Scientific Evaluation of the Dangers Posed by Religious Groups: A Partial Model [1]

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Abstract

This article borrows from family violence and sociology of religion literature to provide a biopsychosocial model for evaluating religious danger. Taking its departure from Kenneth G. Roy's model of four necessary levels of analysis concerning the determination of violent behavior, this article identifies four interrelated "domains" that contribute to, and help explain, religious violence, especially within alternative religious groups. These domains include 1) intrapsychic or biopsychosocial contributors; 2) interpersonal contributors; 3) intragroup contributors; and 4) intergroup contributors. Each of these contributors has various subcategories, many of which have parallels in family violence literature.

Religiously driven violence fills the pages of history with battles, crusades, martyrs, and persecution. Yet similar themes recur in our era, as religion continues to motivate contemporaries around the world to perform heroic acts of courage and dramatic gestures of rage. Certainly, more religions exist now than ever before in history, as secular

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tolerance allows—and some say catalyzes—people's claims to have been moved by the word of God. Consequently, in addition to the world's major religions, which themselves often have violent legacies, we now also face threats from some smaller, newer, but occasionally dangerous new faiths.

High-profile events involving a few new religions drew attention to the reality of violence by and, often, against those religions. If we limit our understanding of violence to "multiple homicide or suicide," then we can identify (according to the religious scholars Gordon Melton and David Bromley) some twenty newer religions implicated in violence in the last years of the twentieth century (Melton and Bromley 2002:44). Although they do not tell us which ones they identified, and their restricted definition overlooks failed attempts at killing (including shoot-outs and non-lethal bombings, poisoning, arson, assaults, etc.), certainly this list includes ones (such as People's Temple and Aum Shinrikyo) that we all know (see Appendix). If, however, we use a broader, more comprehensive definition of violence—the use of force or its threat, causing harm or abuse—then the list of violent, newer religions is uncountable. Now we must identify groups that allow or at least facilitate the following: corporal punishment; medical neglect or assault (Asser and Swan 1998; Swan 1998); spousal violence; punitive dietary restrictions; exhausting work regimes; private, demanding re-education and punishment programs (Kent 2001); sexual assaults; emotional battering; and socio-political terrorism. Significant about the more widely drawn lists of violence in these religions is how many of the acts of religious aggression resemble, in varying degrees, what we know goes on within violent family settings.

Several reasons suggest why an examination of family violence literature might provide key insights into predicting violence among some religions. Both types of organizations—violent families and abusive religions—tend to be "somewhat detached from a society with which they are at tension . . . and charismatically led. Intense relations, intimate face-to-face interaction, social isolation, and a dynamic of powerful leaders and dependent followers all provide the context for familial styles of coercion" (Cartwright and Kent 1992:351) and violence associated with radicalized religions. Indeed, a leading expert on family violence, David Finkelhor, used language to describe

domestic violence that closely resembles what 'cult-critics' say about abusive religions:

> All forms of family abuse seem to occur in the context of psychological abuse and exploitation, a process victims sometimes describe as 'brainwashing.' Victims are not merely exploited or physically injured: their abusers use their power and family connection to control and manipulate victims' perceptions of reality as well (Finkelhor 1983:20).

While not wishing to ignore the exemplary work that many religions do for peace and life-enhancement, we also must acknowledge that some religions have, at their core, an intimate relationship between what René Girard called "violence and the sacred" (Girard 1972).

The family violence literature is vast, with various models seeking to explain the use of force and coercion in the home or between intimates. One theoretical formulation, however, that seems especially apt when drawing analogies to violent religious danger appeared in 2000, when Kenneth G. Roy proposed "a set of conditions for the four levels of human behavior—intrapsychic, interpersonal, intragroup, and intergroup—that are [*sic*] necessary, but not sufficient in and of themselves, to determine the expression of violent behavior" (Roy 2000:389). Drawing from recent, prominent studies on violence, Roy showed how each of these four levels (or *domains*, as I prefer to call them[2] of human behavior often contains conditions that enhanced the

[2] My preference for the term *domains*, rather than *levels*, stems from comments made by psychologist Roger Sapsford, who proposes a fourfold model of "domains of analysis" very similar to this one. His domains are *societal* (which correlates closely with Roy's *intergroup*); *group* (which correlates with Roy's *intragroup*); *interpersonal/personal* (which correlates with Roy's *interpersonal*); and *intrapersonal* (which correlates with Roy's *intrapsychic,* and which I will call *biopsychosocial*). He rejects conceiving of them as *levels*, because "levels are 'higher' or 'lower,' and can be identified as 'foundation,' 'basis,' 'superstructure,' 'pinnacle,' none of which is necessarily appropriate for discussing different ways of doing social psychology." He prefers to call them "domains," because they "may be adjacent, but none is identifiable as 'above' or 'below,' so we are not tempted to regard one domain as in some way primary just because of the nature of the metaphor" (Sapsford 1998:65).

likelihood of violence. This likelihood escalates in a 'value-added' fashion (Smelser 1962:13-14) as circumstances develop from individual (i.e., intrapsychic) conditions to intergroup interactions. I propose that a refined and adapted version of Roy's model is useful in evaluating the danger posed by religious groups of whatever age or lineage. Although the four domains overlap to some degree as one examines the complexities of conflict (Sapsford 1998:69, 71), this model allows me to draw upon family-violence literature at crucial junctures. It also allows me to refer to other key concepts from the social sciences (such as social-movements theory) when the issues warrant.

Typically, social scientists have examined issues such as intergroup violence WITHOUT looking at issues related to the leader. So, for example, sociologists have studied intergroup violence by examining access to weapons, outside support, historical ideologies of social change, etc. One can do such analyses within any of the four "domains" and not necessarily trace how the biopsychosocial issues around the leader/founder come into play. The model presented here adapts Roy's model to sociological concepts by drawing attention to the vital role of the leader in all domains.

