurrences, rather than being predominantly the result of an enduring and generalised tendency to experience more stress. Tellegen's stress measure adroitly distinguished the members of the western NRM as being significantly less stressed than the general population and the eastern groups, but it did not reveal an elevated level of stress for those drawn to the eastern groups.

This underscores the importance of detailed consideration of how a theoretical concept like disruption is operationalised. There was considerable consistency in the group orderings resulting from the different subcategories of the life-events measures, but across the three different measures, the recent life events measures, the frequency of
discord, and Tellegen's (1982) stress measure, different patterns emerge. In fact, the results from Tellegen's stress measure reveals the young student group to have elevated stress levels relative to the general control group, providing a cautionary note regarding the use of student samples as control groups, and giving some insights to the psychological impact of tertiary study.

Galanter's measure of neurotic distress revealed the eastern groups to have significantly more distress than the western NRM, but in this, they were no different from the general population who were also more distressed than the relatively stress-free western group. Like Tellegen's measure of stress, this measure of neurotic distress revealed the student group to be in a position of suffering relative to the general population.

The two measures of stress, which have quite different time frames and response options, similarly distinguish the eastern groups from the western NRM. They do not distinguish the groups from the control groups however, which the indices of stress of a more 'reactive' and specific nature do.

49.12 Dynamic adaption

The dynamic nature of stress and coping and the causal sequence between the incidence of events and psychological impact is discussed by Barrera (1988), who notes that the dynamic interplay of incidence and psychological repercussions is unavoidably neglected by a research focus on cross-sectional data. The western group in this study has been shown to have a reduced tendency to experience stress relative
to the control group as assessed by Tellegen's measure. Yet they are indistinguishable from the control group on all measures of incidence and impact of recent life events, bar the measures assessing the incidence and impact of negative social experiences, where the western NRM members actually experience more of these events. Further, these negative social experiences have greater psychological impact on the western NRM than they do for the control group. This suggests that whatever insulation from stress might be provided by group membership is not due to reduced occurrence of events or reduced reponsivity to them. The high level of recent life stress and the comparable tendency to habitually experience stress reactions on the part of the eastern groups relative to the control groups certainly casts some doubt on a postulated direct relation between recent experience of stressful events and the propensity to have bodily reactions and changes in mood indicative of stress on an enduring basis.

49.13 Are More Events Experienced by the Socially Uninsulated?

Acknowledging Thoits' (1982) observation of the possible confounding of events which diminish social support in linking higher stress with lower support, the results from this study pose as possible the notion that more life events occur to the socially uninsulated, especially if some of the recent life stress has been in the form of social exits of significant others. Social supports' availability and adequacy might influence the experience of stress in that the high incidence of life events may result from a person's not having preventative social supports which diminish the likelihood of particular events and particular courses of action (Emerson and Messinger, 1977). For example, one is perhaps more likely to move from one relationship to another (Kohut,
1977), and perhaps be more likely to get into an incompatible relationship if lonely. The novice rebirthing group falls into this category. The members of this group are on average the most lonely of all of the eastern groups, are the group with the greatest proportion of members who have recently had a relationship breakup with an intimate partner, and are second most highly represented in the category of those who have recently begun a new relationship. This pattern holds true for the eastern groups and none of the others. The therapy group is relatively lonely, but has neither a high percentage of people who have recently lost their partners, and has an extremely low percentage of people getting involved in new relationships. Half of this group is married however.

Pursuing the line of thought that those who are socially uninsulated are those to whom most life events occur, it is noteworthy that the eastern groups do not even have a sense of community integration. This may in part stem from their untraditional views and values, and their different spiritual views, which might reduce their social desirability for those who do not share their views. Further, given that they have a recent history of a number of stressful life events, it is possible that, as Barrera (1988) suggests, being people who have experienced trauma they might receive less effective social support due to the stigma of stressful events and the unease and anxiety of the potential caregiver as to the appropriate response. The lack of a sense of community integration might derive from the fact that many of those drawn to eastern NRMs have also recently moved house and have perhaps lost neighbourhood contacts. Many of them had recently changed job and endured periods of unemployment and economic
hardship. This captures a powerful level of alienation from the general community, from the means of production - people ripe for a social movement.

The statistical analysis of the availability of acquaintances and close friends reveals the eastern NRMs to have less acquaintances available than the general population, but not fewer friends. Analysis of individual items regarding recent social losses reveals that the eastern groups are not disproportionately represented among those who had recently lost a friend than anyone else in this sample, as there was a reasonably high incidence of this type of social occurrence for everyone, especially for the members of the western NRMs. There is a lack of available close friends for the eastern groups relative to those who are already members of the western NRM, though they are not more isolated than the student group, therapy group or general population in this regard.

49.14 The Uniqueness of the Rebirthing groups: So Lonely, So Distressed

There is a significant difference between the novice rebirthing group and the graduate rebirthing group, in that the former seems from the data to be especially isolated from the community, lonely in terms of the availability and adequacy of close friends, and distressed. That the more distressed and lonely people are drawn to rebirthing groups may be a function of the nature of the groups' appeal, which more explicitly than any of the other groups promises a new beginning: a fresh start.