I. Intrapsychic or Biopsychosocial Contributors to Religious Dangers

Many predictions about subsequent danger in social settings begin with analyses of psychiatric and psychosocial factors among key players—factors that Roy calls *intrapsychic* but that the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM*) calls *biopsychosocial* (American Psychiatric Association, DSM-IV, 1994:25; see also Pilgrim 2002). These factors, especially ones related to childhood, can provide foundational experiences whose lessons last a lifetime. Some of these experiences will stem from interaction with the social environment; others are complexly connected to biophysiological conditions. These factors limit or frame what many people can experience or understand, and the restrictions that they impose carry into adulthood. During any life stage, substance abuse further complicates people's personalities, including their ability to express and cope with feelings such as anger, disappointment, and shame. As Roy concluded about the importance of (what he called)

intrapsychic factors and their potential contribution to violence:

> ...regardless of the biological or psychological system to which one ascribes, it is clear that a person must end up with a reasonably integrated sense of self that allows for reasonable goal-directed thinking and acting. Most important, one must have the intrapsychic mechanisms for resolving anger so that one is not left with a pool of anger that does not dissipate. If not, the person always has a pool of anger that can be tapped. This [pool of anger] is the first favorable condition needed for the development of extremely violent behavior (Roy 2000:395).

Central to the role that psychiatric and psychosocial dysfunction can contribute to violence are factors that "may further compromise an individual's ability to have an integrated sense of self and effective mechanisms for resolving anger" (Roy 2000:394).

A. Mental Illnesses

Roy (2000:394) mentioned both "genetic/biological conditions" and "alcohol and drugs" as culprits, which (separately or in combination) occasionally play crucial roles as either disinhibiting or catalyzing factors in religious settings of violence. Despite some academic attempts to minimize the connections between "organizational outcomes" and "the personality of a single individual" in a leadership position (Melton and Bromley 2002:47), scholarship has made those connections for several groups (Stark and Bainbridge 1985:174-176).

Sometimes that scholarship has linked theologically sanctioned violence in or by groups to intrapyschic conditions of leaders, even to some conditions that first appeared in the leaders' childhoods or adolescent periods. Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, for example, demonstrated narcissistic characteristics (beginning in childhood) that infused his group's theology and facilitated some of its violence (Clarke 1988; Oakes 1997:53-54). The leader of Heaven's Gate, Marshall Applewhite, demonstrated schizophrenic symptoms in combination with deep sexual confusion (Hall with Schuyler and Trinh 2000:150; Raine In Submission). Another leader, David Berg (of the Children of

God/The Family), experienced harsh corporal punishment, oral sex performed by a female adult, and childhood shame over sex. Together, these experiences translated into group policies during Berg's adulthood that fostered various forms of physical and sexual assaults against women and children (Kent 1994a; 1994b; Kent 2001; Kent and Hall 2000). Indeed, Berg's adult sexual behavior strongly suggests that he was a nonexclusive heterosexual pedophile (American Psychiatric Association 1994:527-528), as also likely was David Koresh (Breault and King 1993:62-64, 72-73, 78-81, 90-92; Thibodeau and Whiteson 1999:109, 113-114).

Several years before the tragedy at Jonestown, Guyana, a psychiatric examination of Jim Jones determined that he was "'paranoid with delusions of grandeur'" (Reiterman and Jacobs 1982:262). Speculative diagnoses of Scientology's founder, L. Ron Hubbard, include "anti-social personality" (Atack 1990: 371-372) and manic depressive with paranoid tendencies (Atack 1990:371; Miller 1987:166, 175-176; Oakes 1997:67), but by my reading he was most likely an individual with a combination of paranoia and narcissism (see Atack, 1990: 372). Anne Hamilton-Byrne, the Australian leader of a group (called The Family or the Great White Brotherhood) who brutally trained children whom she believed "would continue her cult after the earth was consumed by a holocaust" (Hamilton-Byrne 1995:1), showed symptoms of psychosis (possibly some form of schizophrenia). According to a medical doctor who had been the subject (as a child and teenager) of Hamilton-Byrne's training, "her thoughts skip and derail, she seldom finishes a sentence and she has fantastic and grandiose delusions" (Hamilton-Byrne 1995:110). The doctor noted that her odd speech patterns were "just like some of the psychotic patients I spoke with when I was on psychiatry rotation during my medical course" (Hamilton-Byrne 1995:111).

B. Drugs and Alcohol

Similar associations between some leaders of groups involved in forms of violence also exist with drugs (including alcohol). David Berg remained a group leader during periods of alcoholism (Berg 1982), and the volatile founder of Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard, reputedly abused a wide variety of drugs and alcohol (Atack 1990:119, 131, 171, 274; Corydon and Hubbard 1987:300, 303; Hubbard

1980:123-124; Miller 1987:266). The leader of Love Israel became a cocaine addict (Balch 1988:207-208, 212). So, too, did the heavy drinker, Hyo Jin Moon, thought to have been in line to assume his father's leadership position in the Unification Church (Hong 1998:169, 175, 177). In the latter case, his substance abuse contributed to extremely violent behavior toward his wife, who finally had to flee at night for fear of losing her life. Trungpa Rinpoche's drunkenness facilitated violence among his followers and associates (Investigative Poetry Group 1977; Marin 1979), and Canada's Roch Theriault operated on his followers when he was roaring drunk, castrating one follower, disemboweling another, and amputating the arm of a third (Kaihla and Laver 1993:18-19, 39, 44-45, 112, 155-156, 209, 211, 220, 221, 225, 263, 265, 276, 290, 294). In Guyana, Jim Jones created a surreal, abusive (and ultimately deadly) world as his mental health deteriorated amidst his consumption of "injectable Valium, Quaaludes, uppers, [and] barbiturates" (Reiterman with Jacobs, 1982:446). Aum Shinrikyo's founder, Shoko Asahara, "sampled the initial batches of his group's production of LSD" (Brackett 1996:98).

C. Religious Irrationality

Beyond, however, instances of personality dysfunction among some leaders of violent groups, secularists may argue that the central culprit in so many cases of violence is religion itself (See van Uden and Pieper 1996:50). Like people, sometimes the gods are crazy, and in a divinely (mis)attributed craziness, people can, and do, hurt and sometimes kill themselves and others. Religiously driven suicide is the most somber example, which we all know about in groups such as People's Temple, Order of the Solar Temple, Heaven's Gate, and (at least in some cases) the Branch Davidians. We must not forget, however, less-well-known examples of much the same thing—anorexic starvation among the Breatharians (Walker and O'Reilly 1999); self-immolations among Buddhist, Catholic, and Quaker dissidents during the Vietnam War (Zaroulis and Sullivan 1984:1-5) and several protesting Falun Gong members in China (Chang, 2004:16-19, 21, 104; Page 2002 – although some claim these were staged by the government [Xie & Zhu, 2004]); and extreme Jain monks who view "the ideal mode of death as being a form of highly controlled wasting away through fasting [*sallekhana*]"

(Dundas 1992:155). All of these forms of violence against the self bear some resemblance to contemporary suicide bombers, yet the latter's goals include the infliction of death and destruction upon others as well as themselves (Juergensmeyer 2000:69-78).