There is a confounding factor here however, in that these groups were also the
residential groups which required the most extreme temporary commitment: requiring total departure from existing lifestyle and social circles. It may be that this is the refuge of the most distressed subjects, rather than be a product of the promises made by the group’s ideology, and its appeal to these quite lonely and distressed people. These groups are distinguished from the other eastern groups by significantly higher incidence and impact of life events overall, and by relatively extreme loneliness, particularly for the novice rebirthing group, which was assessed prior to any group involvement. It is not possible to either substantiate the differential appeal of the groups’ ideology over their residential form with the present data. This would require a comparative study among an array of residential and non-residential eastern NRM s to distinguish between the two confounding features of group agendas.

49.15 Alienation as a Precursor of Movement Involvement

A generalised condition of alienation is thought to be a characteristic of a society ripe for the rise of social movements. Within the social resources of an individual, alienation is something that occurs at a point of disintegration and attenuation of community relationships, perhaps even more than intimate relations. This seems to be the case for those in the eastern NRM s and the therapy group, in that the indices of social integration reflect a lack on this level. The two indices of extent and quality of social networks, their availability and their adequacy, reveal the isolation and marginality of those drawn to eastern NRM s and reveal that the western NRM is well-provided for in this regard. The eastern groups have significantly less acquaintance-level bonds available than the student group and the control group, and,
like the therapy group, are much more isolated than the western NRM as well. The plight of the eastern groups and the therapy group is not so marked by social isolation regarding closer bonds. They do seem to have the same number of intimates available, but they are rated as falling short of individual needs to a greater extent than is true of the social support available to those in the western spiritual community.

Assessments of the total incidence and impact of life events, and the availability and adequacy of social support distinguishes the eastern groups and therapy groups from the other groups, but it would not be possible to distinguish the therapy group and the eastern groups in this regard. Concerning the experience of recent and psychologically disruptive life stress which is endured in relative isolation (McHugh, 1972), the eastern groups and the therapy group are similarly disadvantaged relative to the other groups in this study. The eastern NRMs show a rather greater emotional response to these events than the therapy group in terms of anxiety and anger attendant on their occurrence, but regarding other qualitative indices of incidence and impact they are indistinguishable from each other. This suggests that as far as Type One Differential Openness to movement involvement is concerned, they are both ready-primed for some kind of social option, and since both sets of groups are relatively unconstrained (the eastern groups are less constrained), they are perhaps likely to take action rather than 'muddle through'. It seems that the less constrained groups also approach the most unconventional self-help option.

The loneliness revealed when the measures of the adequacy of acquaintance-level bonds and the more intimate level of bonds are considered reveals that these people
are not 'happy loners': the isolation portrayed is revealed by the adequacy measures to be felt as loneliness by the people involved. They gain low adequacy ratings because they have replied in response to particular probes that they would like more intimacy in a particular regard, and 'would like someone else as well' to fulfil a particular category of Weiss' social provisions (Weiss, 1973; cited in Henderson et al, 1981). They have unmet needs of a social nature. They are more lonely than the general population, and certainly more lonely than those who belong to a western movement.

There was a surprisingly low level of rated adequacy of intimate bonds for the the student sample, suggesting that their needs and wishes for intimacy and support are in excess of that provided for them by their social networks. This might be one factor in rendering adolescents vulnerable to, or open to, the appeal of social options which offer cohesive groups bonds, and may be behind the high incidence of adolescent conversion attested to in the literature (Wright and Piper, 1986). This study is quite an exception in this regard as many of the people drawn to these groups are in their late 20's and early 30's.

When the actual measure of alienation developed by Tellegen (1982) was considered as a possible precursor of NRM affiliation, the eastern groups and the therapy group were not distinguished from the general population in feeling more alienation. If alienation is a precursor of the rise of social movements (Seeman, 1959; Glock, 1964), then a general condition of alienation seems to characterise the general population and those drawn to eastern groups, with only those who already belong to a western NRM having relief from this condition. All other groups in this study have a higher mean
level of alienation than that found by Tellegen (1982) in the normative data he provides regarding his scale.

49.16 Mental Health and Movement Involvement

Those with the highest incidence and impact of life events and who are least socially integrated and supported at an intimate level are not strangers to joy it seems. While they have significantly lower levels of general wellbeing as assessed by Galanter’s (1979) wellbeing scale, they are not characterised by low levels of wellbeing as assessed by Tellegen’s (1982) measure, nor by higher levels of neurotic distress, (assessed by Galanter’s (1979) measure). They experience as much positive affectivity as the control groups in this study, and the western NRM, and experience no more negative affectivity than the control groups, though they do experience significantly more than the western NRM. Galanter et al, (1979) found the UC members at significantly lower levels of wellbeing, even after involvement. The Western group is not so characterised, they are significantly less prone to negative engagement than the control group, which does seem to be indicative of improved mental health on the part of those members of the western NRM. They are advantaged relative to the eastern groups regarding Galanter’s and Tellegen’s measures of wellbeing, and Galanter’s measure of neurotic distress. They are advantaged relative to the control group in all but Galanter’s measure of wellbeing.

50. PARENTAL APPRAISAL: CURRENT CRISIS, PAST CONCERNS
There is certainly strong support for the loneliness of those drawn to NRMs and the inadequacy of social bonds outside of the group, in line with the discoveries of Barker (1981), Galanter et al (1979), Galanter (1980), Balch & Taylor (1977), and the predictions of Snow et al (1980). There is also strong support for the recent occurrence of distressing life circumstances at an untypically high level of incidence and impact. Ullman (1982) suggests that current distress evokes old familial conflicts, and in fact, data reveal that the retrospective appraisal of parents in childhood and adolescence by those drawn to eastern NRMs and to a lesser extent those who are committed members of a western NRM, finds the recollected parents as lacking in certain attributes. They are seen as less warm, energetic, involved in family life, more hostile, (verbally and physically) colder and more detached.

In terms of the retrospective appraisal of the parental bonds, the western NRM did not differ from the eastern groups on this measure, and this is a remarkable finding, for there is little else that these groups share in this study. The western group differs only regarding the appraisal and satisfaction with the father in adolescence, he is viewed more positively by this group than by the eastern groups. In addition to parents being more negatively appraised by the eastern groups and western NRM, they were also not the parent they would write into their lives if they could rewrite their childhood. While this may well characterise everyone to an extent it characterises them to greater extent than the control groups.

The therapy group has a warmer appraisal of and satisfaction with the mother of their childhood and their adolescence than the eastern and western NRMs. They are much
more likely to select someone with her features if they could rewrite the past. This warmth does not extend to the father of these time frames. He is viewed as negatively, and with the same level of dissatisfaction expressed as that of the eastern groups. It seems then that only the eastern groups have a negative appraisal and dissatisfaction with both mother and father, for both time periods considered in this study. The therapy group at least had warmth towards the mother, and the western NRM at least had an acceptable experience of their father in adolescence. These findings are somewhat different from those of Ullman (1982) in that she found that while the relation to father was problematic for the 'cult' groups in her study, the relations to mother was not so problematic, and only attained significance if all indices of discontent with mother were summed. In this study, mother is as much a problem as father in terms of family relations. This is reason for concern regarding whether the appraisals captured parents as they really were at the time frame specified, or as they were seen at time of appraisal. The reliability of such retrospective measures might also be queried since for many of these people the data is gathered concerning a time period some 20 years prior. However, if the appraisal given is that which remains true for that individual, then to some extent how things actually were is beside the point, since it is the felt lack or injustice which perhaps influences their course of action. If the issue has lingered differentially for some people then that in itself is data of pertinence.

It has been suggested by Deutsch (1983) that those drawn to religions often express a strong sense of the neglect and inadequacy of their parents only once a parental
substitute has been found. There is reason to consider whether this negative appraisal might be a retrospective and self-justifying reconstruction of past circumstances. However, there is not the same degree of negative appraisal from the therapy group who might also have reason to find fault with their parents, and this negative characterisation of parents also characterises those who are merely drawn to eastern NRMs, (especially given the extremely high levels of parental dissatisfaction expressed by the novice rebirthing group), who have not yet the safe vantage point from which to view the past. This suggests that something more than a mere situated vocabulary of motive (Mills, 1940) is contributing to these results.

Granted there may be a considerable discrepancy between the consciously avowed appraisals and the levels of attachment felt unconsciously, but, being restricted to self-report measures as empirical data, clinical levels of insight were not possible within this study. There was no sense in which these measures were presented to the subjects as possible determinants of involvement in New Religious Movements. The researcher’s concern that the subjects might have intuited some of the hypotheses was frequently allayed by the (often quite indignant) queries about how all these things fitted together, including a quite exasperated assertion from one subject that he felt unconvinced that these items had anything to do with each other. Yet, the patterns are quite remarkable. Especially remarkable is the congruence between the composite rating of a positive or negative appraisal of the mother from a number of Likert scales regarding certain attributes found by Ullman (1982) to have been desirable or undesirable features of the parents of converts, and the single item which assesses how
closely she resembles a subject's ideal. This latter question would enable one to sort individuals into cult-prone vs non-cult-prone groups with an extremely economic psychometric outlay, provided that the other conditions of the model were fulfilled.

50.1 The Appraisal of Parents: Data Form

The differences in results between the present study and those of Ullman's (1982) may be due to differences in the groups studied, or due to different assessment techniques. Like this study, hers was a comparative study which looked at a number of NRMs and a number of orthodox religions. She found the problematic family relations, especially relations with the father to especially characterise those who had converted to the NRMs. When these subjects were excluded from the data, and only the orthodox converts considered, the effects fell away. Her in-depth interviews are admirable sources of data, and perhaps more likely to assess problems, and their nature than the present study's use of Likert scales. Open-ended questions were provided in this study to remedy the limitations on subject's responses, asking subjects to detail specifically what they found difficult regarding their parents' relations to them. These measures provided a check that the verbal labels on the Likert scales were being interpreted as assumed. These questions provided a welter of personal commentary, especially from the eastern affiliates. This data will be fruitful for content analysis in further endeavours. The details subjects in the eastern groups noted they would like to have received from their parents which were lacking concerned: being seen for what they were, rather than loved only as they lived up to parental hopes: having more play and more physical affection from parents: being played with and cuddled: and having
experienced more acceptance of their emerging sexuality. In sum, there is a desire to have been accepted more on their own terms.