Less dramatic, but oftentimes no less deadly, are people who deny themselves (and often their loved ones) medical treatments on religious grounds. Ordinarily, one would not think of groups such as the Christian Scientists (Fraser 1999:416-435) or Jehovah's Witnesses (Williams 1987:116-209) as fostering violence, but the denial of appropriate medical treatment can kill just as easily as can a weapon or a fist. Sometimes researchers are able to trace these medical denials to the peculiar psychologies of groups' leaders; for example, the founder of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, probably was paranoid and literally afraid of medical treatment (Fraser 1999:26, 103, 107-108). Regardless, however, of the cause or religious rationale behind such denials, often the consequences are dire. In its worst manifestations, religion itself can foster violence to the extent that it subverts "higher reasoning to help offset the more primitive focus on sex and aggression" (Roy 2000:394-395) or, I would add, self-preservation. It does so, in many instances, by substituting faith for reason and obedience for questioning. To support this claim, one need not rely only upon Karl Marx's quip about religion being "the opium of the people" (Marx 1964:42; see van Uden and Pieper 1996:44), since the less offensive observations of Max Weber will do. In his 1915 essay on "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," Weber observed, "[t]here is absolutely no 'unbroken' religion working as a vital force which is not compelled at *some* point to demand the *credo non quod sed quia absurdum*—the sacrifice of the intellect" (Weber 1915:352). Now one should object immediately by pointing out that billions of people believe in faiths, and most of them never show violent tendencies. But for people whose cognitive capacities are dulled or compromised by biogenetic imbalances, social-psychological stressors, chemical alterations, or aggressive theologies, violence may (and often does) flare up. When it flares up in religious contexts, the results can be especially severe.

II. Interpersonal Contributors to Religious Dangers

A. Mental Illnesses

Biopsychosocial debilitations likely will hinder interpersonal relationships. Roy emphasizes that (what he calls) "a pool of anger" within some individuals can poison their ability to socially interact (Roy 2000:394-395), but mental and personality disorders also inhibit people's ability to enter into social exchanges. Psychopaths or sociopaths (probably like Charles Manson) have no consciences and lack the ability to feel empathy (American Psychiatric Association 1994:645-650; Emmons 1986:202; Sanders 1989:12), while narcissists demand asymmetrical, constant adulation (American Psychiatric Association 1994:658-662). Schizophrenics distort social and personal reality, and interact according to delusional notions about themselves and others' relationships to them (see American Psychiatric Association 1994:287). Manic depression (now called bipolar disorder) involves "a chronic pattern of unpredictable mood episodes and fluctuating, unreliable interpersonal or occupational functioning" (American Psychiatric Association 1994:359). Paranoids, of course, demonstrate "a pattern of pervasive distrust and suspiciousness of others such that their motives are interpreted as malevolent.... [They] assume that other people will exploit, harm, or deceive them, even if no evidence exists to support their expectation" (American Psychiatric Association 1994:634).

Even among groups whose leaders lack demonstrations of diagnosable mental-health problems, the social distance between leaders and followers facilitates violence by diminishing leader accountability. Moreover, groups sanctify that social distance through divine claims. Gurus, reputedly enlightened masters, and religious virtuosi of all types claim special spiritual gifts that set them apart from others (at least when others accept their claims). Removed from the flock, these charismatic leaders can direct, facilitate, or justify violence, making divine or transcendent assertions that few can challenge but all must accept. If leaders become deified, then followers get diminished, and it is easier to strike out at one's underlings than it is against one's peers or superiors. Said succinctly about family violence but also applicable to religion, "abuse tends to

gravitate toward the relationships of *greatest power differential*" (Finkelhor 1983:18, italics in original).

B. Shared Drug Experiences

If mental illnesses and social distances distort the ways in which some leaders relate to followers, then shared drug experiences create even more complex interpersonal dynamics that often contribute to violence. Drugs alter (among other things) judgment, cognition, and sensation, so people under their influence may engage in actions that they otherwise would avoid. Likewise, they also may adopt the interpretations about their altered consciences that their leaders provide about them, thereby relinquishing considerable autonomy to persons whose mental and emotional stabilities themselves may be questionable. Numerous examples of these patterns come to mind.

The late yuppie guru, Dr. Frederick Lenz (also known as Zen Master Rama), took LSD himself but also gave it to his students. One student among the ten or so to whom Lenz provided the drug on one occasion subsequently recalled that several hours after their trips began, Lenz

> called us to the living room and began to talk. And talk. And talk. I tried to understand how his words were affecting us. I thought in terms of computers. I decided that he had rebooted us with LSD and now, as we were coming down, he was downloading his wordy operating system to our unformatted, receptive minds. 'He's formatting us like floppy disks!' I thought (Laxer 1993:143).

On different occasions, apparently Lenz gave other members LSD and then harangued them about being "possessed by demons and entities" (Butler 1987: see Okerblom 1988:B8). While on LSD himself (and dressed in yellow rain gear), Lenz spent an hour supposedly cleansing water-like demons out of a follower's basement (Senders and Moloney 1988:24). Eventually, however, Lenz's own paranoid demons overtook him, and in early 1998 he convinced a female student and lover to commit suicide with him by drug overdose. (He ingested 150 Valiums and drowned, but his lover survived despite having swallowed 50 Valiums and 45 Phenobarbitals [Konigsberg 1998:22]).

Lenz was notorious for sleeping with female followers (Motoyama 1992:12), but it is not clear whether he combined sex with LSD. Charles Manson, of course, did. For a period of time, he gave his followers the drug several times a week over several months (Faith 2001:111, 113), often amidst orgies (Bugliosi with Gentry 1974:236-237), and. at least in one instance. a mock crucifixion ceremony in which he was Jesus (Sanders 1989:86-87). Few of his followers likely knew that "when Manson passed out the LSD, he always took a smaller dose than the others." Presumably he did so "to retain control over his own mental faculties" so that he could "instill his philosophies, exploit weaknesses and fears, and extract promises and agreements from his followers" (Bugliosi with Gentry 1974:237).