50.2 Inadequate Mirroring: Implications for Coping

Whether this experience of the family, still prepotent in the memories and perhaps motive structure of these people, has influenced their experiences of stress, cannot be answered with self-report data. It seems possible that those individuals describing their parents in the manner outlined above have experienced less of a sense of protection (from parents viewed as both distant and demanding) and less endorsement from their parents that their own way of dealing with events was appropriate. Also, in so far as early significant others may have consequences for the development (if not the ontogeny) of the ego in analytic terms, then this might influence allied 'ego-strength' responses like: being somewhat constrained and considering the options rather than being more disposed to impulsive action, resilience in the face of stress, the viewing of stress as manageable challenge, and having a belief that personal resources will be sufficient to meet that challenge.

50.3 Lost Love Objects and Narcissistic Wounds

Kohut (1971, 1977) suggests that early life experience has left those drawn to charismatic others "mirror hungry". This is echoed explicitly in much of the recent literature on affiliates of NRMs: the work of Deutsch (1983), Halperin (1983), and Cushman (1986). It is indirectly present in the work of Barker (1981) when she suggests that few had expectations of ever forming satisfying relationships at a point
prior to membership of the Unification Church. That those drawn to eastern NRMs in this study had recently lost lovers relates to the speculative part of the model that perhaps early life experience has left these people "mirror hungry", as Kohut (1971, 1977) suggests. Weston La Barre (1980) notes that there are people who are predisposed to the charismatic appeal of leaders and that it is these needs prepotent in the follower which gives the charismatic leader's message such an emotional welcomeness, and the leader such an uncanny sense of 'supernatural rightness'. Doi (1971) notes a desire for dependency akin to identification, whereby there seems to be a presumption (unconscious or otherwise) that one can depend totally on another and have no sense of imposition or shame. Freud (1921) notes that there is a sense in which a leader takes the place of the individual's superego, or moral beliefs.

We are all prone to idealisation and hero-worship, yet few of us emerge into adulthood longing for explanation and interpretation in so human a form as a charismatic leader. Most content themselves with ideas serving that function, as Freud (1921) notes they might. Yet this differential openness to charismatic appeal has been claimed to characterise those drawn to NRMs. The underpinnings of this openness has been explained by Kohut (1971, 1977), Cushman (1986) and Halperin (1983) as due to the fact that these people have sustained a low-level narcissistic wound in the formation of their psyche, deriving from sub-optimal parental bonding which has not allowed the child a sense of competency from believing in the power and limitless resources and insight of the parent (idealisation, in Kohut's terms), aligning him/herself with that all-powerful parent (phase-appropriate merger, in Kohut's terms), and receiving
feedback regarding their competency and worth from their parents (mirroring, in Kohut's terms).

In this study, it is suggested that there are possible signs of such a wound, and the evidence for this will be discussed below. Poor family relations may indirectly draw people to NRMs, and as Wright and Piper (1986) have shown, may have consequences for disaffiliation. Even if participation in such groups does not directly change the appraisal of the parents, it may satisfy some of the needs that were operative at the time of affiliation. It seems that there are significant differences within the eastern groups themselves, in terms of the felt lack regarding the nature of family relations, demonstrated here in the differences found between the rebirthing groups and the other NRMs. It seems that the ideology of rebirthing, which seems to hinge on a notion of being born once more from the shackles of an identity forged by early and imperfect family relations, draws people who have specific difficulties and yearning in that realm. The changes in the appraisal of the parents between the novice and the graduate groups, while in the direction of a warmer appraisal of the parents in most instances, did not attain significance. While, as Ullman (1982) suggests, new religious movements attract those with difficult family prehistories, it seems that some new movements draw those with a heightened awareness of those difficulties, and possibly with some idea as to which groups might help them to focus and resolve them. It is premature to suggest that such involvement does not achieve an ameliorated appraisal of the parents, as the graduate group had only just finished a three-month workshop, and had not yet been reintegrated into the community. Some explicitly said in
qualitative commentary that they felt that emotions had been stirred up which would take some time to work through, and so a long-term follow up, of true diachronic dimensions would be desirable. As addresses have been retained to communicate with the subjects, this project will be followed through if the group does not prove too transient to contact, as their lack of social integration suggests they might be.