Manson did not limit the drugs that his he and his followers abused simply to LSD—he gave them marijuana and peyote whenever they were available. Indeed, his abuse of amphetamines may have contributed to the violent rampage that his followers undertook (under his orders) in 1969 (Faith 2001:115). Although he introduced LSD to some of his followers, others had taken it well before meeting him (Bugliosi with Gentry 1974:235, 483). Members of another group, Love Israel, also had psychedelic histories before joining, but their leader introduced them to a drug that almost certainly was new to them all—a solvent called toluene (or what the leader called 'tell-u-all'). Even after two of his followers died from the fumes, Love and other leaders continued to advocate the sniffing practice as a means of inducing visions (Balch 1988:192; Israel, Israel, and Israel n.d.).

Looking at yet another group leader, Shoko Asahara's visions during his first LSD trip were so dramatic that, when he came down from it, he declared, "This is excellent," even though he had wet his pants while on the acid (Brackett 1996:98; Kaplan and Marshall 1996:162-163). Soon LSD was one of "an illicit pharmacy of hallucinogens, stimulants, and other psychoactive drugs" that his organization produced (Kaplan and Marshall 1996:163), and members by the thousands experienced the mind alterations caused by LSD. He, of course, benefited greatly from these trips, because the members misattributed the vivid colors and perceptual distortions "to the mystical power of Asahara's training" (Kaplan and Marshall 1996:164).

The leader of Australia's Great White Brotherhood, Anne Hamilton-Byrne, had a similar goal of misattribution behind her "religious ritual" of giving LSD to her teenaged followers. One former member, who was a fourteen-year-old when the leader gave her LSD, subsequently surmised that part of the reason that the leader subjected her young followers to these trips was that

> [i]t was also meant to make the spiritual bonding easier between the Master and the disciple. You were supposed to recognize Anne as the 'one true Master,' Christ incarnate. She would come in to people when they were under [the effects of LSD] and ask, 'Do you know who I am?' The correct answer was 'The Lord Incarnate.' The incorrect answer meant you weren't working hard enough (Hamilton-Byrne 1995:143).

These and other examples show how leaders' abuses of various drugs can have direct and damaging consequences for members, especially when those leaders facilitate, and usually direct, the experiences that the members have while on them.

C. Trusted, Fictive Families and Abuse

Related to the hierarchical, asymmetrical social structure is the frequent pattern of alternative (and some traditional) religions to use familial terms to describe members and their relationships. Called 'fictive families,' groups often speak of leaders in parental terms and followers as children (in relation to leaders) and siblings (in relation to one another). Violence researchers realize, however, how dangerous family dynamics can be, so what frequently occurs in religions whose members portray themselves as fictive families is that these members engage in acts of intrapersonal exploitation and violence roughly analogous to actions that occur in real family settings (Cartwright and Kent 1992).

Unfortunately, among the acts of interpersonal exploitation that sometimes occur in families and hierarchical religions are various forms of child abuse. Innocent adults trust the fictively parental members in the hierarchy (Shupe 1995:29), while a few of those trusted members use their relatively unmonitored positions within the hierarchy to gain access to children and youth. Religious scandals involving sexual assaults against children now plague numerous

religious communities, including Catholicism, the Hare Krishnas, and the ministries of some Protestant preachers (such as the convicted pedophile Tony Leyva, who admitted to having sexually abused as many as 100 teens but whose actual number many have been closer to 800). As one of Leyva's victims lamented, "'He was a preacher, and that means he was a man of God, and the atmosphere felt true'" (Smothers 1988:A2). In any social setting, religious or otherwise, children are at unnecessary risk for suffering sexual abuse when left alone with unmonitored adults, and pedophiles have used trusted religious hierarchies and positions to gain access to victims.

D. Sexism, Patriarchalism, and Corporal Punishment

Sexism, which occurs in many (but by no means all) groups, facilitates sexual assaults against women and contributes to the crushing poverty—an often-neglected form of violence—in which some families live. Looking globally at the combination of sexism and poverty, the abusive religious arrangement that epitomizes violence against poor women is the *devadasi,* or temple prostitution system in India. Impoverished families sell their daughters to temples that in turn hire them out to male clients in what may be the world's largest child- and female-prostitution ring (Barry 1995:181-184).

An additional interpersonal facilitator of violence within some religions is the imposition of corporal punishment at early ages. Fictive families, as well as families within mainstream Western societies, often resort to 'the rod' or the hand to discipline children. The long-term consequences are enormous for the victims who are hit and the society in which they mature. For the victims—the recipients of the punishment—"[r]esearch over the past 40 years [has] been remarkably consistent in showing that hitting children increases the chances of a child becoming physically aggressive, delinquent, or both.... [C]orporal punishment leaves invisible scars that affect many other aspects of life" (Straus 1994:186). It also "reflects a deep but rarely perceived cultural approval of violence to correct many types of wrongs" (Straus 1994:181).

Specifically writing about corporal punishment in Christian religious settings, Philip Greven identified a litany of negative consequences on young victims, all of which have dramatic

implications for assessing risk posed by religious groups. These negative consequences for corporal-punishment victims frequently include the creation of: anxiety and fear, anger and hate, apathy and the stifling of empathy, melancholy and depression, obsessiveness and rigidity, ambivalent feelings of love and hate toward the perpetrators, dissociative states, paranoia, attraction to sadomasochism, authoritarianism, and propensities toward domestic violence (Greven 1991:121-204). A specific religious consequence of religiously sanctioned corporal punishment is the creation of what Greven called "the apocalyptic impulse," which he described as "anticipating the end of this world and the inauguration of the new millennium" (Greven 1991:204). Clearly, therefore, any attempt to assess and predict danger from religions must factor in whether they utilize corporal punishment in child-rearing. To the extent that they do, then their members, especially those reared within these groups, may have a propensity toward apocalyptic violence that stems from the violence they already have known firsthand.

III. Intragroup Contributors to Religious Dangers

Just as biopsychosocial issues can increase the likelihood of violence manifesting in interpersonal relations, so too can difficulties in interpersonal relations affect the likelihood of violence in exchanges between individuals and groups. Initial insights into these conditions for the likelihood of radicalized religious violence take their lead from Roy's work on teen violence, but the infusion of religion into our analysis makes the conditions more complex. Roy offered that the probability of violence increased under two conditions: Either people feel alienated from groups (and react against them with anger), or they align with groups that have violent norms (Roy 2000:396). The basis for these claims is Roy's belief that people (especially teens) may lash out at a group which they feel has excluded or humiliated them, but they also may commit violence simply by following the norms of a group that is violent but which fulfills their needs for belonging, friendship, and self-esteem. While certainly these insights have some bearing on the issue of assessing groups for their potential risks, the infusion of religious ideology into (especially volatile) intragroup settings makes risk assessment much more complex.