50.4 Regression in Response to Stress

It is possible that group affiliation, especially of a residential nature is a regression in response to life stress, as Buckley and Galanter (1979) suggested. While the descriptive data regarding difficulties found in taking a critical perspective revealed that the eastern groups (bar the theosophist group) did not seem to experience special difficulty in this regard, and while a desire for a leader did not characterise these groups to a disproportionate extent (though the discrepancy between the proportion who would like a leader and those who had found one was greatest for these groups and the student sample), the fact remains that they have been drawn within the ambit of charismatic groups, and a charismatic form of authority. They have had difficulties with their social environment and have found their intimate bonds less than adequate. Given that they have no less bonds available than the general population, it is possible that this rated inadequacy of bonds reflects unluckiness on their part that they have drawn people to them who cannot provide them with social resources to the extent that others in the community enjoy. The possibility also exists that these people have more needs which they address to others, and this could be an acute phase of additional neediness due to recent elevations of life stress, or a chronic requirement.
The absence of significant differences in negative affectivity suggests that the eastern groups do not have diminished self-esteem. Yet the groups they join, especially the residential groups, provide an environment where they are free of daily concerns, free to address felt difficulties and emotions with greater freedom than they seem to have felt was possible with those close to them. The environment is, in a sense, a 'holding environment'. It has been shown that these people do not differ from the control groups in terms of their social competency, and their level of achievement, as assessed by Tellegen’s MPQ subscales. They are not more alienated, but they are more disrupted, upset, angry and aggressive, feel they are responsible to a greater degree than others for the life events which have occurred, and would like to make changes in their personality and coping style. Portraying this affiliation as a regression in response to stress is not a pejorative statement, as there are examples of regression in the service of the ego: in daydreaming, creative writing, and perhaps, mourning and therapeutic ‘working through’ where one becomes dependent on the figure of the therapist or analyst. In this sense, the modern religious movements are perhaps not merely a fantasy solution to stress as Freud suggested, but a regressive solution. The mechanistic world of causality might not afford a sense of safety, and a sense of the grace of that old machine which drives the seasons. For some a world of demand and response may be much more comfortable. While the eastern groups do not have this demand and response in their cosmology, in that there are no overseeing deities, they do have it in the actual form of worship. The leader has special status, be it divine, enlightened or ‘emotionally worked out’, such that they are seen as above (or so in touch with to be functionally above) petty human concerns. S/he is to some extent an
ultimate object of trust.

50.5 Parental Relations, Submission to Authority and the Authority of Non-Authority

The results suggest that there is a tendency for those drawn to spiritual movements, of either orientation, to appraise the parents more negatively in retrospect. There is a lack of idealisation of the parents, revealed in negative appraisals of them, and the tendency to want to change features of the parents if a childhood or adolescence could be rewritten. Adorno (1970, cited in Kreml, 1977) suggested that parental child-rearing techniques were powerful influences for a child’s later tendency to obey moral authorities, and to submit to leaders. Child-rearing techniques were not assessed in this study, and so a direct relation between a relatively negative appraisal of parents and authoritarian tendencies to submit to authority was not postulated. The predicted unconventionality of the eastern subjects led to a prediction that this would entail a rejection of traditional moral authority, for such is the nature of the values encapsulated in the submission to authority subscale of Ray’s (1979) balanced F scale. A low level of submission to authority was predicted, and the results support this hypothesis strongly. The eastern groups had an extremely low level of submission to authority, particularly the novice rebirthing group, (no data was available for the graduate group on this measure). Yet these eastern groups by their actions in being involved with a group centring on a charismatic leader show a seemingly paradoxical inclination to shun one form of authority and turn towards another. Yet, in the case of the rebirthing groups, these charismatic leaders permit subjects to express their
aggressive and despairing feelings about their real parental authorities. It is possible that the form of authority exercised by leaders steeped in eastern belief and practice has a different form, sufficiently different to prevent rejection by those who challenge orthodox authority. From participant observation, it was apparent that this form of leadership is an exercise by the leader in turning questions and decisions back to the individual. The author is not failing to recognise this as very real form of influence and guidance, but it has a form that is novel in western cultures, and is perhaps not seen as an arbitrary or normative authority, but one based on the unique psychohistory and awareness of the individual. The power to be guided is portrayed as accorded by the individual, whether this is actually the case or not. It is suggested that the form of the authority makes it unlikely to be a target of rejection and rebellion for those who have moved away from conventional authority.

51. The Conventionality of the Western NRM

It was expected that the western group would be more conventional in their value systems, in terms of endorsing views consonant with those of the wider society, with regard to respect for one's parents, child-rearing practices, the importance of orthodox religion and so on. They did in fact accept more readily the elements of the F scale regarding submission to authority. They are the most authoritarian group, closely followed by the student sample.