Adding to group volatility, of course, is the fact that the content of the religious ideology—and the social structure that reinforces it—likely reflects the imbalances of the charismatic leader. Put simply, many charismatic leaders have unrecognized biopsychosocial disorders, and they create theologies based upon them. These theologies contain the usual secular rewards that most groups offer—possibilities for friendship, status, purposiveness, and so on, but also 'heavenly' rewards involving enlightenment, salvation, closeness to God, and the like. Equally important as human motivators are the secular and spiritual punishments within these theologies—shunning, costly rehabilitation programs, dire warnings about hell and damnation. The charismatic leaders, however, place themselves within these reward and punishment systems either as godly arbiters who assign the rewards and punishments or as the god-figures themselves. In either situations, the theologies replicate, in significant degrees, the biopsychosocial dysfunctions of the leaders. As increasing numbers of people misattribute biopsychosocial dysfunction as proof of a guru's charismatic connections to the divine (see Proudfoot and Shaver 1975; Kent 1994b), they become adherents or followers who staff social structures that attempt to maintain and further the dysfunctional worldviews. Dysfunctional leaders and their followers, therefore, become codependents. The followers believe that they need their teachers' messages for access to desirable proffered rewards in this life and 'the next,' while the leaders need the followers to translate their worldviews into secular structures that undertake social action. To the extent that these worldviews, structures, and actions embody the paranoia, narcissism, delusions, and/or sexual dysfunctions and idiosyncrasies of group leaders, they are especially unstable and open to internal and external criticism.

As individuals come to categorize themselves as devotees or followers of particular teachers, they accentuate or emphasize either people or things that they perceive to be similar and people or things that they perceive to be different. According to self-categorization theory in social psychology, this categorization-accentuation process "highlights intergroup discontinuities, ultimately renders experience of the world subjectively meaningful, and

identifies those aspects which are relevant to action in a particular context" (Hogg, Terry and White 1995:261). One aspect of this categorization process is that "[p]eople are essentially 'depersonalized': they are perceived as, are reacted to, and act as embodiments of the relevant in-group prototype rather than as unique individuals" (Hogg, Terry and White 1995:261). When something happens to one or more members that shifts group categorization of them from the in group to the out group, the remaining in-group members have clear and immediate targets for hostility and aggression. Such shifts in categorization may come about through a number of ways, initiated by leaders' alteration of doctrines, internal scapegoating over a group failure, internal power realignments among inner-circle elites, schisms (which may involve numerous 'defectors'), or members' inability to continue the high costs of membership. Regardless of the reasons, however, an out-group categorization gives in-group members a clear and direct target against which they can enhance their own sense of similarity and solidarity, sometimes through acts of violence.

A. Violence Resulting from People's Alienation from Groups

Particularly visible targets for in-group members are clusters of former associates who now define themselves as the true bearers of the master's teachings. Although former believers who depart silently may present a challenge to remaining members if those members believe in the universality of their teacher's message, a direct challenge comes from former members who still claim allegiance to the spiritual master but assert that their way is the true path. These people are schismatics, and members of the original group must silence them because potentially they can "proselytize among actual or potential adherents of that group" (Coser 1974:109). Keeping in mind that many new religions form as schisms from existing faiths (Stark and Bainbridge 1985:101-107), issues about hostile, violent, or otherwise aggressive interactions between the old and new groups become indices of danger. All of the issues that motivate division and divisiveness—money, authority, legitimacy, property, doctrine, leadership-personality, and so on—amplify as participants interpret them through religious hues, and danger increases as the stakes rise and the disputants each claim God as their guide. Under these

circumstances, shunning—acting as if the other party were dead—may be a comparatively mild response, given that court action and even interpersonal violence occasionally will occur. Rarely do disputes turn into gun battles, but such battles indicate a willingness on the part of the disputants to translate sectarian disputes into deadly confrontations.

B. Violence after Alignment with Groups and/or Traditions That Have Violent Norms

As far back as 1971, social scientists have realized that previously nonviolent individuals may become violent when they expect that their social roles call for it. In that year, psychologists at Stanford University cut short (after six days) what was to have been a two-week experiment in which college students enacted various social roles found in prison. Within days, some of the players become increasingly aggressive, violent, and sadistic. Reflecting upon the findings of that study, two of its designers concluded that it

> demonstrated the power of situations to overwhelm psychologically normal, healthy people and to elicit from them unexpectedly cruel, yet 'situationally appropriate' behavior. In many instances during our study, the participants' behavior (and our own) directly contravened personal value systems and deviated dramatically from past records of conduct. This behavior was elicited by the social context and roles we created, and it had painful, even traumatic consequences for the prisoners against whom it was directed (Haney and Zimbardo 1998).

The analogy to what can happen when psychologically healthy and normal people become involved in violent religions is obvious. After groups establish norms that condone violence, and create social positions or roles to enact it (and often do so under their leaders' directions), many formerly nonviolent people will rise to the occasion and commit acts of aggression or abuse. Although I do not wish to initiate a debate about the guilt or vulnerability of persons involved in complex and often disturbing court cases, neither Charles Manson's 'girls' (Faith 2001:27-33, 88-90), Patty Hearst, nor the American Taliban fighter, John Walker Lindh, had histories of violence until they became involved with violent groups. For what it is worth, at Walker Lindh's sentencing hearing on October 4, 2001, he reflected,

"'...had I realized then what I know now ... I would never have joined them'" (Cable News Network 2001).

Nothing better illustrates this ethic of learned, group-contextual violence than an examination of key members of Aum Shinrikyo, who followed the orders of their guru, Shoko Asahara, in a series of killings that culminated in the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway in March 1995. Summing up the kinds of young people who became involved with Aum and its murderous practices, journalists David E. Kaplan and Andrew Marshall concluded:

> ...many were students of the sciences or technical fields like engineering. More than a few were *otaku*, Japan's version of computer nerds—techno-freaks who spent their free time logged onto electronic networks and amassing data of every type. They were inevitably described as quiet kids, with little apparent interest in the outside world. They spent what free time they had absorbed in their comics and their computers (Kaplan and Marshall 1996:26-27).

Nothing in their backgrounds would suggest that some of them would become killers and chemical terrorists. The best explanation for their participation in violence is that they devoted themselves to a leader, Asahara, whose aggressive paranoia about an apocalypse played itself out through the organization that he built (Brackett 1996:98).