52. Absorption and Stress

The eastern NRMs have experienced more psychological disruption as a result of life
events: they have experienced more disruption and adjustment, more anger and anxiety. This, coupled with their low level of constraint, their negative appraisals of their mother and father at both life time frames, their disregard of traditional authority and their seemingly paradoxical involvement with a charismatic authority, suggests that there is perhaps some difference in the permeability and resilience of their sense of themselves, which Jones and Gerard (1965) refer to as the phenomenal self (and I do not intend to reify a 'self' in speaking in this way) which is more open to influence. Their openness to experiences has been shown in their strongly absorptive perceptual style, and may be a positive influence on their experience of the natural world. Interestingly they do not evidence an increased tendency to experience negative affectivity, which Watson and Clarke (1984) portrayed as consonant with a tendency to brood over misfortunes and mistakes, despite a greater impact of life events and social experience. A tendency towards an absorptive perceptual style might mean however, that when things are going badly in the present, these individuals, chameleon-like, might evidence more emotional impact than others without this perceptual style. This is supported by the data which shows they do have more emotional responses and more lingering responses to life events, in keeping with Tellegen's description of absorption as experiencing recollected perceptions with a greater vividness as well as the greater vividness of momentary perception. Absorptive tendencies have implications for the sense of separateness for the things that are happening to one, and one's sense of separateness from those whom one loves. The origin of the scale was as a trust scale. Highly absorptive people might endure stress less well, in the sense of a dynamic adaption to events.
53. What Features Debar Other Groups From Participation?

The student control group provides an example of some of the interconnections between measures cited above. They have a relatively high level of stress, even if their level of wellbeing is high. They are somewhat lonely and are also more absorptive in their perceptual style than the general control group. They have a number of the features which would make them somewhat open to the appeal of NRMs, though they lack the crucial feature of endorsing as true the eastern beliefs examined in this study. Further, there is no behavioural evidence of seeking, as they have had few flirtations with eastern groups.

The therapy group shares with the eastern groups an even more similar life situation than does the student control group. Yet they too lack the element of a belief in eastern spiritual conceptions of the sacred. They are more acquiescent to these items than the western NRM, but the ratio of belief reveals them to have a more western than eastern spiritual orientation.

54. Operationalising The Narcissistic Wound

In this study, it is suggested that possible signs of a narcissistic wound might consist in a tendency towards impulsivity which is found in the low level of constraint characterising those drawn to eastern NRMs. A further sign is a tendency towards experiencing a strong emotional response to life events, which is also the case for the eastern groups, as is the tendency to experience an emotional fusion with the objects of perception and recollection. There is support for this in the elevated levels of
absorption which characterises those drawn to eastern NRM (their scores on Tellegen's Absorption scale of the MPQ is the highest of any group). As Tellegen (1982) suggested might occur, this scale does seem to distinguish those with a mystical propensity if being drawn to movements with an emphasis on meditation and yoga might be deemed a behavioural sign to validate the scale. Support for this inference is provided by Deikman (1965) who has compared the sense of fusion with the meditational object which is a characteristic meditational experience with the more full-blown mystical form. While the western NRM members have had dissatisfactions with mother in childhood and adolescence to a similar degree to the eastern groups, and have had a similar level of dissatisfaction with father in childhood to these groups, during adolescence they have a significantly higher positive appraisal of father relative to the eastern groups, (an effect which is in part caused by the extreme dissatisfaction of the rebirthing groups with father during this time). Therefore, in terms of this study's cursory assessment of familial relations, there is insufficient evidence to explain why the western groups are not also unconstrained, prone to an absorptive perceptual style and so on. It is for this reason that this is termed the most speculative part of the model. It concerns what is in essence a psychoanalytic hypothesis, and self-report data scoring adjectives on Likert scales may well capture a sense of dissatisfaction with parental bonds which have implications for later social experiences, but test psychoanalytic hypotheses they cannot. The influences which determined the development of such features are likely to be more complex, and more difficult to assess, given they may not be available to the person for conscious report.
55. The Irrelevance of Non-normative Spiritual Traditions to a Western NRM

The adherence of the western NRM to traditional moral values and traditional forms of authority makes it very unlikely that they might find attractive the non-normative eastern movements with the experimental lifestyles and spiritual forms entailed in these groups. They showed great assent to western spiritual tenets of the SOS and almost none to eastern spiritual tenets. Given that there is an objective criterion of membership of a W western spiritual movement, this provides good empirical validation for the SOS. It was interesting to note just how little they were interested in eastern spiritual beliefs. When the test batteries arrived back from this group the items on the SOS which referred to eastern spiritual items were returned incomplete by many of the members of this movement, as they did not comment upon the eastern items at all. They were more than willing to comply when the scale was returned with a request for completion, but it was as if they felt these items had no relevance to them whatsoever, and they did not even want to assert that they did not believe in them. They were not significantly less open to such belief items than the general population, though they had a lower level of assent, and much less variation in response than the control groups. This group does differ in their spiritual beliefs from the other groups in that they are most differentiated in their responses to the eastern and western scales of the SOS.
56. The Control Groups and the SOS

The two control groups show little intense belief to either of the scales. The therapy group evidences moderate credence for the eastern scale and a surprisingly high level of assent to the western scale. They are eclectic though favouring western spiritual conceptions of the sacred.

57. The Eastern Groups and the SOS

As predicted, the eastern affiliates show a high level of assent to eastern items, and a moderate level of assent to western spiritual items. They have a higher level of assent for the latter than either of the control groups, though significantly less than the therapy and western groups. The ratio of belief reveals the intensity of their beliefs to favour eastern spiritual items, but their level of eclecticism was something of a surprise. It was thought that in line with Needleman's (1975) observations, there might be a disaffection with the western forms of spirituality. It does seem to be the case regarding their experimentation with forms of religion other than the family religion, that they experiment more with eastern than with western movements, supporting Galanter's (1980) findings of a high incidence in eastern experimentation and a low incidence of western and political prior affiliations in those drawn to an introductory workshop. However, the eastern groups, despite an absence of behavioural experimentation, do seem to have retained an allegiance to the beliefs of the religious orientation into which they were primarily socialised. The exception to
this among the eastern groups is the Theosophist group, where a high proportion had been involved in western religions, and interestingly enough, this group was also that most represented in the category of those who came from a single religion family. The eclecticism of this group is rather less surprising, given the explicit statements of the group belief system which link Christ with Buddha. Further, one of the leaders of the rebirthing group had previously trained as a Catholic priest, so it is possible that these groups portray a tolerant, syncretistic approach to religions.

This finding reveals that if these people have moved to eastern form of spirituality as a result of a disaffection with western forms, it seems that they are only disaffected as far as the institutional forms of expression are concerned: they are still quite open to the component beliefs of the worldview, as Barker (1981) noted.

It seems that Nock (1933) carries the day on this issue: their affiliation is one of adhesion rather than conversion, they have added new spiritual beliefs on to an already engage religious (mental) life, (at least), and have not turned from the tenets of the religion into which they were born in embracing the new. This is reminiscent of pre-Christian times, and it is perhaps for this reason that those members of the western movement dissociate themselves as sharply as it has been demonstrated that they do from beliefs characteristic of the ‘cultic milieu’. Perhaps they still remember that theirs is a jealous God.

POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS AND EXTENSIONS OF THE STUDY

If the test battery could be reduced to more time-elegant proportions, the study would
be vastly improved with larger groups per sample, and a broader array of eastern and western groups. It would be rewarding to cover a broader range of structural and organisational features of these movements, for example comparing residential groups and weekend groups, groups with a present and interactive leader, with groups whose leader is not immediately available.

Greater consideration of the degree to which the belief systems are syncretistic amalgams of eastern and western traditions would facilitate the exploration of the degree to which individual beliefs and orientation of worldview are consonant with that of the movement approached, as Zygmunt (1972) suggested.

It would improve the design to have a therapy group which was not run under the aegis of a church group, though it is important to retain the comparability of the group arrangement of those drawn to therapy, so that the social element of group appeal is held constant for those who seem to be isolated and lonely, as both those drawn to therapy and to NRMs appear to be.

A diachronic study is vital to tease out the causal sequence of the variables which are strongly interrelated in this study. A similar effect cannot be achieved using path analysis (Heirich, 1977) as the issue is not *how much* of the variance each variable accounts for, for example the incidence of life events, but *how* this incidence influences the person's coping with life events and appraisal of social networks, and social agencies of self-change. More generally, it is the temporal conjunction of a number of life circumstances, occurring to a person who has particular psychological
attributes such as a lack of constraint, an unconventional outlook, a tendency towards absorbing perceptual experience, and, in addition to a history of some involvement with eastern movements, a tendency to endorse items which taken together constitute an eastern worldview with explanatory and consolatory potential.

The eastern groups are distinguished by the nature and degree of their response to life events from the control groups, but from the therapy group only on the form and intensity of emotional response regarding these variables. They are distinguished from the control groups in terms of social isolation at a community level, and loneliness at an intimate level. They are not distinguished from the therapy groups on these measures. It is only when psychological attributes are considered that it is possible to distinguish those ripe for therapy, from those ripe for a spiritual movement. Attributes of unconventionality and a lack of constraint and an unwillingness to endorse traditional moral authority might also distinguish any number of activist groups in the community from terrorist, political, feminist, to radical psychoanalytic groups. These variables are perhaps only determinants of involvement in non-normative social options.

It is the predisposition to respond to perceptions and memories in an absorptive manner, and the assent to beliefs which are spiritual in nature which distinguished these eastern affiliates from all other groups. The theoretical form of the model is thus vital to the results, and, when taken in concert these variables reveal affiliates to be differentially open to involvement of a social and a spiritual kind, especially where a physically and emotionally present charismatic leader might also be found.
Is the state of transition delineated here an acute response to a personal life cycle stage? Or, is it like the variable of Negative Affectivity described by Watson and Clarke (1984), a state likely to still apply ten years on for these people? Whether they are perpetual seekers in a perpetual state of transition can only be answered by longitudinal data.

WHAT WAS DEMONSTRATED AFTER ALL

For the moment, it was demonstrated that those drawn to NRMs of an eastern nature are in a state of transition, and that the manner of resolving that transition was in a direction whereby a consonance of individual worldview and movement ideology was achieved.