C. Group Alienation from Disaffected, Former Members: Stalking

While it remains true that a person who is alienated from a group may lash out violently in an act of revenge, and a group may do the same toward a schismatic competitor, evidence indicates that often when radicalized group members strike out against targets, those targets are former members. In other words, apostates who now feel alienation from the groups to which they had belonged may become targets of violence by the remaining members who feel threatened by their defections, concerned about the knowledge that the defectors may have about group operations, and worried about the complaints to civil authorities that the defectors may be making. Even though these persons have left the immediate membership of their former groups, the groups themselves still consider these

people as legitimate targets for their social-control efforts through harassments and retaliations.

We need not be reminded, for example, that a defector was among the first people killed on the tarmac at Jonestown (Reiterman and Jacobs 1982:517-518, 530-531), and the first victims of the Solar Temple deaths were a disaffected couple who had access to the leaders' secrets, along with their infant son (Hall with Schuyler and Trinh 2000:112, 139-140). Former members of Ervil LeBarron's Church of the Firstborn (a fundamentalist Mormon group) died in murders directed by the leader, some deaths even occurring after he was dead (Chynoweth and Shapiro 1990:3-5, 148); and a vocal critic on the fringes of the Kirtanananda branch of the Hare Krishnas was shot, stabbed, and had his head bashed in (Hubner and Gruson 1988:18). Synanon sent out members of a "goon squad" (i.e., a group of thugs) to silence critics and defectors (Gerstel 1982:263-264; Mitchell, Mitchell, and Ofshe 1980:168, 169-171, 180), and Aum Shinrikyo killed the elderly brother of a defector in a failed interrogation to determine where his sister was (Brackett 1996:121-123; Kaplan and Marshall 1996:227-229).

Scientology had a written policy in place (dated October 18, 1967), specifically applied to troublesome former members and other critics, which stated that a member whom the organization declared an "enemy" was "Fair game. May be deprived of property or injured by any means by any Scientologist without any discipline of the Scientologist. May be tricked, sued or lied to or destroyed" (Hubbard 1967). Its originator was Scientology's founder, L. Ron Hubbard; and when he cancelled the "fair game" policy a year later, he did so because "[i]t causes bad public relations." He added, however, that this supposed cancellation actually "does not cancel any policy on the treatment or handling" of a person attempting to hinder or harm Scientology (Hubbard 1968). During that and subsequent years, Scientology appears to have applied the "fair game" doctrine to numerous troublesome defectors and critics (Breckenridge 1984a; Hubbard 1968; Kent 2003).

Drawing another analogy to the family-violence literature, the manner in which some groups attack former members parallels how some abusive former partners stalk their estranged companions (Sheridan, Davies, and Boon 2001).

Neither the abusive group leaders nor the abusive former partners can stand the loss of power represented by the defections—by persons formerly under their control but now ostensibly out from under it. Among, for example, the different types of family abuse, *"they seem to be acts carried out by abusers to compensate for their perceived lack of or loss of power"* (Finkelhor 1983:19 [italics in original]). So, too, is it the same for types of abuse by some groups toward persons who have left their flock. Moreover, some of the power that defectors can have over leaders is "inside knowledge"—knowledge about life as a member that may reveal realities that persons holding group power would prefer to keep quiet. Sometimes, therefore, group leaders and/or members attempt retaliations to frighten and intimidate; other times, they kill. A strong predictor, therefore, about the danger posed by a religion is the manner in which it deals with former members, especially ones who turn into critics.

IV. Intergroup Contributors to Religious Dangers

Somewhat cryptically, Roy (2000:398) states that "feeling alienated from and persecuted by other groups aid the *development of violence." Presumably because of that* alienation,

> [g]roup members are unable to enter into superordinate goals with people from other groups. Superordinate goals require the cooperation of people from different groups to accomplish a goal. Without superordinate goals, conflict between groups can escalate (Roy 2000:398).

Although sociologists might dispute these statements as absolute truths—for example, controversial 'religious' groups have worked together on the superordinate goal of fighting perceived opponents—they nonetheless allow researchers to connect group conflict with group structures and ideologies that reflect the biopsychosocial issues of many group leaders.

Among the clearest attempts to connect the mentality of a leader with potentially dangerous group conflict appeared in a 1984 court decision against Scientology. In his "Memorandum of Intended Decision," California Superior Judge Paul Breckenridge, Jr., concluded that the Scientology

> organization clearly is schizophrenic and paranoid, and this bizarre combination seems to be a reflection of its founder LRH [L. Ron Hubbard]. The evidence portrays a man who has been virtually a pathological liar when it comes to his history, background, and achievements. The writings and documents in evidence additionally reflect his egoism, greed, avarice, lust for power, and vindictiveness and aggressiveness against persons perceived by him to be disloyal or hostile.... Obviously, he is and has been a very complex person, and that complexity is further reflected in his alter ego, the Church of Scientology (Breckenridge 1984b:7-8).

While part of the "diagnosis" that Breckenridge gave almost certainly was incorrect (Hubbard was far more likely to have been bipolar with paranoid tendencies or narcissistic than schizophrenic), the connection that the judge made between the mind of the founder and Scientology's organization and its aggressive policies rings true. He reached these conclusions in a case in which the organization had "fair gamed" former member Gerald Armstrong, and Breckenridge saw a direct connection between Hubbard's paranoia and the organization's reaction to someone whom leaders perceived to be an enemy.

Scientology applies the same "fair game" policy to organizations, including governments, against which it struggles. As the author of a review of Scientology's litigation strategies concluded, "[m]uch to the Church's chagrin, opponents frequently cite its own founder, L. Ron Hubbard, for the 'fair game doctrine,' a revealing statement that may explain the ferocity and zeal of the organization's litigation stance" (Kumar 1997:748). While providing examples of that ferocity against individuals, the author (J.P. Kumar) also reported that Scientology's application of fair game "can frustrate the largest of adversaries. Large media defendants and multinational corporations have learned that even a successful battle against the Church is something of a Pyrrhic victory after the costs of litigation are tallied" (Kumar 1997:750). Even the American government has experienced the force of Scientology's "hardball" tactics (Kumar 1997:747-748). Persons suffering from paranoid personality disorder often are "litigious and frequently become involved in legal disputes" (American Psychiatric Association

1994:635), but this characteristic also fits the organizational alter ego of Scientology's founder.