The affiliates do not emerge as ‘dropouts’: they do not differ from any of the other groups in terms of achievement, social competency, wellbeing, negative affectivity or positive. Any measures which assess more acute ongoing response to stress, such as Henderson et al.’s (1981) Recent Life Events Schedule, and the scales relating to impact and emotional response styles, or Galanter’s measure of General wellbeing, differentiate the groups. Barker (1981) acknowledged the recency of changed life circumstances, living arrangements, and pessimistic thoughts regarding future relationships as features relevant to who might be a ‘moonie’. These are endorsed by this study in vivid psychometric detail. At the time of contacting these people they seem alive to the broader concerns of life, the larger issues of the human condition the peace we might attempt to make with the future, regarding our finite nature, and the peace to be made with past hardships lack and suffering. These are the hallmarks of a
person who has seen the slanted cheekbones of the ocean, and found them gaunt.

They are also the hallmarks of a person open to personal change.
FOOTNOTES

1. The Divine Light Mission was millenarian at its inception, but changed emphasis to an "exploration of the self" (Price, 1979:285). The Unification Church retains its world-transforming goals.

2. The state seems to overstep both freedom and falsifiability in this New York State "Lasher Amendment", whereby "if a member of a religious group does not understand the need for treatment to terminate his or her membership, this is evidence of mental incompetence" (Chorover, 1980, in Richardson, 1981:18).

3. He cites Swanson’s suggestion that middle siblings are likely to seek fantasy solutions to stress (Heirich 1977:663).


5. I am indebted to Dr. Peter White for discussion on this point.

6. This information derives from my own participant observation.

7. The mantra is "Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo".
8. The scroll is The Gohonozon and is regarded as the most powerful object in the world. The mantra "unlocks" its power (Snow and Phillips 1980; Snow and Machalek 1983).

9. It may be noted that neither Gerlach and Hine (1970) nor Zurcher and Snow (1976) address in what way the recruits were "potential" recruits. Gerlach and Hine retain merely an implicit and unspecified notion of any "predisposing" features within their model (see Richardson et al 1981 for fuller commentary). They assume that everyone undergoes a "refocussing of needs" at cult contact.

10. MCA is a statistical test similar to ANOVA but, Heirich suggests, more appropriate to his data. See Andrews et al (1967), cited in Heirich (1977:66).

11. "...social influences studied here have greatest impact on persons not already involved in an active religious quest" (p. 672) - but, he adds, "such a combination occurs infrequently in the people studied here and seems inappropriate to the circumstances that had produced religious interest previously in the bulk of converts studied" (p. 673).

12. Richardson, Stewart and Simmons (1979) note of Gerlach and Hine's (1970) model, which begins at the commitment phase (when contact has already been made) and therefore does not address possible predisposing factors that "they incorporate such considerations in an unsystematic and implicit way" (p. 234).

13. Sympathizers refers to those individuals who believe in or agree with the goals of a movement or organization, but do not devote any personal resources to it. They are what McCarthy and Zald (1977:1221) refer to as adherants" (Snow,

14. Used in Mead's (1934) sense of "a system of common or social meanings" which is constituted by participation in a "common social process of experience" (pp. 89-90, cited in Travisano, 1970:594).

15. Travisano uses identity in the manner defined by Stone (1963): "when one has identity, he is SITUATED - that is cast in the shape of a social object by the acknowledgement of his participation or membership in social relations... others PLACE him as a social object by assigning him the same words of identity that he appropriates, for himself or announces" (Stone, 1962, cited in Travisano 1970:596-597 - emphasis in original).

16. The "world" here refers to the consensual world of shared meanings of the symbolic interactionist tradition.

17. He defines world-view as the individual's general outlook on reality of which his stock of knowledge (regarding all an individual regards to be true about the physical and social world; including her or his values) and cognitive style (characteristic procedures for accepting and validating new propositions) are two major aspects.

18. An example of this is provided by a friend's personal account of an experience at a Buddhist retreat. The monk had spoken of "accepting that one's desires go away", and the friend countered with the merits of a cultural and sensual existence. The monk replied: "Well, Buddhism isn't for everyone".
19. The divinity is often a self-proclamation of being God. The Reverend Moon of the Unification Church refers to his wife as "the bride of Christ" to small gatherings of the faithful (Robbins et al, 1980). However, in the case of Eastern gurus this may be a distortion by the media who do not highlight the doctrine of Advaita in headlines (see Christchurch Herald, 1980 Appendix 1 regarding Rajneesh).

20. The following passage is perhaps an inevitable inclusion in any PhD: a digression not directly pertinent to the empirical aims of the study, but a theoretical point, which because of its speculative nature has come to absorb a disproportionate amount of the researchers time. Ulman's interest in psychoanalytic accounts of religious involvement is intriguing, she remains interested in the original Freud, rather than citing more contemporary object-relations theorists like Kohut, who have become more linked with the literature of charismatic movements.

21. The weightings of the subscales to produce Tellegens Constraint assessment are as follows: -.06 scale 1a -.18 scale2 + .66 scale3 + .12 scale4 + .36 scale5a + .81 scale6 - .51 scale7 + 1.33 scale8 + .93 scale9 + 1.01 scale10 - .12 scale11 + 100.