Other examples of (what appears to be) organizational paranoia that originated in the minds of leaders have led to dire consequences. Jim Jones's paranoia escalated (with fatal consequences) when some members tried to defect and leave with visiting Congressman Leo Ryan, and the assassination squad that killed five members of the departing party foreshadowed the mass murder and killing of 913 people that soon followed in the compound (Reiterman and Jacobs 1982:527-529, 556-560). In yet another group example, by 1994 the apocalyptic warning of Aum's leader, Shoko Asahara, led a former foreign correspondent to conclude that the mindset of that organization "was a classic paranoia in the making, striking out at an imagined enemy before the enemy has a chance to strike first" (Brackett 1996:105). In part, a delusional Asahara and Aum leaders saw the sarin attack in the Tokyo subway as a preemptive strike against enemies (i.e., Japanese and American officials) who were poised to assault their organization.

Oregon's Rajneesh community grew increasingly paranoid in the 1980s, but this paranoia was not necessarily the direct result of its leader's narcissism. Ashram leaders' pattern of frequent lying to officials certainly reflected a behavior common to narcissistic individuals (Clarke 1988:41-42; Carter 1990:137-139; see American Psychiatric Association 1994:658), but the commune's paranoia was a response to increasing challenges from Oregonian officials over the constitutionality of their settlement as a city (Carter 1990:194). As leaders' concern grew over Rajneeshpuram's future, they "appear to have believed that they could yet secure the commune by desperate tactics. These took three forms: heightened security, provocative rhetoric, and what appear to have been initial and tentative attacks on others (later becoming more general and demonstrable)" (Carter 1990:196). Rajneesh's narcissism likely explains the bombastic, incendiary rhetoric that he so often used, and "[p]erhaps in emulation of the controversial Bhagwan, Rajneesh leaders tended toward inflammatory rhetoric" as external pressures and internal weaknesses increased (Carter 1990:198). Moreover, his narcissism probably explains his laissez-faire attitude toward ashram management (until moments before its imminent collapse).

As long as devotees idolized him, he essentially stood 'above' the mundane operations of the facility (see Clarke 1988:38-39).

"Defiant counterattack" is another narcissistic feature (American Psychiatric Association 1994:659), and certainly this term amply describes the behavior of many Rajneesh members, especially in the commune's final days. In the end, sixty-three Rajneeshees faced charges on eleven different types of criminal offenses, many of them directed at perceived opponents both outside and inside the group. These offences included lying to federal officials, criminal conspiracy, burglary, racketeering, first-degree arson, second-degree assault, first-degree assault, and attempted murder. Leaders had carried out the assaults and attempted murders through poisoning, which included the salmonella illnesses of some 750 people caused by salad bar contaminations in 1984 (Carter 1990:224, 235-238).

Paranoia in the Children of God/The Family organization certainly reflected the attitudes of its founder, David Berg, but his fears probably were not based in mental disorder but rather in a realistic appraisal of legal and social consequences he would have had to face if authorities could have held him accountable for his teachings about pedophilia and ephebephilia. Many of these teachings appeared in publications that leaders restricted to trusted disciples, and in April 1989 Family leadership published an "emergency notice" about security leaks. It reminded members that "in order to avoid unnecessarily endangering the Family Homes or members by either antagonizing our enemies with the New Wine [i.e., Berg's teachings] or even revealing the methods & tactics of our spiritual warfare or life style, Dad [i.e., Berg] has laid down very definite rules & security guidelines for each of our Homes & Members that receive DO [Disciples Only] lit[erature]" (World Services 1989:1). Despite these efforts, the material about the "life-style" that Berg encouraged continued to leak out. The eroticized information about children and teens sufficiently alarmed government officials around the world (Argentina, Australia, France, and Spain) about children's safety that they led a series of controversial raids against Family homes during the late 1980s and early 1990s. None of these raids led to child-abuse convictions, which has allowed the Family and many supportive academics to condemn these actions as an

unfortunate consequence of anti-cult propaganda (see, for example, Richardson 1999:179, 182-183). However poorly conceived and executed many of these raids appear to have been, the fact remains that authorities who encountered Berg's teachings about child sexual abuse felt compelled to act. Having obtained various copies of the Family's more explicit publications and videos, child-welfare agents in various countries would have been negligent in their duties if they had not removed children from the care of adult Family members. Rather than laying blame on the shoulders of the group's opponents, therefore, for the Family's government confrontations, the final responsibility for them must rest upon Berg himself.

V. Conclusion

In these and numerous other cases, groups' abilities to negotiate with competing contenders for legitimacy and resources diminish significantly when founding figures have translated their biopsychosocial dysfunctions into the cultural ethos of their respective groups. Negotiation becomes exceedingly difficult; paranoia increases dangerously, and compromise become impossible. In such cases, the likelihood of violence increases as members feel that they have few options when trying to protect their groups' messages. In the domain of intergroup relations, as in the related domains of intragroup and interpersonal relationships, biopsychosocial issues can have a profound impact upon the quality, direction, and content of social discourse and conflict resolution.

Of course, a biopsychosocial model that discusses the potential for religious danger must remain, at best, only partial in its explanatory power. So many items, for example, can interact with religions, especially in the intergroup domain, that the 'science' (or perhaps the skill) of predicting danger becomes increasingly complex. Factors such as nationalism, ethnicity, gender, resource availability, and class weave together in complex ways to affect possibilities of religious danger. Also important are the reactions to these groups by agents of social control, since groups and authorities can lock themselves in spirals of deviance amplification and escalation that end tragically. Regardless, however, of what external, socio-political factors may put pressure on groups, a significant aspect of members'

responses to these factors likely will reflect their leaders' biopsychosocial issues. These issues have infused the groups' theologies and impacted previous social interactions, all of which influence groups' responses to perceived outside threats.

Into complex social circumstances that reflect national or even global issues, religion can ignite dangerous social and political tensions by adding powder to already explosive situations. Often, it makes stakeholders less willing to compromise and combatants more willing to inflict suffering and die in the process. By teaching that all extremist action gets forgiven (if not rewarded) in heaven, religion can assist in people refusing to see their own contributions to the creation of hell on earth.

When social scientists discuss the possibilities of religious danger, they should not forget to consider the biopsychosocial factors of the founders and/or leaders at work in any if not all domains of human behavior that are relevant to the issues at hand. Some academics, however, have chosen to do so, and this article offers a corrective against their choices. Complex, frequently troubled personalities interact amidst rapidly changing, globalized societies, and sometimes those personalities help shape the actions of hundreds if not thousands of both innocent and complicitous people caught in their influence. Yet even on smaller scales, where family violence literature helps to prepare researchers for interpreting religiously violent situations, victims may experience the less-noble dimensions of divinely sanctioned human action. Overemphasizing the extent to which the biopsychosocial issues of founders and/or leaders heighten the prospects of religious danger is alarmist, but understating or ignoring their importance is exceedingly unwise.

Appendix: Sects, Cults, and New Religions Involved with Violent Deaths During the Past Four Decades

On February 21, 1966, at least three members of the Nation of Islam in Philadelphia fatally shot Malcolm X, who was critical of the then-current leader of the organization (Evanzz 1999:311, 320).

Charles Manson's 'Family' killed at least nine people in California between July 27 and August 26, 1969, although the actual number of murders may reach at least into the thirties (Bugliosi with Gentry, 1974:474-481).

Between 1975 and 1977, Ervil LeBarron, who was the leader of a fundamentalist Mormon polygamous group, Church of the Firstborn, had his followers carry out a series of murders against defectors and perceived rivals (Chynoweth with Shapiro 1990:145, 147-148, 207-208).

In the Guyana compound named after Jim Jones, 913 members committed murder/suicides on November 18, 1978, and five members of Congressman Leo J. Ryan's entourage were murdered as they prepared to fly out of the local air strip (Reiterman with Jacobs 1982:529-531, 571, 579).

On July 31, 1978, self-proclaimed prophet and leader of an anti-Mormon cult, Immanual David, committed suicide in a canyon outside of Salt Lake City, Utah. Over a decade earlier, the Mormon church had excommunicated him for "proclaiming that he was God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, that he had the original Book of Mormon gold plates in his possession, and that he had received a revelation that he would someday take over leadership of the church" (Fleisher and Freedman 1983: 133). Three days later, his wife and seven children went over an eleventh floor balcony of the hotel in which they were living in Salt Lake. (Some eyewitnesses said that the widow and mother had to throw the youngest children over the balcony, but that the older ones and her jumped.) Only one child lived, but suffered severe brain damage (Fleisher and Freedman 1983: 133-134).

On January 18, 1979, police killed fundamentalist Mormon John Singer on his property in Marion, Utah, during a failed attempt to arrest him over the schooling of his children (Fleisher and Freedman 1983: 178-184).

In Singapore, spirit medium Adrian Lim and two associates were executed for the 1981 ritual murders of two young children (Fong 1989; John 1992).

In the fall of 1983, Robert Mathews formed an Aryan terrorist group named the Order, which subsequently murdered a Denver talk-radio host (Alan Berg) in June 1984

and a police officer in Missouri in April 1985. Mathews died in a gun battle with police in early December 1984 (Martinez with Guinther 1988).

Followers of Yahweh Ben Yahweh (in the Nation of Yahweh) murdered and decapitated a member, whom they apparently believed was a stool pigeon, in mid-November 1981 (Freedberg 1994:128-133). In late 1983, members killed another suspicious adherent (Freedberg 1994:156-160), and other murders followed throughout the mid-1980s (Freedberg 1994:189-190, 202-203, 205, 207-208, 217-218).

On July 24, 1984, Mormon fundamentalist Daniel Lafferty killed his sister-in-law (Brenda Lafferty) and fifteen-month-old niece (Erica Lafferty), allegedly after discerning God's will that he was to do so (Krakauer 2003).

Two members of the Hare Krishna sect (based in New Vrindaban, West Virginia) murdered a fringe member (in 1983), and one of them subsequently (in 1986) killed a former-member-turned-critic (Hubner and Gruson 1988:17-20, 319).

In Philadelphia, the "back-to-nature" and anti-technology group MOVE engaged in a gun battle with police, which ended in the death of eleven members (on May 13, 1985) after police dropped a bomb on the top of the row house (aiming for the group's bunker), which burned down the entire block (Assefa and Wahrhaftig 1988).

Late in 1988, while he was drunk, Roch Theriault of Ontario and Quebec, Canada, killed a follower (Kaihla and Laver 1993: 219-228).

In April 1989, Jeffrey Don Lundgren, who broke away from the Reformed Latter Day Saints organization, murdered (with the assistance of his followers) five members of a family that had drifted away from his teachings (Earley 1991:268, 284-291; Sassé and Widder 1991:108-118).

During the Spring of 1989, law enforcement uncovered twelve bodies in a ranch in Matamoros, Mexico, where drug dealers had killed victims and then used them in Palo Mayombe rites of protection (Kilroy and Stewart 1990:112; Schutze 1989).

Four federal agents and at least six members died in a gunfight with the Branch Davidians on February 28, 1993, followed by the deaths of seventy-four Davidians on April 19 in a building fire (that some leaders may have started) and related 'mercy killings' (Hall with Schuyler and Trinh. 2000:44).

Seventy-nine members of the Order of the Solar Temple died in murder-suicides at various times in Quebec, France, and Switzerland in October 1994, 1995, and 1997, and several members murdered an apostate couple and their infant son (Hall with Schuyler and Trinh 2000:111-114).

Members of Aum Shrinri Kyo released sarin gas on the Tokyo subway on March 20, 1995, killing 12 and injuring 5,510 people (Hall with Schuyler and Trinh 2000:79-80). Some of the group's leaders also had been involved in other murders (Brackett 1996:121-123; Kaplan and Marshall 1996:40-43, 274).

Thirty-nine members of Heaven's Gate committed suicide on March 22 or 23, 1997, in southern California (Hall with Schuyler and Trinh 2000:149).

The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God killed an estimated 780 members at various times in March 2000 in Uganda (Mayer 2001).

In August 2003, South Korean investigators discovered that adherents to a sect devoted to a leader named Cho had killed nine members whom Cho believed questioned his authority. The group's main dogma "is that eternal life can be obtained by observing Cho's 131 commandments, which include avoiding sexual relations during marriage. It once had over 3,000 devotees" (Ja-young, 2003).

In early September 2003, five members of a sect named Superior Universal Alignment were sentenced in a Brazilian court for having tortured, killed, and mutilated up to 19 boys (whose ages ranged from 8 to 13) between 1989 and 1983. The female leader of the sect, Valentina de Andrade, believed that a medium had told her that "boys born after 1981 were possessed by the devil," so she and her followers slit their victims' wrists, cut out their eyes, and sliced off their sexual organs (*Reuters* 2003).

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